Writing Together

A Study of Secondary ELA Preservice Teachers Participating in Peer Writing Communities

by

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ABSTRACT

This mixed methods study explores the work of five small writing communities formed within a university-based preservice English language arts writing methods course. Fifteen preservice English language arts teachers took part in the study and participated across five peer writing groups. The study shares the instructional design of the course as well as the writing activities and practices that took place within the groups over the course of one 15-week semester. The study draws on Wenger's (1998, 2009) theory of communities of practice as well as activity theory (Engeström,1999, 2001; Russell, 1997) to understand the social supports, practices, and learning activities that assisted these preservice teachers as writers and as teachers of writing. The qualitative data included writing surveys, writing samples, and participant interviews as well as pre and post writing self-efficacy surveys as quantitative data. This study documents the affordances and constraints of peer writing groups in methods courses for preservice English language arts teachers and how these groups may influence their identities and practices as writers and as teachers of writing. These findings provide insight into ways we might strengthen the preparation of English language arts preservice teachers as teachers of writing and build communities of practice within preservice training courses and programs.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The last writing experience of my undergraduate teacher preparation program was an English senior seminar course. It was a small class about American slave narratives taught by my favorite professor. In a prior semester, I had taken this professor's American literature course and enjoyed engaging with the texts. The final paper for his class was a twenty-page analysis of a theme we had discovered throughout the course readings, which we then applied to an outside text we had selected to identify and analyze independently to see if the theme held up. I wrote my paper early to take into my professor for feedback. I was unsure of my analysis and clarity but was not too concerned. The professor's feedback was not what I expected. He ripped my paper to shreds with comments and criticism. I had never seen so much red ink on one page before. His focus was predominantly on my grammar, but my organization was under fire as well. I remember he looked up and said, "This is a mess, how are you proposing to teach writing when yours is such a disaster?" I walked out of that office devastated. I internalized his comments and carried those with me into my teaching career.

This experience with college writing took place right before I began my student teaching, as an English language arts (ELA) teacher, and it took its toll on my teaching practice. I was reticent to teach writing. It took me several years of teaching before I taught anything about writing above merely assigning essays. A mentor teacher eventually opened my thinking and practice to help me entertain the idea that I might

have something to teach about writing. My mentor worked with me to collaboratively designed writing units for our curriculum, which helped build my confidence as a writing teacher. However, I continued to feel inadequate as both a writer and as a teacher of writing.

When I began my master's degree, not in curriculum and instruction like most of my teaching peers, but in writing, I was determined to strengthen my practice as a writer and as a teacher of writing. In several courses, I was asked to copy edit my peers' work, and I grew more familiar with giving and receiving critical feedback. One course had a profound impact on me as a writer and teacher of writing. In this class, students were grouped based on disciplinary background to share writing.

My group met weekly before class to share our written assignments. I gained a sense of what others' writing looked like and received many helpful tips on my own writing and process from my peers. I began to see the power of learning to write with the support of a peer writing community. My writing pedagogy grew exponentially that year, and I felt a shift in my instructional decision making to incorporate more writing. I had spent a majority of my time focused on reading literature and analysis, and this shifted and expanded toward a focus on empowering students to share their thinking through writing.

I also introduced writing communities (Kittle, 2008; Atwell, 1990) in my classroom. I invited students to work in groups and take part in peer feedback workshops. I shared my own writing and wrote alongside my students. I altered the types of writing

assignments I was asking students to do, and I started giving students more choice instead of rigid, formulaic writing assignments. I demonstrated how to fix run-ons within student essays instead of through worksheets on run-ons. Even my reading pedagogy transformed as I helped students consider what authors were thinking and what their possible objectives were by including specific elements in their work.

This shift in my teaching of writing took place too late in my career. I was already in my fifth year in the classroom. I left too many students without exposure to the kind of writing instruction they deserved. After teaching high school ELA for nine years, I wanted to learn more about the effective ways of teaching secondary writing and decided to pursue a doctoral degree in English Education.

After starting graduate school and participating in The National Writing Project, I became even more convinced that writing communities have the potential to provide positive experiences for teachers of writing. I also saw the potential of writing communities for ELA preservice teachers when I began utilizing classroom-based writing communities in the methods courses I was teaching. Both my positive and negative experiences as a writer and as a teacher of writing play a role in the development of this dissertation.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this mixed methods research study (Creswell & Clark, 2018) is to explore preservice ELA teachers' practices, perceptions, writing, and confidence as they participate in small classroom-based writing communities as part of a writing methods

course in their undergraduate ELA secondary teacher preparation program at a large public university in the southwest. The study aims to detail the classroom-based writing practices of ELA preservice teachers as they participate in writing communities. The study works to understand what happens when preservice ELA teachers work as writers in classroom communities to advance their writing practices and to plan for and shape their teaching of writing. It also allows for an understanding of what challenges preservice ELA teachers face as they participate in classroom-based peer writing communities.

My goal for this study is to understand what takes place in classroom-based peer writing communities over the course of a semester in terms of the participants writing practices, and the feedback, support, and obstacles they encounter throughout their participation in the small classroom-based peer writing communities. I am also interested in understanding how classroom-based peer writing communities influence preservice ELA teachers' writing and teaching of writing self-efficacy (Pajares, Johnson, & Usher, 2007; Pajares, 2002; Pajares & Johnson, 1994). Using both qualitative and quantitative methods allows the study to converge two lenses to gain insight to what classroom-based peer writing communities offer ELA preservice teachers in preparing them to teach writing in their future classrooms (Creswell & Clark, 2018).

Research Questions

The research questions that ground this study are: (1) What happens when preservice ELA teachers take part in classroom-based peer writing communities within a

writing methods course? And, (2) In what ways do classroom-based peer writing communities provide support for preservice ELA teachers writing practices and plans for becoming teachers of writing? Five sub-questions inform my examination of these classroom-based writing communities:

1. What aspects of classroom-based peer writing communities do preservice ELA teachers find useful and not useful to their growth as writers?
2. What aspects of classroom-based peer writing communities do preservice ELA teachers find useful and not useful to their growth as teachers of writing?
3. In what ways does participation in classroom-based peer writing communities support or hinder preservice ELA teachers' perception of themselves as writers?
4. In what ways does participation in classroom-based peer writing communities support or hinder preservice ELA teachers' perception of themselves as writing teachers?
5. What obstacles do preservice ELA teachers face while participating in classroom-based peer writing communities?

Theoretical Framework

Sociocultural theory serves as the overarching frame for this study. Within this frame, I bring together two specific frameworks, including Wenger's (1998, 2009) concept of communities of practice and Russell (1997) and Engeström's (1999) understanding of activity theory. These two frames situate the study concretely within the

understanding that writing is socially situated (Prior, 2006). It also highlights the interplay between the various activity networks (Russell, 1997) that the participants engage in and how those interactions create connections and tensions for them as individual participants within the larger group (Engeström 1999; Wenger, 2009).

Additionally, I draw from cognitive theories of writing (Flower & Hayes, 1981; Scardamalia & Bereiter, 1987; Hayes, 1996; Zimmerman & Risemberg, 1997). More specifically, I examine writing self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977; Bandura & Wessels, 1997; Pajares, 2002: Early & DeCosta, 2012) to understand how classroom-based writing communities' impact undergraduate preservice ELA teachers' confidence in writing and teaching writing. Graham (2017) suggests that utilizing both sociocultural and cognitive frames of writing research offers a more nuanced and complete picture of how writers engage in the task of writing.

Sociocultural Theories of Writing

This mixed methods study employs sociocultural theory, which stems from theorists who work to understand the factors important in language, learning, thinking, and development (Bakhtin, 1986; Voloshinov, 1973; Vygotsky, 1978). The study examines individuals writing in a social context and the implications for their learning and preparation to teach writing. I draw from sociocultural theories, grounded in the work of Bakhtin (1986), Voloshinov (1973), and Vygotsky (1978), and Prior (2006).

These theorists conceptualized how engagement in social contexts requires the knowledge, language, and cultural practices of the community. Sociocultural theory

posits that literacy mediates human action within specific social, historical, and cultural contexts (Lewis, Enciso, & Moje, 2007). Vygotsky's fundamental notion that "the true direction of the development of thinking is not from the individual to the social, but from the social to the individual" (1986, p. 36) can be seen through this lens. Through social interactions, these theorists posit, individuals engage with the community around them and grow personally from that participation. For example, waitresses have particular rules for taking orders, placing orders, creating receipts, and the like which they learn through the work of being a participant in writing as a waitress in the context of a restaurant or food service space community.

Within the last thirty years, sociocultural theory has dominated writing research (Prior, 2006; Bazerman & Prior 2005; Heath, 1983; Brandt, 2001; Norman & Spencer, 2005; Early & Flores, 2017). It is a departure from earlier research focused on cognitive or developmental views of writing (Flower & Hayes, 1981; Scardamalia & Bereiter, 1987; Hayes, 1996; Zimmerman & Risemberg, 1997). Unlike the cognitive frame, sociocultural studies of writing focus on the ways relationships and social interactions influence the writing practices of individuals and groups within specific contexts. Writing is always situated within a context, driven by a purpose, and changing with each social experience.

Communities of Practice. Under the broader umbrella of sociocultural theory, I draw from Wenger's concept of communities of practice (1998, 2009). Wenger (2009) defines communities of practice as "groups of people who share a concern or a passion

for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly" (p. 1). My study examines preservice ELA teachers as they participate in classroom-based writing communities of practice formally constructed within a required writing methods course. Wenger (2009) claims we hold membership in multiple formal and informal communities of practice. He also argues not all communities, like neighborhoods, can be labeled as communities of practice because they must also contain three characteristics: (1) members are committed to the domain of interest that connects all the participants (2) they work collaboratively to share ideas, provide support, and co-create (3) they have a shared repertoire and are practitioners (2009, pp. 1-2). Our participation in a community shapes our identities as members, but also as members of the community we possess the ability to transform the community in different ways.

I created several small formally constructed classroom-based writing communities of practice within a preservice ELA methods course on teaching secondary writing to falls in line with Wenger's (2009) definition of what counts as a community of practice. First, all the participants (preservice ELA teachers in a writing methods course) will share one domain of interest, which is preparing to teach writing in secondary schools. Next, all the preservice ELA teachers will participate in classroom-based writing communities where they will work collaboratively to share ideas as well as provide and receive writing support. Finally, they will participate in the community with a shared course repertoire (i.e., a shared syllabus and course expectations), a shared preservice ELA teacher preparation program in which they are all enrolled (shared program requirements), as

well as their more general shared experiences of all, being undergraduate college students at the same university.

Activity Theory. Along with Wenger's communities of practice framework I draw from activity theory (Engeström, 1999, 2001; Vygotsky, 1978, 1986; Russell, 1997). Activity theory looks at the activities an individual participates in to understand the tensions and moves they make within a community of practice. Activity theory is particularly useful in analyzing the complex systems where teachers operate because it focuses on the historical, cultural, and social aspects of learning and accounts for the way tools and actions impact teacher and student's, thinking and learning (Johnson, 2016). Activity theory suggests that learning is an activity found within discourse communities that is object-oriented, collective, and culturally mediated by human actions (Engeström, 2001). In this study, I examine preservice ELA teachers working in a system or a community of practice, a methods course on teaching writing, where participants engage in the activity of writing and creating while contemplating curricular choices in their future teaching of writing.

Initially, activity theory focused on Vygotsky's mediated action triangle (Russell, 1997, p. 510). The *subject* is the individual who uses *mediational means* or tools to realize their *object/motive*. In this study, I examine the writing, teaching, and learning that took place within the small formally constructed classroom-based writing communities within the methods course. Therefore, the individual preservice ELA teachers are the *subjects* that use writing as the *mediational tool* to realize the

object/motive which is to consider themselves writers and teachers of writing. This study then examines how the activities within classroom-based writing communities support or hinder the participant's as writers and as teachers of writing.

Cognitive Theories of Writing

While this study remains predominantly focused on the sociocultural elements of writing, it does utilize the concept of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977; Bandura & Wessels, 1997) which falls under the umbrella of cognitive theory. Cognitive theories of writing work to understand the exact thinking and processing writers work through when they compose (Hayes, 1996). It also considers how writers brainstorm, plan, translate, review, and even how they monitor their progress (Flower & Hayes, 1981, p. 369). Cognitive theories of writing are really about what the individual does during the act of writing (Flower & Hayes, 1981; Scardamalia & Bereiter, 1987; Hayes, 1996; Zimmerman & Risemberg, 1997) but not the external elements that also impact writing as sociocultural writing theories do (Lewis, Enciso, & Moje, 2007; Prior, 2006; Bazerman & Prior 2005; Heath, 1983; Brandt, 2001).

Neither cognitive nor sociocultural theories of writing can alone paint an absolutely perfect picture of a writer at work. However, combining the two addresses both the social and cognitive thinking (Graham, 2017) and falls in line with recent research and theoretical models for writing research. Steve Graham (2017) recently proposed that neither the cognitive nor the sociocultural paradigms are as fruitful as they could be if combined. He suggests that current cognitive models ignore social, political,

cultural and historical influences on writing (p. 272). Sociocultural perspectives on writing, he claims, ignore the process of becoming literate and the motivation that brings writers to write (p. 272). Combined, however, sociocultural and cognitive theories offer a richer and fuller understanding of writing, because writing involves the social context in which it occurs and cognitive motivation that brings writers to write according to Graham (p. 304, 2017). Both the internal thinking and the external culture matter in writing. That is why this dissertation study seeks to understand both the social elements as well as the inner dialogue of participants through their reporting on their self-efficacy as a writer and as a teacher of writing.

Self-Efficacy. Bandura's (1977) study of self-efficacy has paved the way for hundreds of studies of efficacy spanning a variety of fields and a diversity of purposes (Pajares 2002; Zimmerman & Risemberg, 1997) Most of these studies have found that self-efficacy impacts human behavior and success at accomplishing tasks (Bandura & Wessels, 1997; Pajares 2002; Zimmerman & Risemberg, 1997). Bandura and Wessels (1997) suggest our success in any action is dependent on our perceived self-efficacy and judgments about our capacity to perform the task. Frank Pajares (2002) narrowed down the concept of self-efficacy to more precise content knowledges, such as mathematics skills, writing skills, and reading skills. In line with some of Pajares' work, this dissertation study will examine writing self-efficacy (Pajares, Johnson, & Usher, 2007; Pajares, 2002; Pajares & Johnson, 1994), but also seeks to understand preservice teachers' self-efficacy as future writing teachers. Most of Pajares' work in this arena

looks at student's writing efficacy and then achievement on writing assignments. Pajares and many others who also study writing self-efficacy are looking at efficacy and its impact on future productions of writing (Pajares, Johnson, & Usher, 2007; Pajares, 2002; Pajares & Johnson, 1994). Teaching self-efficacy has also yielded some research (Holzberger, Phillips, Kunter, 2013; Graham, Harris, Fink, & MacArthur, 2001; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001), but mostly in the context of teaching in general and not specifically concerning the teaching of writing.

Ultimately, both the social context and the cognitive demands of writing play a vital role in writing and teaching writing. For these reasons, this study will employ both lenses to more thoroughly examine a preservice ELA writing methods classroom and how classroom-based writing communities within this classroom impact the preservice ELA teacher's perception of themselves as writers and as teachers of writing and what activities supported or hindered their growth in both of these areas.

Definition of Key Terms/Acronyms

Below, I provide descriptions of key terms I utilize throughout this study to provide transparency in my thinking and cohesion in my writing.

The term *English language arts (ELA)* refers to the study and teaching of English language arts at the secondary level (in the state where this study took place this includes grades 6-12). When the research refers in particular to the preparation of those secondary teachers, it uses the term *preservice ELA teachers*. The phrase *classroom-based writing community* throughout refers to the small classroom-based writing communities created

during the study, each consisting of three preservice ELA teachers who were students in a writing methods course at a large public institution.

Self-perception or *perception* while similar to self-efficacy, is not dependent on confidence but instead is focused on an individual's overall evaluation of themselves. Self-perception contributes to the individual's sense of identity over time, which in turn affects their self-efficacy.

Overview of the Dissertation

Along with this introductory chapter, this dissertation is organized in the following way: Chapter 2 provides an overview of the current research on teacher-writers and teachers who participate in small classroom-based writing communities. The section also details what research tells us about the preparation of preservice ELA teachers, specifically focusing on what research tells us about preparing them to teach writing.

Chapter 3 first describes the context for this study, including the university setting, class, participants, and my positionality as the researcher for this study. It then presents the research design including the instructional design, data collection, data analysis methods, and my code refinement procedure. This section ends by drawing connects between the methods and the theories being utilized.

Chapter 4 describes the findings from the research study including the qualitative and quantitative data. It provides evidence for the four major themes that continually appeared in the data, including the one obstacle reported by participants. It concludes by sharing the four main activities participants identified as significant to their growth as

teachers and as teachers of writing and the quantitative data that corroborates the qualitative findings.

Chapter 5 shares a discussion of the findings and their implications. It provides a summary of the findings and makes several claims about the significance of those findings. It provides the limitations of the study and gives a detailed description of how I hope to extend these findings in further research.

Following the conclusion and references is an appendix which includes supplementary materials such as figures, explanatory texts, and the research instruments. These are referred to throughout the text.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The past 50 years have brought about a growing body of research examining the writing practices, beliefs, habits, and preparation of writing teachers. I draw from three specific areas within this line of work on teachers and writing to foreground my study:

1) **Teacher-Writers:** The influence of teachers writing in their own lives beyond school (Whitney, 2008; Gannon & Davies, 2007) and sharing their writing practices, products, and habits with their students (Fearn & Farnan, 2007; Whyte et al., 2007). This section offers background and support for why it is vital to support teachers in identifying themselves as writers as they enter the classroom to teach writing.

2) **Teachers in Writing Communities:** Teachers' involvement in professional and personal writing communities and the influence of participation in these communities on their lives and their pedagogy (Dawson et al. 2013; Street & Stang, 2009; Baker & Cremin, 2016). This area of study provides insight into what writing communities offers both preservice and in-service teachers and the impact of their work in writing communities on their classroom practices.

3) **Preparing Preservice Teachers to Teach Writing:** The preparation of preservice ELA teachers to teach writing is complicated, and continued research tries to find ways to support preservice teachers in their efforts to be writing teachers (Gallavan, Boyles, Young, 2007; Myers et al., 2016). This research provides the context for what we know from research about preparing preservice teachers for the rigors of teaching writing

and where there is a need to do more research to better prepare them for the writing classroom.

The following literature review offers a more detailed examination of these three facets of research. Not surprisingly, these areas are interconnected and share many of the same premises and findings, so there are many overlapping ideas as can be seen in the brief history of teacher-writers laid out in the article *Teacher-Writers: Then, Now, and Next* by (Whitney, et al., 2014). Ultimately, all of this research combined impacts both the purpose and value of my dissertation. The foundational knowledge found in this literature review provides the frame and purpose of this dissertation. It informs and suggests that the work of this dissertation are both timely and relevant as we work to prepare preservice ELA teachers for the realities of the 21st –century classrooms of today.

Teacher-Writers

Since the early 90's, there has been an ongoing conversation in the field of English Education about the value and importance of teachers of writing maintaining their own writing practices (Jost, 1990; Gillespie, 1991). The question of why ELA teachers should write lies at the heart of research on teacher-writers (Woodard, 2015; Gannon & Davies, 2007). In the following pages, I present research on the influences of a teacher's writing experiences on the teaching and professional development of writing teachers. I will begin by looking at the classroom level impact teacher-writers have particularly in their writing pedagogies. This section highlights how teacher-writers offer students experiences with the challenges of writing (Cremin, 2006; Alford & Early,

2017), provide models of writing (Cremin & Baker 2010, 2014; Frager, 1994), and also the rewards of taking risks as a writer (Woodard, 2015; Baker & Cremin, 2016). Then I will share for those in administrative capacities what happens to quantitative measures (Pritchard & Honeycutt, 2006; Marshall & Pritchard, 2002) in classrooms when teachers identify as writers themselves (Fearn & Farnan, 2007; Whyte et al., 2007) and then those teachers who do not identify as writers (Murphy, 2003; Napoli, 2001; Street, 2003; Street & Stang, 2008, 2009). Together this research provides a backdrop of how teacher-writers are different from non-teacher-writers.

Classroom Pedagogies of Teacher-Writers

Teachers who write alter their instruction in a myriad of ways. First, teacher-writers are much more cognizant of the challenges of writing (Blau, 1998; Morgan, 2010) because they have first -hand experience with these challenges and more importantly recent exposure to these hurdles. Teacher-writers research finds that these teachers offer more models of writing in their classes (Cremin & Baker, 2010, 2014; Frager, 1994; Daisey, 2009; Baker & Cremin 2016). With hands-on writing experiences, teacher-writers also are more apt to demonstrate the value of risk-taking in writing and to encourage students to also take some risks (Woodard, 2015; Baker & Cremin, 2016; Cremin, 2006). These altered classroom behaviors are the result of teachers being and feeling like they are writers.

Teacher-writers bring an acute awareness of the challenges of writing (Cremin, 2006; Alford & Early 2017). They feel the anxiety of sharing their work with others and

the pressure to write within an allotted time frame to a prompt that they have not necessarily chosen by themselves (Morgan, 2010; Cremin, 2006). This is crucial for teachers so that they might "put themselves in their student's shoes" as Morgan (2010) puts it. "Before teachers teach writing it is important that they know or become reacquainted with the terrain in writing" (Morgan, 2010, p. 40). This is all in order for them to walk their students through the complex journey of brainstorming, drafting, editing, revising, and then publishing a piece of writing. As Sheridan Blau (1998) suggests teachers must experience firsthand "the struggles and satisfactions of the writer's task" (p. 31). Whitney, Zuidema, and Fredricksen (2014) extend this notion of teachers understanding and sharing the struggles of writing to discuss how teachers manage the challenges of sharing their writing publicly. Those teachers who go on to write for publication have even more to offer their students: their experience writing for a public audience (Whitney, et al., 2012). Another challenge that teacher-writers establish and walk students through is how to maintain an authoritative voice through their writing (Whitney, Zuidema, & Fredricksen, 2014, p. 70). The myriad of experiences that teacher-writers face while being writers themselves provides such rich knowledge for teachers in their support of students who encounter similar challenges. When teachers write themselves, they can provide rich insight into the complex and laborious process of writing.

