Spring 2022

The Impact of Freewriting on Writing Teachers' Self-Perceptions

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Recommended Citation
Busch, Katherine A., "The Impact of Freewriting on Writing Teachers' Self-Perceptions" (2022). *MSU Graduate Theses*. 3713.
https://bearworks.missouristate.edu/theses/3713

THE IMPACT OF FREEWRITING ON WRITING TEACHERS'

SELF-PERCEPTIONS

A Master's Thesis

Presented to

The Graduate College of

Missouri State University

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Science, English Education

By

Katherine Busch

May 2022

THE IMPACT OF FREEWRITING ON WRITING TEACHERS' SELF-PERCEPTIONS

English

Missouri State University, May 2022

Master of Science

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ABSTRACT

I present a study of eight graduate assistants who teach introductory composition courses as part of their graduate assistantships. Each participant was asked to freewrite for ten minutes a day, five days a week, for ten weeks. Participants were interviewed about their teacher and writer identities prior to the freewriting, at week five, and at week ten. Graduate assistants offer a unique perspective, as many of them are neither professional writers nor trained teachers, yet they are hired to teach writing. Using Peter Elbow's *Embracing Contraries* (1986) as a theoretical framework, I determine that freewriting offered the participants a space to explore the contradictions of their teacher and writer identities, eventually moving into a wider frame of reference through which they understood themselves and their profession. I find that this study provided a space for identity exploration that these instructors did not have elsewhere. Implications of this study are that teachers need an opportunity to explore issues of teacher and writer identity in a low-stakes, unevaluated environment that allows for the interaction of contradictions. It cannot be assumed that writing teachers have explicitly considered their notions of writing and teaching; many of these participants had not done so prior to the study. If teachers of writing must be writers themselves, then teachers must be given an opportunity to explore their identity as writers, and freewriting provides one means of doing so.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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INTRODUCTION

Teachers are often asked to wear many hats: collaborator, lecturer, cheerleader, role model, facilitator, stand-up comedian, etc. Throughout my undergraduate and graduate studies, I noticed one role that my colleagues in education struggle to fill. Many of my fellow writing teachers do not openly identify as writers.

A well-loved professor at my university always assigns her composition students the task of stating "I am a writer," to a family member or friend. Many of us have never used those words before, at least not seriously. While one might expect this task to be a joke among young education students, instead, this assignment has quite the reputation as a rite of passage. Undergraduate students take it very seriously, and some graduate students even struggle to say the phrase. Sometimes, my classmates giggle through it, as if humiliated, or they offer a disclaimer; "I don't know how well I believe this, but I'll say it." Why is identifying as a writer such a novel experience for future English educators, and how can we create a stronger sense of teacher-writer identity?

In one graduate-level English Education course, we were asked to reflect on our identities as writers in an introductory discussion board post. I was surprised to see that only myself and one other student identified strongly as writers. Most of the other students said they were good teachers, or were good at helping others write, but they did not consider themselves to be strong writers, nor did they practice writing regularly. My classmates agonized over essay assignments and dreaded sharing their writing aloud or getting peer feedback. Even though the teaching of writing was part of their chosen profession, they did not seem to want to write. When I asked a

classmate recently about a course I was planning on taking, her reply was, "Oh, I hated that class! You have to write four essays!"

And, it seems that even when teachers do practice writing regularly, many do not model it for their students. My cooperating teacher during student teaching wrote readers' theatre sketches for the drama club. His English students, however, had no idea he did so. A friend of mine who teaches composition recently posted on Facebook that she had self-published a book of poems. I had no idea that she was even interested in poetry; I had never heard her mention it at staff meetings, in the classroom, in our graduate coursework, or even during social interactions outside of school. When I mentioned it to her, she was almost embarrassed to have written a book and immediately dismissed it as, "just something I did when I had extra time."

My current colleagues are all graduate assistants (GAs) who teach entry-level composition courses. While I believe some of them do identify as writers, I have found that they have not taken the next step into identifying as writer-teachers; they do not "perform" writing for their students (Atwell, 1998). They see their own writing lives as separate from their teaching lives. Even though my colleagues write nearly every day for their own coursework, many rely heavily on my lesson plans in their beginning composition classrooms, because they do not feel confident writing their own. While one could attribute this "borrowing" of my lessons to laziness, I hesitate to make that assumption. My colleagues want to be good teachers, but they do not trust themselves. I contend that they do not identify as skilled or trained writing teachers, because they have not made the connection between being a writer and being a teacher of writing. They must identify as a writer, but then use that identity to scaffold into one of a writing teacher. They must see their writing identity as a position of expertise that can be applied in a teaching setting.

In the same course where only one other student and I identified as writers, we were asked to freewrite for at least 2,000 words each week, for the entire 16-week semester. While I had previously identified as a strong writer, I did not think of myself as having a particular interest or investment in the teaching of writing. When asked what my research interest was, I often parroted the interests of my favorite professors: "student-centering," "authentic assessments," "making students fall in love with literature." I rarely thought about any of these topics outside of class, and they certainly did not excite me. But I thought it was normal for a research interest to be less-than-interesting.

By the end of the semester, I was a daily freewriter, and I was calling myself a "composition person." I wrote more than was required of me. I suddenly knew how to revise, and exercises that previously seemed silly to me – "Turn your essay into a blackout poem," "Describe your essay as a fruit" – made perfect sense and were, actually, helpful. Freewriting gave me my research interest, but it also gave me a sense of purpose. I became a much stronger writer in that class, and I became entirely devoted to the teaching of writing.

I wondered, would the same thing happen to other teachers, if given the time and incentive to freewrite? In this study, I explore how consistent freewriting over the span of ten weeks affects eight composition instructors' identities as writers and writing teachers. I propose that freewriting offers a potential solution to the problem I have posed: that too many writing teachers do not identify as writers.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Teacher-Writer Identity

My work on teacher-writer identity builds on that done by Donald Murray. Murray describes *A Writer Teaches Writing* (1985) as "a book by a writer who is still learning to write and a teacher who is still learning to teach" (p. 3). He self-identifies as both a writer and teacher, but he separates them as two different identities and skills. Meaning, these skills are not inherently synchronous; identifying as a writer does not necessarily include identifying as a writing teacher, and vice versa. You can be one without the other. He goes on, though: "I hope that each reader will become, through the experience of writing and teaching, the writer in the title" (p. 5). Murray makes it clear that composition instructors should be writers teaching writing. Though he treats these identities as separate, he seems to present them as equally necessary. The combination of both is the goal; they share a dialogical, symbiotic relationship.

Murray highlights how many first-year composition instructors are neither writers nor teachers: "The majority of composition courses in the country are taught by teachers who do not write, do not know how effective writing is made, and do not know how to teach writing" (p. 1). However, he is not pessimistic about these instructors, claiming that instructors in his program show "exceptional" teaching skills in settings that are "alien to almost all of them upon their arrival" (p. xii). While this attitude might seem naively optimistic, Murray offers a potential explanation. He believes that writers can "crawl into the skins of people alien to the writer's background and in doing so make them less alien" (p. 15). The instructors he supervised were put into an alien environment – teaching writing – and succeeded. Perhaps this is because these instructors also became writers, and in doing so, developed the ability to "crawl into" teaching,

to feel, act, speak, and respond as a teacher (p. 15). The inherent empathy and understanding of writers may allow them to succeed as teachers regardless of their previous experience in the classroom.

Murray highlights other reasons for developing one's writing skills as a teacher. He explains that "All writing is an act of faith … Teachers – and editors – must recognize how hard it is to maintain faith – and how essential. This is a significant reason for teachers to write" (p. 41). For someone to teach writing without ever having written themselves, they will always have a picture of the writing they could produce, a picture that is "unblemished" because they have never tried to write it (p. 41). The image of good writing in their head will lead to "unrealistic high standards" (p. 41). Again, Murray's image of writer-as-empath is visible here; to teach writing, we need to understand exactly what we are asking our students to do. He later affirms, "teachers and editors and colleagues who write the least will often be the most critical and the least helpful. Your real draft will never measure up to their imagined draft" (p. 46). If most teachers want to be helpful – and I think we in the field have to accept this assumption as true, or else fall into despair – then most teachers need to write.

I believe, too, that some teachers of writing do write, but they separate their writing from their teaching. They have a writing persona and a teaching persona, and never the two shall meet. But Murray writes against this duality: "The writer cannot be someone else and write effectively" (p. 45). If you are a teacher of writing, you cannot slough off this identity when you write, at least not if you want to write well (perhaps wanting to write well is part of the problem; teachers may resign themselves to subpar writing because they are not sharing it with anyone, least of all their students). While Murray does separate the spheres of "teacher" and "writer," he

writes against inhabiting them separately; we must be teachers and writers simultaneously, all the time.

Many other scholars and practitioners also identify the importance of writing teachers being writers themselves. Kelly Gallagher's *Teaching Adolescent Write*rs (2006) explains, "Students are more likely to develop as writers when teachers lead by example. When we compose alongside our students, when we speak the language of writers, when we make the struggle all writers face visible, we demystify the process, thus making writing more approachable for students" (p. 72). He laments teachers who do not "actively write," or who do write but who "have become expert at hiding the work it takes from students" (p. 49).

Nancy Atwell (1998), too, writes about "the notion of writing-teacher-as writer" and the importance of "play[ing] the role of the writer for [student's] benefit and to try to lend adult credibility to the act of writing" (p. 331). Even Penny Kittle's *Book Love* (2013*)*, which focuses primarily on teachers' reading identities, makes a nod toward teachers-as-writers: "But if I tell you some English teachers have said they don't write, you'll nod and keep reading. And I will say we can't teach something we don't practice" (p. 158).

The National Writing Project, as well, addresses the issue of teacher-as-writer under its core principles: "Knowledge about the teaching of writing comes from many sources: theory and research, the analysis of practice, and the experience of writing. Effective professional development programs provide frequent and ongoing opportunities for teachers to write and to examine theory, research, and practice together systematically" (2019).

Murray (1985) writes about, "the secret excitement of discovery: the word, the line, the sentence, the page that achieves its own life" and how, "The first responsibility of the writing teacher is to experience this essential surprise. You can't teach what you don't know" (p. 8). He

claims that if one has not had this experience, then one should "sit down immediately and write," telling his readers to freewrite and study Elbow (p. 8). If experiencing the excitement of lively writing is the first task of a writing teacher, and so many of my colleagues have not had this experience, then we teachers need to solve this problem. This study puts Murray's freewriting solution to the test.

Freewriting to Develop Writer Identity

Elbow's notion of freewriting is the definition I am using. Murray directed his readers to study Elbow, so I am following that instruction. More importantly, no other scholar writes so extensively and in such detail about the benefits of freewriting. While Elbow did not necessarily invent the exercise – Ken Macrorie (1968) could be credited for that – Elbow popularized it, and he has come to represent freewriting and personal expression more than anyone else in the field. Elbow explores the benefits and effects of freewriting in various contexts and for many types of writers. As I am studying the effects of freewriting, I can think of no better scholarly basis than Elbow's.

Elbow (1973) asserts that one should freewrite at least three times a week and to begin by writing for ten minutes (p. 3). Elbow adds that, if one wants to see marked improvement in one's writing, then ten minutes each day of the week will be "most useful" (p. 9). Elbow also advises eventually increasing to fifteen or twenty minutes. There should be no stopping whatsoever; Elbow (1981) even suggests using a "squiggle" in place of actual letters if one cannot think of a word (p. 3). It is perfectly acceptable to write "I have nothing to write," over and over (p. 13). He suggests that if you lose your train of thought, repeat the last word you wrote until you are ready to move forward. The writer should not stop and think; "The goal of freewriting is in the process,

not the product" (p. 13). The point of freewriting is not speed; it is to keep writing (p. 13). The writer should not feel as though they have to rush.