Research also suggests teacher-writers provide their students with models for what good writing looks like (Cremin & Baker 2010, 2014; Frager, 1994) and models for

what good writers do when they write (Daisey, 2009; Baker & Cremin, 2016). Cremin and Baker (2010) followed two teachers in their study to see what happened when the two teachers composed in front of their students as models for the writing they were asking their students to accomplish. Elaine, one of the teacher participants, clearly modeled in her lesson the thought process she went through while writing. For example, after composing a bit, the teacher stopped and said aloud to her students "Right, I'm going to read this back, just to make sure that it makes sense to me, then it'll make sense to my readers" (p. 15). She wasn't just modeling the writing, but the thinking that goes on before, during, and after the writing. Teachers who are aware of their thinking while writing can walk students through the process of writing more readily. Being a teacher-writer makes teachers more aware of their brainstorming, drafting, and revising (Locke, 2015). More assured preservice ELA teacher-writers share their expertise by modeling writing tasks (Street, 2003, p. 42). They have their personal strategies for writing successfully and can share those strategies with students.

Baker and Cremin (2016) also found teachers experienced "tension and emotional unease… when composing short stories for publication [, but this] appeared to mobilize a kind of creative energy that involved the teachers in taking risks as writers" (p. 101). Teacher-writers, particularly those who participate in peer writing communities (see more about this in Teachers in Writing Communities, p. 24), learn the value of taking risks as writers and in turn, share that with their students. In Baker and Cremin's (2016) review of research on teacher-writers, they reported "in two studies that examined teachers'

participation in peer writing groups from an emic perspective, creative risks were taken, and 'bravery' was shown" (p. 101). Cremin's earlier 2006 study demonstrates this exactly. The study follows three teachers participating in peer writing communities who felt the "tension and affective discomfort" (p. 17) when writing as part of a group and reported on how teachers responded to these uncomfortable encounters. They suggest that "teachers may develop an awareness of the roles of resilience and reflection, resourcefulness and relationships" in writing (p. 19).

Likewise, Woodard's (2015) study tracked two ELA teachers in peer writing communities and examined their perceptions of what it means to be a 'brave writer.' One of the participants, Aaron, simply saw himself as a brave writer, which he used on his social media platforms for networking and advocacy (p. 45). For another study participant, being a brave writer meant revising a draft even after extensively revising it and seeing herself as someone who could see the piece with increasingly more depth (p. 37). Woodard's (2015) study uncovers what insights teacher-writers offer their students into the challenges and rewards of a writing practice through their own experiences as teacher-writers. Studies, like Cremin's (2006) and Woodard's (2015), reveals the influence of teachers feeling like teacher-writers and the ways it informs their teaching of writing at the classroom level.

Quantitative Measures of Learning to Write

The previous section details the qualitative implications of teachers who view themselves as writers, and often qualitative research goes no further, but in an era of

standardization, I believe it is important and relevant to also highlight the quantitative impact of teacher-writers. While this dissertation does not explicitly address quantitative measures of writing progress within the study either in students or teachers, it is significant to acknowledge, for policymakers and administrators, to whom test scores do matter significantly, that teachers who write and view themselves as writers have had a larger impact on tests scores (Fearn & Farnan, 2007; Whyte et al., 2007) than simply redesigning curriculum to a process-oriented approach or spending more time in class on writing (Applebee & Langer, 2011).

Research finds that in-service and preservice teachers often do not feel confident in their abilities to teach writing and frequently do not see themselves as writers (Murphy, 2003; Napoli, 2001; Street, 2003; Street & Stang, 2008). Some report a lack of training in their teacher preparation programs (Graham, Harris, Fink, MacArthur, 2001; Gallavan, Bowles, Young, 2007), while others point to negative writing experiences from their past (Daisey, 2009; Draper, Barksdale-Ladd, & Radencich, 2000). Either way, these negative beliefs can have dire classroom implications. Research has shown that teachers who are reluctant to write, often offer little to no extended writing opportunities that go beyond short answers, worksheets, or fill in the blank types of writing (Kiuhara, Graham & Hawken, 2009). These types of writing do not ask students to use "composing as a way to think through the issues, to show the depth or breadth of their knowledge, or to make new connections or raise new issues" as Applebee and Langer (2011, p. 15) suggest writing in all content areas ought to. While there has been an uptick in process-oriented

writing and a small increase in time devoted to writing in classrooms, from 4% in 1980 to 8% in 2010, unfortunately, NAEP scores show almost no change since 1969 (pp. 4-5) as a result of the surface level writing that teachers continue to assign. So, while writing in classrooms has seen some reform in the last 20 years, we have yet to see a major impact on test scores, except for in one domain.

We do know from research that test scores go up when teachers have what most researchers call "high writing lives" (Fearn & Farnan, 2007; Whyte et al., 2007). Much of this research revolves around The National Writing Project (NWP), which has been shown to advance teachers' personal notions about their own writing abilities and alter their self-perceptions to view themselves as teacher-writers (Whitney, 2009; Lieberman & Wood, 2002, 2003). It is not surprising then to find out that NWP teachers can positively impact students tests scores. Pritchard and Honeycutt (2006), as well as Marshall and Pritchard (2002), found that students who had NWP trained teachers received the highest writing test scores compared to non-NWP trained teachers. McCarthey and Geoghegan (2015) found similarly that "students in classrooms of NWP teachers have shown strong performance on writing assessments" (p. 334). Locke and Kato (2012) looked at just one teacher after she began viewing herself as a writer and found most, but not all her student's tests scores rose as a result of her new view as a teacher-writer (p. 72). At the teacher level then research supports the notion that teacher who have "high writing lives," who see themselves as teachers, can individually have positive effects on student success with standardized written exams.

Conclusion

Teachers write "to enrich and inform their teaching of writing, to participate in and shape public discussions about teaching, and to enrich their own lives" as Dawson (2011, p. 11) succinctly summarizes from her account of the literature on teacher-writers. Research has shown how teacher-writers experience changes in their self-perception as writers and in their writing practices that have the potential to positively impact their classroom practices (Cremin, 2006; Woodard, 2015). Teacher-writers provide rich models for their students in their classrooms: models of writing (Cremin & Baker 2014; Frager, 1994), models of writing practices (Daisey, 2009; Cremin & Baker, 2010), and models of how a writer must take risks (Woodard, 2015; Cremin, 2006), and models of how writers face those challenges as they compose (Cremin, 2006; Alford & Early 2017). Teacher-writers also offer hope in raising test scores (Pritchard & Honeycutt, 2006; Marshall & Pritchard, 2002), which simple curricular and design strategies have failed to do (Applebee & Langer, 2011). The research is clear, teacher-writers provide a richer more engaging education that has a measurable impact on the writing of students (Fearn & Farnan, 2007; Whyte et al., 2007; McCarthey & Geoghegan, 2015; Pritchard & Honeycutt, 2006; Marshall & Pritchard, 2002) and classroom practices (Woodard, 2015; Cremin, 2006; Daisey, 2009; Street, 2003; Baker & Cremin, 2016; Morgan, 2010; Blau, 1998; Locke & Kato's, 2012; Locke, 2015; Cremin & Baker 2010).

Teachers in Writing Communities

Research examining the value of teachers writing in collaborative communities specifically represents a relatively recent area of study in the field of English Education and Secondary Literacy Studies. Work in teachers writing in communities has most often revolved around the National Writing Project (Whitney, 2008; 2009; Woodard, 2015) or other professional development programs that focus on creating writing communities (Dix & Cawkwell, 2011; Locke & Kato, 2012). For example, Dix and Cawkwell's (2011) study looked at a professional development opportunity that was modeled after the NWP while Locke and Kato's (2012) study investigated the long-term effects (2 years) of teachers who engage in writing workshops provided by a local university. Teachers writing in communities also appears in the literature on teacher preparation (Street, 2003; Daisey, 2009; Street & Stang, 2009; Cremin, 2006). Morgan's (2010) study, for example, follows 42 preservice teachers through a writing intensive course to see how their perception of themselves as writers changed from beginning to end. Together these findings suggest teachers have positive experiences in writing communities that support their personal and pedagogical growth. This section details how teachers are transformed both professionally and personally by the writing they do and the experiences they have in peer writing communities (Dix & Cawkwell, 2011; Whitney, 2008). These transformations include teachers learning to talk like writers (Woodard, 2015; Hicks, Whitney, Fredericksen, & Zuidema, 2017), and building teachers confidence as both writers and teachers of writing (Gardner, 2014; Morgan, 2010; Whitney, 2008). Not only are teachers transformed, but their classroom practices are then influenced by these

transformations. Studies reveal how teachers who write in communities create spaces in their classrooms where students can be turned on to writing (Locke & Kato, 2012), where students are given more choices in writing (Morgan, 2010; Zoch et al., 2016), and where teachers model for students how to provide constructive feedback and how to take up that feedback in order to improve students' prose (Dix & Cawkwell, 2011). Combined, this research as a whole suggests that teachers who write with one another in communities of practice experience rich transformations that positively influence their classroom decision making.

Personal and Professional Transformation

Writing communities offer teachers a place of transformation both personally and professionally. Dix and Cawkwell (2011) examined one teacher writing within a community, which gave her an opportunity to present her writing and compare it with others to receive feedback. The experience of writing with her peers empowered the teacher's belief in herself as a writer and enhanced her understanding of the social nature of writing. Writing in a community "not only provided an audience for her personal writing, but her colleagues generated possibilities for improvement: audience response and feedback [that] empowered her self-efficacy as a writer" (p. 50). It influenced this teacher's writing pedagogy by providing insight into other teacher-writers practices and habits and gave her an opportunity to experience revision work with peers. Similarly, Whitney (2008) discovered how seven teacher-writers experienced transformation after writing in an NWP summer institute. She found the teacher participants used the writing

within their peer writing communities to reflect on their pedagogy and practice as teachers and then began to reframe how they viewed the challenges of teaching. The time to write and reflect in a community of peers allows teachers to adjust their frames or discover new frames as a "new ways of positioning themselves in relationship to various others" (p. 164). Teachers found the process of writing with peers and reflecting on their work as teachers empowering and identified this as the cite of transformation for themselves as teachers participating in writing communities. Based on this past research, teachers writing together in a community seems to offer teachers space to stop and think about their own practice and see others practices in a big picture way that they might not have had the opportunity to do before.

More specifically, recent studies have shown teachers who write in communities see a shift in themselves as writers and begin to use the language of writers in their teaching. For example, Woodard (2015) found that teachers who wrote in a community offered more specialized language to describe the things writers do, like how writers "show don't tell" their readers to capture the audience's attention and how sometimes it is necessary to "bury" things within the text to allow the reader to dig and find them (2015, p. 45). Woodard describes these as "writerly moves" that teachers share with their students when they become conscious of them, often through interactions with their writing communities. Cremin (2006) found similarly that teachers who write "find a common conceptual language to describe creativity in the context of written composition" which they carry with them into their teaching practice (p. 19). Hicks,

Whitney, Fredrickson, Zuidema (2017) make the case that when teachers "write, read, share and converse with one another, their ideas are extended and refined" which pushes them to think as writers and not just as teachers (p. 15). Teacher-writers in communities, practice the language of talking about their writing and learn from these conversations to talk like writers. With these first-hand experiences of reading, writing, refining and talking about their writing with teacher-writing peers allows teachers to use this same language in their classroom practice (Fallon & Whitney, 2016; Whitney, Zuidema, & Fredricksen, 2014).

Similarly, there is evidence that preservice teachers who participate in writing communities experience a transformation in their attitudes about writing and their self-efficacy as writers (Morgan, 2010; Street, 2003; Daisey, 2009; Zoch et al., 2016). In their review of research on teacher-writers, Cremin and Oliver (2017) noticed, "all of the eight studies that examine initial training and professional development initiatives suggest that focused opportunities to participate in a community of practice, or to write in a range of forms, can 'transform' teachers' attitudes, self-esteem, and sense of self as writer" (p. 8). The four studies of preservice teachers (Morgan, 2010; Street, 2003; Gardner, 2014; Daisey, 2009) all found writing in their methods course with their peers offered encouraging writing experiences that positively influenced their perception of themselves as writers (Cremin & Oliver, 2017, p. 8). One of those studies (Gardner, 2014) found group writing workshops enabled preservice teachers to reconsider the importance of writing and its purposes as well as become reintroduced to the creative powers of writing,

ultimately changing the preservice teachers writing process and beliefs about themselves as writers. Morgan (2010) also noted an increase in writing confidence after his methods course students wrote with and for their peers.

The most focused study on ELA preservice teachers' confidence as writers and the classroom implications is Street's (2003) following three middle grades preservice ELA teachers into their student teaching to understand the impact self-confidence in writing has on their writing pedagogy. He observed a reluctant writer, a developing writer, and a confident writer in their student teaching to understand the variances between their pedagogical choices in teaching writing. The reluctant preservice teacher provided little to no inspiration to write and utilized a more "taskmaster" and rigid approach to teaching writing to students (p. 38-39). She struggled to engage students and provide insight into writing poetry specifically (p. 38). The preservice teacher who was a confident writer had students clamoring to share their writing with the preservice teacher and one another (p. 41). The students were engaged and enthusiastic to write, and the preservice teacher provided models for the writing task that supported students understanding (p. 41). The developing writer struggled to implement engaging writing curriculum, but by the end of her student teaching, she felt more competent in her ability to utilize her own developing writing practice to inform her teaching of writing (p. 40). The findings from Street's (2003) study suggest it is imperative we support the writing lives of preservice ELA teachers before they enter the classroom to improve the confidence of our ELA teachers who are responsible for teaching the next generation of

writers. More confident teachers will hopefully "adopt the kind of professional attitudes that are crucial to their continued success as writing teachers" (Street, 2003, p. 47).

Classroom Pedagogies of Teachers Who Write in Community

Often teachers who write in communities outside of their classrooms, better utilize those writing experiences inside their classrooms to support students' writing growth. Locke and Kato's (2012) study found one teacher who wrote in a community, within a professional development opportunity, offered writing experiences in her classroom that "switched on" her unmotivated students to have more positive attitudes toward writing. The study also revealed how the students in this teachers' classroom also demonstrated a marked improvement in their writing test scores (p. 73). The teacher in Alford and Early's (2017) study found that the feedback process in her teacher writing community was meaningful to her own growth as a writer and after implementing this in her own classroom she found it was also motivating for students and their writing. Teachers who experience writing in communities offer more to their students in their classrooms. Specifically, they provide richer environments for students to make conscious choices about their writing that move beyond the bounds of formulaic and test-driven writing (Locke & Kato, 2012; Cremin, 2006; Zoch et al., 2016). Teacher-writers who participate in writing communities experience writing within a social context and emulate that in their classroom practices.

Ultimately, when teachers write in communities they offer more opportunities for extended writing and greater choices and agency for students in regard to their form and

content (Locke & Kato, 2012; Cremin, 2006). Zoch et al. (2016) share three teachers experiences of writing in a community and highlight how one teacher moved her classroom practice away from her former more formulaic style of teaching writing to a more fluid process-oriented approach where she encouraged students to take more risks with their writing and experiment with techniques until they found it more comfortable. Her pedagogical progress was described as "shift[ing] from a more directive to facilitative" style of teaching (2016, p. 16). Other studies reveal how teachers offer more choice in student writing topics after they themselves write about topics that interested them in their writing communities (Morgan, 2010; Cremin, 2006). Giving choice promotes ownership (Daisey, 2009) and engages students in topics that draw on the life experiences that matter most to students (Zoch et. al., 2016; Whitney, 2009). Writing communities help teacher-writers realize this and it transforms their teaching practice.

Teachers who write together with their own peers also realize the power of peer feedback (Fallen & Whitney, 2016). They take up those lessons and apply them to their classrooms by offering insight into how a reviewer might carefully and consciously provide meaningful feedback (Daisey, 2009; Street, 2003). In addition, teachers who write in communities go on to teach students how they might take up the feedback to move their writing forward (Dix & Cawkwell, 2011; Fallen & Whitney, 2016). Fallen and Whitney (2016, p. 67) detail how one participant found her own skill of asking for clarification on the feedback she was given as vital to her future success in writing.

Writing communities provide teachers with the insight into how to take full advantage of peer feedback as both the reviewer and recipient of feedback.

Teachers from writing communities frequently create classrooms where students share their uncertainties as writers with their peers because they themselves have experienced the fruitfulness of exposure to criticism (Cremin, 2006). Teachers familiar with peer feedback from writing communities even begin to share their own in-process writing, which in the past they did not feel comfortable doing (Zoch et al., 2016; Fallon & Whitney, 2016). This process offers a model for how students can take up criticism to positively influence the outcome of a piece of writing. Experiencing the sting of feedback (Fallon & Whitney, 2016) allows teachers to empathize with students, but also it highlights for them the value of these constructive spaces. Spaces that respect and value constructive criticism that moves writing forward.

Conclusion

The research on teachers writing in community is clear, teachers who write with and for their peers' experience both personal and professional growth (Dix & Cawkwell, 2011; Whitney, 2008). It also changes their practice as they take up the language of a writer (Woodard, 2015; Hicks, Whitney, Fredericksen, Zuidema, 2017) and become more confident in their own writing (Morgan, 2010; Gardener, 2014). We also see the classroom application when teachers begin to take their writing experiences back into the classroom and begin to turn students on to being writers as well (Locke & Kato, 2012). Teachers who write in community begin to also empathize with their students (Cremin,

2006; Alford & Early 2017) and offer greater choice to students in their classrooms (Locke & Kato, 2012; Cremin, 2006). Their classrooms become spaces where students share their in-process writing struggles (Cremin, 2006) and work more collaboratively and through oral approaches to address these issues together (Whitney, 2009; Dix & Cawkwell, 2011). In the end, this research concludes that teachers who write in community provide richer classroom experiences to students as they grow as writers.

This dissertation study is similar to both Morgan (2010) and Gardner's (2014) studies that successfully utilize peer writing communities within methods courses to enhance the writing lives of elementary preservice teachers. The difference is I plan to do this within a secondary ELA preservice writing methods course to see if small peer classroom-based writing communities offer positive and influential writing experiences for secondary preservice ELA teachers that increase their confidence as writers and as teachers of writing. What is also missing from most of the studies on teachers writing in communities is a deeper understanding of what it is that these writing groups offer to preservice ELA teachers that is essential to this growth in their self-efficacy as writers and as writing teachers. That is why this dissertation seeks to build on these past findings but dig more precisely into the writing communities themselves to explore more deeply how small classroom-based writing communities create change in preservice ELA teachers to understand of themselves as writers and teachers of writing.

Preparing Preservice Teachers to Teach Writing

This dissertation study takes what we know about teacher-writers and teachers writing in communities and connects it directly to what we know about preparing ELA preservice teachers. Studies of preservice teachers and their teaching of writing became a focus of educational research in the early 2000s. Before this time, reading pedagogy dominated research agendas and policy decisions (NCWAFSC, 2003; 2006); Applebee and Langer (2011) also note the disparity in policy as well as pedagogy between reading and writing. After *The Neglected R*'s original report in 2003 and the implementation of the Common Core State Standards (National Governors Association, 2010), there has been an increased focus on research in teaching writing (Graham & Perin, 2007; MacArthur, Graham, Fitzgerald 2008; 2016) and in preparing secondary teachers to teach writing (Draper, Barksdale-Ladd, & Radencich 2000; Street, 2003; Gallavan, Bowles, Young, 2007; Daisey, 2009; Street & Stang, 2009). Overall, research has shown that preservice ELA teachers feel underprepared to teach writing (Gallavan, Bowles, Young, 2007; Graham, Harris, Fink, MacArthur, 2001) and experience a lack of confidence as writers (Daisey, 2009; Street & Stang, 2009) and as teachers of writing (Myers et al., 2016).

There is a need then to prepare preservice ELA teacher's better to teach writing. Many of the suggestions found here in the research about preservice teachers are similar to the findings in the previous two sections on teacher-writers and teacher writing in community. This section more narrowly focuses on what we know and what research suggests we do to improve the preparation of teachers, particularly ELA writing teachers.

Similarly, this dissertation takes all of this work combined to understand what teacher-writer, writing communities offer preservice ELA teachers specifically as they prepare to be teachers of writing. First, I will look at the current state of teacher preparation especially as it pertains to the teaching of writing (Draper, Barksdale-Ladd, & Radencich, 2000; Gallavan, Bowles, and Young; 2007) then I will focus on what research says we can do to improve the preparation of writing teachers (Daisey, 2009; Morgan, 2010; Locke & Kato, 2012). In the end, this section provides the connection between all of the research cited in this review of the literature to suggest both a need for this dissertation study and the groundwork for understanding the preparation preservice ELA teachers need to teach writing.

Current State of Teacher Preparation

Unfortunately, research has found that many preservice teachers do not enjoy writing (Barksdale-Ladd, & Radencich, 2000; Gallavan, Bowles, & Young, 2007). Draper, Barksdale-Ladd, and Radencich (2000) studied the writing habits of 24 preservice teachers and found they were relatively unaware of their writing practices and had narrow academically focused definitions of what constitutes writing. These preservice teachers hoped to foster a love of writing in their students; however, found this challenging because they, themselves, did not enjoy writing. Similarly, Gallavan, Bowles, and Young (2007) reported most preservice teachers disliked writing even though 94% highly valued writing and the writing process for their future students. While preservice

teachers see writing as positive and powerful, they often remain unsure in their ability to teach writing perhaps because of their lack of enthusiasm to write themselves.

We know preservice teachers have a myriad of beliefs about their writing practices and these beliefs come from various experiences with writing (Morgan, 2010; Daisey, 2009; Street & Stang, 2009; Norman & Spencer, 2005). For example, Norman and Spencer (2005) found past teachers had the most significant influence on preservice teachers' beliefs about their writing abilities both positively and negatively. Kennedy (1998) also suggested to teacher educators that preservice ELA teacher's "enter their professional education already trapped in their own relationship with the subject" (p. 14). They already have formed a perception of their ability to write. Street and Stang (2009) explicitly measured preservice student's self-confidence in writing and found only 20% of teachers were confident writers. Morgan (2010) also concluded that 60% of preservice teachers felt unsure about their writing abilities. In the end, many of these studies (Daisey, 2009; Morgan, 2010; Street & Stang, 2009; Gallavan, Bowles, Young, 2007) have concluded that in order to not perpetuate negative beliefs about writing it is necessary for teacher preparation programs to improve their teacher education by supporting preservice teachers' development into writers, not just teachers of writing.

Given the evidence from the research on teacher-writers (Fearn & Farnan, 2007; Whyte et al., 2007; Murphy, 2003; Napoli, 2001; Street, 2003; Street & Stang, 2008), it is pivotal for teachers to feel like writers, and if there is a distinct lack of joy and confidence in writing for preservice teachers, it can be assumed that they will lack the skills

necessary to be productive and engaging writing instructors. This is a distinct indication that teacher preparation programs have an obligation to improve ELA preservice teachers joy and confidence in writing so that they might be both better writers and teachers of writing.

How to Improve Writing Teacher Preparation

Time is one factor essential to creating positive writing experiences for ELA preservice teachers and improving their writing teacher preparation. Daisey (2009) suggests teacher preparation programs need to encourage ELA preservice teachers to write often, especially if they have had negative writing experiences. Surrounding preservice ELA teachers with nurturing environments, that leave space and time to write is essential, so they can produce thoughtful writing and receive useful feedback from peers that support their growth rather than perpetuate their negative notions of themselves as writers (Gardner, 2014; Locke & Kato, 2012; Daisey, 2009; Fallon & Whitney, 2016). When preservice ELA teachers have more pleasant writing experiences, they are more likely to reproduce assignments that also highlight the joy that can come from writing. Morgan (2010) agreed and shared what one preservice teacher found.

> 'When we had time to write in class, I was like a writing maniac getting all of my ideas out onto the paper. I couldn't get enough of it. I would go home and write some more. . . I grew so much as a writer that I even came home after our day of writing poems in class and wrote one on my own. Me! The girl who hates writing!' (p. 358).

Giving preservice ELA teacher's time to write also highlights that writing does take time, and their future students need time to dig into their writing. It also gives preservice ELA

teachers time to reflect on past writing experiences and to think about ways they can stop the cycle of negative writing experiences for their future students (Daisey, 2009, p. 166). All of this research provides evidence for teacher preparation programs on the value of time and positive writing spaces in methods courses.

Another issue raised by researchers in the preparation of teachers is the need for preservice ELA teachers to experience the writing process for themselves as a way to become metacognitively aware of what they do as writers (Chambless & Bass, 1995; Street, 2003; Street & Stang, 2008, 2009; Morgan, 2010). Morgan (2010) suggests the need for preservice teachers to rediscover writing through multiple experiences so they might draw upon these experiences when they themselves teach a variety of writing modes, and to understand what authors do (p. 352). Morgan claims preservice teachers:

> Need to encounter the constant decision-making writers face—the slow, deep thinking, the search for the right word or phrase, the false starts, and stops, along with the joy and satisfaction of getting ideas clearly stated on paper. Only by doing these things can preservice teachers truly understand the demands and complexity of writing. In addition, they need time to learn about the pedagogy of teaching writing (p. 352).

Street and Stang (2009) agree and believe preservice ELA teachers must "reflect on themselves as writers and look forward to their work as teachers of writing" (p. 90). Ultimately research suggests preservice ELA teachers need recent experiences with writing to contemplate their process as well as re-experience the challenges and joys of writing.

Research also suggests that one-way teacher preparation programs may offer insight into the process of writing and provide positive writing experiences is to set up peer writing communities within the context of courses on writing and teaching writing which is a significant part of my dissertation study. Street and Stang (2009) offer the most explicit discussion as to why this is useful not just for preservice ELA teachers writing, but their thinking about teaching writing. They found participants valued the community of the classroom and highlighted how integral the constant sharing of their work within the classroom-based community was to their writing self-confidence (p. 90). At the beginning of their study, they found that 48% of participants had an unfavorable view of themselves as writers and after participating in the writing class community it dropped to only 12% (p. 86). Street and Stang's (2009) study offers clear insight into how peer writing communities can positively influence self-efficacy.

Street and Stang's (2009) study follows in-service teachers from various content areas in a graduate course designed to improve teachers writing, but these ideas can potentially apply to preservice ELA teachers. In fact, in their conclusions, they draw many connections and apply their findings to teacher preparation programs. Much like Street and Stang (2009), my dissertation study seeks to understand what happens to the writing self-efficacy of preservice ELA teacher's when they engage in small classroom-based writing communities within the context of a writing methods course designed to prepare preservice ELA teacher's to teach writing in their future classrooms, but digs

deeper into understand what exactly participants view as essential to their growth or what obstacles they encounter in their writing communities.

Conclusion

What we know then about teacher preparation to teach writing needs improvement. A focused effort to enhance the writing lives of ELA preservice teachers in one-way research suggests we might counter their lack of joy for writing (Draper, Barksdale-Ladd, & Radencich, 2000; Gallavan, Bowles, and Young; 2007), and their past negative experiences with writing (Kennedy, 1998; Norman & Spencer, 2005). In order to help preservice teacher, focus on their own writing development, the research is clear that students need time (Daisey, 2009; Morgan,2010) to work through the writing process (Chambless & Bass, 1995; Morgan, 2010). The best solution research has to offer is to create writing communities that foster preservice ELA teachers' growth as writers (Street & Stang, 2009). This dissertation study takes these findings and applies them in a writing methods course to see what it is about the writing communities that is particularly beneficial to improving ELA preservice teachers' efficacy as both writers and teachers of writing.

If all this research suggests that peer writing communities and supporting teachers as writers offers a potential space to create positive writing experiences for preservice teachers (Chambless & Bass, 1995; Street, 2003; Street & Stang, 2008, 2009; Morgan, 2010) then we need to look more closely at what exactly it is about those communities so that we might utilize them more productively in the preparation of secondary ELA

teachers. Morgan and Pytash (2014) found in their review of the research on preparing preservice ELA teachers to teach writing that "teacher educators seem to know that positive or new experiences with writing can influence PSTs' beliefs; however, the extent of that change and what it means for classroom teaching remains unknown" (p. 14). I aim to address this issue by studying what elements of classroom-based writing communities play a role in altering preservice ELA teachers' self-concept as writers and as writing teachers. By delving more deeply into what activities, relationships, spaces, and any other elements play a role in preservice teacher's changed self-concepts, this study offers insight into how we might in the future offer more robust writing communities before preservice ELA teachers enter their first classrooms.

Conclusion

The research is telling, but there remains much to be discovered about the role of writing communities in ELA preservice teachers' confidence as writers and as teachers of writing. Street (2003), as well as Cremin and Baker (2014), make it clear that teachers who view themselves as writers provide more engaging writing instruction in their classrooms and Woodard (2015) and Whyte et al. (2007) suggest those teachers are more likely to share their writing practices, products, and habits with their students. This suggests then it is worth working towards producing preservice ELA teachers who view themselves as writers so that they might also provide richer writing pedagogical practices in their future classrooms.

Other research into teachers writing in communities suggests one possible way to produce teachers who view themselves as writers is through teachers writing in communities (Dawson et al. 2013; Street & Stang, 2009; Baker & Cremin, 2016). These communities offer spaces for transformation (Whitney, 2008). Preservice teachers who write in a community of practice experience an increase in confidence and sense of self as writers (Morgan, 2010). Writing communities research then has found that it is essential to provide spaces where in-service and preservice teachers become more confident and self-assured both in their own writing and in turn their writing pedagogy.

This dissertation research relies on all this research but extends the conversation to understand more fully how specifically writing communities may enhance ELA preservice teachers' own writing practices, confidence as writers, and also their teaching of writing. Building on the work of scholars like Whitney, Woodard, Street, Stang, Oliver, Cremin and Baker this work moves forward to examine the ways writing communities formed within a preservice teacher education methods course may support the preparation of preservice ELA teachers for the rigors of teaching writing in secondary settings.

CHAPTER 3: METHODS

This dissertation study utilizes a sociocultural lens to identify what shared practices, goals, and interactions of preservice teacher writing communities have an impact on preservice ELA teachers and their confidence in writing and teaching writing. This study utilizes interviews, participant reflections, and writing surveys to tease out what aspects of writing communities are supportive to preservice ELA teachers' growth as writers and as teachers of writing. While there is a body of research suggesting that writing communities do support teacher's growth as writers (Morgan, 2010; Gardener, 2014) and as teachers of writing (Dix & Cawkwell, 2011; Whitney, 2008), there is a need to understand the nuances and elements that are vital to making these writing communities successful in teacher preparation programs. There is little to no research focused on preservice English language arts teachers learning and participating in writing communities within required preservice training programs.

What follows is a detailed account of this study's design. It begins by providing the context of the study, my positionality as the researcher and instructor, the recruitment procedures, and the setup and instructional design of the writing groups. This chapter then details my data collection. I include a description of the data analysis process, including how I developed and refined my codes. Finally, I link my methodological choices to my theoretical framework and research questions.

Setting

Sociocultural theories research focuses on the fundamentally social nature of learning (Vygotsky, 1987). As I draw from this framework, I want to make clear the specific context for which this study took place. Below, I provide the context of this study to help situate the research in both space and time.

University

The study took place at Arizona State University's main campus in Tempe, Arizona. ASU is one of the largest universities in the United States with over 51,000 enrolled students on the Tempe campus alone while ASU served over 111,000 students across all of its campuses in the 2017-2018 academic year (ASU Facts, 2018). It is located in an urban center of the southwestern United States and serves a diverse population of international, non-traditional, and in and out of state, and in person and online students. This R1 university provides over 6,000 students annually with face-to-face-and online learning in education specifically (Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College Annual Report, 2015). This study involves only face-to-face students from one Methods in Teaching Composition course offered through the Department of English in the fall semester of the 2018-2019 academic year and taught by the researcher.

Course

ENG 480 Methods in Teaching Compositions is a three-credit course offered at Arizona State University within the Department of English. The course is offered for undergraduate students in the Bachelor of Arts in English Education program in the Department of English and the Secondary Education English program for the Mary Lou

Fulton Teachers College. These students are all majoring in either English or Education with a specific focus on teaching English in secondary classrooms (grades 6-12). The students are all preservice secondary English language arts teacher candidates working toward a BA and certification. The class is a requirement for both degree programs and is offered every semester. The course objective is to explore instructional approaches and philosophies for teaching writing in the secondary English language arts classroom. The course is typically taught by English Education faculty, and teaching associates who are doctoral students in the English Education program, like myself. At the time of the study, I was the teacher of record for the course and a doctoral student in English Education with a teaching assistantship. This course is typically capped at 20 students. At the time of the study, the course had15 students enrolled. The class met on campus for 15 weeks, twice a week, on Tuesdays and Thursdays, from 3 pm to 4:15 pm.

Participant Recruitment

I recruited students in the second class session of the semester, in the first week of the course. I did so by reading the recruitment script (see Appendix A) and asking for volunteers to participate in the study. The criteria for participation included: 1). students who were in good standing with the university at the time of the study and working toward earning a bachelor's degree, 2). students enrolled in an ELA preservice teacher program (in English Education either through the Department of English or through the Mary Lou Fulton Teaching College), and 3). students enrolled in a required English Education methods course "Methods of Teaching Composition." After reading the

recruitment script I offered to answer any questions regarding the study and then stepped out of the room. I asked a colleague to obtain consent for me when I was not in the room (see Appendix B). After collecting permissions in a folder and sealing it, my colleague filed it in her office. Throughout the semester, I remained unaware of who had offered consent to avoid any conflict of interest or bias in my instruction or grading. I collected data from all students throughout the semester with the understanding that I would then only use the data of students who had given consent.

Participants

All fifteen students enrolled in the course agreed to participate in the study. Participation was voluntary. There were nine female participants and six males. Seven participants identified as white/Caucasian, three Hispanic/Latinx, one as Vietnamese, one Bosnian, one Serbian, one Middle Eastern, and one identified as five races, American Indian, Alaskan Native, Black/ African American, Hispanic/ Latinx, White/Caucasian. Their ages ranged from 21 to 39 with an average age of 25 (see Table 3.1). Seven participants identified as seniors, six as juniors, and two as graduate students pursuing a post-baccalaureate degree in teaching. Eleven participants were pursuing a degree through the Department of English, two focused in Linguistics, one in Creative Writing, one in Literature, and seven did not report a specific track in English. The other four participants were pursuing a degree in the Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College with a focus in Secondary Education, English.

Table 3.1

Participant Demographics

Group	Pseudonym	Grade	Sex	Degree	Age	Racial Identity
1	Carly	Junior	F	Secondary English Education	22	Asian, Vietnamese
1	Kyle	Junior	M	Mary Lou Fulton Secondary Education	27	White/Caucasian
1	Alaina	Senior	F	English (BA), History (BA), Secondary Education Certificate	21	White/Caucasian
2	Krista	Senior	F	Secondary English Education	21	Bosnian
2	Hugh	Junior	M	Mary Lou Fulton Secondary Education	22	White/Caucasian
2	Mineta	Senior	F	English – Certificate	25	White/Caucasian, Serbian
3	Tiana	Junior	F	Mary Lou Fulton Secondary Education	22	American Indian, Alaska Native, Black/ African American, Hispanic/ Latinx, White/Caucasian
3	Fabian	Junior	M	Creative Writing Secondary English Education	23	Hispanic/Latinx
3	Sherry	Graduate	F	Secondary English Education	27	White/Caucasian

4	Pam	Senior	F	English Literature Secondary Ed Certificate	21	White/Caucasian
4	Xena	Senior	F	Secondary English Education	21	White/Caucasian
4	David	Senior	M	Secondary English Education	21	White/Caucasian
5	Roger	Graduate	M	Mary Lou Fulton Secondary Education	39	Hispanic/Latinx
5	Sheila	Junior	F	Linguistics/English & Spanish, Secondary Education	37	Hispanic/ Latinx, White/Caucasian
5	Kafi	Senior	M	Linguistics/English, Secondary Education	22	Middle Eastern

Creating Writing Groups

Each writing group was made up of three students (see Table 3.1). I selected these groups by randomly pulling names from the class roster. I selected two females for every male because I wanted to distribute the few male students in the class across the groups. The groups stayed the same for the duration of the study. I include a brief description of each of the groups below, along with a detailed description of the one group member who agreed to participate in the one-on-one interviews, as a way to paint a nuanced portrait of each community of learners.

Group 1. Group one included two women and one man, Carly, Alaina, and Kyle. This group joked around frequently and made friends even outside of the classroom.

They all had at least one semester of observation already and were all in classrooms with mentor teachers during the course which required them to teach at least four lessons. This group frequently texted one another for support or if they had a question. They leaned on each other for advice and feedback about their lesson plans as well. Kyle the one male participant of this group agreed to take part in an interview after completing the course. He was the oldest in the group, but also had the least classroom experience. He was in an internship during the course, so he often shared the work, challenges, and joys of seeing his mentor teachers teach and his own interaction with students.

Group 2. Group two also included two women and one man, Krista, Hugh, and Mineta. The dynamics appeared more strained in this group. Mineta's frequent absences were irritating to Krista who was determined to be successful in the course. The two women were descendants of Southern Slavic countries, Bosnia and Serbia. Krista the Bosnian woman, whose parents were immigrants to the United States, agreed to participate in the interviews. Krista had recently transferred from a local community college to take her education courses. She was in her first student teaching internship placement, which meant she was observing in a secondary English language arts classroom 2-3 times a week and was working closely with students from her internship placement on a regular basis. She was frustrated with some of the things she was observing. She was most frustrated with the perception of her mentor teacher's relationship with students, which Krista thought was disconnected. Krista was actively

trying to connect with the students in the class and tried to talk with them one on one as much as possible.

Group 3. Group three was made up of two women and one man. Tiana, Fabian, and Sherry formed a quick bond. They did not know each other before the course began, but through sharing their writing they found many similar ideals and life experiences with one another. Their writing styles and processes were similar to one another. Fabian participated in the interviews after the semester. He was the only Creative Writing major in the course and was adding English Education as a second major as a "back-up plan" to his writing career. He had no teaching or teaching observation experience and was relatively new to the program. Tiana and Sherry were further along in their programs and he was grateful for their insight. He frequently went to them with questions and concerns about classrooms practices. His outsider perspective was received well by Tiana and Sherry who encouraged Fabian's thinking about his own classroom.

Group 4. Group four included one man and two women. David, Xena, and Pam named themselves the "Gold Team" during their first writing community meeting. Despite having very different writing styles and ideas about their future classrooms, this group formed the strongest bond. They had rich conversations and seemed well connected. They were also comfortable disagreeing with one another but maintained a vibrant connection and ability to support one another. The two women were interning in junior high schools and the male David was at the high school level. David came from a

screenplay writing background and often connected that work and experience to the teaching of writing. He volunteered for the interview at the end of the course.

Group 5. The final group, group five was the only group with two men and one woman. This was the oldest group with Roger and Sheila in their thirties and Kafi in his twenties. Each came from such different backgrounds, Roger had a law degree, Sheila was in the medical field prior to this and Kafi was from the middle east studying in the US before returning home to teach English. They also had a great deal in common. Kafi and Sheila were both studying Linguistics specifically in the English program and Roger and Sheila were getting teaching degrees as a second career path in life. Sheila, the participant who agreed to be interviewed, is a Hispanic woman who intends to teach ESL in public schools in the greater Phoenix area. She was the oldest student in class and pursuing a second career path. Before this program, she had worked as a secretary in a medical office. She had her own children, who were all school age, and had been encouraged by their teachers to pursue teaching. She was just beginning her teaching observations and made connections often to her own children's schooling experiences for reference.

Researcher

As a doctoral student in English Education and a Teaching Assistant for the Department of English at Arizona State University, I was the instructor of record for this course as well as the researcher for this study. To maintain self-reflexivity (Tracy, 2012, p. 2) I acknowledge my positionality in terms of my history and perspective as a White

middle-class woman, writer, teacher, and researcher. At the time of this study, I was 35 years old and in my fourth year of my doctoral program in English Education. I grew up in the Midwest of the United States and moved to Arizona at the beginning of my teaching career, 15 years ago. I am a native English speaker and do not speak any other languages. I went to college in Colorado where I studied English Secondary Education and I received my teaching certification and ESL endorsement through this undergraduate program. I started teaching English language arts at a public high school in Tempe, Arizona in 2006. I taught ESL, English, developmental reading, and AP English courses for nine years. While teaching, I received my Masters of English at Northern Arizona University through a hybrid (online and in person) program in 2009. I began my doctoral program in English Education Fall 2015 at Arizona State University.

As part of my teaching assistantship with the Department of English, I taught first-year composition for the Writing Program in my first year of doctoral work, and in my second and third years, I taught two methods courses in English Education. In my fourth year, I taught the course where I conducted this study in the fall semester. I designed the curriculum based on my experience as both a secondary and college teacher and with the support of the faculty in the doctoral program who provided sample syllabi and readings.

Although I entered this course as an outsider in terms of age, education, and professional role, I was committed to researching and participating in the study as a participant observer (Spradley, 2016) and I shared an interest and investment in studying

and working within the field of English education with my students. While I did not join any one of the writing groups as a participant, I participated frequently in the discussions and collaborative writing activities across and among the groups. As the instructor of record, I created the tasks the groups completed throughout the study and helped support the groups' efforts in completing these tasks by answering questions and making suggestions or refocusing groups if they were veering off task. I also graded all course assignments, answered emails, and held office hours. While implementing the curriculum and instruction for this course, I also collected data for the study, which I describe in more detail below. I balanced the dual roles of teacher and researcher. I was transparent with students about these roles. They saw me when I was collecting writing samples or designing particular activities or asking questions within writing groups and taking field notes.

Instructional Design

The focus of the writing methods course was in preparing preservice teachers for the work of teaching writing in their future classrooms. The course description explains:

> This course is designed as an exploration of instructional approaches and philosophies for building a strong writing curriculum in the secondary English language arts classroom. We will examine the ways writing has been taught in secondary schools in the United States. We will read and discuss works of theory and research in the field of secondary composition, and we will consider the implications of those works for instructional practice.

The design of the course maintained a focus then on learning, thinking about, and enacting an understanding of what it means to be a secondary writing teacher and what issues preservice teachers must consider in curricular and instructional decision making.

Each week had a different theme (see Table 3.2) to help focus the readings, discussion, writing, and activities. For example, on the fourth class meeting as we prepared to write the multimodal literacy memoir, we read a sample memoir from Jim Burke and then using his writing as a model students created in their writing communities a "How To" book for writing a memoir, noting all the structural elements, as well as the content focus and literary tools that can be used to effectively narrate a memoir. During the fifth class, students read the chapter from Jim Burke's (2013) *The English Teacher's Companion* on teaching writing before class. We began class with a snaporism activity that teaches about aphorisms and asks students to create clever titles in the form of an aphorism, called snaporisms. Then in the writing groups students highlighted their favorite Burke tips, tricks, and ideas which they shared then with the whole class. The session concluded with everyone thinking about the best writing assignment they had ever been assigned and thinking through how they might modify this assignment in their future classroom. On the seventh meeting students read about the pros and cons of standards in teaching writing and the class activity, called Cross the Line Discussion asked students to agree or disagree with statements about standards by moving their bodies along a line drawn in the class from the front to the back. This allowed them to share their beliefs and opinions about standards physically and then we opened up the floor to discuss those beliefs. Students moved during the discussion to reflect any changes they felt in their thinking about standards.