Freewriting is not to be evaluated or discussed, nor is the teacher to offer any commentary (1973, p. 4). Elbow will read a writer's freewriting quickly, but he will not speak about it with the writer (p. 4). Perhaps the most important part of freewriting, and what differentiates it from other types of writing in terms of audience, is that "Freewritings help you by providing no feedback at all" (p. 4). The teacher or reader cannot evaluate or discuss freewriting, because that undermines the very essence of what makes freewriting helpful. Freewriting lets the writer practice "nonediting" (p. 5). It is meant to counteract the habit of producing words and editing them at the same time. The writer can learn to generate words better without these editing blockades; the writer will write "more freely, lucidly, and powerfully" (pp. v-vi). Elbow presents the objective of freewriting as an "all-purpose writing exercise that improves the very process by which words come to you" (p. vi).

He describes regular freewriting as, "The most effective way I know to improve your writing" (p. 3). Freed from the "unnecessary burden" of simultaneously producing and scrutinizing one's writing, writing can follow a more "organic, developmental process in which you start writing at the very beginning … and encourage your words gradually to change and evolve" (p. 15). Freewriting improves the quality of writing, because it allows for exploration of ideas and thoughts we might otherwise miss (p. 10). By giving up control over the words as they come, the words will be richer and more powerful; "Most people find that they improve their ability to think carefully and discriminatingly if they allow themselves to be sloppy" (p. 34). Simply put, "If you do freewriting regularly, much or most of it will be far inferior to what you

can produce through care and rewriting. But the good bits will be much better than anything else you can produce by any other method" (p. 9).

So, if freewriting can improve both the quality and quantity of writing, then perhaps it will improve one's self-perception as a writer, simply because one is writing better. This benefit is perhaps the simplest reason why writing teachers should freewrite.

Freewriting also breaks bad writing habits. Because teachers are often subjected to intense oversight from administrators, parents, department heads, and even students (we all know the student who takes extreme pleasure in pointing out our typos), many of us may write as though we are still writing for a teacher ourselves. According to Elbow, for writers who still write like nervous, timid, or angry students, freewriting serves as one corrective measure (1981, p. 227). Overcoming the anxiety or hesitation of writing for an invisible teacher is crucial.

Teachers are trained to judge writing; it is, naturally, one of the hallmarks of our job. Elbow writes, "English teachers … usually can't think of anything to do with a set of words except to formulate criticism of one sort or another – high criticism for works of great literature, low criticism for works of student writing. I suspect this is why English teachers so seldom write" (1981, p. 21). This judgmental instinct may, then, apply to our own writing. We do not identify as writers because we judge ourselves too harshly. Because freewriting is an exercise in "withholding judgment" (14), it may serve to help teachers give ourselves permission to write.

This permission is intimately connected to accepting our voices as writers. One may identify more strongly as a writer because one comes to value one's voice and use it more. Elbow writes, "Maybe you don't like your voice … But it's the only voice you've got. It's your only source of power … If you keep writing in it, it may change into something you like better" (1973, p.7). Freewriting can help one learn to recognize and like one's own voice. So, as

freewriters become more comfortable with their voice, perhaps they value it more as the voice of a writer.

The relinquishment of control may be very counterintuitive – and therefore very powerful – for teachers. Elbow notes, "Nowadays it seems as though everyone is obsessed with standards and assessment, so my approach seems more problematic than ever" (1981, p. xviii). Teachers dwell in this space of standards and assessment, of rubrics and lesson plans and administrative oversight. He writes, though, that "Insisting on control, having a plan or outline, always sticking to it is a prophylactic against organic growth, development, change" (1973, p. 35). This control can hinder the power of our writing. Teachers often fit Elbow's description of "very controlled writer[s] who can write anything [we] want, but without power" (1981, p. 19). Freewriting forces teachers to dwell in the unstructured by starting off with writing anything and not stopping to consider how it connects. This "chaos and disorientation" (1973, p. 35) may be what makes freewriting effective. We are able to step outside of our orderly lives, and in doing so, discover a hidden self who could be a powerful writer.

Freewriting for Students, Not Teachers?

Freewriting has been studied so extensively over the last forty years that to present a comprehensive survey of the field would be nearly impossible. However, one trend I will highlight is that the vast majority of scholarship regarding freewriting has analyzed its use by students. Gallagher (2006) writes in support of Elbow's Looping, in which students freewrite, identify a "hot spot" in their writing, rewrite this hot spot into a new sentence, freewrite about the hot spot, and keep looping until a thesis emerges. Gallagher does write about modeling these types of writing as the teacher (p. 49). But, modeling for students is not the same as writing for

oneself. Jeff Anderson (2005) has students do a "focused" freewrite by reading a "stimulating piece of literature" first, which helps students produce more writing than freewriting proper (p. 30). Kittle (2013) has students freewrite about their thinking during reading (p. 99). The applications of freewriting for students are well known and well-documented.

However, the discourse surrounding freewriting presents a certain dearth of literature on its effect for writing teachers, let alone writing teachers' self-perceptions. It is not a focal point of *Writing Without Teachers* (1973), because Elbow's "teacherless" writing classroom seeks to remove the student-teacher hierarchy, and therefore removes the need to explore the teacher's identity separately from the students (p. 76). When Elbow introduces the concept of freewriting, he claims, "No matter what kind of writing course it might be … students will benefit from the freewriting exercises" (p. viii). Students, not teachers. He claims to write for "young people and adults in school, but especially young people and adults not in school" (vii). What about the adults who are in school, but are employed by it?

Elbow and Mary Sorcinelli's "The Faculty Writing Place" (2006), in which Elbow and Sorcinelli reflect on a Professor-as-Writer program at the University of Massachusetts- Amherst, comes closest to addressing the relationship between freewriting and teacher-identity. Elbow writes that, "A key strategy for helping faculty become more effective and productive writers is the setting aside of structured time and space for writing" (p. 20). The purpose of this program is "to provide a quiet, comfortable working space for faculty, free of the distractions of office or home… predicated on the notion that faculty will be more apt to do the solitary work of writing if they surround themselves with other writers" (p. 18). This program includes monthly day-long retreats during the academic year, and one summer retreat, all typically held in a "pleasant, off-campus room" (p. 17). Participants simply show up, sit down, and start writing, after "a few

words from Peter" (p. 18). There is a separate space where participants can exchange manuscripts, socialize, and partake in refreshments. Elbow claims that Professors-as-Writers Programs can support the natural and positive connections between scholarship and teaching (p. 20). He explains that using "uttered," "unrehearsed" words, as in a freewriting exercise, leads to the realization that "even though we're engaged in writing a high-stakes piece that will come in for fierce criticism, no living creature will see our early exploratory drafts except ourselves" (p. 21). He also writes that the faculty who participated in the Professor-as-Writer program "gain[ed] confidence not only in their writing but also in helping students learn to write, especially by modeling the use of freewriting and a 'writing space' in their own courses" (p. 20). This commentary, at first glance, seems to answer the question I am researching; the professors who wrote in this program developed better identities as writers and teachers of writing.

However, professors are not the only people who teach writing at most universities. Beginning composition courses are nearly always taught by graduate assistants and part-time instructors, far from having the status of professor. The article explains that all instructors were invited to the retreats, which I assume would include those who were teaching assistants. However, the article does not distinguish between the two, and I think that distinction is crucial; professors – who have written dissertations, who publish books and articles, who are professional writers – may not struggle to identify as writers in the same way that graduate assistants do. "Imposter syndrome" has been mentioned at nearly every training session and professional development for graduate students that I have ever attended (Clance & Imes, 1978). It is a pervasive part of graduate school culture. It is very much openly expressed and accepted among graduate students, perhaps even more so than among tenured faculty. Therefore, a gap in the research still exists: does freewriting improve the writer-identity of composition instructors

who are not professors, but who do constitute an important part of the writing instruction at most universities? Graduate assistants' identities may be more approximate to those of high school teachers as well, as both groups are unlikely to be extensively published in their field. To put it more generally, then, does freewriting improve the writer-identity of any type of writing teacher?

WRITER POSITIONALITY

I conducted this study as a white, young adult woman who has had an almost exclusively positive and successful relationship with writing. I also firmly believe that writing teachers must be writers, and I define writer as "anyone who spends intentional time trying to communicate messages in a textual form." To me, "texts" include informal and formal writing as well as personal and public writing. Meaning that yes, a teenager who writes extensively in a diary each night is a writer according to my definition. I have a strong identity as a writer and teacher of writing. I am also a regular practitioner of freewriting as Elbow defines it (1973).

I assumed all of the participants would need me to define freewriting for them. In making this assumption, I positioned them as only partial members of my discipline community. Lauren Black (1998) writes, "Words such as 'freewrite,' 'revise,' 'peer group,'... would be discipline-specific terms. Using these terms without any explanation indicates… that the speaker assumes the listener is a part of her community. Using and defining them indicates a willingness to help the listener become part of the speaker's community" (p. 76). I did not assume that the participants were already part of my community, because many of them are literature or creative writing majors. Only one of the eight participants is pursuing a Master's of Education, and only two had undergraduate degrees in education. However, I believed that they were likely familiar enough with the practice of freewriting that I could merely offer them a quick verbal definition, rather than asking that they review Elbow.

METHOD

This study received Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval on May 3, 2021. The approval number is IRB-FY2021-491 (See Appendix A).

I was initially drawn to graduate assistants, because I believe they are uniquely positioned as writing teachers who may not have the background or experience to identify as either writers or teachers. Many of my colleagues were put into a teaching position having not pursued education degrees and having little to no experience with lesson planning or implementation. Many of them, as well, are pursuing degrees in literature or other fields besides writing; teaching writing is a means to an end, not their scholarly interests. It is, for many, a way to fund themselves until they have their Ph.Ds. and can teach their preferred subjects. Additionally, as they were just embarking on their graduate careers, I expected that they may not yet identify as writers. Professors were likely to be published, but graduate assistants were not. I was drawn to how these GAs navigated their identities as writers when put in the authoritative position of writing teachers, but when they also lacked the experience in higher education or publishing to be considered professional writers. Thus, graduate assistants who teach composition seemed uniquely positioned for a study of writer and writing-teacher identity.

I present a study of eight graduate assistants who teach introductory composition at the university level as part of their graduate assistantships. Participants engaged in ten weeks of freewriting for ten minutes a day, five days a week of their choosing. I based this time frame on Elbow's recommendation of ten minutes "each day of the week" (1973, p. 9), on the assumption that each of five weekdays would suffice. They were instructed to simply start writing about anything they wanted without stopping to think or edit. I told them that it was appropriate and

correct to write "I don't know what to write," until they became unstuck. They were told that it was preferencial to write via pen and paper, as this medium is where most of my background research on freewriting had focused. But, when participants asked if it was okay to type their freewriting when it was more convienent, I consented, as I preferred them to write digitally than not write at all. I re-expressed my strong preference toward handwriting, but I did not prohibit typing.

Participants were interviewed three times during the study: once before they began the freewriting, once after five weeks of freewriting, and once again after the ten weeks of writing were complete. Some of the interview questions were the same for multiple interviews, while others were unique to each interview (See Data Collection). This approach allowed me to qualitatively and quantitatively track changes in the participants' self-perception as writers and writing teachers over the course of the study.

I did not collect the freewriting, because I was not interested in the writing that was produced by the freewriting. I was interested in how the process of freewriting affected the participants' identities as writers and writing teachers. The content of the freewriting, then, was irrelevant to this study. I followed the ethic of Elbow's freewriting (1973) by engaging with it as a process, not product.

PARTICIPANTS

To select participants, I wanted to focus on graduate assistants who had already taught introductory composition for one year. I thought that first-year graduate assistants would not be able to speak to their teaching, having not spent much time in the classroom. I also wanted to represent students who were studying education, literature, and creative writing, as I thought these areas of study may affect their identities. Most importantly, I wanted variation in the participants' prior experiences with freewriting; I was hoping for some people who had freewritten before and others who had not. So, I identified a group of eight people who, together, would meet these criteria, and whom I thought might be willing to participate. I solicited participants via email three months before the first interview. All eight people agreed to participate.

Participant Six had practiced unprompted freewriting previously and extensively in a National-Writing-Project-style course. He was the only participant who, before I offered instructions, seemed familiar with how Elbow defines freewriting. Participant Two had never practiced freewriting, or at least could not identify a time when she had. The other six participants had all practiced prompted freewriting as a brainstorming or prewriting technique but did not note ever performing unprompted freewriting.

The participants were told in detail about the study. They were told that they would be freewriting five days a week, ten minutes a day, for ten weeks. They were told that they would be interviewed three times, with ten questions per interivew, and that interviews would last approximately fifteen minutes. They were not given the questions ahead of time, but they were told that I was researching writer and teacher identity, so the questions would focus on these

topics. They were told how I was defining freewriting and given instructions for how to perform it (See Method).

Each participant consented to participate in this study prior to the first interview. Each participant consented to have the interviews audio recorded on my personal and password-protected laptop, on the basis that I would manually transcribe the interviews, redacting personally identifying information, immediately upon completion of each interview.

DATA COLLECTION

Data collection took place over a 3-month period to account for the ten weeks of freewriting and the interviews before and after these ten weeks. The data corpus of this study features interviews, which were conducted prior to the ten weeks of freewriting (interview one), after five weeks (interview two) and after the freewriting session was completed (interview three).

Participation in each interview was voluntary. The interviews were conducted either in-person in my office on the university campus, or via videotelephony software, specifically Zoom. Participants were able to choose which medium they preferred. Participants One, Two, Four, Six, and Eight met with me in-person all three times. Participants Three and Five met via video all three times. Participant Seven, who met with me in-person for interviews one and two, but via video for interview three, is the only participant who did not choose the same medium for all three interviews. The average length of time for each interview was ten minutes.

Each interview consisted of ten questions (See Appendix B). For the first interview, I was looking to establish a baseline for each participant's writing and teaching identity. I wanted to explore how they conceptualize writing and teaching more generally and how these ideas relate to their specific identities. So, questions three, four, nine, and ten ask for more general ideas about teaching and writing, whereas the other questions are about their personal identities. The first interview featured the following questions:

1. Do you consider yourself a writer? Why or why not?
2. Do you consider yourself an expert on writing? Why or why not?
3. How do you define what it is to be a "writer?"
4. Do you think writing teachers must be writers themselves?

5. Do you enjoy writing?
6. Do you think you are good at writing?
7. Do you prefer teaching writing over other topics?
8. Do you think you are better at teaching writing than other topics?
9. How often should students write in a writing classroom?
10. Is casual writing, such as freewriting, of equal learning value to formal essay writing?

For the second interview, I wanted to get the participants thinking about their freewriting experiences; I wanted them to evaluate if the freewriting seemed to have any effect on their identities so far. The participants also needed a space to explicitly consider how the freewriting was going. I thought of this interview as a halfway check-in point for their freewriting processes and as an opportunity for me to hear their own metacognitive evaluations of the freewriting experiences they were having. Therefore, the questions in interview two are much more focused on freewriting.

The only question that is not about freewriting is question seven, "Do you think of yourself as a writing teacher?" While this interview was focused primarily on freewriting, I wanted an opportunity for the participants to discuss their teaching identities at this point in the study. And I anticipated that asking about their identities alongside the questions about freewriting might help facilitate their thinking about the relationship between the two.

The second interview repeated one question from the first: "Is casual writing, such as freewriting, of equal learning value to formal essay writing?" I used this question to track how the participants' perceptions of casual writing had changed once they had practiced freewriting for five weeks, as I anticipated the participants would be more willing to attest to its value. I knew that many of them had never practiced freewriting as I was defining it, so I anticipated

rather negative views of the exercise initially and much more positive views once they had

actually tried it. Interview two consisted of the following questions:

1. Do you include freewriting in your definition of "writing?"
2. Has that definition changed since the beginning of this study?
3. Do you enjoy freewriting?
4. Do you think you are good at freewriting?
5. Has the freewriting experience been positive or negative?
6. Has freewriting had an effect on your other writing?
7. Do you think of yourself as a writing teacher?
8. Is casual writing, such as freewriting, of equal learning value to formal essay writing?
9. What would your students think of freewriting?
10. Would you try freewriting with your students?

The third interview questions were identical to the first interview, with the exception of

the question that was already repeated in interview two. I did not feel the need to repeat this

casual writing question a third time, as I wanted to focus specifically on identity in the third

interview. I repeated the other questions so that I could explicitly highlight changes in the

participants' answers. There was an additional question in interview three: "Do you think you are

a better writing teacher after completing this study?" I wanted the participants to explore how

any developments in their identities as writers and teachers affected their classroom practices. If

their classroom practices improved, then the importance of identity formation would be made

clearer. Interview three featured the following questions:

1. Do you consider yourself a writer? Why or why not?
2. Do you consider yourself an expert on writing? Why or why not?
3. How do you define what it is to be a "writer?"
4. Do you think writing teachers must be writers themselves?
5. Do you enjoy writing?
6. Do you think you are good at writing?

7. Do you prefer teaching writing over other topics?
8. Do you think you are better at teaching writing than other topics?
9. How often should students write in a writing classroom?
10. Do you think you are a better writing teacher after completing this study?

I anticipated a linear progression in their identity development; I expected that their identities as writers and teachers would directly strengthen over the course of the study. To track this progression, in all three interviews, questions one, two, four, six, seven, eight, and ten are all yes/no. I believed that quantifying their answers as affirmative or negative would explicitly show the strength of their identities at the beginning, middle, and end.

However, not every question was yes/no. It was important to ask how often students should write in a writing classroom, as the participants' prioritization of writing time could be affected by their daily freewriting practice. I anticipated potential for change in their time spent having students write as a result of the study. So, question nine in interviews one and three asks for an amount. In interview two, I wanted the participants to consider freewriting as a classroom practice in addition to a personal one, to see if there were differences in their perceptions of freewriting as writers versus teachers. So, I asked what their students would think of freewriting. I also asked if the freewriting experience had been positive or negative, as I wanted to note how the participants were perceiving their own progress during the study. In interviews one and three, I also wanted to trace how the participants were defining "writer;" if their identities as writers changed, I thought their definitions of this term might illustrate why the change occurred, or the thinking behind the change. So, question three in interviews one and three asks for a definition.

FINDINGS FOR INTERVIEW ONE

I first began by considering all of the data, looking to find changes in the participants' perceptions of their identities as writers and writing teachers as a consequence of freewriting for ten weeks. I assumed that the longer they participated in freewriting, the more likely they would be to identify as writers and teachers of writing. I also expected that they would see those two identites – writers and writing teachers – as more interconnected. I assumed the participants' progression through the study would reveal a linaer trajectory, showing a gradual move toward a stronger perception of their writing and teaching identites.

I assumed that, in this first interview, few of the participants would easily consider themselves as writers. I thought some participants might say, "yes, but.." or "sometimes," but I did not expect any resounding affirmations.

I expected nearly every participant to define "writer" as, "a person who writes," as our university compositon program teaches this idea. However, I expected a correlation between this question and question one; if they did not consider themselves as writers, then they must similarly exclude themselves from their definitions of "writer."

I expected participants to affirm that writing teachers must be writers themselves in question four, as this answer would be consistent with the idea that everyone who writes is a writer, which I knew these participants had likely been taught. If they gave this type of defintion for "writer," then they must answer "yes" to question four.

I expected waffling answers to "Do you enjoy writing?" I was unsure if participants would base their answers to this question on their general writing experiences, or if they would

be influenced by whatever they were feeling about their current writing projects. So, I expected a general answer of "sometimes," "often," etc.

I did not expect any of the participants to think they were good at writing, though I thought some of them might reference how other people seemed to perceive their writing abilities (for example, "I'm a straight A writing student, so I guess that means I'm good"). I expected mostly denials to, "Do you consider yourself an expert on writing?" More importantly, I expected a correlation between answers to these two questions; if participants believed they were good at writing, I also expected that they would identify as experts on writing.

I expected their answers to "Do you prefer teaching writing over other topics?" to correspond with their areas of study; literature students would say no, they would rather teach literature; writing students would say yes, they prefer teaching writing. I thought the same would be true for, "Do you think you are better at teaching writing than other topics?"

In response to, "How often should students write in a writing classroom?" I again expected them to repeat what our coursework in compostion studies usually says: every day, or as often as possible. I did not expect the participants to think that casual writing was of equal value to formal writing, though I thought this answer might change rather quickly once they tried freewriting.

Table 1 below presents the answers to the questions from interview one, with each question represented as "Q" and the corresponding number. Participants are represented as "P" followed by an assigned number, which is the same for each interview. Answers that did not fit cleanly into a "yes" or "no" category are represented in the footer legend and explained below. In many cases, the participants responded with "yes and no," which is represented as "yes/no" in the table (see Table 1).

Table 1. Answers to Interview 1

	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8
Q1	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Sightly
Q2	Aspects	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	No
Q4	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No
Q5	Yes/No	Yes	Yes	Yes/No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Q6	Yes	ST [1]	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	No
Q7	Yes	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	DK [2]
Q8	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes/No
Q9	Often	Daily	Weekly	Daily	Daily	Daily	Daily	Daily
Q10	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Could	Yes	No

[1] "Sometimes"
[2] "I don't know"

In answer to question three, which is not represented in the table, as it asked for a defintion, all but Participant Eight gave very open, inclusive answers. Participant Eight's answer indicated that to be considered a "writer," a person must be published or paid. Otherwise, each participant gave defintions that could be summarized as "anyone who writes."

The established baseline indicates that all participants did identify as writers in question one, though Participant Eight said "only slightly." This was an unexpected finding. Five out of eight participants believed that writing teachers must be writers in question four. All participants answered question five with yes, they enjoyed writing, though two offered "yes and no" answers, as they only enjoy some parts of the writing process. Six did not identify as experts on writing in question two, while Participant One said she was an expert "on aspects" of writing. Answers to

question six, "Do you think you are good at writing?" were almost evenly divided between "yes" and "no," with one "sometimes."

All but one of the literature students said "no" to question seven ("Would you prefer teaching writing over other topics?"). Participant eight, the only literature student who said, "I don't know" to question seven, indicated that he does not separate the teaching of writing from any other topic, so he could not answer the question. The two writing students and the only education student said "yes" to question seven.

Answers to question eight matched answers to question seven except for Participants Four and Eight. Meaning, three of the participants who said they would prefer teaching a topic other than writing also thought they would be better at teaching a topic other than writing. Similarly, the three participants who preferred teaching writing thought they were best at teaching writing. Participant Four could not speak to her abilites to teach a topic other than writing, having never done so, even though her preference would be to teach literature. Pariticpant Eight, who had said "I don't know" for question seven, similarly said that he was unsure if he was better at teaching writing than other topics, because he was good at some aspects of the job and bad at others.

Every participant answered "every day" to question nine ("How often should students write in a writing class?") except for Participant One, who said "as often as they can" and Participant Three, who said "once or twice a week." Participants were divided on question ten, "Is casual writing – such as freewriting – of equal value to formal essay writing?" with five saying, "yes," two "no," and one "it could be."

After reviewing the data for interview one, I discovered something that I had not anticipated. Many of the participants contradicted themselves during the first interview by giving

an inclusive defintion of "writer," but answering "no" to question four ("Do you think writing teachers must be writers themselves?"). Half of the participants also contradicted themselves in their responses to question two ("Do you consider yourself an expert on writing?") and question six ("Do you think you are good at writing?") Upon closer examination, I noticed subtle differences among the types of contradictions and decided to aggregate the data according to these contradictions in the first interview.

The first contradiction was, "participant believes writing teachers do not have to be writers, but also believes writers are simply people who write." This contradiction dealt with their conflicting answers to questions three and four. If writers are merely people who write at all – people who have literacy, essentially – teachers should by default be writers. However, several participants indicated that writing teachers need not be writers.

The second contradiction was, "participant does not identify as an expert on writing but does consider themselves to be good at writing." Each participant in this category indicated a contradiction between their answers to question two ("Do you consider yourself an expert on writing?") and question six ("Do you think you are good at writing?") They all identify quite firmly as good writers but do not identify as experts at writing, which indicates that their notions of "good" and "expert" may not correspond.

The third contradiction was, "participant identifies as a writer, but not with the definition they present." All of the participants who identified as writers offered qualifications for their identities as writers, and for three participants, their qualifications did not seem to align with the definitions of "writer" they gave in answer to question three.