Each class was structured in the following way: 1) Before class each class, I asked students to read about an issue in English Education ranging from direct grammar instruction to multimodal writing assignments (see Table 3.2). 2) When they arrived in class, I provided a journal writing prompt on the whiteboard in front of the classroom to open class connected to an issue from that days reading. 3) After writing for the first five minutes of class, I open up the question for the class to discuss as a whole or had the writing communities come together and share and discuss their journal writing. 4) Next, students took part in a class activity or multiple activities that invited them to work either individually, with their writing communities, or as a whole class. 5) During the last five minutes of class, students were asked to reflect on the day's activities through writing. The written reflection, which remained private to the students, invited them to think about how they could take up their learning from the day in their future classrooms and how they might adapt the activity(ies) for a high school classroom.

Table 3.2

Course Calendar

Class	**Issue**	**Activities (I= Individual, S=Small Writing Groups, W=Whole Group)**
1	Why We Write	Brainstorm purposes of writing (W) Writing History Timelines (I)
2	Effective Writing Instruction	Study Introduction (W) Drawing Future Classroom (I & S)

3	Elements of Writing Instruction	What Should Writing Teachers Know? NCTE Statement Gallery Walk (W) Writing History Storyboard or Comic Strip (I & S)
4	Memoir Writing	How To Books on Writing a Memoir (S & W)
5	Writing Instruction Tips & Tricks	Snaporism (I do, We do, You do) (W & I) Tips, Tricks & Ideas (S & W) The Coolest Writing Assignment You've Ever Done (I)
6	Themes in English Education	Common Themes Hunt (S & W) Growth Mindset Expert Groups (S & W)
7	Standards in English Education	Cross the Line Discussion about Standards (W) Four Perspectives on Standards (S & W)
8	What Works in Teaching Writing	What Works in Teaching (S & W) SnapChat Best Teaching Strategy (S)
9	Peer Review of Multimodal Literacy Memoir	Peer Review of Literacy Memoir (S)
10	Scripted Curriculums	Why Writing is HARD brainstorm (W) Why Scripted Curriculums? (W) Pro's and Con's of Scripted Curriculums (S)
11	Infographics and Visuals in Writing	Visuals in Writing Hunt (S & W) Infographic Theory Picks (I & W)
12	Genres Studies	Genres Brainstorm (W) How To Books (S) Gallery Walk of Genres (W)
13	Education is Politics	Class Openers Brainstorm (W) Table Talk Silent Discussion (I & S)
14	Why Theory Matters	Theories You Already Know (I) Guess That Theory Game (S & W) Infographic Peer Feedback (S)

15	Grammar Instruction	Pro's & Con's of Direct Grammar Instruction (W) Infographic Carousel (W)
16	Writing as a Process	Visual Representations of Process over Product (S & W)
17	Using Models to Teach Writing	Models Gallery Walk (W) Uses & Challenges of Models (W) Where to Find Models (S) How to Successfully Use Models (W)
18	Writing Teacher Beliefs	Common Themes Hunt (S & W) This I Believe (I & S) Teacher Writers (W)
19	Picturing Your Future Classroom	Drawing Your Future classroom (I) Describing Your Future Classroom (I & S)
20	Fitting it All in to 180 Days?!	Begin With the End in Mind (W) What is My End Goal? (I) Back Designing From Your End Goal (S)
21	Multi Genres Writing	School Genres vs Real World Genres (W) Outside of the Box Writing Assignment Creation (S)
22	Narrative vs Persuasive	Cross the Line Debate (W)
23	Rubrics-Assessment vs. Feedback	Rubrics Gallery Walk Likes & Dislikes (I & W) Future Classroom Peer Review (S)
24	Shift Happens	Teaching Worries (W) Teaching not just a J.O.B. Podcast notes (I & W) What We've Learned (S)
25	Being the Best You	Highly Qualified Teacher Qualities Expert Groups (S) Being a Teacher Writer (W) Demystifying the Process (I & W)

The class involved three major writing assignments. The first assignment for the course was a Multimodal Literacy Narrative in which I asked students to find multimodal artifacts from their past writing lives (e.g. tweets, literary magazine submissions, journals, letters, diaries, emails, text messages) to illustrate their development as writers in and beyond the formal classroom setting. This writing gave students the opportunity to share in detail their past and current writing practices and experiences and served as a reflection tool for students to consider how they have grown as writers over time.

The second assignment was the Theory Infographic assignment, in which I invited students to select and then researched a learning theory, such as experiential learning, critical pedagogies, and situated learning. Then they created a visually stimulating infographic to share with their peers about the learning theory and what it might look like in enacted within secondary English language arts writing classroom. The assignment asked them to first understand and teach the theory, but more importantly contemplate how that theory looks in action within a writing classroom, impacting the choices the teacher will make and how they might set up the lessons.

The last assignment was the Future Classroom Essay. It was an extended essay detailing what students hoped their future English language arts classroom would be like in terms of design and practice. This assignment asked students to take the time to consider various choices they hoped to make when they entered their first classroom, for example, what writing assignments they hoped to assign and how they would evaluate student writing or provide feedback? This assignment asked students to make choices

about their writing curriculum and think through the details of how to make writing accessible, engaging, and meaningful for their students.

Within the course, the small writing communities met and worked collaboratively almost every class meeting (see Table 3.2). Within these groups, students shared writing from their opening journals with one another or other individual writings produced during class. Groups worked collaboratively to first share their insights with one another and then to the larger class or they focused on a particular reading and then reported out to the class that learning as an expert group. They also supported one another on each of the major class writing assignments through the brainstorming process and then gave peer review feedback on drafts of their three major writing assignments. These groups met and worked together 22 times throughout the course.

Data Collection

To ensure triangulation (Yin, 2017), I collected multiple kinds of data during the study, which I describe below.

Demographics Surveys

At the onset of the study and class, I distributed a brief online demographics survey (see Appendix C) providing self-reported data to provide information about each of the participants including age, gender, ethnicity, additional languages and degree titles. The survey was administered using Qualtrics (Qualtrics, Provo, UT), an online survey collection platform. The survey took participants about five minutes to complete.

Pre & Post Study Self-Efficacy Survey

I created my own self-efficacy survey focused on writing and teaching writing (see Appendix D) because many writing self-efficacy tools focus primarily on grammatical structures in writing (Pajares, Johnson, & Usher, 2007) and teaching self-efficacy tools focus on classroom management and support of students (Holzberger, Philipp, & Kunter, 2013). Starting with the research questions I designed 10 questions that asked about the participant's confidence level to write a successful paper with clear structure and organization. It also asked how confident they were with their writing process, and how well they engaged their audience as well as how much pleasure they derived from writing, concluding with a question about their confidence to develop a creative and meaningful piece of writing. I took the same ten questions and reworded them slightly to access their confidence to teach these exact same skills, creating a total of 20 questions. This survey was also administered online through Qualtrics and used a sliding scale where participants could move their self-efficacy scores anywhere between 1 “not at all confident” to 100 “completely confident.” The survey took participants 5 to 20 minutes to complete.

Using self-efficacy surveys allowed me as a researcher to ascertain if participation in the writing groups made any quantifiable impact on the PST’s beliefs about their own abilities to write and teach writing (Pajares, 2007). The tool measured the participant’s self-reported beliefs about their own writing and ability to teach writing before and after the implementation of this writing group *(*Bandura & Wessels, 1997). These surveys were identical pre and post to understand any change in participant’s beliefs about their own

writing and teaching of writing after participating in peer writing communities for a semester in their writing methods course.

Pre & Post Writing Survey

The pre and post writing survey (see Appendix E) asked a series of questions both before and after the study to allow participants to highlight what supported or hindered their growth as writers and as teachers of writing. I created these questions based on the research questions. By responding to questions like 1) What do you think about your writing abilities? And 2) How do you feel about your ability to teach writing?, participants were able to expand on their self-efficacy surveys to describe in more detail how they felt about their abilities to write and teach writing. Questions like: 1) What activities, assignments, workshops, etc. have supported your growth as a writer/teacher of writing? And 2) How were each of these helpful to you as a writer/ teacher of writing?, helped participants describe what moments, relationships, conversations, and activities participants found meaningful to their growth as a writer and as teachers of writing.

Writing Samples

I collected all the course writings except for the class opening and closing journals. I did not include the journal writing as part of my study intentionally. I wanted this writing to serve as a venue for students to document their thinking and to choose to share these or not with their peers in class.

Collaborative Classroom Writing. I frequently asked the writing groups in class to produce collaboratively constructed products. These took the form of lists, "how-to"

manuals, visual representations of issues, brainstorming activities, rubric evaluations, and written conversations about issues in English Education. I collected all of these writings or took pictures of them if they were completed on the whiteboards. These co-constructed works represented the thinking and discussions that the groups did based on the course readings.

Major Course Writing Assignments. I collected each of the three major course assignments. This includes the Multimodal Literacy Narrative, the Theory Infographic, and the Future Classroom Essay. These assignments are described in more detail in the above section on Instructional Design. These assignments provided insight into the writing histories of the participants and their thinking about teaching in their future classrooms. Their final products also served as a representation of some of the work they did within their writing communities because their writing communities supported their writing process with brainstorming, outlining, and revision.

Drafts with Peer Feedback. Students also submitted their rough drafts of the three major writing assignment with the feedback they received from their peers from their writing communities. I also collected their written brainstorming activities such as a timeline of their individual writing development, and an infographic elements brainstorm. These activities were used prior to writing with their writing communities. Having the drafts, brainstorms and peer feedback shed light on the conversation and activities that occurred in each writing community, but it also highlighted the progress each individual student made in their writing based on the support of their writing communities. Both

their final products and their drafts with peer feedback helped me trace preservice ELA teacher's progression as a writer and their thinking about themselves as writing teachers.

Reflections. For each major course assignment, there were two reflections (see Appendix F). The first reflection was given after the groups' peer review session. It asked 1) What was most helpful to you as a writer today in your group meeting? Why? 2) What was not helpful to you as a writer today in your group meeting? Why?, and 3) What changes are you going to make based on the writing group meeting today? The second reflection was given after they completed the final draft and handed it in. This reflection asked 1) Highlight one passage from your essay that was impacted by your writing community. In a paragraph describe how and why you made these changes and what feedback informed these changes. 2) What did you learn about writing from working on this assignment?, and 3) What did you learn about teaching writing from working on this assignment? I collected these reflections to understand the inner-working of the writing groups and to help identify which moments, relationships, conversations, and activities participants found useful or harmful to their growth as writers and as teachers of writing. The questions were created based on the research questions to isolate and help participants pinpoint what aspect of their writing community work was helpful and what was a hindrance to their thinking about themselves as writers and as teachers of writing.

Post Study Interviews (1 hour each/ 5 participants)

I conducted one on one open-ended interviews with five of the students who had agreed to participate in the study after completion of the course and after I had posted

grades for the semester. Two interviews took place in the classroom where we regularly met and three took place in my office on campus. Each interview took under an hour and while I interviewed each of the five students, I also took notes by hand to document my initial reactions, body language, and any other thoughts I had about the ELA preservice teachers' responses (Merriam, 1998, p. 87). I recorded the interviews on my phone using the voice memo app Voice Recorder (Tapmedia, 2017). After completing all of the interviews, I used the Voice Recorder mobile app to convert the speech to text. This helped cut down on the transcription time, but one constraint was I still had to listen to the audio and clarify any confusing portions and add punctuation as well as note who was speaking when and any pauses. I transcribed each interview to reflect the specific wording of each participant, including non-words like hums and other vocal inflections. The interview lengths ranged from 11 to 30 minutes and transcription of each took me about two hours per 10-minute segment. The transcriptions include both my questions as the interviewer and the responses of each of the interviewees. It took me a week to complete all the transcription work. The transcription work served as my first close reading of the data.

After completing the transcriptions, I listened to the recordings another time to note moments of inflection, pauses or emphasis I had missed, to add these using italics, all caps and parenthetical references within the interviews. I also added in any notes from the handwritten notes I had taken during the interviews that provided insight into how participants viewed their experiences of taking part in a peer writing group (Yin, 1994, p.

84; Shank, 2006). I designed the interview protocol based on the research questions I asked participants to think about their writing and teaching of writing growth throughout the semester. While I followed the interview protocol, the interviews remained semi-structured (Merriam, 1998, p. 73; Tracy, 2012, p. 139), which allowed me to delve deeper into questions or aspects of their experience that seemed fruitful to their growth as writers and as teachers of writing. For example, during the interview with Kyle, he commented how everyone in his writing community was experiencing things together so to pull out more details about this I asked: Did you like that you were working with people who are kind of experiencing the same writing transitions? This provides a space for him to dig in more to why this was important to him.

Table 3.3

Interview Protocol

1. How would you describe your writing community this semester in ENG 480?
2. What aspects of your writing community did you find useful?
3. What were the challenges of working in your writing community?
4. How did your writing community impact your beliefs about your ability to write?
5. How did your writing community impact your beliefs about your ability to teach writing?
6. How did your work in your writing community impact your writing itself?
7. How did your work in your writing community impact your teaching of writing?
8. You discussed _____ a great deal in your reflections and surveys. What experiences from the writing communities played a role in this?
9. Your confidence in _____ went up/down after participating in the writing community. What aspects of the writing community do you believe played a role in this shift?

10. You often point to _____ as supporting/hindering your growth as a writer/teacher of writing. How do you think this supported/hindered your growth?

Data Analysis

After data collection, I began my data analysis. I organized the qualitative data by type and then began my analysis in the order listed below which follows the order of their collection:

1. Pre-study writing survey
2. Multimodal literacy narrative peer review reflection
3. Multimodal literacy narrative assignment reflection
4. Infographic peer review reflection
5. Infographic assignment reflection
6. Future classroom peer review reflection
7. Future classroom assignment reflection
8. Post-study writing survey
9. Interview transcript (5 participants)

The four phases of qualitative data analysis are outlined below. These steps supported my organization, categorization, and assembly of the data into hierarchical themes for content analysis (Krippendorf, 2013). After completing data analysis, I then attended to the quantitative data as a means of paradigmatic corroboration (Creswell & Clark, 2018). The rest of this chapter describes my qualitative and quantitative analysis.

First Cycle Coding

I began my initial coding cycle by reading through each of the data types in chronological order. For each data type, I created a separate coding list (see Table 3.4). For example, I started with the pre-writing survey. I developed 60 first cycle codes for this data type including things like "needs work on grammar", "depends on the type of writing" and "reading peers writing." I created anywhere between three to twelve first cycle codes depending on the kind of data type per question (Saldana, 2016, p. 73). Many of the codes are words directly from the participants called "in vivo" codes (Saldana, 2016, p. 105-110). For example, during the interview, I created a code called "we were on a spectrum" taken directly from a participant sharing how his group members had different writing styles. Other codes were descriptive codes (p. 102-105), such as "confidence levels," or conceptual codes (p. 119-124) like "teacher identity development." I created all of these codes to identify a potential theme or quality that might warrant further exploration. Every code was constructed to open up the possibility of insight that the data might have to offer. This means I coded everything in this first read through indiscriminately, trying to read objectively, with my research questions in mind, but trying not to narrow or eliminate possibilities for interpretation. This "open coding" (Charmaz, 2014) allowed me to break down the data into discrete parts and closely examine and compare these parts for similarities and differences (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 102). This loosely defined coding produced from 18 codes for the infographic assignment to 60 codes for the pre-study survey with a total of 233 codes for the corpus.

Table 3.4

Coding Cycles

Data Type	First Cycle Codes	Second Cycle Codes	Third Cycle Codes
Pre-Study Writing Survey	60	27	5
Multimodal Reflections	35	16	6
Infographic Reflections	18	11	6
Future Classroom Reflections	39	14	4
Post-Study Writing Survey	36	19	4
Interviews	45	22	6
TOTAL	**233**	**109**	**31**

Second Cycle Coding

In my second round of coding, I used the frequency counts of the first cycle codes (Krippendorf, 2013, p. 189). I determined what codes were most frequently referred to by the participants for each individual question. I also lumped several questions together in this second cycle of coding because the responses were closely aligned (Saldana, 2016). For example, in the pre and post-study surveys, question 11 and 12 asked "What activities, assignments, workshops, etc. have hindered your growth as a teacher of writing?" And "How did these things negatively impact you as a teacher of writing?" Because these questions were directly related I combined their codes. I also during this phase collapsed several codes into a single more inclusive code that encompassed or subsumed two or three codes into one larger code (Saldana, 2016). Specifically, in the

pre-study survey data I subsumed three codes “hard to teach writing,” “teachers forget their students are new writers” and “students need to have multiple drafts” into “understanding students’ perspectives.” This second iteration of coding categorized the initial codes to more narrowly define what the data was presenting (Saldana, 2016, p. 220). This second cycle coding narrowed down the codes from 233 to 109 codes.

Third Cycle Coding

To begin the third cycle of coding, I looked across all the questions for each data type to find common codes and began narrowing the codes into more concise recurring themes (Saldana, 2016, p. 234-239) that could be seen within each data type. For example, I narrowed down several codes about how participants saw their communities building to the single code “community building” and I brought together several codes about “differences in writing styles and perspectives” into that single code. Using this focused coding allowed me to figure out what common themes were occurring for each data type (Saldana, 2016, p. 239-244). To increase my confidence in the reliability of these codes I re-read and re-coded the corpus with these new codes while also determining how many different participants utilized each code (Krippendorf, 2013, p. 184). If the code was only present in one or two of the participants, it was not included in the final codes for this cycle. Through this process, I narrowed the codes into four to six major themes for each type of data. You can see the narrowing effect of the first three coding cycles above (see Table 3.4).

Fourth Cycle Coding

In the final coding cycle, I looked across the corpus and made connections among each data type to identify major themes that were consistently discussed (Saldana, 2016). I broke these codes into the two major research questions with the first focusing on 1) What happens when preservice ELA teachers take part in classroom-based peer writing communities within a writing methods course? and (2) In what ways do classroom-based peer writing communities provide support for preservice ELA teachers writing practices and plans for becoming teachers of writing? (see Table 3.5). For the first questions, I focused the coding on what activities participants pointed to most frequently as affecting their thinking about being a writer and a teacher of writing. For the second question, I focused more on what the learned or took away from their experiences of being their writing communities.

To reaffirm and ensure I had not missed anything major, I read the corpus again focusing on the two questions and four major themes within each. I identified when these themes were mentioned and its connection or absence to other factors. For example, when participants were discussing the theme of community building, they most frequently were referring to a specific person, either from their writing community or larger community who impacted them, often referring to this person as meaningful in their writing or teaching development. I also ensured that these themes were seen across participants and data types and were not isolated to just one individual or group or to one particular data type. Also, during this phase, I pulled representative quotes that clearly exemplified these themes and subcategories that made salient the theme it was

representing. During this phase, I noticed many connections between the major themes and used a strategy to help make those connections more visible. Using a Venn diagram, I graphed three of the major themes, leaving out the one negative theme of absenteeism, and created connections between the themes (Saldana, 2016, p. 275-276).

Table 3.5

Fourth Cycle Codes

Research Question #1	**Research Question #2**
What happens when preservice ELA teachers take part in classroom-based peer writing communities within a writing methods course?	In what ways do classroom-based peer writing communities provide support for preservice ELA teachers writing practices and plans for becoming teachers of writing?
Peer Review - More than Grammar Support - Using Peer Review in Future - Seeing Others Writing Techniques	*Professional Writing Teacher Identity* - Defining Writing Teacher - Building Confidence as Writing Teachers - Students Needs - Giving Writing Feedback
Discussion - Trying Out Creative Teaching Ideas - Built Confidence to Teach Writing	*Celebrating Differences* - Rigid Writing Structures - Providing Choice - Honoring Student Voices
Reflection - Reflections Rewards - Reflection as a Writing Tool	*Importance of Community* - Additional Audience - Group Cohesion - Small Groups Impact on Larger Classroom
Mini Group Projects and Presentations - Different Approached to Teaching Writing - Expanding Notions of Writing	*Absenteeism/Disengagement* - One Members Absent Effects Group - Multiple Members Absences

Quantitative Data Analysis

Using a mixed method approach I corroborated the findings between both the qualitative and quantitative data types in order to have greater confidence in the findings of this research (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004, p. 19). During the data analysis of the quantitative data, I used simple descriptive statistics calculated using Excel data analytics tools. After inputting the data and finding the average scores for each participant I conducted a pairwise t-test between the pre and post self-efficacy scales for both their self-efficacy as writers and as teachers of writing. Using a scatter plot I charted the pre versus post scores to identify any outliers. This analysis helped me connect the findings to communities of practice (Wenger, 1998, 2009) and make claims about the work these groups did and the impact that work had on the beliefs of the preservice teachers.

Connecting Back to the Research Questions & Theory

Utilizing Wenger's (1998, 2009) concept of communities of practice this study dug into the work of a small writing community of preservice teachers through an activity theory lens (Russell, 1997; Engeström, 1999). Focusing on the activities at play in these groups allowed me as a researcher to hone in on the precise moments, relationships, conversations, and activities of the writing groups to figure out what really happens when preservice ELA teachers take part in classroom-based peer writing communities within a writing methods course? This being the first research question of the study. The design of this study supports the discovery of these moments or activities as discussed through a variety of participant-reported data types as well as semi-structured interviews with five

of the participants, which included one participant from each of the five writing communities. The data also allowed me to discover how these particular activities influenced the participants as they worked in their communities of practice, extending our understanding of what communities of practice offer preservice teachers of writing.

Each element of the design focused on the research questions and discovering what happened in small writing communities in a preservice ELA writing methods course. The questions asked in all the surveys, reflections and interviews were designed to address each of the research questions at least twice and by at least three data types (see Table 3.6).

Table 3.6

Data Connections to Research Questions

Research Question	**Data Type**	**Question #'s**
What aspects of classroom-based peer writing communities do preservice ELA teachers find useful and not useful to their growth as writers?	Pre & Post Study Writing Survey	2-6
	Pre & Post Self-Efficacy Survey	
	Peer Review Reflection	1-3
	Assignment Reflection	1-2
	Interviews	1-10
What aspects of classroom-based peer writing communities do preservice ELA teachers find useful and not useful to their growth as teachers of writing?	Pre & Post Study Writing Survey	8-12
	Pre & Post Self-Efficacy Survey	
	Peer Review Reflection	
	Assignment Reflection	2-3

	Interviews	1-10
In what ways does participation in classroom-based peer writing communities support or hinder preservice ELA teacher's perception of themselves as writers?	Pre & Post Study Writing Survey	1-6
	Pre & Post Self-Efficacy Survey	1-10
	Peer Review Reflection	
	Assignment Reflection	
	Interviews	4
In what ways does participation in classroom-based peer writing communities support or hinder preservice ELA teachers' perception of themselves as writing teachers?	Pre & Post Study Writing Survey	7-12
	Pre & Post Self-Efficacy Survey	11-20
	Peer Review Reflection	
	Assignment Reflection	
	Interviews	5
What obstacles do preservice ELA teachers face while participating in classroom-based peer writing communities?	Pre & Post Study Writing Survey	2, 5, 6, 8, 11, 12
	Pre & Post Self-Efficacy Survey	
	Peer Review Reflection	2
	Assignment Reflection	
	Interviews	3, 8-10

Using a variety of data types allowed for triangulation of data and supported the validity of the findings (Creswell, 2014, 201). Additionally, having corroborative quantitative data further validates the findings set forth in the next chapter. Through all this data collection and then and its analysis I was able to make several claims supported by multiple participants and across a myriad of data types.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the findings for this study, which emerged through my systematic analysis of the data. I first share the qualitative findings and then the quantitative findings. The qualitative findings focus on the common themes found in the data connected to the shifts ELA preservice teachers noted in their thinking about writing and about becoming secondary ELA teachers of writing during and after taking part in the classroom-based peer writing communities. The first three themes that emerged from my data demonstrate how the writing communities supported ELA preservice teachers' perceptions of themselves as writing teachers, how they understand their role in honoring differences in writing practices and forms of writing, and what they think the value of community is in teaching writing. The fourth theme, which emerged from my data analysis was the issue of peer absenteeism, which was the one obstacle ELA preservice teachers faced as they participated in the small writing communities. I then share the four specific activities noted by the participants as integral to their growth and conclude by providing the quantitative data as corroborative evidence to the qualitative data findings. This is the outline for the qualitative and quantitative sections of this chapter.

1. Developing a Professional Identity as Writing Teachers
    a. Trying on What it Means to Be a Writing Teacher
    b. Building Confidence as Writing Teachers
    c. Considering the Needs of Students

    d. Providing Feedback on Writing

2. Celebrating Unique Differences in Student Writing
    a. Avoiding Rigid Writing Structures
    b. Providing Choice in Writing
    c. Honoring Student Voices in Writing
3. Valuing Community in the Teaching of Writing
    a. Providing an Additional Audience
    b. Supporting Better Writing Through Group Cohesion
    c. Improving the Larger Classroom Community Through Smaller Groups
4. Absenteeism Within the Writing Communities
5. Specific Relevant Activities
    a. Peer Review
    b. Discussion
    c. Reflection
    d. Mini Group Projects and Presentations
6. Quantitative Data Findings
    a. Self-Efficacy as Writers
    b. Self- Efficacy as Teachers of Writing

Developing a Professional Identity as a Writing Teacher

Through my systematic analysis of the data analysis, including writing surveys, written reflection, class writing assignments, and interviews, I discovered different ways the ELA preservice teachers were beginning to position themselves differently as writers and as teachers of writing. Through work in peer writing communities throughout the semester, participants were recasting themselves as English teachers instead of students and as writers who were also becoming teachers of writing. The data uncovered how the ELA preservice teachers were beginning to (1) try on what it means to be a writing teacher (2) build their confidence as ELA writing teachers, (3) identify with and consider the needs of their students, and (4) contemplate how to provide feedback to students on writing. I share more details about each of these findings below.

Trying on What it Means to Be a Writing Teacher

As the ELA preservice teachers participated in the classroom-based peer writing groups, they described "taking on" or "trying out" their future role as ELA teachers. They enacted this shift in identify through peer writing group discussions and writing, which I had designed to invite students to think about and plan for their future work as secondary writing teachers. The data revealed how the writing groups fueled the participant's confidence and excitement about becoming ELA teachers, and helped them imagine many of the challenges and rewards of becoming a writing teacher.

Three participants shared how the work in writing communities made them excited about becoming ELA teachers and, more specifically, teachers of writing. For example, Kafi shared:

> Working as a group or team has given me many skills and made me passionate about teaching writing. For example, helping each other and improving our work together has helped. I feel excited because I'm going to introduce a culture of writing in my English classroom. This will help me teach easily in the future because I am willing to support English education in Kuwait.

Kafi believed the support he received and gave his group members in peer review helped him realize he had the capacity to truly become a writing teacher who is excited to share writing with his students. He looked forward to returning to Kuwait to share this passion with his future students. David similarly noted how his writing community encouraged him to view teaching as enjoyable, "What that work did was say to me 'Okay maybe I'm on the right track.' It's brought me back to, 'Maybe I can enjoy this and do all these things.'" David found he felt more hopeful that he offered more as a teacher than he had originally imagined because of the discussions and writing projects with his group. They helped him feel like he had something meaningful to offer students, and he would enjoy the work of teaching writing.

Four ELA preservice teachers in their post writing surveys and interviews shared how the opportunity to reflect and discuss their future teaching with one another helped them realize the challenges and rewards of becoming an ELA teacher. For example, Fabian, perhaps because he saw teaching as a "back-up plan" from the beginning of the course, used his time with his writing group to wrap his head around what becoming a teacher entails. He detailed what he took away from his experiences in writing communities in his writing reflection:

> My writing group taught me the absolute importance of the job. Most teachers in my writing career saw their job as just a job. It's not, it is a vocation! You need to

> not only be passionate about the art of writing, but you need to enjoy all forms of writing. My group made teaching seem like a lot of fun, I just never thought of it as fun before. Being with other students who are on fire for teaching has definitely changed my perspective. Look at what great minds we have.

Fabian shared his new understanding of his role as a writing teacher and it was broader than he originally constructed. He also felt his group members shared how fun and rewarding teaching could be for him. Their work together also highlighted for Fabian the challenges of being a writing teacher:

> I also learned that teaching is going to be exhausting! Not only will it be hard, but it made me realize how rewarding it's going to be. Honestly, I will have a chance to change a child's life, maybe hundreds! I could see myself really enjoying what I'm doing. I learned that when teaching I'm going to have to overcome a lot of difficulties. Whether it's with the district, parents, students, or books we don't want to teach! I am going to have to think of so many different ways to creatively fix those issues.

Fabian's interview revealed how his participation within the peer writing community altered his thinking about the challenges and rewards of ELA teaching. He shared how his peers helped him realize the many choices he would have to make and the ingenuity he would need to support students as they became writers. He returned to the rewards of being a teacher by noting the impact he could have on students' lives. In the end, he proclaimed in his post study writing survey:

> My ability to teach writing has transcended! I did not even think about teaching writing before this year. I am not only inspired but I think I really found something I could be impactful with. I am excited to one day teach and see my work go out into the world.

Fabian's enthusiasm about being an ELA teacher grew through the interactions he had with his writing community. It appeared teaching was no longer a "back-up plan" for Fabian, but a career goal.

The classroom-based peer writing communities helped the preservice ELA teachers contemplate what it means to become a writing teacher. They were able to "try on" or imagine their future work as writing teachers and their writing groups helped them imagine the various challenges and rewards of being a writing teacher.

Building Confidence as ELA Writing Teachers

The data revealed that participation in the peer writing groups also supported the ELA preservice teachers' confidence about teaching secondary writing. The activities the participants took part in as part of the writing groups such as, writing, collaborating, discussing, and reflecting served as a support for the students within a transitional space of becoming ELA teachers. My analysis of data revealed three things about how the writing groups supported the ELA preservice teachers' confidence. Participants noted that participation in the peer groups grew their confidence to teach writing, validated their thinking about teaching, and revealed that learning to teach writing was a process that would not end when they entered the classroom.

All the participants reported the writing communities empowered them and made them feel more confidence to teach writing. For example, in her post-study writing survey, Carly proclaimed:

> I would say that this semester, my peers in this class have helped me a lot in growing as a teacher of writing because of all the discussions and sharing we did

> in class. What has helped me the most as a teacher of writing was the in class discussions and personal sharing that was done in class. Hearing what my peers think like as a teacher of writing helped me open my eyes more as a teacher of writing. Hearing how everyone else thinks and writes allowed me to understand how writing works not only as an individual student but as a teacher of many different writers. I feel more ready to teach for sure.

Carly notes here how the peer writing group work, especially the discussions and peer review, boosted her confidence to teach writing. Fabian provided a more detailed example of how his group supported his confidence to teach writing:

> When I would share something that I would think of as creative in the classroom, for example, I would ask "Hey do think this would work out if we could take walks randomly throughout the day?" They were like, "Yeah that's a great idea. I didn't think of that." I wanted that outside of the box kind of thinking, and my group let me do that and even encouraged it. That gave me confidence because they're like "oh I didn't think about that." I feel I am more confident to do so because of my group.

Fabian knew he wanted honest feedback from his group and receiving encouragement from his peers only strengthened his confidence. The conversations with his group made him take teaching seriously as a career choice. Both Fabian and Kyle felt empowered by their work in the writing communities.

Other participants believed the peer writing groups validated their beliefs about teaching and, in turn, increased their confidence to teach writing. For Tiana, group discussions helped her writing, and impacted her thinking about teaching writing. She believed her ideas were validated by the discussions she had about teaching writing with both her small group and the larger class:

> I feel confident now to teach writing. I have learned AMAZING tools that I know I will use successfully in teaching. I have gotten to bounce ideas off my group members and other classmates and those who are really within the field.

Being in conversation with those who are also on a pathway toward becoming teachers helped Tiana build her confidence in teaching and allowed her to explore her thinking more freely. David also felt validated by the conversations he shared with his writing group. He explained in the interview what he believed his writing group offered him:

> It's like I'm blind and I'm feeling around in the dark for what works and what doesn't work but with this class, it let me kind of exercise that a little bit. We'd bring work and ideas in and we'd discuss with each other, and bounce shit off each other. What that did was that made me more confident in my writing and thinking about teaching.

David enjoyed the opportunity to think through the work of becoming an ELA teacher. Thinking through and discussing his future practice offered a chance to contemplate how he might run his future ELA classroom. Tiana and David both shared how they found their participation in the peer writing groups validating as writers and as future teachers of secondary writing students.

Three participants reported that their writing and teaching of writing confidence increased but they also shared their growing awareness of how much they still had to learn about teaching writing. For example, Hugh shared:

> I am still uncertain, but I am much more confident than I was before. I have some idea of how I want to represent writing in my classroom, and a host of strategies that I can employ to increase student engagement and growth in writing. I hope to learn even more.

Hugh reported how his writing groups activities, discussions, and reflections supported his confidence to be a writing teaching in a secondary classroom. Likewise, Alaina

expressed how, as a fourth-year college student, she was almost at the end of her schooling and about to start her career as an ELA teacher, but she was not done learning:

> I am confident in my ability to teach writing now. It will for sure be a learning process, but I think I will be able to succeed as a teacher and rely on my students and staff to become a better writing teacher. I am always learning and growing. There is still a lot for me to learn but I think I will get there eventually!

Similarly, Alaina believed her writing group gave her a good start to her thinking and learning about becoming an ELA teacher, but there was still more out there for her to learn. She recognized that building a community of support in her future school with students and staff would offer her a chance to learn and grow even more as a teacher. Pam also shared Hugh and Alaina's sentiments:

> I have found a lot of support from my fellow classmates who are studying English education. I think that it helped show me that teachers are always learning new techniques for their practice, no matter how many years someone has had in the classroom.

Pam recognized the role her peers played in her thinking as she worked with them in her writing community. She also acknowledged there was much to discover about the art of teaching writing at the secondary level.

The preservice ELA teachers reported their confidence to teach writing increased as a direct result of their engagement in small peer writing communities. They were validated by their peers in their thinking about teaching. They also discovered that learning to teach writing was a process that would not end when they entered the classroom from their work in the writing communities. The ELA preservice teachers

reported the writing communities improved their confidence to teach writing and in turn this helped them develop their identities as writing teachers.

Considering the Needs of Students

The data revealed how ELA preservice teachers found writing groups helped them contemplate the demands of their future secondary students as they discussed, reflected and provided feedback on one another's writing. The ELA preservice teachers shared the ways in which the work they did as writers within the peer writing groups supported their continued understanding of what their future students would need as writers. The data revealed how writing groups helped ELA preservice teachers consider where students might be in their writing pathways and the importance of space and time to write for growing writers.

The participants described how the peer group writing activities afforded them opportunities to understand how everyone is on a writing journey or pathway and how everyone faces different kinds of challenges and rewards as growing writers. After hearing what other peers in her group struggled with in their own writing, Krista realized every writer is different which means every student that comes to her class will be different. Listening to her peers struggles opened her eyes:

> It was nice to hear in discussions about what people struggle with and why they struggle with it. It is something to focus in on and to catch it with students. Like I know I'm not good at testing, but I can explain things better in writing, so I know from a personal standpoint that's how I passed tests. Hearing my groups struggles made me more aware of other people’s struggles.

Gaining awareness of other people's struggles as writers made Krista more open to supporting the needs of students in her future classroom. Seeing her group members struggle with the organization in their writing helped her awareness about how she might help students in similar situations. Fabian shared how seeing his peers past writing lives through reading their Multimodal Literacy Narrative made him think about what writing teachers often forget:

> I think teachers often forget that their students are completely new to this. Teachers often forget that their students are LEARNING this task. To put into perspective, we have years of experience writing. Some teachers may have even been published and they are working with students who can barely put a sentence together. So, I feel I would do well as a writing teacher because I understand writing is a process and so is teaching writing.

Fabian recognized teachers sometimes become so trapped in their own literacy practices they forget students are years behind them on a variety of other pathways or that they could be on completely different pathways of their own. He felt that by recognizing these things, he would have an advantage as a writing teacher because he would help students tap into their own writing pathways and find their writing process. Both Krista and Fabian found their writing groups helped them consider where students might be in their varied writing pathways and how they might address some of their students' struggles as writers.

The writing groups shared multiple drafts of their three major writing assignments and even worked collaboratively to brainstorm and provide feedback on one another's writing. Four of the ELA preservice teachers shared how the peer review work within the peer writing groups was helpful in providing an awareness of how environment is a factor

in supporting practicing writers in the ELA classroom. David reported that he worked with two very different writers within his peer writing group. He learned how each person's process and product is different and, as a future writing teacher, he must provide a comfortable space for students to explore their individual writing practices:

> You have to really respect voice which is something that you can't really teach but you have to let kids sit. You must let kids get in a spot where they can find themselves in the writing. Which is hard as hell but it's what I've gleaned. It's just about making them [students] comfortable and making a safe environment.

Sheila also noted how important it would be to offer students an encouraging environment to write without the pressure to write a perfect draft on the first try:

> I learned to be sure and encourage my students writing. To let them start with a crappy first draft and then give them a few pointers to help them unpack what it is that they want to say or share. I will teach my students to write down any and every idea that comes to their mind and then sift through and organize them later.

Sheila believed the mini group writing projects, the opening journals, the group work on each major writing assignment, helped her understand the value of space and time for writing. She started making plans about how she might encourage drafting in her future classroom and she detailed this in her Future Classroom Essay.

The small peer writing groups helped these ELA preservice teachers contemplate the needs of their future students. The peer group work encouraged them to consider where students might be in their writing pathways and how, as ELA teachers, they might need to address some of their students' struggles as writers. Writing groups also helped ELA preservice teachers contemplate the importance of space and time for their students to think and write with little pressure to produce a final product immediately. By

considering the needs of their students ELA preservice teachers were working on developing their identities as writing teachers.

Providing Constructive Feedback on Writing

The data revealed how the ELA preservice teachers were anxious about providing constructive and quality feedback on their future students' writing. This was the single most fretted over teaching topic ELA preservice teachers shared in their writing surveys, reflections, and in the interviews. The data revealed ELA preservice teachers' concerns about hurting their students' feelings through their written feedback and how they hoped to provide clear and meaningful feedback to support their students' writing.

For ten participants, anxiety about giving feedback revolved around the emotional reactions of students. Their major concern was how students would respond to feedback. For David, giving feedback to his group was a practice run in giving students feedback:

> It reality checked me because it's hard to tell someone that what they're doing isn't the best. It's a lot harder than I thought it would be, especially with your peers. Obviously, the dynamics are going to be a lot different when you're talking to students, but as a person it made me realize I'm kind of a people pleaser and I don't want to make people upset, but as a teacher it made me realize that I'm gonna have a really hard time failing students.

The fear of failing students, David went on to explain, prevents many teachers from giving honest feedback. David wanted to ensure he was prepared to give honest feedback to his students and worked through this with his group during a discussion on how a teacher might go about having this type of difficult conversation with a student. Fabian had similar worries. He practiced being frank with his group during the peer feedback about what was working in their writing and what could still use some work:

> I think one of the challenges is you definitely are afraid to hurt somebody else's feelings. Being able to give adequate advice without sounding mean or being mean or condescending. Even though it was a challenge it was a really good skill for all of us to learn because we're going to have a student one day that's going to be really sensitive and they will not want to hear us talk to them that way.

Fabian found insight into how difficult it will be to give critical feedback by contemplating his role as a teacher during his peer review. Sheila also utilized her writing groups peer feedback sessions as an experiment in how she might give negative feedback.

> The writing groups and being in the class also taught me how to be empathetic versus sympathetic… I also have to remember that it's not my paper, I can't write it for the person. I worry about other people's feelings which is good and bad at times, but I didn't want to crush him [Roger]. I did tell him "Hey you have a good start. You have a good paper. It is good information." I'm just glad that he took it in a positive way because the point of that is I know that it's it is hard to critique someone's work when you don't want to hurt their feelings.

Although it was difficult for Sheila to be honest and kind in her feedback, she was hopeful that she found a strategy for giving criticism on her future students' writing. More than half the ELA preservice teachers believed the groups offered a great opportunity for them to practice giving feedback and thinking through how they effectively could give feedback without hurting students' feelings.

ELA preservice teachers also noted how practicing giving written feedback on writing with their peer writing groups provided insight into how well their written feedback was received and what was clear or not in their feedback. Kyle discussed in his interview how much he actually took away from the opportunity to receive feedback on the quality of the feedback he had provided his group members:

> It made me realize I need to get a little bit better at how I phrase what I think people should do because sometimes they would ask if I could explain it better.

> When I would give feedback they would say, “What do you mean by this?” and I would explain, and they would be like “OK I get it now” but just going through their writing initially and writing what I was thinking it definitely improved my realization that I need to write my feedback more clearly at first.

Kyle learned his own written feedback was vague and unclear, which he realized he needed to improve if his students were to gain anything from his written feedback. He went on later to explain how he took this learning into his internship classroom:

> I was able to even take some of those lessons into my internship when I was giving students their feedback. I was thinking well if Alaina and Carly didn't understand what I was saying then these guys [students] definitely wouldn't understand what I was saying because these guys aren't teachers. It definitely made it so that I was more specific with my feedback.

Kyle reported he was proud he learned to clarify and refine his feedback for students. He saw how the work in his writing group translated directly into his teaching practice in real time. Kyle believed that receiving constructive criticism on his written feedback was essential to his growth as a teacher of writing. He was grateful he had an opportunity to hear from his peers what was helpful in his written feedback and what was not clear.

ELA preservice teachers utilized peer feedback during the course not only as writers but as teachers of writing as they tried on and took up their new understanding of their role as writing teachers. They imagined and planned how they would provide students constructive feedback in meaningful ways to support their students’ writing. Peer review also offered ELA preservice teachers’ opportunities to receive feedback on the quality or effectiveness of their written feedback. This gave them an opportunity to understand how their written feedback was understood by others, so they could clarify their written responses to writing for future students. ELA preservice teachers developed

their identities as writing teachers by considering the way they would give feedback in the future.

The findings of this study revealed ELA preservice teachers developed their professional identities as writing teachers when they participated in small peer writing communities during their writing methods course. The writing groups fostered ELA preservice teachers' excitement about their future careers and helped them imagine what that work might look like as future ELA teachers. The social support and feedback within the peer writing groups helped fuel the ELA preservice teachers' confidence to teach writing, validated their thinking about teaching writing, and revealed that teaching writing is a craft they would need to refine for years to come. The ELA preservice teachers reported the writing groups helped them consider where students might be in their continuing writing pathways or writing journeys and the importance of providing space and time for students to write and explore writing as a process. The data also revealed ELA preservice teachers' concerns about not hurting students' feelings through written feedback and how they could provide clear and meaningful feedback to supports their students' writing. Overall, the peer writing groups provided a space for ELA preservice teachers to develop their professional identities by providing opportunities to write, collaborate, discuss, and reflect on their histories as writers alongside their peers.

Celebrating Unique Differences in Student Writing

My data analysis revealed that the work in the classroom-based peer writing communities helped ELA preservice teachers become more aware of differences in

individual's writing practices. After sharing their own writing processes and histories with their groups, they recognized how everyone may have their own approach or method for writing. They also discovered how individuals respond to writing prompts in a variety of ways. As the students tried on their new role as writing teachers, these realizations about individuality and differences in approaches to writing helped ELA preservice teachers to acknowledge and celebrate these differences. ELA preservice teachers reported that after the study they wanted to as writing teachers (1) avoid rigid writing structures, (2) provide choice to their students in writing, and (3) honor every student's different voice in their writing.