The fourth contradiction was, "participant does not mention grammar or usage in their definition of 'writer,' but notes grammar as a skill on which writing is contingent." None of the

interview questions were about grammar, yet several participants mentioned grammar in answer to one or more of the questions, even though none of these participants included grammar in their definitions of "writer."

Participant Believes Writing Teachers Do Not Have to be Writers, But Also Believes Writers are Simply People Who Write

I coded interview one for the contradiction: "Participant believes writing teachers do not have to be writers, but also believes writers are simply people who write." Two participants coded here. Participant Six answered, "How do you define what it is to be a writer?" with, "A person who writes is a writer. And when I say writing, I mean texting, emailing, to doing a big research paper, posting some ideas on Facebook." Then, when answering, "Do you think writing teachers must be writers themselves?" the participant said, "I don't think [teachers] have to be writers, but I hope they have a passion to teach how to write."

Participant Three said, "I think being a writer is someone who enjoys writing and like, writes." Later, when asked if writing teachers must be writers, she said, "I think it probably helps, but I don't think there's necessarily a requirement for somebody to be a writer to teach writing."

Participant Does Not Identify as an Expert on Writing, But Does Consider Themselves to be Good at Writing

I also coded interview one for the contradiction, "Participant does not identify as an expert on writing but does consider themselves to be good at writing." Three out of eight

participants indicated a contradiction in their answers to questions two ("Do you consider yourself an expert on writing?") and six ("Do you think you are good at writing?").

Participant Four said she was good at writing: "Yes. For the most part. It's something that comes pretty naturally to me." Then, when asked if she identified as an expert on writing, the participant said, "I think I'm suspicious of anyone claiming to be an expert, because it feels like something that is very hard to claim expertise in."

Participant Three claimed to be good at writing, "I would say yes," but then asserted, "I probably don't consider myself an expert, since I'm still in school. I consider it more of like a fluid thing, since it's more of a developing skill, rather than kind of an 'expert' status."

Participant Two said she was "sometimes" good at writing, but also said, "Writing is a medium that always changes its form, so I don't really think it's appropriate to label yourself an expert in something like that."

Participant Identifies as a Writer, But Not with the Definition They Present

Three participants identified as writers but qualified these identifications in ways that seemed to contradict their definitions of "writer." The contradiction lay in their answers to "Do you consider yourself a writer?" and "How do you define what it is to be writer?" Participant Two said, "I would say yes [I am a writer], because I do a lot of creative writing," but also said, "If you've ever written a word, you're a writer." This reflects a contradiction because if anyone who has ever written is a writer, then there is no reason to qualify her own identification with her experience in creative writing.

Participant Five said, "I consider myself a writer because I'm always trying to improve my writing," but also offered, "[A writer] is somebody who's looking to transfer their thoughts

and feelings into a written form." This participant's focus on the transfer of thoughts and feelings seems unrelated to his identification as someone who seeks to improve his writing abilities.

Participant One claimed, "I consider myself a writer because I write something every day," and simultaneously claimed, "Do you write something, ever? If the answer is yes, then you're a writer." This participant had the simplest contradiction; to be a writer, does one need to write every day, or can one simply write "something ever?"

Participant Does Not Mention Grammar or Usage in their Definition of "Writer," but Notes Grammar as a Skill on which Writing is Contingent

Another contradiction coded was, "Participant does not mention grammar or usage in their definition of 'writer,' but notes grammar as a skill on which writing is contingent." Three participants coded for this contradiction.

Participant Six defined writer as "a person who writes," but later answered "Do you identify as an expert in writing?" with, "No, because I still make a lot of errors and I still want to come back and revise and rewrite." While he does not mention grammar under his definition of "writer," he seems to believe that an expert in writing does have grammatical accuracy.

Participant Two defined "writer" as, "If you've ever written a word, you're a writer," and identified as a writer: "I would say yes." But later, when answering question seven ("Do you prefer teaching writing over other topics?") she also said, "I really only feel like I can handle [teaching] writing at like a university level, because I am not confident on my grammar. I wouldn't want to teach like middle school writing where they do like, 'There's the subject and the verb.' I'm like, 'I don't know; I don't know what those are.'" I assumed that if one's

definition of "writer" has nothing to do with grammatical acuteness, there was no need to bring up grammar as a skill that would prohibit one from being able to teach writing.

Participant Eight defined "writer" as "requir[ing] some kind of publishing element." He claimed, perhaps appropriately using this definition, that writing teachers do not have to be writers; "It doesn't require a vast in-depth knowledge to teach somebody something." Later, the participant answered, "Do you think you are better at teaching writing than other topics?" with, "When I think about teaching writing, I think about teaching things like how to use a comma, like grammar and usage rules." This third claim reveals a contradiction. Teaching grammar and usage rules does require extensive understanding of language. If this topic is part of teaching writing, then teachers should presumably have a "vast, in-depth knowledge" of these skills. It is doubtful that one can teach the usage rules this person describes without the high level of knowledge that he rejects.

DATA ANALYSIS OF INTERVIEW ONE

To analyze the contradictions that I observed, I began by seeking out a theoretical framework that would help me understand how to embrace contraries. Peter Elbow's notions of embracing contraries and methodological belief (1986) frame my understanding of this study. Elbow writes that by searching for contradictions in a system and believing in both sides, the learner is able to move out of a limited frame of reference and into a newer, larger one, because of the "interaction of contradictions" (1986, p. 251). To move away from the "limitations of a single point of view" (p. x), one must seek out the most offensive oppositions and affirm each side of them. If one fully plays this believing game (1973, p. 145), nurturing the conflict and embracing it (1986, p. 243), one may find a wider frame of reference that includes elements that had previously been seen as contradictory.

Embracing contraries means to heighten contradictions, even overstating or exaggerating them, but to simultaneously understand that both sides of the conflict "must somehow be right" (p. x). Doing justice to each perspective, not through a compromise or reconciliation but through an understanding of the validity of each side (p. 234), leads to better thinking (p. 255). Inherent in this frame is an idea of knowledge as pluralistic (p. 289), wherein by participating in conflicting perceptions, we get closer to understanding the truth, because each perception may address a different facet of this truth.

Methodological belief, which Elbow contrasts with methodological doubt, is "the equally systematic, disciplined and conscious attempt to believe everything no matter how unlikely or repellent it might seem – to find virtues or strengths we might otherwise miss" (p. 257). Methodological doubting seeks to "criticize everything no matter how compelling it might

seem—to find flaws or contradictions" (p. 257). This framework does not argue for the practice of methodological belief instead of methodological doubt. Elbow views both ideas as equally necessary; he argues merely for the inclusion of belief with doubt, that a person cannot reject an idea until they have succeeded in believing it (p. 261).

Admitedly, I entered the analysis portion of this study doubting much of what I had collected. Many of the participants seemed to contradict themselves in their interviews, and much of what I found contradicted the expectations my background research had laid clear for me. So, to help expand my own frame of reference, I sought to believe that everything the participants told me was true. I sought "to find a valid sense in words where before there was no sense or an invalid sense" (p. 278). I asked myself in what way their words could be right.

Elbow writes that one particularly approachable way of playing the believing game is to ask the following questions (p. 275): What would you notice if you believed this view? In what senses or under what conditions might this idea be true? Elbow suggests that the listener pretend to be someone who believes in the idea, whether that person is real or imaginary. This role playing serves as the foundation for my analysis of the data.

Participant Believes Writing Teachers Do Not Have to be Writers, But Also Believes Writers are Simply People Who Write

The participants clearly did not see the same contradictions that I saw regarding their definitions of "writer" and their answers to question four ("Do you think writing teachers must be writers themselves?"). So, to analyze these responses and practice methodological belief, I asked in what sense these claims could be true. Two of the participants indicated in interview one that they believe writing teachers do not have to be writers, but also believe writers are

simply people who write. I believe the participants really do define writers as people who write. They likely tell their students that they are writers just by writing.

In what sense, then, might writing teachers not consider themselves writers? What would I notice if I believed this? If I place myself into the shoes of the participants, both of whom are in fields other than Composition, then I can begin to understand: I am not explicitly studying Composition, so the writing in my graduate classes doesn't seem particularly relevant to teaching writing. I do not even know what types of writing people in the field of Composition do. My work as a writer has nothing to do with my work as a writing teacher. Why would I try to fit my writing identity in a sphere where it is not relevant? Because I see little relevancy connecting writing and teaching, I cannot claim that one identity necessitates the other.

Role playing reveals that graduate assistants may not see the connection between being a writer and being a teacher of writing because those two identities are inherently separate in their lived experiences. They compartmentalize their work as students and their work as teachers, and in doing so, isolate their writing from their teaching of writing. For them, writers and teachers are a Venn Diagram with some overlapping experiences, but they are still two distinct circles.

By highlighting and even exaggerating the contradictions through role playing, this prompted me to look toward another alternative explanation: these two participants could believe that everyone who writes is a writer, but they have internalized higher, perhaps subconscious, expectations for themselves as graduate students: Yes, everyone is a writer just by writing, but I am not a writer. When evaluating their own writing as graduate students, they may believe writers must have advanced skills and/or be published. Therefore, to say that writing teachers must be writers would be quite hypocritical. Notably, while both of these participants identified as writers, neither identified as an expert in writing in question two. This inability to claim

expertise may inhibit their abilities to fully identify as writers. In an almost face-saving set of ideas, if they do not really believe that they are writers, then writing teachers must not have to be writers.

Participant Does Not Identify as an Expert on Writing, But Does Consider Themselves to be Good at Writing

Another contradiction I found was similarly related to the idea of expertise: "Participant does not identity as an expert on writing but does consider themselves to be good at writing." Participant Four considers herself to be good at writing but admitted to being "suspicious" of anyone claiming expertise. This contradiction in her responses may find its crux in the idea that this person is pursuing a graduate degree. She may be suspicious of people who identify as an expert but have not worked toward an advanced degree. If I place myself into the role of the participant, then I can begin to understand why she does not see a contradiction: Expertise requires an advanced college degree or some type of outside certification. That is why I am pursing a graduate degree. Someone can produce good writing without these credentials, but that doesn't make them an expert in writing. Participant Four is not an expert because to identify as an expert requires an advanced degree. She is suspicious of anyone claiming expertise without the appropriate credentials. This does not negate the fact, though, that someone can be "good" at writing without credentials.

Participant Three, who denied expertise because she is still in school, also shares similar ideas about what being an expert means. Being in school prohibits expertise, because one has not yet achieved the required degree, but it doesn't prohibit being good at writing.

Participant Two, who denied the existence of expertise, said she was "sometimes" good at writing. She also defined "writer" in question three by saying, "If you've ever written a word, you're a writer." This participant may have such an open definition as to remove the need for a novice-expert hierarchy. Again, if I jump into role-playing, I can begin to understand the participant's logic: A text message is truly of equal value to a best-selling novel, thus the novelist is no more an expert than the texter. If we are all writers, then we are all experts; conversely, if everyone is an expert, then no one is. Through role-playing, this idea becomes easier to understand. If the hierarchy is removed, no one can label themselves as expert or novice. This logic explains her "sometimes" answer to question six ("Do you think you are good at writing?"); if there is no novice-expert hierarchy, there may also be no "good writer" versus "bad writer" hierarchy, which makes it difficult to give a yes/no answer.

By "believing" these conceptions of expert, it becomes evident how graduate assistants can define themselves as good writers without identifying as experts. Their stricter conceptions of expertise prohibit any automatic connection between being good at writing and having expertise in writing. They do not see good writing as a direct scaffold into expertise. Consequently, though these graduate assistants are positioned as the writing experts in their classrooms, they are far from actually identifying as experts.

Participant Identifies as a Writer, But Not with the Definition They Present

The third contradiction – participant identifies as a writer, but not with the definition they present – is evident in respondents' answers to questions one ("Do you consider yourself a writer?") and three ("How do you define what it is to be a 'writer?'").