Avoiding Rigid Writing Structures

In the pre-writing survey, six participants brought up former assignments or frustrations with past writing assignments that were overly formulaic or rigid in structure and purpose. The students recalled how these written assignments were not interesting because they were asked to regurgitate what the teacher wanted to hear through their writing. The data revealed the ways ELA preservice teachers defined rigid writing structures and the way they perceived the impact of these structures on themselves as writers and for their future students.

Half of the study participants mentioned the role of rigid writing structures or formulaic writing in their growth as writers, but one student in mentioned them in almost every single data type. David had strong feelings about what he called "the rigid long

form essay" and discussed it time and again so I asked him about this in his interview. Here he explains what this "rigid long form essay" is exactly:

> It's when your teacher basically tries to get everyone in the class to write the exact same thing about the exact same thing. It's the way they're going to measure your success in class by how well you can emulate their ideas on a sheet of paper, which is the most big brother shit I can imagine. That's brainwashing. It's awful. It's lazy, because it's easy to grade and all that shit. It's easier to read the prompt. It's easier to measure learning that way, but you don't get anything from reaching word counts. I mean it's hard to classify what a rigid long-form essay is, but it's a strict page count, a rubric for how it's created, and a more specific than not prompt for what you need to write about. Those are the three horse from the apocalypse right there.

David believed "rigid long form essays" negatively impacted his own writing and was sure he would not do the same thing to his own future students.

Five of the other ELA preservice teachers shared how rigid writing forms negatively impacted their writing and their beliefs about their writing abilities. Xena shared what rigid writing structures did to her as a writer:

> They limit me, or box me into writing something and then I feel like I can't accomplish what I want or I'm not writing something well. These negatively impact me as a writer because I feel like I won't write well enough to accomplish what needs to be written. I get really into my head about that kind of stuff and I end up sitting for hours not knowing what to write. I usually just end up writing something I really don't care about and turning it in to forget about it.

Xena believed her disengagement with these assignments had a negative impact on her writing self-efficacy. She felt disappointed in herself and thought it was her own fault for not being a better writer. Fabian also shared his experiences with rigid writing structures:

> I think boring assignments where we don't need any creative thinking has definitely hindered my growth as a writer. Writing is a skill that has various forms and styles. When a teacher or professor makes you complete an assignment where

> you are forced into one way of thinking or seeing something from one point of view really affects the writer.

Fabian believed assignments that hemmed in the writer and looked for a singular response put pressure on writers and would have a negative effect on the writing they produced. All five ELA preservice teachers agreed writing assignments that offered no room or flexibility impacted the writing produced and their thinking about writing and being a writer.

Two ELA preservice teachers went even further to express how rigid writing structures influence students and their writing practices. David explained:

> They kill the love of writing. It neglects critical thinking. It teaches kids to think singularly, linearly and not creatively. It's almost like group think. It's a heard mentality type of thing and kids need to be going their own way and forming their own unique and valuable opinions about things. What these long form essays do is rips that from them. "Hey, fit into this cookie cutter thing. You know don't take the risks and succeed extraordinarily or fail extraordinarily, you just to have sit right in the center," and that stagnates. That causes all types of problems and it's up to us to stop it. They will make kids hate writing I think. It's awful.

Within his writing group, David recognized that writing was not about fitting in, it was about standing out. His group had different writing styles and they supported one another's differences and learned from one another's strengths. He wanted to ensure his future students would also have the opportunity to stand out, "succeed extraordinarily or fail extraordinarily." Kyle also shared at the end of the study how restrictive rigid writing assignments could be and how damaging they could be for students:

> When they're trying to fit into a very specific box you know this rigid structure box there's no room for anything else... I think that if they have to follow that kind of structure where they have to do it a very specific way, it becomes less of a natural thing and it becomes so much more robotic that it just becomes boring. It

> makes writing boring and I think it makes it weaker because if they are all following the same thing there's nothing that's surprising in it.

Kyle was excited his group encouraged him to step out of the rigid box. He enjoyed adding images to his text and then when his group encouraged him to add his humor and his authentic voice into his writing he felt more engaged than ever and his writing flourished:

> It felt really supportive that I could be very much myself. Sometimes I worry that I can't bring my humor into it as much, because sometimes my humor can be a little barbed. But they all appreciated that, so it was really nice because I could truly express what I was trying to say.

Kyle's felt his writing group helped give him the necessary nudge to push out of the rigid structure he had become accustomed to and supported him as he uncovered his authentic writing voice.

Through the peer reviews, discussions, reflections, and activities the ELA preservice teachers started to condemn these rigid essay structures and acknowledge how important it is to let students out of this box and even more to encourage them to find their voice in writing. They indicated several ways these structures prevented their growth as writers and voiced their concerns about what those rigid structures do to student writers. ELA preservice teachers believed avoiding these rigid writing structures helped them celebrate people's unique writing differences.

Providing Choice in Writing

For seven of the participants one answer to ensuring the rigid essay structure is broken up is to offer students choice in their writing invitations. The data revealed how

ELA preservice teachers after working collaboratively with their writing groups believed writing teachers should offer student assignments in a variety of modes and allow students to write about topics they are passionate about.

ELA preservice teachers started to think about how choice in genre, form, and topic mattered as they contemplated their role as future writing teachers within their writing groups. Sherry, Roger and Krista all hoped to engage students in their future classrooms by offering choice and encouraging various modes of writing. Sherry shared:

> I learned that by having students use various modes within their writing they can not only express themselves creatively but become more engaged with their assignment. And as a teacher of writing I could use multimodal examples to differentiate teaching.

She believed her future students would be more creative and engaged if she offered them choices and encouraged multimodal writing forms. Likewise, Roger talked about how offering his future students a variety of writing assignments he would provide them with opportunities to explore genres they might enjoy and value:

> I learned that some students will have easier times with some genres of writing, and harder times with others. This makes it important for writing teachers to make a variety of writing assignments. When students feel connected to writing, they are more likely to care about the assignment. Furthermore, when writing is personal students get insight into themselves.

From Roger's conversations with his writing group and experiences with reflecting on his writing past, he surmised his own writing was better when given a choice and he wanted to ensure his students had the same chance to experiment with different genres. Krista expressed similar sentiments. She hoped to help her students focus on their strengths as writers:

> Just offering different assignments on the same line and not just requiring it to be one set thing and allowing them to be more creative than anything else and show what they are good at and then focusing in on their flaws when you actually have the time rather than docking them because they're not doing good.

All three of these students hoped to create classrooms that support exploration through writing and encourage different written forms and genres.

ELA preservice teachers in the study believed offering choice in writing enhanced their own writing, but it was also important to offer these same opportunities of choice to students. The writing done during the course and the opportunity to share with their peers in writing communities highlighted for ELA preservice teachers the need to offer students assignments in a variety of modes and allow them to write about topics they are passionate about. ELA preservice teachers believed providing these opportunities to students would help them celebrate their future students unique writing differences.

Honoring Student Voices in Writing

ELA preservice teachers noticed how the peer writing groups, especially during the peer feedback sessions, allowed them to see the various voices in the writing of their peers. Seven ELA preservice teachers noted this experience of seeing these differences not only as peers but now as a future writing teacher was important. They claimed it taught them to honor their students' unique voices in writing as they did in their writing groups. The data revealed how ELA preservice teachers noticed and appreciated their writing groups different styles and approaches to writing, and the need for writing teachers to honor students voices in writing.

Kyle, Tiana, and Roger noticed through the process of reading their peer's drafts during peer feedback that everyone had a different writing style and understanding of how to address each writing assignment. Seeing their peers writing opened the door to additional writing possibilities they had not considered, and it broadened their writing repertoire. Kyle noted, "I think the most helpful thing was reading other papers, it gave me more ideas on what different writers do." Tiana also appreciated reading her peers' work to learn from their unique styles and choices. "Both members in my group had two completely different styles of writing. It was awesome to get two vastly different perspectives." Kyle and Tiana both believed reading their peers work in peer review only widened their understanding of all the choices a writer could make.

One participant went beyond noticing and appreciating his group member's writing differences. For David, reading and giving feedback to his writing group offered a chance for them to honor the voice of each person. He explained:

> Xena and Pam are both on like a spectrum sort of and I'm like down the center. Xena is full one way and Pam is full another way. I think completely differently from both of them. First of all, they are wicked smart in weird ways. Xena her papers...It is a mess, but it's beautiful. The writing is amazing. She's not great at grammar, but she fixes it by the time she turns it into you. Her creativity is off the charts and the way she expresses her vision is wicked. And then Pam is just a machine. She's smart as fuck and she knows exactly what she wants and she's willing to go for it. Xena is not really a very linear thinker she's all over the place. Pam is straight to the point she's a fighter and then I'm kind of somewhere in between. The way we write, because we did a lot of peer review, all that stuff comes out a lot in our papers. We were able to kind of use each other's strengths to hone that edge in our own work and be able to move it towards a product that we liked a lot more. It's hard to explain. It was shockingly good.

As David described each member of his group had a unique process and style, and he explained how they could “hone that edge” in one another’s writing and refine their unique voices and grow from their differences instead of dwelling on making everyone’s the same. He spoke later about how his group “honored” each other’s voices and how he planned to do this kind of supportive work in his own classroom:

> It made me realize that you have to honor other people's voices and the ways they write. My way isn't always the right way. So, fostering individual strengths rather than cookie cuttering your set of ideals and techniques on other people is important.

David felt he experienced a shift in his thinking about teaching writing, and this startled him. He expressed gratitude for having a space where he could learn and grow both as a writer and as a teacher of writing. Of all the participants in the study, David was the one who detailed how instrumental these writing groups were to his thinking about writing and teaching writing.

ELA preservice teachers were glad the writing groups provided them an opportunity to share their writing and see the work of their peers. As they tried on the role of being a writing teacher they discovered from reading their peers work that everyone has a unique style and approach to writing. This helped them realize that writing teachers must honor those differing students voices in their writing classrooms in order to celebrate people's unique writing styles and forms.

The writing groups work helped the ELA preservice teachers discover the importance of celebrating people's writing differences. As the ELA preservice teachers began to consider their future classrooms, this knowledge impacted their thinking about

the teaching of writing. They believed they understood how significant it is to have writing assignments that offer choice and differences in modes. In the end, what was most important to ELA preservice teachers was making sure they were open as teachers to a wide array of writing styles, so they could support the learning and growth of their future student writers.

Valuing Community in the Teaching of Writing

Through the work of the writing groups, the ELA preservice teachers noticed the value of building and enacting small writing communities within a writing classroom setting. They found the smaller peer writing communities had a meaningful impact on the larger classroom community and how the work of the smaller writing groups directly impacted the work of the whole group. The findings in this section shares how ELA preservice teachers believed peer writing communities create (1) an additional audience for writers, (2) better support for writing, and (3) a better whole classroom community.

Providing an Additional Audience

Three ELA preservice teacher revealed the writing communities offered them a broader audience for their writing. They suggested having more than one person read their writing was an impetus for them to write better. Knowing their classmates were going to be reading what they wrote put the pressure on to perform and present a more complete draft of their writing. The data revealed how ELA preservice teachers believed having an added audience increases writing performance, improves audience awareness, and provides a more productive environment for students.

The writing groups, ELA preservice teachers noticed, provided a reader beyond just the instructor of the course. ELA preservice teachers suggested having this additional audience increased their writing performance because it forced them to write a more complete draft to share. Kyle saw himself more as a one draft type of person, but having his writing group read his draft encouraged him to perform and create multiple drafts:

> I was holding myself to a bit of a higher standard because it's not just the instructor that is reading this; it's also my peers that I'm going to be stuck with next semester. When you have a large audience, you want to do better. I said it a million times during your class that I was more of a write one draft kind of person. I think that having the rough draft where I was holding myself accountable, like "Okay they are going to read this and they are going to you know" … It kind of puts the pressure on a little bit more.

Kyle felt without the pressure of his peers as an audience he would not have written multiple drafts, and he later suggested the writing he produced for this class was much better than in those classes where he wrote a single draft and handed it in.

It was not just about the pressure to produce something, having an additional audience, many ELA preservice teachers reported, made them think more deeply about the audience they were addressing. Fabian found having his peers as another audience made him more conscious of the readers' needs:

> It made me more conscious about the reader. When you would say "make sure to have a draft ready on this day we're going to be in writing groups." It's not like I could just throw together some words. I know they are going to be reading it they are going to be looking for what I'm trying to say and making sure it makes sense. I was thinking about Tiana and Sherry reading my paper. Like Tiana doesn't like it when it's like "I, blah blah blah," and the next sentence is, "I, blah blah blah." So, I mixed it up. I know that now as a writer, and so when I'm writing, I want to make sure that I am appealing to her in that sense. I think you must be conscious of that as a writer.

Knowing the likes and dislikes of his writing group members changed Fabian's writing. He was more attuned to what they would be looking for and this, he believed, impacted what he produced. Fabian and others recognized and shared that having writing groups made their writing better because they were writing for a bigger audience, an audience they knew better, and they could attend to their needs.

Fabian and Kyle both recognized what these groups offered them as writers, but Pam went a step further to recognize what having an additional audience in those small writing groups meant as a writing teacher. She felt the small writing groups offered students a better classroom experience that made writing more meaningful:

> I learned that the classroom experience is more than just procedures and standards! We must create a full environment for our students. By having peers read their writing, it makes everyone more receptive to doing the assignments. It creates a richer learning experience.

Knowing the power of a broader audience, Pam contended that teachers must create this "full environment" for students by including smaller writing groups in the class. She believed teaching writing was about creating a writing atmosphere and that included students sharing one another's writing.

ELA preservice teachers agreed that the writing communities created an additional audience for their writing and this improved both their writing and the classroom environment. They shared how this added audience increased their writing performance, and because they had worked so closely in their writing groups, they knew this audience better and could attend to their needs as a writer. Preservice ELA teachers

believed having a more substantial audience provided them with a more productive learning space, and they hoped to harness that in their future classrooms.

Supporting Better Writing Through Group Cohesion

Five ELA preservice teachers believed having an active and strong writing community had an impact on the work the writing groups did together and their individual writing as well. These five felt their groups had taken the time to build their community and this created a level of trust that significantly improved their writing and their beliefs about teaching writing. The data revealed how ELA preservice teachers believed strong group cohesion takes time but is essential to building a trust that improves writing and that cohesion can help students achieve their writing goals and provides validation to students.

Four ELA preservice teachers noted that their strong group cohesion played a role in the effectiveness of the feedback they received, which in turn improved their writing. Xena believed it was important for her group to take the time and build their relationship:

> I think the peer groups we did in class definitely supported my growth as a writer and teacher both because it gave me feedback that was actually useful. It was important to build our relationship and trust. It really made a difference in the feedback when we trusted each other. Student's need to build a community of trust before that feedback can really work.

According to Xena the work of creating faith in each other paid off because she was able to receive more meaningful feedback from her group members. She felt that helping students develop similar communities with high levels of trust was pivotal in making peer

feedback productive in her future classroom. Fabian shared these sentiments and revealed how his strong group bond was essential to receiving productive feedback:

> The first time we did the writing groups, it wasn't as helpful. Everyone was just so nervous to say anything, and so that made it not as good, but then when started opening up and it started to work. After that, we were constantly in the groups, and we became better friends and stuff like that. So, the next time we gave peer feedback, it was a lot more effective because we were actually writing helpful comments instead of just "You spelled this wrong or maybe put a comma here." That doesn't really help.

Fabian noticed that the work of his group was not as strong before they built trust amongst each other. He felt that once their relationship flourished so did their productivity with one another. Tiana agreed; the more comfortable she felt with her group, the easier it was to take up their feedback, "I feel the more comfortable I am with someone and vice versa… it seems that there is a truth there and it is easier to give out and receive constructive criticism." Tiana felt safer giving her feedback and more open to receiving it when a trust was built, and she was more comfortable with her group. All three of these participants agreed that the work in their writing communities only improved as they grew together and built stronger relationships.

For one participant, building a strong community had an even broader reach than just enhancing the feedback he gave and received. David shared in his interview how meaningful he felt his writing community was not only as a writer but as a person. He also recognized how meaningful these types of community are too high school students:

> A special community in the classroom, there's nothing more powerful towards furthering students goals then like what we were doing this semester. Obviously, we are all in our low to mid-20s, so we know who we are as people, but high school students need this especially. If I can by any means replicate that in a high

> school classroom I know I can make a lasting impact on those kids' lives. It is because of that community because of the validation the groups provide for them; it's that genuine human experience I think.

David found that the work of his group was influential. Their bond directly supported his growth as a writer and as a teacher of writing. He wanted to ensure that his students would have those same powerful experiences and knew that he too would use small writing communities in his future classroom.

ELA preservice teachers recognized that the bonds they formed in their groups helped produce better feedback and, in turn, better writing. They found success in their own writing but also in the discussions they had in their groups. ELA preservice teachers recognized that the bonds they formed were special, and it had a meaningful impact on their thinking as they looked forward to becoming writing teachers. They shared how building those communities in their future classrooms would help support their future student's writing. ELA preservice teachers reported noticing that these cohesive groups were an essential element to their own teaching of writing.

Improving the Larger Classroom Community Through Smaller Groups

Two ELA preservice teachers also noticed the power the small groups had on the larger whole class community. They shared how the smaller groups helped support the dynamics during whole group discussions. Both David and Sheila agreed that the small groups made the larger community more successful. The data revealed how ELA preservice teachers believed smaller groups supported the work and discussions of the

large classroom community, and they created group solidarity and positive learning environment.

Almost every single participant shared in their writing surveys and reflections about their small group discussions, but for four of those people, the large group discussions also played a role in their growth as writers and as teachers of writing. For Tiana, Fabian, Sheila, and David the work of both the small group and the larger classroom community was important. Sheila pointed out that both were essential parts of her learning:

> I liked that there was a small group so that we could get more comfortable with each other. But I think there was also benefits when we would change it up a little bit. Like when we would split in half or talk altogether. I believe that that the group that we had as a whole class worked very well together. Our specific group it worked out really well.

Sheila believed that the work of her small group had an impact on the dynamics of the whole class group discussions. These two groupings worked well, Sheila felt, because the smaller groups got to know one another and that made everyone feel safer to share. She went on to suggest that the large classroom community was so strong that they could have rearranged the small groups and still been just as successful. She had faith that the bonds not only with her small group were strong, but her bonds with every student were strong enough to foster honest and productive feedback by the end of the course.

For one ELA preservice teacher, the small groups enhanced the classroom community because it fostered solidarity and created a positive learning environment. David saw the connections between the small and large group:

> I mean the community behind it was great because we were as a class we were all friends and then having little groups, it slightly shifted the dynamic upwards. It was the community behind it all. Having the whole group and then the smaller groups. It was cool because we were all going through the same things... on the same journey. But it's really true though having the concentric forms of grouping, we were able to foster a pretty awesome space. We were all chatting about things, and that creates this kind of organic solidarity between all students as a whole and then having smaller communities. That was really helpful having the two layers of that. The smaller groups supported the connections we made in the larger class.

David felt that without the smaller groups, the larger classroom group would not have been as cohesive. As David put it, "This is what teaching is about I think. It is about community in a lot of ways. Creating a sincere environment. That should be a part of every class. Unfortunately, it's not." He took away the importance of those communities to fostering a learning environment that is engaging and meaningful to students.

ELA preservice teachers felt the small groups, in the end, made a considerable impact on the whole group discussions and the larger classroom dynamics. They believed the small writing groups supported the work and discussions of the large classroom community, and it formed a whole group solidarity that created a positive learning environment.

ELA preservice teachers believed the opportunity to engage in writing communities taught them the value of community as they prepared to enter the secondary ELA classroom as writing teachers. They witnessed firsthand the rewards of working with their peers on their writing and shared how they hoped to bring those same rewards into their future classrooms. They discovered that writing communities create an additional audience for writers and that naturally improves writing performance, audience

awareness and generally enhances the writing classroom environment. The ELA preservice teachers in the study believed strong writing group cohesion takes time, but it is essential to building a trust that improves students writing and unity can help students achieve their writing goals. Small writing groups, ELA preservice teachers felt, enhanced the large classroom community discussions and overall atmosphere because they created both group solidarity and a positive learning environment for all students.

Absenteeism Within the Writing Communities

The design of the study offered multiple opportunities for participants to readily share the factors within their peer writing groups that they felt inhibited their growth as writers and as teachers of writing. Every peer review reflection and assignment reflection asked participants to share their challenges working within the writing groups and two of my interview questions directly asked students about challenges they faced. Despite these multiple opportunities to share concerns and hinderances only three participants mentioned any obstacles they faced during the study. In the pre-study writing surveys, the most common obstacle students faced in their writing was their own self-doubt or procrastination. During and after the study participants only noted absenteeism as negatively contributing to their growth as writers and as teachers of writing.

Three students mentioned challenges they faced in their writing groups due to frequent attendance issues. Two groups had one member each who was frequently absent from class and the other group members became frustrated that their group member's absence influenced the quality of their learning and productivity.

Krista was the most vocal about her concerns with regards to attendance issues. She did come into the class with doubts about group work in general and did not believe that group work was warranted or successful in classrooms:

> I was frustrated that our other group member was absent for a second time during peer review today. It would be nice to get more than one person's opinion on the writing. It was annoying, and it was just frustrating that I was being asked to give feedback to somebody who wasn't even going to look at mine or give me feedback [the absent member had emailed their paper]. We didn't really have any [graded] group assignments, but it was frustrating to only have one partner show up to peer review.

Even though Krista's grade was not impacted by her group member's absence, she still found it frustrating that she was not getting the feedback she needed. She was disappointed that her group was not as cohesive as some of the others. She worked diligently to connect with the one member who was in attendance regularly, but she felt the other absent member let the group down. Krista saw what the community offered other ELA preservice teachers, and she wanted her community to give her those same benefits. Because one member was frequently absent, she felt her group failed to create the learning and growth that others were experiencing.

During Krista's interview, we tried to brainstorm ways that teachers could accommodate this issue and ensure that groupings could flourish despite absent members. She suggested that maybe allowing students to choose the groups could help:

> Maybe just let them pick their own groups rather than having them get into certain ones. Just because I feel like I mean there have been times when I pick groups and they have still fallen short, but usually you know how they work and you can get things done or you can assign them things but in random groups you don't really know their strengths or what they're actually going to do or what they expect you

> to do so but I mean it's hard especially like your class where everybody is new and we haven't been with each other before, so.

Even allowing students to pick, Krista recognized that the absenteeism and disengagement could still occur. We did not come to any conclusion about how to avoid these problems with writing groups.

Sheila's group also had a member who was frequently absent. Although this member was present for the peer review sessions for the three major assignments, his absences did influence the group. Sheila explained:

> It was definitely a challenge when people weren't there. So that was a big deal. It's great to have the input of at least one person, but I think it's as they say, multiple heads are better than one. So, it's always good to have different aspects or having different representations.

When she approached me about this concern, we decided that when this member was absent, she and the other group member could join another small writing group to accomplish the in-class activities. This helped Sheila and the other group members discuss, reflect and think out loud about what they thought teaching secondary writing would be like. This accommodation seemed to work for Sheila, and she was satisfied with her in-class work.

Group one also had attendance issues. Regularly at least one member of this group was absent, but it was not always the same person:

> Between the three of us we were absent a few times in the writing community. Especially like the three of us and so sometimes it would be just me and one other person just sitting there and then you know. So, it made it made it a little more difficult sometimes just because of less feedback, and discussion, but other than that it was totally good.

The group remained a pair if one member was absent, but twice I joined the group to help add a third voice to the mix. This strategy worked in terms of accomplishing the group tasks; however, the group members felt the cohesion of their group was weakened because of the frequent absences. This was disappointing and frustrating to the present members who wanted the same rewards they were witnessing in the other writing groups.

Specific Relevant Activities

As can be seen in all of the major themes discussed earlier in this chapter preservice teachers were able throughout this study to pinpoint very specific activities that they felt were vital to their growth as writers and as teachers of writing. In this section I detail what those four activities are, briefly describe what that activity looked like in the classroom, and then share what participants attribute those activities most often to in their learning and growth. Participants' written reflections, surveys, and interview transcripts revealed these four main activities: (1) peer review, (2) discussion, (3) reflection, and (4) mini group projects and presentations. Each of these is detailed below.

Peer Review

All but one of the participants expressed that the peer reviews within the small writing groups was particularly helpful because they were now thinking and acting in connection to their role as writers and as teachers of writing. The students shared how taking on this new lens shifted what they focused on in peer review and helped them think about themselves more as writers and as teachers of writing. The findings revealed how preservice teachers believed peer review could be more than just grammar support

and gave them insight into how they might plan and support peer review in their future classrooms. Preservice teachers also became aware that peer review offered students an opportunity to see other writers' techniques.

The three peer review sessions were designed differently to offer preservice teachers an opportunity to experience three different styles of peer feedback. The first peer review of the Multimodal Literacy Narrative asked students to respond to their peers writing focusing on expression and meaning and I offered three questions for them to consider for each. They wrote a letter after reading one another's writing that detailed what they enjoyed about the writing and what areas they believed needed work. For the Theory Infographic peer review I walked students through a series of questions about the infographic ensuring their peers writing addressed both the prompt and the needs of the audience appropriately. They wrote their feedback directly on the printed infographics highlighting areas of concern and strengths. For the Future Classroom Essay students used the rubric for the assignment to guide their feedback. They wrote on the rubric and gave their peers scores to note weak elements and areas of success in their writing. Each of these different types of peer review provided opportunities for students to note what went well in their peers writing and what areas could use more attention.

For several participants identifying as teachers during peer review revealed how much more students can gain from the process of peer review than just grammar support. Fabian realized this early on:

> Peer review workshops offer not only creativity, but they also give a different perspective. Students look out for grammar, but they also look for the context,

> since their ideas are usually bounced off each other. They can help one another focus their ideas and make sure they are not missing key points. And of course, the basics, proofreading cannot be done alone! Proofreading needs to be done with multiple eyes!

Fabian was noticing what peer review offered students. Yes, it provided proofreading and grammatical support, but it also provided a space for students to zero in and make sure their writing is focused. According to Fabian students could use peer review to ensure their ideas were flushed out, which is more meaningful to their writing than proofreading, which peer review also provides.

ELA preservice teachers also noticed how important it would be to scaffold peer reviews in their future classrooms as they ensured students knew how to give productive feedback on their peers writing. Xena began to think through how she might implement peer review into her future middle school classroom as she wrote her Future Classroom Essay:

> I learned that if you want to do peer reviewing, you need to set students up by telling them not to focus only on negatives but give positives too because that is what will encourage peers to write more or edit their writing. Peer review can be helpful, especially if the feedback is well put. I need to teach students exactly how to do that before letting them loose on one another's papers for sure.

Xena felt more comfortable when her group offered criticism because they provided lots of positive feedback. She reported that her group members, Pam and David, made sure they didn’t just critique but they noticed what went well in her writing and she appreciated that process and wanted to ensure that as a teacher she created a peer review space that provided both support and critique.

The small writing communities work together in peer review also highlighted for preservice teachers how important peer review is for students to see different approaches to writing by reading their peers work. Tiana's positive experiences with peer reviewing taught her several new writing approaches, and it made her contemplate how she could create those same lessons in her future classroom:

> This semester I think my writing has flourished, and I think you have seen that as well. Hands down my writing group they are the real MVPs for me this semester! They pushed me out of my comfort box. There is more than one way to approach writing, and that's something I needed to understand and teach students moving forward. How I felt in my peer writing group this semester is a feeling I want to give to my students.

Tiana found that in peer review her group members writing might be different from her own, and they might approach the assignments differently, but they all created beautiful writings that each member appreciated for its unique qualities, and she was glad her group could expand her thinking about writing. Tiana planned to bring that into her classroom ensuring students could learn from reading one another's writing and see that there is not just one way to write an essay.

Peer review was the most cited activity by preservice teachers. Their new understanding of their role as writing teachers revealed how peer review offered students more than simple grammar support, how important positive feedback is for students in peer review, and how peer review offers students an opportunity to witness different approaches to writing from reading their peers writing during peer review.

Discussion

Every participant in this study shared at least one conversation that they had with group members that had an impact on their thoughts about teaching writing, but only nine participants overtly shared how meaningful these group discussions were to their growth as writers and as writing teachers. The findings in this section reveals how preservice teachers felt discussing writing and teaching practices provided a space for them try out their more creative or progressive teaching ideas and detailed how these discussions built their confidence to teach writing.

Discussions occurred daily during the course as students shared first their opening writing with one another as partners, in their writing groups, or with the whole class. Discussions also occurred during large class activities such as debates about the value of teaching grammar in the ELA classroom, and during activities where they shared their learning through drawings and presentations. Discussions also occurred regularly as the writing groups worked together on brainstorming, drafting, and revising the three major writing assignments: The Multimodal Literacy Narrative, the Theory Infographic, and the Future Classroom Essay.

David had self-proclaimed radical and progressive ideas about teaching and his group members helped him think through some of his more "out there" ideas such as walking in to the first day of class and saying nothing and just observing students as they chatted with their friends, letting the chaos take over to just see what happens when the teachers voice is absent the first day. David explained what the discussions offered him as a writing teacher:

> It's like I'm blind and I'm feeling around in the dark for what works and what doesn't work but with the class, it let me kind of exercise that a little bit. I think with that writing group I could kind of express myself. We'd bring work and ideas in and we'd discuss with each other, and bounce shit off each other. It was awesome. What that did was that made me really open to that kind of thing, but I mean, I can understand how people might come in here and be really sort of guarded.

David understood that some might be more reserved in this work and guard themselves against exposure, but he enjoyed the opportunity to think through the work of being a teacher. Thinking through and discussing his future practice offered David a chance to contemplate what his future classroom might run like.

The discussions also built the classroom community and supported several ELA preservice teachers' confidence to teach writing because they knew their thinking was in-line with other preservice teachers. For Krista who transferred to ASU from the community college and was beginning her education courses, the conversations offered a place to join the on-going conversation in the teacher preparation program she had just entered.

> There were just some positive comments and discussions about how we want our classrooms and all of that, so I think really having everybody agree on certain parts of the classroom was really cool. It helped me know I was on the right track. The communication that everybody had was very good. I have so many class discussions in my head. I don't know I just know that it was always exciting like I remembered certain things Tiana would say or just things people would say throughout the class about how they want their classrooms to look, how they want it to feel and how they want their students to learn and how we standardized tests. It was all just important in helping me process who I want to be as a classroom teacher and made me more confident.

Krista felt like an outsider at the beginning of the class, but by the end through several discussions, she felt like a member of the group and her confidence to teaching writing grew because of her inclusion in the community of secondary preservice ELA teachers.

All participants reported that having discussion in the writing communities was meaningful to their growth as writers and as teachers of writing. The discussions supported writers, opened their eyes to more possibilities in writing, and created true communities of practice because the discussions were not graded, and they began to trust one another. It offered a space for preservice teachers to think through what it meant to teach writing and how they might go about teaching writing. Discussions validated preservice teachers thinking and allowed them to try out their new or progressive teaching ideas in a safe space, and that built their confidence to teach writing.

Reflection

Eleven participants in the writing surveys, assignment reflections, and interviews reported that reflection played a major role in the work of the writing communities. As they considered their role as secondary ELA teacher's teachers they realized how invaluable reflection is for students learning to write. The data revealed preservice teachers' beliefs about how reflection was rewarding for them as writers and how they could share that with their students. Reflection in their peer writing groups also made preservice ELA teachers conscious that reflection is a valuable writing tool they can and should teach students.

Reflection was an activity during the study that participants took part in first through the Multimodal Literacy Narrative as they narrated for both their groups and the class their writing history, utilizing multimodal evidence of this journey. Reflection also occurred at the conclusion of each writing assignment as they looked back at what lessons they learned from writing each assignment and how they grew as writers and as teachers of writing from the process. At the end of the course when students prepared to write their Future Classroom Essay they used reflection again to remember successful writing assignments from their past as inspiration for their own teaching future.

Reflection for three participants was rewarding as a writer and they believed that as teachers they could offer this same reward by utilizing reflection with students. For Alaina reflection was the most significant activity she participated in during the course of the study. Alaina shared in her assignment reflection after the Multimodal Literacy Narrative how meaningful the process of reflecting on her writing past was to her thinking about her future students:

> I really felt like the timeline of my writing was beneficial. Being able to look back on my work and see the progression that I have taken throughout my life as a writer is not only encouraging but also makes me hopeful for the growth to come. It helped me understand where my future students might be too. I will need to recognize that I made that same journey once.

She shared how she recognized that her future students will also be on a writing journey and that she was there once too. Alaina shared even more about how important reflection was to her thinking about teaching writing in her post study survey:

> As an educator I need to push my students to reflect and get outside of their comfort zones. It is so rewarding to see where we all started as writers and now

> see how far we have come. Additionally, I want my students to be given assignments that push them to be a little uncomfortable but, in that discomfort, allow for growth. Especially with high school students, I think it is important to give them meaningful assignments of reflection, as that helps them to be better people, not just better students.

Alaina believed that using reflection would encourage students to go beyond and find the same reward and growth that she did through her own reflection during the work with her writing community. She also through her own reflections and through reading her peer writing groups reflections began to consider where her students might be in their own writing pathway's.

Doing their own reflection as writers highlighted for two ELA preservice teachers how students must understand the connection between their own life and the writing they produce. While writing his Multimodal Literacy Memoir, David discovered that his writing life and his personal life were intertwined and to pull them apart was impossible:

> I learned that connecting one's personal life with their writing causes discomfort, but this discomfort yields growth rather than damage. The two ideas- a writing life and a personal life- are, in reality, inextricable from one another. One informs the other, and vice versa; it took me 22 years to understand that. Teaching students to write must include informing them of this, by forcing them into activities where they reflect on their lives and tell their own stories. Not only will this increase their ambition and motivation to write, but it will create true and honest writing, a luxury as of late that we've sadly neglected.

This realization made him contemplate the realities then of teaching writing to high school students. He knew that reflection was a vital tool in his writing toolbox and to teach writing you must also teach the art of personal reflection. David believed reflection to be so powerful that it alone could engage students and make them create more

meaningful writing. Unfortunately, he also noted how little of this work he believed was happening today in classrooms.

Taking the time to reflect for many study participants was eye-opening. As writers it encouraged preservice teachers to thinking through their writing past, and as future teachers of writing it offered them a chance to think through how they might share the rewards of reflection with students. Ultimately reflection in their peer writing groups illustrated for preservice ELA teachers how the act of reflection in an excellent tool for writers that they should utilize in their teaching of writing.

Mini Group Projects and Presentations

Ten participants pinpointed specific mini group writing projects and presentations in the post study writing surveys, reflections, and interviews as being meaningful to their thinking and growth as writers and as teachers of writing. These activities played a significant role in the beliefs and thinking of preservice teachers as they considered their future teaching practices. The findings in this section shares how mini group writing projects and presentations helped preservice teachers consider different approaches to teaching writing and what writing includes beyond the traditional essay.

Throughout the course, groups were asked frequently to engage in mini group writing projects and presentations as part of the course (see Table 3.2). These activities ranged from the groups brainstorming for the writing assignments, drawing their future classrooms, list making, and sharing information to the class through expert group

presentations. Together the small groups co-created texts, images and even presentation that they then shared with the whole class.

Five participants in the study suggested that these mini group writing projects and presentations opened their eyes to ways they can scaffold learning in their future writing classrooms. David believed that participating in a variety of writing projects and presentations enabled him to "see different approaches to the continued improvement of teaching writing, from ways to keep the spark alive to daily activities to keep students' brains moving." David saw the work as improving his own writing practices and realized that working through these types of activities is beneficial to writers. He later in his interview mentioned that working collaboratively through these types of projects and presentations is "something I would like to emulate and model in my classroom." David claimed this type of work in classrooms is significant to the growth of writers, and he wanted to take up this practice in his future classroom as well.

Listing and brainstorming was an activity done in class and in the writing groups and was regularly based on the readings and discussions about teaching writing. For Kyle these specific group projects made him realize that writing was not just about essays, it could be so much more:

> Activities wise, I really liked anytime that we were listing and going over genres choices specifically because there are certain things that I never would've considered a genre of writing, but then hearing other people consider letting kids record a podcast as a writing assignment or doing recipes and stuff like that, I never really would have thought of that, including let them use pictures or letting them include songs in their papers. That just wasn't something that had ever crossed my mind and now I'm super for it.

Creating these lists as a group broadened Kyles notions of what writing might include. He was able to hear his peers make these suggestions for unique genres and it encouraged him to take up these expanded notions of what writing might include. This new sense of what could be considered writing opened the doors for Kyle in terms of what kinds of writing he could teach students.

Preservice teachers took away many lessons as both writers and as teachers of writing from engaging in mini group writing projects and presentations throughout the course. This activity helped preservice teachers think about different approaches to writing and helped them create a broader understanding of what writing might include.

Quantitative Data Findings

The pre and post self-efficacy surveys provided a quantitative measure of ELA preservice teachers' confidence levels as both writers and teachers of writing before and after their participation in peer writing communities. Combining qualitative and quantitative measures in this way provided corroboration of the qualitative findings (Creswell & Clark, 2018). Below are the results of the pre and post study self-efficacy surveys.

ELA preservice teachers' growth in their writing self-efficacy showed a significant improvement during the course of the intervention, mean Δ 4.86, $t(14) = -3.37$, $p = .004$ (see Table 4.1). Based on the scatter plot (see Table 4.2) there were no outliers in the data. This data substantiates the qualitative findings suggesting participants did experience a growth in their writing self-efficacy as a result of their participation in

small classroom-based peer writing communities in their writing methods course during their secondary ELA teacher preparation.

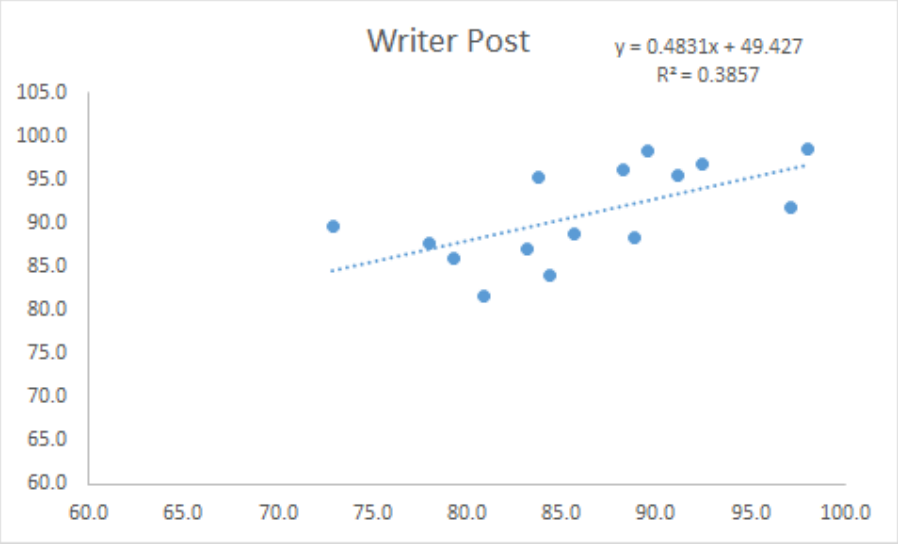
Table 4.1

Self-Efficacy as a Writer

Self-Efficacy as a Writer		
	Writer Pre	*Writer Post*
Mean	86.22962963	91.08888889
Variance	48.73274544	29.49770723
Observations	15	15
Pearson Correlation	0.621007564	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	14	
t Stat	3.372526186	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.002277586	
t Critical one-tail	1.761310136	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.004555172	
t Critical two-tail	2.144786688	

Table 4.2

Plot Chart of Writer Self-Efficacy Growth



The ELA preservice teachers' teaching of writing self-efficacy also showed a significant improvement throughout the course of the interventions, mean Δ 9.8, t (14) = -3.68, p=.003 (see Table 4.3). This shows corroboration with my qualitative findings that participants believed they were better prepared to teach writing in their future classrooms as a result of their participation in the small classroom-based peer writing communities in their ELA preservice training methods course. Based on the scatter plot below (Table 4.4), there was one individual who scored outside the norm and I looked at his individual responses and found he answered one post-study self-efficacy question vastly lower than all of their other efficacy scores dragging down the total change. This decreased the participant's overall self-efficacy from pre to post.

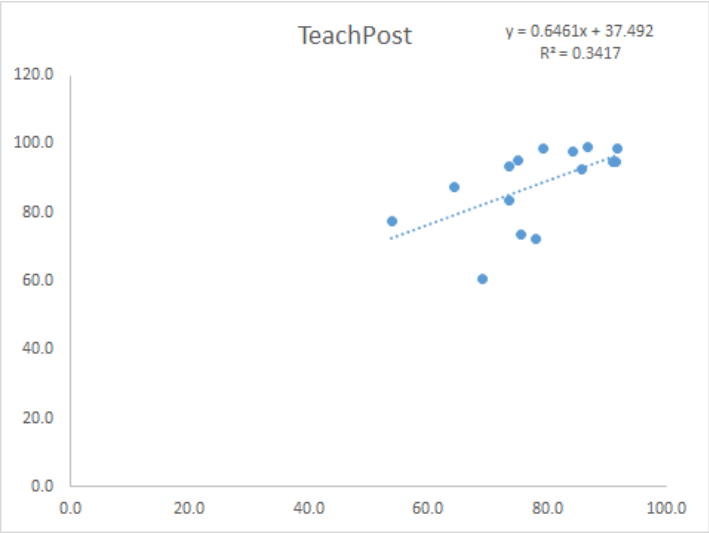
Table 4.3

Self-Efficacy as a Teacher

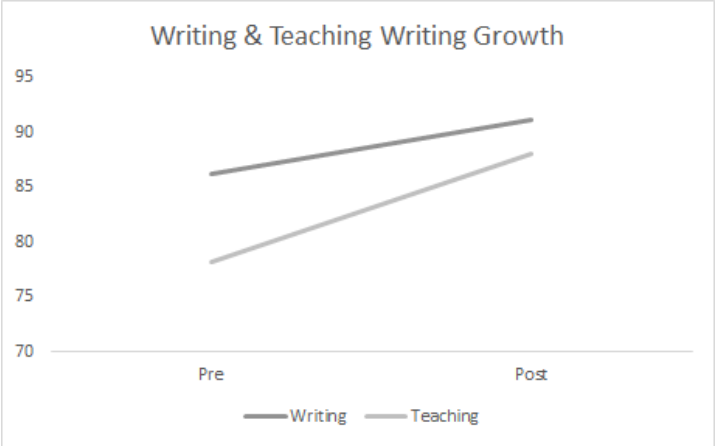
Self-Efficacy as a Teacher of Writing	*Teacher Pre*	*Teacher Post*
Mean	78.24	88.04
Variance	114.7025714	140.0954286
Observations	15	15
Pearson Correlation	0.584584476	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	14	
t Stat	-3.676346052	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.001245669	
t Critical one-tail	1.761310136	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.002491337	
t Critical two-tail	2.144786688	

Table 4.4

Plot Chart of Teacher Self-Efficacy Growth



Both the writing and teaching of writing self-efficacy overall scores increased for the majority of ELA preservice teachers from the beginning of the study to the end of the study. There was a sharper increase in the self-efficacy scores of ELA preservice teachers' confidence to teach writing (see Table 4.6).