Participant Two said, "I would say yes [I am a writer], because I do a lot of creative writing," but also defined "writer" as anyone who has, "ever written a word." She qualified her own identity with the "creative" element, even though that was not part of her definition of "writer." When this participant answered question five, "Do you enjoy writing?" she said, "When I do creative writing, I like it a lot." Creative writing *is* an important part of her writer identity, even though it is not part of her more general definition of "writer." It was natural to bring up creative writing when asked about her own identity, but this detail functions independently from her definition.

Participant Five defined writing as all about the transfer of thoughts and feelings but identified as a writer because he is always trying to improve his writing. It is difficult to see the connection between thoughts and feelings and improvement, especially if his notion of improvement is based on some external notion of "good" writing. It reads as a contradiction between his private writing goals (transfer of thoughts and feelings) and his public writing goals (improvement). If I roleplay as this person, writing is all about the transfer of thoughts and feelings; however, I am struggling to do so in my literature graduate program. I have yet to figure out how incorporate my own feelings into my critical analysis of Hemmingway. But perhaps if I try hard to improve the way I engage with Hemmingway, I will see how my thoughts and feelings can live through my writing as a literature student. Therefore, this contradiction is resolved by the idea that he is a writer because he is trying to improve his ability to put his thoughts and feelings into written form; he is improving based on his definition of writing.

Participant One's identity as a writer also seemed to contradict her general definition of "writer." She claimed that writers must simply "write something, ever," but also considered herself a writer because she writes daily. The contradiction rests on whether writers should be

daily practitioners, or if any act of writing makes one a writer. Had this participant merely said, "I have written, so I am a writer," it would not have conflicted with the definition she presented. It was the "every day," that created the contradiction, but the two may not be mutually exclusive. The participant may not be claiming to identify as a writer because she writes every day; she identifies as a writer because she writes, and it just so happens to be every day.

By role-playing as these participants, I understand that the qualifiers they chose to include are important parts of their personal writing journeys. For Participant Two, creative writing is the most sentient part of her identity. For Participant Five, the journey toward improvement likely takes precedence over other aspects of his writing. And for Participant One, daily practice is an important part of her work as a writer, and therefore has a real impact on her identity. This insight suggests that writer identity for graduate assistants may be highly idiosyncratic, even if their definitions of "writer" are quite broad.

Participant Does Not Mention Grammar or Usage in their Definition of "Writer," but Notes Grammar as a Skill on which Writing is Contingent

Three participants did not mention grammar or usage in their definition of "writer," but noted grammar as a skill on which writing is contingent. Participant Six defined writer as "a person who writes." However, he did not identify as an expert in writing in question two. He qualified his answer to question two with, "I still make a lot of errors and I still want to come back and revise and rewrite." While he does not mention grammar within his definition of "writer," he believes that expert writers would not make errors. One can be a writer regardless of grammatical knowledge, as in his definition. But one cannot be an expert if one consistently makes grammatical errors.

Participant Two stated that "if you've ever written a word, you're a writer," but noted that she does not prefer teaching writing over other topics because she is "not confident" with grammar, and for this reason, she can only teach writing at the "university level." She simultaneously separates the teaching of grammar and the teaching of writing but also sees them as inseparable, because she cites grammar as a reason that she could not teach writing in a middle school. Participant Two has an undergraduate degree in literature and is pursuing a master's in such. Prior to her appointment as a GA, she had no teaching experience. If I assume her perspective, I can begin to understand the contradiction: It is not that my definition of "writer" has nothing to do with grammar, it just has nothing to do with the ability to name grammatical rules. Perhaps, writing must have enough grammatical accuracy to be understood. This doesn't mean that a writer needs to be able to explicitly name subjects and verbs, but they should know how to use those parts of speech correctly. I feel less-than-confident in teaching the prescriptive elements of grammar and usage, having never been formally taught such at a college level, but this is okay. I believe that writing is a skill dependent upon understanding of grammar, but this understanding may be implicit. When phrased this way, the contradiction seems to disappear entirely.

Participant Eight defined a writer as one who must be published. However, he also specified that writing teachers do not need any "in-depth knowledge" to teach writing. Though, according to him, teaching writing was primarily about teaching grammar and usage. The most obvious understanding of this contradiction is to consider how this person defines "in-depth knowledge." He may not think that an understanding of grammar and usage rules is in-depth; to have "in-depth" grammatical knowledge, to this person, may mean having a Ph.D. in linguistics. To him, teachers' knowledge does not have to be "in-depth" to teach the types of grammar and

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usage skills needed by a layperson. I define "in-depth knowledge" as having graduate-level study in a field. So, teachers do not need this level of knowledge to teach most students.

Another way to understand this contradiction, however, is to focus on his definition of "writer" as someone who must be published. I wondered how a writer must be published, but a writing teacher must teach grammar. These two skillsets seemed widely far apart, as grammar is likely not the most important skill to a published writer. Many published writers are much indebted to a skilled editing team and could not teach grammar without some significant refreshers. So, then, the group that Participant Eight labeled as "writers" could not actually teach writing. Of course, this fits well within his frame of reference; he never claimed that writing teachers have to be writers, in fact he was quite certain otherwise. To him, writers and writing teachers are two entirely different circles on a Venn Diagram. There may be some people who can fit in the overlapping portion – those who are published writers but are also skilled at teaching grammar – but one can easily exist in the outer circles only. Professional writers and writing teachers have little to do with each other.

There is, however, one contradiction remaining with Participant Eight. Again, he defines "writer" as someone who is published. If teaching writing means teaching grammar, but published writers likely rely more heavily on skills other than grammar to succeed, then one is not actually teaching many of the skills that writers use. Meaning, one is teaching writing without teaching students to be writers, based on this person's definition. As mentioned above, this person answered question eight ("Do you think you are better at teaching writing than other topics?") with, "When I think about teaching writing, I think about teaching things like how to use a comma, like grammar and usage rules." However, his answer did continue: "When I think about turning students into professional writers … I think about logic and reason." So, this

person does allude to the idea that professional writers need skills other than grammar. Participant Eight separates teaching writing from turning students into writers. For him, teaching basic writing skills for the layperson and teaching skills needed to be a "writer" are entirely different pursuits.

This data indicates that grammar plays an important role in teacher and writer identity, even if the respondents did not note grammar in their definitions of "writer." These findings could indicate that even when graduate assistants have generous definitions of "writer," their personal writing identities are still dependent on grammar and usage concerns. Graduate assistants may even hold themselves to much higher grammatical standards than they would apply to anyone else.

FINDINGS FOR INTERVIEW TWO

In interview two, I was primarily seeking information about how the freewriting experience was going for each participant. I saw this as an opportunity for the participants to practice some metacognition about how freewriting was affecting their thinking. Answers to all but question nine ("What would your students think of freewriting?") from interview two are represented below (see Table 2). For question five ("Has the freewriting experience been positive or negative?"), I have abbreviated "Positive" as "Pos." Question eight, "Is casual writing, such as freewriting, of equal learning value to formal essay writing?" is the only repeated question from interview one.

Table 2. Answers to Interview 2

	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8
Q1	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Q2	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	Yes
Q3	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Q4	Yes	NA	No	No	Yes	ST [1]	ST [1]	Yes
Q5	Pos	Pos	Pos	Pos	Pos	Pos	Pos	Pos
Q6	Yes	Y/N	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No
Q7	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Q8	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Q10	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Once	Yes	Yes

[1] "Sometimes"

Participant Two, in response to question four, "Do you think you are good at freewriting?" said, "I don't think there's necessarily a way to be good at freewriting." As she did not consider the question to be applicable, I represented this answer as "NA" in the table. In response to question six, "Has freewriting had an effect on your other writing?" she answered that it had affected her poetry writing but not her "academic" writing, which I coded as yes/no, represented as "Y/N" in the table. Participant Six, in response to question ten, is listed as "Tried once," as he once assigned freewriting to his students but did not do so again.

In response to question one, seven out of eight participants said yes, they do include freewriting in their definition of "writing." In response to question two, six participants did not believe their definition of "writing" had changed since the beginning of the study. Participant Four's definition had changed because she was "more comfortable" including freewriting in her definition. Participant Eight noted that his definition had changed because he no longer believed that being "writer" means being published.

Everyone answered yes to question three, "Do you enjoy freewriting?" Answers to question four, "Do you think you are good at freewriting" were mixed, with two "no," two "sometimes," three "yes" and Participant Two's "N/A." Everyone believed the freewriting experience had been positive in question five.

Question six, "Has freewriting had an effect on your other writing?" received five "yes," two "no" and one "yes/no" from Participant Two. Question seven, "Do you think of yourself as a writing teacher?" had unanimous answers of "yes."

Question eight, "Is casual writing, such as freewriting, of equal learning value to formal essay writing?" also received universal "yes" answers. This is a shift from the two "no" answers and one "it could be" given in response to the same question (question ten) in interview one.

Answers to question nine, "What would your students think of freewriting?" were not yes/no answers but were surprisingly categorizable. Participants Six, Five, and One indicated that their students, in general, like freewriting. Participants Seven, Eight, and Three indicated that their students have mixed feelings; some seem to enjoy it, and others do not. Participants Two and Four were quite firm that none of their students seem to like freewriting. Question ten, "Would you try freewriting with your students" was also answered with "yes" from nearly every participant, with the one exception of "tried once" from Participant Six.

I first read through the data for shifts in thinking regarding the value of freewriting. In interview one, I had not expected many participants to value casual writing as much as formal writing. I anticipated that much of this attitude came from a lack of experience with freewriting. I had hoped that after five weeks of trying freewriting, they might place more value on it.

After reviewing the data, I noted that many participants expressed a dramatic emotional response to the freewriting. I had not anticipated their candidness about these reactions, nor had I explicitly asked about their emotional responses. While I did ask, "Has the freewriting experience been positive or negative?" I had anticipated participants to evaluate the positive or negative effects on their writing, not their emotions. The choice of seven out of eight participants to include information about their emotions in their answers to this question proved significant, and therefore, became the second trend I noted.

The third trend was, "a change in writer identity to a change in teacher identity." In this second interview, the participants started to relate their development as writers to their development as teachers. Few of them had expressed this connection in the first interview, so I highlighted the presence of this newfound teacher-writer relationship.

Shifts in Thinking Regarding the Value of Freewriting

In interview one, three participants believed that freewriting was of equal value to formal, academic writing, but added specific qualifiers for their affirmative answers. In interview two, all three participants believed that freewriting was of equal value but had removed the conditions they presented initially.

Participant Eight said in the first interview, "Yes [freewriting is of equal value], but I don't think the skill is necessarily transferable. So, it can help, but in a vacuum, no." Then, in the second interview, he offered, "Yes. It has to be [of equal value]. Based on my experience .... Even if it's not necessarily important, as it's not going to be published. To get your ideas straight, to understand yourself, to understand the topic you're writing about. If it does that, then it has to be. It has to be as important, if not more important." This participant had the most noticeable shift in thinking between the first two interviews.

Participant Two originally said in the first interview:

> [Freewriting] can be [of equal value], but I don't think it's utilized as such. I feel like a lot of people think of a journal as like, oh this is my diary and I'm just going to write down all the bad things that happened to me today, or like, my crush asked me out, or whatever. To answer your question, I don't think people take journaling seriously enough, but I think if they were, I think it would be useful.

Prior to practicing freewriting, this participant used the terms "freewriting" and "journaling" synonymously. She also renounces the digressions that are so often a part of freewriting, noting that to write about one's day or romantic encounters renders the writing as less valuable than academic writing. To reject the presence of digressions is nearly analogous to rejecting freewriting as a whole, as they are an integral part of Elbow's freewriting process.

Freewriting improves the quality of one's writing by encouraging ideas we might otherwise miss, and these digressions are how one finds these ideas; "You can encourage richness and chaos by encouraging digressions … if you allow yourself to get genuinely off the subject you can see it differently when you come back" (Elbow, 1973, p. 34). So, to reject these digressions could prevent any improvement in one's quality of writing.

In interview two, Participant Two answered the same question with: "I would argue that yes, it can be [of equal value]. A lot of freewriting techniques that I've personally been using are just giving more credit to my own style and voice. Which is very useful. I mean there are tons of essayists who write in a very informal, personal tone."

Participant Six initially said, "I would say [freewriting] could be equal [in value] if they focus on their techniques or their strategies that they use." Then, in the second interview, the same participant said, "I think a similar or same value for freewriting and academic writing, but I think it's a matter of the amount of experience I had, and I just got a huge experience this summer [in a freewriting-based writing class] … The amount of experience is definitely changed my mind and view of what the value of each type of writing is."

On the one hand, Participant Six's shift in thinking seems rather small; he goes from one necessary condition (focus) to another (experience). However, these conditions are very different. While he initially prescribed how one performs the act of freewriting, he concluded in the second interview that mere practice with freewriting could make a difference in the value. This condition is almost a non-condition, because to practice freewriting at all is to do it regularly; Elbow's first line in Chapter One of *Writing Without Teachers* is, "The most effective way I know to improve your writing is to do freewriting exercises regularly. At least three times a week" (Elbow, 1973, p. 3).

Emotional Response

Perhaps unsurprisingly, given the nature of freewriting and the emotional volatility

associated with the stress of graduate school, seven out of eight participants noted having a

strong emotional response during freewriting, in response to question five ("Has the freewriting

experience been positive or negative?"). Only Participant Five did not exhibit this trend. When

asked about the positivity or negativity of the freewriting experience, he said:

> I think it's been mostly positive. When I ask my students to freewrite, that's
> usually when I'll freewrite, so I'm in the classroom. So, I'll talk about like how
> I'm doing as a teacher that day or like, what I'm going to be teaching, or maybe
> things I'm studying in my own life. I'll write about that … If I'm doing a specific
> lesson, I'll try and write all of what I remember about the lesson before I teach it
> when I'm freewriting.

Many participants' emotional responses were based on a sense of catharsis. Participant

One said, "I generally end up treating the freewriting like it's time to write in my journal, so it's

like that is where I vent and like word vomit everything... [It's been] Positive, especially for

mental health." Participant Seven said, "A lot of personal stuff comes up. So yeah, that's really

weird. Freewriting is getting all of this stuff that I kind of keep bottled inside." Participant Four

said, "I'm unloading all these thoughts that I'm having and they're not just bouncing anymore.

It's nice."

Other participants responded to having a time and space for themselves; the self-care or

emotional independency element of freewriting was their takeaway. Participant Two said, "It's a

great way for me to vent without having to bother everyone a million times a day," while

Participant Six said, "So it's been really positive and I really enjoy it and it's a very, very good

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time of the day. Just ten, fifteen minutes of the day when I can reflect and think just about myself."

Two participants had emotional responses that differed from the others. Participant Eight said, "I would say [freewriting has been] positive … But I do think, I guess I can't call it fully positive, because it is sort-of compulsory, and I tend to rebel against things that are compulsory."

The last participant who had an emotional response, Participant Three, is unique in that her response was strictly confined to her attitudes about writing: "I think maybe I feel a little more confident starting writing ... I do feel more comfortable with the things I'm writing, I think."

A Change in Writer Identity to a Change in Teacher Identity

Four participants made a connection between the development of writer identity and the development of teacher identity. This connection is perhaps the most explicit way in which the participants shifted toward a reframed notion of themselves as writers and teachers in interview two. In the first interview, the relationship between writer and teacher was rarely mentioned by any of the participants, except when I explicitly asked if writing teachers must be writers themselves. Even so, their answers to this question did not explore the connections between teaching and writing with much depth; this question was the only one in interview one in which all of the answers were very plainly "yes" or "no." In the second interview, when answering question seven ("Do you think of yourself as a writing teacher?"), the participants shifted toward more nuanced understandings of the teacher-writer relationship; they began to make specific connections between their work as writers and their work as teachers in a way that was not present in the first interview.

Participant Two answered question seven with the following:

I will say, more practicing of writing is making me feel more comfortable, because I am a literature person by nature. So, I was very scared to attempt teaching writing at first; I wasn't sure that I would be able to transfer my skills. So, just being able to practice writing of my own accord, even if it's not anything fancy, I feel gives me more confidence to be able to help my students.

This person's relationship between writing and teaching rests on confidence and comfort; she focuses primarily on her newfound feelings associated with writing. While she mentions a discomfort with transferring skills from her literature study into her teaching, she does not list any specific skills that freewriting helped her to transfer. Instead, she indicates that freewriting simply made her more comfortable with writing, which made her more comfortable teaching.

Participant Three's answer was, "I don't know if it's having more teaching experience this semester, but I do feel a lot more confident giving feedback on writing. I think it's probably a combination of things, but I do feel more confident in my own writing, which I think is helping me be more confident in giving feedback and teaching."

Participant Six offered a contradictory answer, similar to the contradictions noted in interview one. He said, "I cannot say freewrite is helping me to become a writing teacher, but I do feel writing is definitely helping me to refocus on what I can do and what I need to know before I teach. It's been a big reinforcer to think about how I do teach, what I know about teaching writing."

Participant Eight offered:

Last time I said something along the lines of … you have to produce something for it to be writing proper. And I don't think that's true anymore … if you see a helicopter in a tree, you don't have to be a pilot to know that something got messed up. And I think that's the way that my opinion of writing has changed;

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you don't have to necessarily produce something or be paid or published. You can still know something just by looking at it. I read philosophic texts … I'm not a philosopher, but I think I could probably teach something. Even in music, I've told people before, you need to be just one lesson ahead of the person that you're giving a lesson to. So, if I apply my own philosophies on this kind of stuff, I have to apply it to writing.

Unlike the other participants, he was answering the question, "Has your definition [of writing] changed since the beginning of this study?" Yet, his answer addresses teaching and writing together, similar to these other responses. In the previous interview, this person had been adamant that to be a writer, one must be paid to write. Because of this, writing teachers need not be writers; it would be quite challenging to find professional writers to teach every writing class in the world. However, the above shift indicates a significant change in his ideas surrounding both writing and teaching.

DATA ANALYSIS OF INTERVIEW TWO

Having established the presence of contradictions in interview one, I looked for shifts of thinking in interview two that, combined with the interaction of contradictions, lay a foundation for a wider frame of reference in interview three. I was specifically looking for how the participants' perceptions of freewriting had changed now that they had participated in five weeks of freewriting. I also looked for how their conversations surrounding their writer and teacher identities differed from their discourse in the first interview, and if there was potential for further development in these identities as we proceeded into the second half of the ten weeks of freewriting.

As conversations with the participants often indicated an unfamiliarity with freewriting as we were conceptualizing it, especially during interview two, I was regretful that I did not explain freewriting more at the beginning of the study. All of the participants claimed to use freewriting with their students when asked, "Would you try freewriting with your students?" But it was clear that many of them used the word "freewriting" to mean different activities. Only Participants One and Eight assigned regular freewriting that was unprompted, ungraded, and undiscussed. Participant Six had tried unprompted freewriting one time but did not do so again, meaning that his idea of freewriting did not include regular practice. Participants Seven, Five, and Four all used prompted writing as a warm-up before whole class discussions, requiring students to share what they wrote verbally and to answer specific, content-based questions. Participant Two did not require students to share but did consistently use prompts. Participant Three's notion of freewriting was not always beholden to the requirement of constant writing for a given amount of time (she indicated that she would "wrap it up" if students were getting "restless"). All of

these exercises were described as "freewriting" by the participants during interview two. I had

hedged my own assumption that my classmates were unfamiliar with freewriting, believing

instead that they simply needed a quick refresher, when a more thorough conversation about

Elbow's process and purpose of freewriting was probably necessary. Granted, it is also possible

that the participants were aware of these discrepancies between our definitions but did not see

them as contradictory or noteworthy; they may not have realized, for example, that evaluating

freewriting compromises the integrity of the exercise as I am defining it. Or, they may have

thought that all "freewriting" means is writing without worrying about grammar, which could

describe all of the activities they mentioned. The participants' prior experience with freewriting,

the way they practice freewriting, and the way they assign freewriting in their classes framed my

analysis of their responses.

Shifts in Thinking Regarding the Value of Freewriting

Participant Eight, who came to value freewriting as equally if not more important than

other types of writing, demonstrated the most dramatic positive shift in the value he places on

freewriting. It is worth noting that he performed freewriting throughout the study in a form that

most closely matches Elbow's definition. While many participants said at some point during

interview two or three that they used freewriting to draft for their coursework (one participant is

even submitting content from his freewriting for publication), Participant Eight truly wrote

whatever came to mind. He did not try to stay on a singular topic and was perfectly comfortable

with seemingly random digressions. When asked if he thought he was good at freewriting, he

said, "I will just write about something that's completely random. If I'm thinking about how

buildings are made, I'll freewrite about how buildings are made. If I smell a particular smell

outside, I'll try to figure out why that mattered, and I'll remember if it was like a baseball tournament from 2000. So, I'll just freewrite about something randomly."

It could be inferred that Participant Eight's commitment to generating words may have fostered the change in his thinking. Perhaps he was able to see the transferability of freewriting more clearly because he was not trying to write something for his coursework. To be surprised at the quality of his freewriting – to write something without trying to make it transfer to his other writing, and then to realize parts of it do anyway – might demonstrate the transferability of freewriting more acutely than actively freewriting for a specific essay assignment. When one is forcing freewriting to fit with coursework, one may struggle to mold it to such limiting confines, and the writing may be forced and powerless; when one embraces the "chaos and disorientation," (Elbow, 1973) and finds applicable thoughts within it, then one may see the value in freewriting much more vividly, as this participant did.

Participant Two, who denounced the digressions associated with freewriting, had never practiced freewriting before. I believe most people – no matter how open-minded – will naturally have this reaction upon their first exposure to freewriting. Elbow writes that many freewriters experience a "feeling of chaos and disorientation" (Elbow, 1973, p. 30). So, I was not at all surprised by her shift toward viewing freewriting as equally valuable to other writing once she had performed it for five weeks. While this person's frame of reference regarding freewriting is still somewhat limited in interview two – she notes freewriting is of equal value for the sake of voice, but does not list any other value, and only seems to note this benefit because "tons of essayists … write in a very informal, personal tone" – it shows a much more positive perception of freewriting than she had shown at the beginning. It is possible that five weeks of freewriting

was simply not enough time for her to reap any more dramatic benefits, and her focus on voice was an entry point into the wider lens through which she may eventually understand freewriting.

Participant Six's shift from focusing on "strategies and techniques" to "experience" could confirm that the amount of time and experience one has with freewriting may affect how one perceives its value. As stated in the findings for interview two, engaging in freewriting more than once or twice is part of the definition of freewriting; I would never argue that freewriting occasionally in isolated incidents would have the same benefits as other types of writing, or as engaging in freewriting more often. So, while this person does add the condition of "experience" when discussing the benefits of freewriting, the condition is already part of the generally accepted definition of freewriting. Essentially, the participant acknowledges that freewriting is of equal value if done correctly according to Elbow's definition, which means doing it regularly.

Emotional Response

Both the sense of catharsis and the sense of independency in the participants' noted emotional responses indicate that these participants were at least occasionally invested in the freewriting. I doubt that emotional responses could result from freewriting that is stagnant and confined. By allowing their thoughts to wander into emotional and personal topics, they were able to embrace the contraries and contradictions they felt. The participants played the believing game by believing that freewriting was worth trying and so let themselves be genuinely affected by the experience. By relinquishing control and taking advantage of the time to reframe their own ideas, to develop their notions of themselves and their experiences, they made space for a wider frame of reference. The emotions could be a natural biproduct of exploring their identities, whether they were aware of such or not.

Participant Three, whose emotional response was limited strictly to her attitude about writing, had also said, "[I] have a hard time writing the whole time and not getting distracted." This comment was given in response to, "Do you think you are good at freewriting?" Perhaps, this person was able to experience some of the benefits of freewriting (she was more confident and more comfortable writing), but not to the extent of the other participants, because she had difficulty engaging with freewriting the whole time. She was able to write enough to feel a newfound comfort with writing, but not enough to feel anything new or radical about herself. That said, even a limited emotional response lays the foundation for a reframed notion of oneself as a writer and writing teacher; if she feels more comfortable writing, that comfort is bound to have far-reaching effects on her writing process and her teaching of writing.