CHAPTER 5

IMPLICATIONS & CONCLUSIONS

I began this dissertation by sharing my own writing experiences as a preservice teacher preparing to enter my first secondary ELA classroom. This study acts as a counternarrative to that negative experience that left me doubting my capacity, not only as a writer but as a teacher of writing. Through this dissertation, I explored what happens when preservice ELA teachers engage in writing communities in a teaching composition methods course. This study offers insight into how individual preservice ELA teachers at a large public university in the southwest worked collaboratively within peer writing groups to support one another as writers and as teachers of writing. The findings of this dissertation study present insight into the ways embedded, classroom-based peer writing groups, may support preservice ELA teachers within their teacher training program methods courses to positively affect writing and teaching of writing self-efficacy and to try on and think about their roles as writers and as future teachers of writing. In this chapter I do four things: (1) provide a summary of the findings and make an argument for the use of writing communities in preservice secondary ELA teacher preparation programs, (2) share the limitations of the study, and (3) suggest my plans for further research.

Summary of Findings

The communities that formed as a part of this dissertation research supported preservice ELA teachers as they explored, wrestled with, wrote about, and discussed the

work of becoming secondary English language arts teachers. These small writing communities asked preservice ELA teachers to dream, ask questions, network, and envision possibilities for their future careers. The findings of this research suggest that writing in communities helps ELA preservice teachers make connections between their current life as student writers and their future paths toward becoming writing teachers. The small peer writing groups provided a safe and structured community of practice (Wenger, 1998, 2009) for the ELA preservice teachers to experience this critical identity transition from student to future teacher. Their writing communities were as Wenger defines it a true "community of practice" because they (1) were members committed to a domain of interest: teaching writing, (2) worked collaboratively to share ideas, provide support, and co-create, and they (3) shared a repertoire as beginning English teacher practitioners (2009, pp. 1-2).

By taking up activity theory (Russell, 1997; Engeström, 1999) this research study uncovers the inner working of small writing communities of practice (Wenger, 1998, 2009) in an English language arts preservice teacher preparation writing methods course. It finds that the highly structured work of those groups allowed preservice teachers to write, think, and discuss as a group without the support of me their teacher. By giving those groups a purpose, they worked collaboratively to achieve their common goal of preparing to teach writing in their future secondary English classrooms.

In her study of writing teacher identity development, Janet Alsup (2006) argues for the study of what she calls 'borderland discourses' as a means of understanding how

teachers negotiate the space between conflicting discourses. This research study examines preservice ELA teachers engaging in 'borderland discourse spaces' within their small classroom-based peer writing groups. Within these groups, they had opportunities to try on, test out, and negotiate their student writer and preservice teacher discourses with their new and future discourses as teacher-writers and as future writing teachers. This study like Alsup's (2006) documents the process of preservice teachers merging their multiple identities, thus helping to form their professional identities as English teachers. Alsup and I both attend to the moment in time preservice teachers merge their past writing lives with their future teaching writing lives. Alsup focuses on how students narrate their stories of becoming a teacher and she documents how these narratives reflect and affect their identity development. This dissertation takes Alsup's research a step further by linking that identity development to the sociocultural (Prior, 2006) interactions and activities enacted within classroom-based peer writing groups to form writing and teachers of writing communities of practice (Engeström 1999; Wenger, 2009).

The study demonstrates how writing is socially situated (Prior, 2006), and Wenger's idea that "meaning exists neither in us, nor in the world, but in the dynamic relation of living in the world" (Wenger, 1998, p. 54) with Alsup's findings about 'borderlands' and finds that community can be an instrumental tool for preservice ELA teachers in their writing practices and efficacy and in their teaching of writing identity and practice formation. My findings lead me to the following claims:

1. This research confirms past studies showing how teachers who write within communities feel more confident in their ability to teach (Street & Stang, 2009; 2016; Dawson et al. 2013; Baker & Cremin, 2016) and extends this argument to include preservice teachers.
2. This research demonstrates how writing communities can offer a new and foundational writing experience for preservice ELA teachers.
3. This research finds that writing communities provide a space for preservice ELA teachers to talk about writing and its practice in preparation for teaching secondary writing.
4. This research moves toward a model for how university ELA teacher preparation programs might enhance the preparation they offer future secondary English teachers by embedding small peer writing groups into English education methods courses.

Confirms and Extends Research on Teachers Writing in Community

The study confirms and extends past research findings that writing in communities supports an increase in confidence with writing teachers (Street & Stang, 2009; 2016; Dawson et al. 2013; Baker & Cremin, 2016) as well as through the work of the National Writing Project (Whitney, 2008; Dix & Cawkwell, 2011). This research extends those findings to include preservice teachers, true novice teachers who are just beginning their path to becoming a writing teacher. The scant research on preservice teachers writing together in communities of practice (Wenger, 2009) does suggest

programs that offer opportunities for students to write in communities in a range of forms have a positive impact on preservice teachers and can "transform" their beliefs about their writing (Street, 2003; Gardner, 2014). It fails to provide details about what those writing groups do to support that transformation, and the findings of this research illustrate through the data that this change in confidence is not merely a superficial "ego boost" but is rooted in the serious work of writing, discussing, reflecting, and creating collaboratively with peers in a community of practice. It finds that the practice of sharing in-process writing positively influenced preservice ELA teacher's perceptions and sense of identity as writers and as writing teachers. Both quantitative and qualitative data from this research confirms this and works to paint a picture of what aspects of those writing communities are vital to its success.

This research shifts the conversation toward a deeper understanding of what happens within classroom-based peer writing communities to enhance teacher's self-efficacy as writers and as teachers of writing. The study finds that four writing group activities were significant to preservice teachers: peer review, discussion, reflection, and group project presentations. The findings reveal how preservice teachers felt they grew from those moments, relationships, conversations, and activities.

Writing Communities Can Offer a New and Foundational Writing Experience

Preservice teachers writing histories and past literacy experiences play an essential role in their beliefs and self-efficacy as writers and as teachers of writing (Chambless & Bass, 1995; Street & Stang, 2009; Daisey, 2009). Negative writing

experiences can have a damaging effect on preservice teachers' confidence to teach writing, but research has shown that merely providing positive experiences with writing can positively alter their beliefs (Street & Stang, 2009; Morgan, 2010; Daisey, 2009). This study offers an example of how embedding small peer writing groups within preservice teachers' methods courses can provide a positive individual and group writing experience. The writing communities enhanced preservice teachers understanding about rigid writing structures or formulaic writing and made them think about why teachers use these structures. It also made them think about how formulaic and overly structured or prescriptive writing can negatively influence student writing. Preservice ELA teachers were encouraged within their groups to produce multiple drafts of their papers and found this process and the process of receiving peer feedback meaningful to their writing growth. The ELA teachers described taking risks as writers within their groups and how they explored new techniques, like including humor or images in their written work. The peer groups met and discussed the myriad of choices the students would make in their future classrooms and provided opportunities to share past negative experiences and think through how they will avoid these for their prospective students. The peer writing communities opened the door for preservice ELA teachers to write and think about writing in positive ways so that they might carry that with them into their future teaching practice.

Create Opportunities to Talk About Writing and Writing Practices

This research reveals how writing communities offer preservice ELA teachers more than just an opportunity to write with and for one another, but the groups allow a space where preservice ELA teachers can talk about writing and their own writing practices. As Morgan (2010) suggests in her research, it is not enough for ELA teachers to identify as writers, they must also enact that identity through "talk about writing in a way that helps students envision making particular choices" (p. 49-50). Gardner (2014) also suggests that writing and then talking about writing provides preservice teachers the opportunity to elicit an "insider knowledge" about writing and all of its practices. Participants in this study recognized that conversations about their own writing and seeing the choices of their peers writing created an open dialogue between the group members about what decisions writers make. This led to further conversations amongst the group members about how they might teach their future students the myriad of writing choices available. The dialogue with one another about writing and its practices provided preservice ELA teachers a space to consider how they would teach students about the writing decisions that authors must make like what to include and exclude. Teaching writing in this way preservice ELA teachers believed avoids "cookie cuttering" types of writing or formulaic writing that implies a right and a wrong way to write. Ultimately, talking about writing in the writing communities provided a space for preservice teachers to notice these possible choices and then take that up as they prepare to be teachers of writing.

Moving Towards a Model in English Education Teacher Preparation

University teacher preparation programs are the "foremost settings for learning how to teach" (Smagorinsky, Cook and Johnson, 2003, p. 1407). As the pressure to produce better writing teachers increases (Applebee & Langer 2011) universities must step back and consider how they prepare ELA teachers to teach writing. English education researchers and teacher educators are in a unique position to support preservice teachers in developing their identities as both writers and as teachers of writing. It is important to consider both identities since many teachers indicate that their teaching of writing is connected to their own experiences as writers (Whitney & Friedrich, 2013). This study is one model of how programs at the university level might improve ELA teacher preparation by asking students to reflect and share their past writing experiences with their peers and "try on" their new role as writing teachers. This model provides a space for preservice ELA teachers to consider the writing instruction they will offer their students within a small shared community of practice.

Participants in the class met with their writing groups almost daily. They regularly interacted with the texts they read for class, their groups, the whole class, and me to produced writing daily either alone, with their group, or as the entire class. This model is similar to the design of most National Writing Project sites that harnesses the sociocultural (Prior, 2006) aspects of learning to provide a space for teachers to learn and grow not from so-called "experts in the field" but fellow teachers in more interpersonal relationships. Placing the power of learning in the hands of preservice teachers instead of aggrandizing myself, the teacher, as the "sage on the stage" participants in this study had

the opportunity to learn from one another and "try out" their thinking with their peers. They reacted to the texts we read, reflected on their own past schooling experiences, and imagined their future classrooms together, with the input of their writing community and not me their teacher. These findings suggest that the social aspects of learning should be an important consideration when designing a secondary ELA preservice teacher preparation curriculum. When preservice teachers have the opportunity to share their experiences and thinking, they consider their role as writing teachers more concretely. The small peer writing groups formed nurturing and sustaining communities for the ELA teachers to develop their identities as writing teachers.

Small peer writing communities within secondary ELA teacher preparation provides teachers with opportunities to transform the former version of themselves as writers and look forward to their future selves as teachers of writing. If given multiple opportunities to collaborate, discuss, reflect, and time to share preservice ELA teachers may be better positioned to teach writing. Their new positive identities as both writers and as teachers of writing can affect the writing instruction they provide their future students.

Limitations

A limitation of this study is the population size of the class. Although small numbers of participants are relatively common in qualitative research, it is possible I would obtain different findings from a study with a larger number of participants. A study that included more than one course or courses from more than one university would

provide a more robust account of preservice teachers experiences in writing communities. Due to the limited number of participants, these findings cannot be generalized for it offers just one example of what is possible when ELA preservice teachers take part in writing communities within their ELA teacher preparation programs. Another potential limitation relates to the duration of the study. By following preservice teachers after the writing community work into their student teaching experience further research could highlight how the writing community work impacts preservice teachers' teaching practices. A longitudinal study could provide more direct data that is less dependent on interpretation. It's brevity also could be considered a strength of the study, however, as most teacher preparation programs could apply similar strategies easily into a semester-long course. Future studies could also extend these findings into other content areas and grade levels as they modify the writing communities to suit a variety of preservice teaching contexts. One last limitation was that one participant in the study failed to provide much depth in her understanding through the data collection tools. A revision of the questions could harness more fruitful responses from all participants.

Further Research

I hope that this program of research fills a gap in the current literature by documenting how writing communities can work in secondary ELA teacher preparation and what insights they offer preservice teachers as they imagine their role as writing teachers. For me, this research has a significant impact on how I will prepare future secondary ELA teachers in the courses I teach at the university level. I plan to utilize

writing communities in my courses to provide the same types of support found in this research. I hope to explore the work of these communities further and refine my practice to create even more productive small group activities and projects. Below I make several suggestions for how I hope to extend this research:

1. My future research will zero in even further on the particular writing projects that were meaningful to pick apart what elements are essential for preservice ELA teachers.
2. As I explore ELA preservice teachers' identity transformation further I hope to understand more fully the transition they experience as they move from student writers to teacher writers.
3. I'd like to extend my inquiry into writing communities in ELA teacher preparation by branching out to include other universities and student populations as a way to confirm these findings and extend them further.
4. In the future I also hope to explore talking about writing and writing practices as an additional and more focused study of research to understand what role this particular activity plays in preservice teachers work toward becoming writing teachers and their understanding of that new role.

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APPENDIX A

RECRUITMENT SCRIPT

During the fall semester, Katie Alford, a Ph.D. student in the Department of English at Arizona State University, will conduct a study on the influence of writing communities on the writing lives of preservice secondary English language arts teachers to understand their writing confidence, and perceived confidence as writers and as teachers of writing.

We invite you to take part in this research study, which will involve your participation during the fall semester of the 2018-2019 academic year. If you choose to participate, you will be asked to share your work in this writing methods class. This will include your work on the three major writing assignments and all write produced within the group and reflections on that work. In addition, you will be asked to give access to the research to use your information from the demographics survey, both the pre- and post-study writing self-efficacy survey and the final reflection at the conclusion of the course. Several of you will be asked to continue participation after the course has concluded by answering several interview questions.

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. It will neither positively nor negatively impact your grade in this writing methods course. You may choose to withdraw from the study at any time without any penalty to you or your participation in this English writing methods course. If you have any questions concerning the research study, please call Katie (602) 429-9605 or email her at Katie.alford@asu.edu. We look forward to learning about the influence participating in a writing group has on your writing and teaching of writing.

APPENDIX B

CONSENT FORM

Writing Together:
A Study of Secondary ELA Preservice Teachers Participating in Peer Writing Communities

INTRODUCTION
The purposes of this form are to provide you (as a prospective research study participant) information that may affect your decision as to whether or not to participate in this research and to record the consent of those who agree to be involved in the study.

RESEARCHER
Katie Alford a Ph.D. student in the Department of English and her advisor/committee chair Dr. Jessica Early, both at Arizona State University, have invited your participation in a research study.

STUDY PURPOSE
The purpose of the research is to investigate the ways in which participation in a writing community impact PSTs attitudes toward writing and their future careers in teaching writing.

DESCRIPTION OF RESEARCH STUDY
If you decide to participate then you will give access to the researchers to use and analyze data collected from class activities such as the demographics survey, the pre and post self-efficacy survey, reflections after each major writing assignment, each writing assignment and peer reviews, as well as a final written reflection on the influence this writing community has had on your writing and thoughts about becoming a writing teacher. Several participants might be asked to participate in interviews after the course has ended about their experiences writing in a community. All this will work is part of the course curriculum and will not add any additional burden to your time, however if you agree to an interview after the course has ended this will take 30 minutes to an hour of your time.

RISKS
There are no known risks from taking part in this study, but in any research, there is some possibility that you may be subject to risks that have not yet been identified.

BENEFITS
There is no direct benefit to you for your participation in this study. However, the research findings, presented in publications and conference proposals, will benefit preservice English Language Arts teachers in their writing instruction.

CONFIDENTIALITY

All information obtained in this study is strictly confidential. The results of this research study may be used in reports, presentations, and publications, but the researcher will not identify you. Your writings and responses might be used in parts in the publication of this work but will be anonymized, and when anonymization is not possible, pseudonyms will be used for names and locations. A master list of pseudonyms will be kept in a locked office attaching all the data collected from you to your pseudonym. After the data is analyzed this list will be destroyed.

WITHDRAWAL PRIVILEGE

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. It is ok for you to say no. Even if you say yes now, you are free to say no later, and withdraw from the study at any time. If you choose not to participate this will NOT impact your grade/credits/certification hours in your English methods course.

VOLUNTARY CONSENT

Any questions you have concerning the research study or your participation in the study, before or after your consent, will be answered by Katie Alford, Ph.D. student Department of English Katie.alford@asu.edu or 602.429.9605 or Jessica Early, Associate Professor of English, Jessica.early@asu.edu or 480.965.0742.

If you have questions about your rights as a subject/participant in this research, or if you feel you have been placed at risk; you can contact the Chair of the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board, through the ASU Office of Research Integrity and Assurance, at 480-965 6788.

This form explains the nature, demands, benefits and any risk of the project. By signing this form, you agree knowingly to assume any risks involved. Remember, your participation is voluntary. You may choose not to participate or to withdraw your consent and discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefit. In signing this consent form, you are not waiving any legal claims, rights, or remedies. A copy of this consent form will be given (offered) to you.

Your signature below indicates that you consent to participate in the interviews. The interviews will be linked to your course work if you also agree to release your course work.

_____ _____ _____

Subject's Signature Printed Name Date

Your signature below indicates that you consent to release work completed in the writing community and course.

_____ _____ _____

Subject's Signature Printed Name Date

INVESTIGATOR'S STATEMENT

"I certify that I have explained to the above individual the nature and purpose, the potential benefits and possible risks associated with participation in this research study, have answered any questions that have been raised, and have witnessed the above signature. These elements of Informed Consent conform to the Assurance given by Arizona State University to the Office for Human Research Protections to protect the rights of human subjects. I have provided (offered) the subject/participant a copy of this signed consent document.

Signature of Investigator_____ Date_____

APPENDIX C

DEMOGRAPHICS SURVEY

Name:

Age:

Gender:

Ethnicity:

Additional languages:

Undergraduate degree title:

APPENDIX D

SELF-EFFICACY SURVEY

Writing Together:
A Study of Secondary ELA Preservice Teachers Participating in Peer Writing Communities

For each of the following, answer how confident you are in your belief that you have this ability (Circle one response for each statement listed below)

SELF-ASSESSMENT OF SPECIFIC WRITING SKILLS AND ABILITIES

Your current skills and ability to ….	**Not at all confident 1**	**50**	**Completely confident 100**
1. Write an excellent paper for school	1 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100		
2. Write an effective argument for personal gain	1 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100		
3. Solve real-world problems using writing	1 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100		
4. Understand how to organize a piece of writing	1 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100		
5. Utilize peer feedback to improve writing	1 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100		
6. Find pleasure in writing	1 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100		
7. Create a grammar error free piece of writing	1 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100		
8. Use sources to support claims in a piece of writing	1 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100		
9. Write an engaging piece that draws readers in	1 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100		

10. Develop creative and meaningful pieces of writing	1 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100
11. Teach students to write a paper for school	1 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100
12. Teach students how to use effective arguments in their writing	1 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100
13. Teach students to solve real-world problems using their writing	1 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100
14. Teach students to organize their writing	1 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100
15. Teach students to use peer feedback to improve their writing	1 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100
16. Teach students to find pleasure in writing	1 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100
17. Teach students to create grammar error free writing	1 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100
18. Teach students to use sources to support claims in their writing	1 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100
19. Teach students to engage their audience with their writing	1 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100
20. Teach students to develop creative and meaningful pieces of writing	1 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

Thank you for completing this survey.

APPENDIX E

WRITING SURVEY

DIRECTIONS: Please respond to each question in a few words or sentences.

1. What do you think about your writing abilities?
2. Who has supported or hindered your growth as a writer?
3. What activities, assignments, workshops, etc. have supported your growth as a writer?
4. How were each of these helpful to you as a writer?
5. What activities, assignments, workshops, etc. have hindered your growth as a writer?
6. How did these things negatively impact you as a writer?
7. How do you feel about your ability to teach writing?
8. Who has supported or hindered your growth as a teacher of writing?
9. What activities, assignments, workshops, etc. have supported your growth as a teacher of writing?
10. How were these helpful to you as a teacher of writing?
11. What activities, assignments, workshops, etc. have hindered your growth as a teacher of writing?
12. How did these things negatively impact you as a teacher of writing?

APPENDIX F

REFLECTIONS

Group Peer Review Reflection

1. What was most helpful to you as a writer today in your group meeting? Why?

2. What was not helpful to you as a writer today in your group meeting? Why?

3. What changes are you going to make based on the writing group meeting today?

Assignment Completion Reflection

1. Highlight one passage from your essay that was impacted by your writing community. In a paragraph describe how and why you made these changes and what feedback informed these changes.

2. What did you learn about writing from working on this assignment?

3. What did you learn about teaching writing from working on this assignment?

APPENDIX G

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

1. How would you describe your writing community this semester in ENG 480?

2. What aspects of your writing community did you find useful?

3. What were the challenges of working in your writing community?

4. How did your writing community impact your beliefs about your ability to write?

5. How did your writing community impact your beliefs about your ability to teach writing?

6. How did your work in your writing community impact your writing itself?

7. How did your work in your writing community impact your teaching of writing?

8. You discussed _____ a great deal in your reflections and surveys. What experiences from the writing communities played a role in this?

9. Your confidence in _____ went up/down after participating in the writing community. What aspects of the writing community do you believe played a role in this shift?

10. You often point to _____ as supporting/hindering your growth as a writer/teacher of writing. How do you think this supported/hindered your growth?

APPENDIX H

IRB APPROVAL

ASU Knowledge Enterprise Development

EXEMPTION GRANTED

Dear Jessica Early:

On 5/23/2018 the ASU IRB reviewed the following protocol:

Type of Review:	Initial Study
Title:	Writing Together: A Study of Secondary ELA Preservice Teachers Participating in Peer Writing Communities
Investigator:	Jessica Early
IRB ID:	STUDY00008301
Funding:	None
Grant Title:	None
Grant ID:	None
Documents Reviewed:	• Writing Together. writing survey.pdf, Category: Measures (Survey questions/Interview questions /interview guides/focus group questions); • Writing Together. recruitment script.pdf, Category: Recruitment Materials; • Writing Togther. IRB protocol.docx, Category: IRB Protocol; • Writing Together. self efficacy survey.pdf, Category: Measures (Survey questions/Interview questions /interview guides/focus group questions); • Writing Together. demographics survey.pdf, Category: Measures (Survey questions/Interview questions /interview guides/focus group questions); • Writing Together. interview questions.pdf, Category: Measures (Survey questions/Interview questions /interview guides/focus group questions); • Writing Together. consent form.pdf, Category: Consent Form; • Writing Together. group and assignment reflection.pdf, Category: Measures (Survey questions/Interview questions /interview guides/focus group questions)

The IRB determined that the protocol is considered exempt pursuant to Federal Regulations 45CFR46 (1) Educational settings, (2) Tests, surveys, interviews, or observation on 5/23/2018.

In conducting this protocol you are required to follow the requirements listed in the INVESTIGATOR MANUAL (HRP-103).

Sincerely,

IRB Administrator

cc: Katie Alford
Katie Alford