Participant Five, the only one who did not code for an emotional response, treated freewriting similarly to the type of journal I remember keeping when I student taught: a professional reflection journal and lesson planning space. While I cannot say that my own teaching journal was entirely void of emotion, I can see how it could happen. And, if he was in his classroom while writing, then the environment was likely not conducive to a strong emotional response. The pressure to be in control of the classroom could influence the type of writing he did, and therefore the type of reaction he had to that writing. And, if he used his freewriting as a place to prepare for his lessons, then the flow of freewriting, the chaos and digressions, may not have been present, which would render his experience different from the participants who embraced these facets of freewriting. The combination of his writing environment and preferred topic may have kept him from experiencing an emotional response.

Participant Eight noted his tendency to rebel against the compulsory element of freewriting. I believe that he did enjoy freewriting and found it to be positive, but then hedged

himself for fear of sounding too emotionally invested. This participant had a huge shift in his perception regarding freewriting; he went from believing that freewriting was not of equal value to academic writing to believing that it is, "as important, if not more important." He went from not including freewriting in his definition of writing to "definitely" including it. And his definition of "writer" shifted to be much more inclusive. So, I think that this person was beginning to realize how dramatically his opinions had changed and felt embarrassed of his ideas in the first interview or nervous about his new notions of writing and teaching. Perhaps, to save face, he backpedaled his pleasure of freewriting with a throwaway critique: that it was "compulsory," even though the study was voluntary.

A Change in Writer Identity to a Change in Teacher Identity

Participant Two was one of the participants who related a change in writer identity to a change in teacher identity when answering question seven, "Do you think of yourself as a writing teacher?" Participant Two noted that her experience as a literature major had left her uncomfortable teaching writing, but that freewriting was helping her to overcome this discomfort. Freewriting gave her an opportunity to write something other than her usual coursework. The change may not be that she learned how to transfer her literature skills into the classroom, but that she developed other writing skills through the freewriting, which did transfer. Freewriting may not have closed the gap between literature and composition, but it gave her a foothold in the latter. I will note, however, that by the third interview, this participant did feel a much stronger relationship between literature and composition.

Participant Three mentions feedback twice in her response to question seven. It seems that, to her, identifying as a writing teacher rests primarily on the ability to give strong feedback.

Freewriting could certainly help someone give better feedback, because teachers who do not write will likely have unrealistic understandings of the writing process (Murray, 1985). A more thorough understanding of the writing process can improve one's ability to give feedback to students at any stage of that process. While she was already a regular writer because of her coursework, writing in a completely different fashion gave her an opportunity to familiarize herself with a wider variety of writing experiences. Freewriting presented this person with more time to explore writing, which may have helped her develop feedback skills.

However, Participant Three does not list freewriting as a contributing factor in her answer. She lists only one contributing factor to her newfound confidence in feedback: having more teaching experience. While experience certainly matters, I will highlight that this person had already taught for two semesters when we began the study. Then, after only five weeks, she noted a change. So, while it is possible that an additional five weeks of teaching experience contributed to this change in confidence, it is hard to believe that it was the only factor. The difference during these five weeks was the addition of freewriting, so it cannot be ignored as a possible contributing factor when a change in perception is found. It is likely a combination of reasons, but I cannot help but believe that the freewriting had more of an effect than her answer indicates. This person was also quite unfamiliar with this style of freewriting prior to the study – the "freewriting" she used in her classroom included up to four prompts, and she did not follow a strict time frame for writing – so, she may not have been looking for the types of benefits that I am. If she did not know how unprompted freewriting can affect her writing, then she may not have noticed the influence it had on her teaching and writing experiences. As a result, she attributed her change to teaching experience instead.

However, Participant Three does make a connection between her writing ability and her teaching ability. Much like Participant Two, the connection between her writing ability and her teaching ability is based primarily on a feeling more than a list of improved skills; she is more confident writing, so she is more confident teaching. It seems reasonable to assume that the freewriting could be at least a partial cause for her new writing confidence.

Participant Six's answer to question seven reads as contradictory. He claimed that freewriting helped him to think about teaching, and to "refocus" on what he needs to do as a teacher, but he denied that freewriting helped him to become a better writing teacher. My assumption is that his work as a reflective practitioner during freewriting has not directly transferred into his classroom, at least not in any noticeable way. But just because his does not see how his reflections on teaching have improved his teaching abilities does not mean there was no effect. It is also possible that he is feeling some cognitive dissonance between his reflections and his practice. Maybe he is noticing some areas in his teaching that need improvement while he is freewriting but is not taking the necessary steps to improve in the classroom. However, if freewriting made him aware of his need for development as a teacher, can that awareness not be considered an improvement, even if he does not know how to solve the problems just yet? In any of these circumstances, it seems as though freewriting gave him a space to think about teaching and writing, which must be an improvement – if a small one – from not having this space.

Participant Eight, who shifted away from the idea that "writers" must be published, shows a much broader understanding of knowledge regarding writing; writing does not require a publication to be valid. Therefore, anyone can be a writer, and any writer can teach writing, so long as they are "one lesson ahead" of their students. This new logic made a space for him to

identify differently as a writer and writing teacher, because he can now work toward building his writer identity despite his lack of published work.

Freewriting Habits and Identity Formation

Shifts in thinking during interview two revealed that the participants' notions of freewriting may have an impact on their identity formation. While the participants may have practiced their individual freewriting differently than how they assign freewriting to their students, many of their classroom practices still indicate a different understanding of the purpose and process of freewriting. If they feel the need to always assign freewriting prompts, they may have internalized prompts for themselves when writing, or may not have been as committed to the chaos and disorientation of unstructured freewriting. Most notably, Participant Five – who explicitly shared that he used freewriting as a lesson planning space – demonstrates the idea that using only prompted freewriting might inhibit the potential for identity formation, as he was the only participant who did not code for any shifts in thinking whatsoever. By contrast, Participant Eight, who practiced and assigned completely unstructured freewriting, demonstrated the most dramatic shifts in thinking regarding the value he places on freewriting and his definition of "writer." The implication here is that writers who understand freewriting as strictly a prewriting or brainstorming activity – who are using freewriting to generate a potential future product – may not reap the same benefits to their writer identities as unprompted free-writers.

FINDINGS FOR INTERVIEW THREE

Individual Shifts for Each Participant

Having addressed the beginnings of shifts in thinking from interview two, I will now focus on the individual changes made by each participant between interviews one and three (see Table 3). I will address each participant separately, highlighting the most significant individual changes. Each participant demonstrated unique changes in answers, so I looked at which questions were most demonstrative of each person's development.

Table 3. Answers to Interview 3.

	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8
Q1	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Q2	No	No	No	No	No	No	Little bit	No
Q4	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Q5	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes/ No
Q6	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Q7	Yes	Same	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	No
Q8	Yes	Not sure	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Q9	Daily	Daily	Daily	Daily	Daily	Daily	Daily	Daily
Q10	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes/No	Yes	Yes

Questions for interview three were:

1. Do you consider yourself a writer? Why or why not?

2. Do you consider yourself an expert on writing? Why or why not?
3. How do you define what it is to be a "writer?"
4. Do you think writing teachers must be writers themselves?
5. Do you enjoy writing?
6. Do you think you are good at writing?
7. Do you prefer teaching writing over other topics?
8. Do you think you are better at teaching writing than other topics?
9. How often should students write in a writing classroom?
10. Do you think you are a better writing teacher after completing this study?

Answers to question three, "How do you define what it is to be a writer?" are addressed individually for each participant who demonstrated a change in answer, as are answers that did not code directly as "yes" or "no."

Participant Six did not code for any changes in the table. Participants Three, Four, Five, and Seven had one changed answer each, though the answer that changed was different for each of them. Participant Two changed answers on three questions, and Participant One demonstrated four changed answers. Participant Eight had the most changed answers, with six total.

Qualitative Changes for Each Participant

Many of the participants' answers, even ones that did not change in the tables, demonstrate dramatic qualitative change. For this reason, their full answers must be addressed individually to capture the nuances of the differences in responses between interviews one and three.

Participant One. The first participant demonstrated some nuanced shifts in thinking that indicated an enhanced confidence in her notions of writing and teaching, as well as a reframing of her idea of "expertise."

In the first interview, this participant answered the question "How do you define what it is to be a writer?" with "Do you write something, ever? If the answer is yes, then you're a writer." In the third interview, she answered the same question with, "Anybody who writes. Whether it's for fun, or for a job. If they have some idea inside of them that they wanna get out, and they write it, then they're a writer." While the spirit of both answers is essentially the same, the second answer indicates more depth of thought about what it means to write. In the first interview, words like "something" and "ever" are very general. In the third interview, the person listed more detailed examples. Additionally, her later answer provided an important qualifier: "Some idea inside of them that they wanna get out." This addition indicates an intentionality about writing that is not present in the first answer.

Another answer that changed between interviews was in response to the question, "How often should students write in a writing classroom?" Her first answer was, "Definitely they should write something every day in the classroom, but they also have lives outside of the classroom. So, I would say at least every other day outside of the classroom. So, like as many days in a week as they can, but like you know, for their life situation." Her second answer was: "Every day. Every single day. Every single time [my students] walked into any classroom, it was, 'Sit down, open the journal, we're going to write some more.' And of course, the first few times they were like 'But we literally just did this.' And I'm like, 'I know, we're doing more… because that's the point. This is the class.'"

One can see much less hedging in the second answer. In the first answer, the participant oscillated between wanting students to write every day, but also wanting to acknowledge her awareness of students' other obligations. However, her second answer was quite definitive. Here,

we see a newfound confidence in the importance of student writing regardless of their "life situations," and a prioritization of time spent writing in the classroom.

Her definition of "expert" also changed between the two interviews when answering question two. In the first, she said, "I would consider myself an expert on aspects of writing. Cuz I'm not gonna like make a blanket statement of like, 'I am an expert,' on the whole thing, but definitely aspects of writing." The next time, she said, "I feel like I've mastered a lot of things in writing, but I don't think anybody can really call themselves an expert in it." Additionally, this participant recognized this particular shift in herself, saying, "Originally I'd said I'm an expert in some things, and now a couple months later I'm like, 'No one can be an expert!'"

Participant Two. The second participant had no prior experience with freewriting. Her undergraduate and graduate degrees are in literature. She had no teaching experience prior to her appointment as a graduate assistant, and the only formal training in teaching she had received was in preparation for her first semester as a GA. Her background may account for the dramatically positive shift in her attitudes about writing and teaching as well as her enhanced reflectiveness and complexity regarding her ideas about these topics.

When asked how she defines what it is to be a "writer," her first answer was: "Should I tell you what I tell my students? Honestly, just writing. People put too much emphasis on 'Ah! Writer,' but if you've ever written a word, you're a writer." Her second answer, just ten weeks later, was, "A writer is someone who actively writes with intention and purpose. Now, that's not to say things like emails and texts are writing. I don't know if that necessarily falls into the 'writing' category. But I do think if you're writing, whether for fun or for a class, if you're writing with intention and purpose, I would say that's writing."

While her definition of "writer" became less inclusive after the study, this shift did not reflect any sense of newfound elitism or exclusiveness. Her second answer is simply the result of more time and thought regarding her definition. The first answer feels a bit rushed. The first phrase, "Should I tell you what I tell my students?" made me question if she was giving me an authentic answer or the prepared, canned answer that she thought was the "correct" one. "Anyone who writes is a writer" is practically a reflex for many of us.

Her "Ah, writer!" phrasing supports the rushed tone of the answer. Her meaning in the first answer was clear to me, but her meaning in the second answer was much clearer. The addition of "intention and purpose," adds a specificity to her thinking that was not present earlier. This newfound complexity could be a result of the freewriting, though it could also be a result of her knowing what question I might ask by the third interview. She may have mentally prepared an answer ahead of time, which would explain the stronger phrasing. Either way, her answer demonstrates a precision that was not evident before the study, likely due to her giving more thought to these ideas.

Another question that elicited different responses was, "Do you think you are good at writing?" The person's first answer was, "Sometimes I do, and then sometimes I'm like 'Wow, that was not good.'" Her second answer was, "I don't know if I want to put the qualifier that I'm good. I do think I have definitely improved. I don't wanna say flat out that I'm good, because there's always room for improvement. So, I'm appreciative of where I'm at right now, but I definitely think I could be better." The second answer is much more process-oriented than the first. Writing is no longer good and "not good," but rather constantly on a journey toward improvement. And, her place in the journey is not a negative one; she appreciates her writing now and looks forward to seeing her writing in the future. Rather than a good versus bad

perception of writing, she has moved to a wider frame of reference that removes these binary judgements. The first answer is humorous; we laughed at the "Wow" together. The second is, again, much more complex, and arguably more formal.

In response to the question, "Do you prefer teaching writing over other topics?" she was initially quite firm: "No. Because I feel I'm stronger at literature, and also, I really only feel like I can handle writing at like a university level, because I am not confident on my grammar. And if I had to teach it to someone I would be like 'oof.'" By her last interview, her answer was quite different: "I'm a literature person, so I'm biased. I don't dislike [writing]. While I don't really have anything to compare it to, I don't think I would like literature or something in a similar vein more than writing. I think I'd like them both the same."

It is interesting to note that both answers started the same – with a nod to her background in literature – but they ended quite differently. The participant was no longer concerned about grammar, and, free of that fear, she believed she would like teaching writing. It is almost as if her second answer started automatically – as if she expected her answer to be the same as it was in the first interview – and surprised herself with what she said.

When asked if she thought she is better at teaching writing than other topics, her first answer was: "No. I mean I'm okay, but like I wouldn't want to teach like middle school writing where they do like, 'there's the subject and the verb.' I'm like I don't know; I don't know what those are." Again, this person immediately thought of grammar when presented with the notion of teaching writing. Later, she said, "That I'm not sure. Since I had more experience with literature, I'd probably just generally do better, more experience, that's what my degree is in, just more practice with it. So, I'm not sure if I would do writing better, but I think it would not be worse." This answer reaffirmed the change indicated in the previous discussion; she shifted away

from a focus on grammar. And, rather than immediately discrediting her ability to teach writing as a literature major, she indicated more uncertainty. She even almost talked herself out of believing that she would be better at teaching literature; to claim that writing would "not be worse" could be rephrased as literature "would not be better."

When asked if she identified as a writer, her first answer was, "I would say yes? Because I have done a lot of creative writing." Her second answer was, "I would have to say yes, I do. I think I'm a writer because, now anyway, writing has become practically an everyday thing to me, thanks to my freewriting." While her identity did not change, it seems as though her reasoning did.

Definitions aside, the participant also experienced a change in attitude after the study. When asked if she enjoyed writing, she at first said, "Mostly yes. A lot of times I end up being stressed during writing, but that's because of essays I put off until the last second, which is my own fault. But when I do creative writing, I like it a lot." In the third interview, when asked the same question, she said, "I do, I do. Again, I know I've said this before, I much would prefer to do creative writing all day long, but I do. That's why I'm an English person." She went from the qualification of "mostly," to a resounding "I do." It is also worth noting that while she refers to herself as a "literature person," at several points throughout the interviews, here, she identifies as an "English person," a category that more directly includes writing and teaching under its umbrella.

When asked in the third interview if she believes she is a better writing teacher after completing this study, she said, "Yes. Of course, the more often you practice writing, the better of a writer you become. I do believe I'm a much better writing teacher now, because I've done more writing than I did at the beginning of the semester. I still agree if you ask me to teach

grammar, I would cry. I think I'm like the star participant, I think I've improved, I have a better outlook."

Here, her reframed understanding of writing and teaching is most evident. She understands the value of daily writing and how improving her writing ability improved her teaching ability. Rather than the hyper-focus on her literature background and lack of grammatical acuteness that was evident at the beginning of the study, she demonstrates a real confidence in her ability as a teacher and a sense of hope that as she continues to write, she will continue to improve in the classroom.

Participant Three. For the third participant, several of her answers did not change substantially. And yet, other answers indicate quite dramatic changes. I believe this incongruity could simply represent a snapshot of her journey in developing a new framework. While some participants had developed new conceptions, evaluated them, changed them, and committed to them by the third interview, this person may still have been in the process of conceptualizing. Therefore, she was still evaluating and forming ideas, which could account for the sense of stability versus change in some of her answers.

One dramatic shift that initially surprised me was in response to the question, "Do you prefer teaching writing over other topics?" In the first interview, she said, "Personally, no. I think that ideally, I would like to teach literature. Writing is so personal and so varied that you bring so much of yourself to it, that it's like, is this writing, or is this my perspective on writing?" The participant shows a certain lack of confidence in her right to an opinion on writing; she separates this objective image of "writing" from her own perspective. In the third interview, she said:

> Hmm I enjoy teaching writing. I think a lot of the time at this level it's
> challenging because it's a lot of people who don't want to learn writing. So, I

think in a perfect world, where the students were here and they were interested in what they were doing, I would like it a lot better. Which is why, ultimately, I'd like to teach like literature or something like that at a more advanced level, just because I'd rather work with students who are choosing it as part of their degree plan rather than like a requisite class.

Participant Three seems to have shifted from preferring to teach literature because she was uncomfortable teaching writing to preferring literature because she does not like working with writing students. At first, it feels as though she went from blaming herself to blaming the students for her discomfort in the writing classroom. However, many beginning teachers vacillate between believing that classroom mishaps are a reflection of their own abilities and believing these mishaps are a reflection of a particularly challenging group of students. Having only taught a writing general education course, this participant's perception of students is quite understandable. More importantly, she stopped discrediting her ability to hold opinions on writing. She no longer differentiates between "writing" and "[her] perspective on writing," which indicates a reframing of the nature of teaching writing itself.

Participant Three indicated a related shift in her ability to hold opinions on writing in answer to the question, "Do you think you are better at teaching writing than other topics?" Her first answer was, "I think [writing is] so personal that on one hand it is really rewarding if people enjoy it and we can make those connections, but sometimes it can be really frustrating because it's not like a black and white type of topic to teach. It's very nuanced." Her third interview answer was:

I feel like this year I've definitely gotten more confident teaching writing … the experience and more practice has made me build up my own writing skills and made me more confident as a teacher. Like, this is what good writing is, or these are the things you should do to strengthen your writing. And I think, in my first year of teaching, I didn't feel like I had the authority to say things like that. And I

feel like the experience, and probably from writing more this semester, I do feel more qualified to make those claims.

When asked if she believed she was a better writing teacher after completing this study, she said:

> I think with more practice and more experience, it has made me feel more confident and more qualified to actually give my opinions on things. If you feel like you yourself are not a very good writer, it makes things like feedback so tricky, because you're like well, this is my opinion, but like, I don't know. But if you feel like no, this is my opinion, based on all that I've done, all of my own writing, my own reading, it makes it easier to say those things.

She shows a dramatic reframing of herself as someone who is entitled to teach and offer opinions on writing. Rather than disavowing her knowledge of writing as irrelevant to what makes writing "good," she now understands good writing as relative to one's own knowledge and experience.

Participant Four. Another participant demonstrated shifts regarding her ideas about writing and writing skills, as well as an especially dramatic change regarding her notion of the writing process. Originally, in response to the question, "Do you consider yourself an expert on writing?" she said:

> Certainly not! Well, I think it's so hard to claim expertise in writing, because so much of good writing is so subjective; there are different sort-of benchmarks that you can evaluate what's good writing by and like, is not good writing by. So, I think I'm suspicious of anyone claiming to be an expert, because it feels like something that is very hard to claim expertise in.

Later, she answered the same question with, "I would love to, but I don't. I think I'm competent, I think I'm capable of communicating that competence; I don't think I'm an expert." This person reframed her notion of expertise as something that is both possible and a worthy goal. This answer demonstrates an increased confidence in her ability to identify good writing. Rather than denouncing good writing as subjective or context specific, and therefore denouncing the ability to label this type of writing, she seems to trust the idea that there are experts who can correctly use these labels.

The way this participant defined "writer" became more certain, more confident. Her first definition was, "I think it's mostly a self-identification thing; I don't know that it's something that is contingent on explicit skills so much as it is sort of an identity marker that you personally identify with." By defining "writer" as a personal identity, she removed the need to offer a universal definition.

Her later answer was, "I think there's like a level of intention that goes into it. I don't know that I would be like, 'Oh, you're making like a grocery list, you're a writer.' I think there's like intentionality behind it, using it to communicate ideas rather than just like throwing out words into the ether." She offered a much more explicit definition. This definition shows an increased confidence and certainty in her notion of writing. She had an answer – one that directly addressed the question – and she offered it, taking full responsibility; she was willing to include certain people and exclude others without hedging.

Another answer that indicates much more certainty was in response to, "Do you think writing teachers must be writers themselves?" She first said, "It feels very necessary. I think that in order to be an effective teacher of writing, you need to at least somewhat identify with the label of a writer, or else, what are you doing? If it's not an interest of yours, or if it's not a trait

that you identity with, I think it becomes very difficult to like carry any enthusiasm into a writing classroom."

Her second answer was simply, "I think it's best if they are, yeah." Rather than hedging herself with phrases like "at least somewhat," or offering a lengthy explanation, her later answer was quite short and to-the-point.

A move toward process-orientation can be seen in response to, "Do you think you are good at writing?" The first time I asked this question, she said, "It's something that comes pretty naturally to me. I've had a lot of the sort-of formal skillsets. Like I have a pretty large vocabulary, I have a working knowledge of grammatical constructs, I have skillsets that make it a fairly even flow of word production, if that makes sense."

Her final answer was, "I'm glad you're asking me this today and not yesterday when I was working on a proposal. Because today I feel like I'm good at writing, and yesterday I was in the trenches." Rather than relying on a laundry list of skills, she understands that writers have good days and bad days, regardless of their skillsets, which is a much more process-oriented frame of mind.

At the end of her third interview, when I asked if she believed she was a better writing teacher after completing this study, she said:

> I do. I think that I have gotten a better handle on why prewriting matters. I think, for a lot of my time as a writer and as a teacher of writing, I was… not a great prewriting advocate. Because all through undergrad, my process was like slap something on a page and then turn it in and maybe proofread it a little bit beforehand. And now that I've been freewriting … and like working through ideas, working through concepts … I'm a lot more engaged with the value of prewriting than I was before. It's a lot easier and I think probably more convincing for me to advocate for it now.

At first glance, this answer seems narrow. Though there are major shifts in her thinking, she self-identifies only a newfound respect for prewriting. But when combined with the rest of the interview, this answer indicates movement toward more process-oriented notions of writing and teaching writing.

Participant Five. A fifth participant demonstrated the most marginal change out of all participants, across all subjects of questions. There was a remarkable stability in his answers. However, while his answers did not demonstrate much change, there are subtle differences.

In response to the question, "Do you prefer teaching writing over other topics?" his first answer was, "To be honest, I would much rather teach literature. I feel like teaching writing is interesting, but I kind of feel like it's also just expected of us to be, you know, the graduate teaching assistants who teach forty students a year." His second answer revealed a slight change: "I think I would rather teach literature, but I think a lot of it too is because like, you know we're graduate assistants and we're expected to teach freshmen. I think if I taught creative writing I would enjoy teaching writing more, but I think I would definitely prefer to teach literature."

The second answer does present a context in which this person can see himself teaching writing – a creative writing class – even if it would not be his first choice. The second answer, while still remarkably like the first, does show some potential for a more receptive attitude toward teaching writing.

When asked if he was an expert on writing, his first answer was, "I do not consider myself an expert on writing, because I mean I guess there could be experts on writing, but I'm still in the process of learning it … but it's a goal to shoot for, I guess." His second answer was, "I don't think I would consider myself an expert but… I don't know. I mean I can teach writing but I'm not at like an expert level." The second answer is less certain than the first – "I do not" to

"I don't think" and "I don't know" – as if he could perhaps see himself as an expert in some ways. Or, perhaps, he sees a more intrinsic connection between his position as teacher and his potential as an expert. In this scenario, his move toward uncertainty could indicate a more positive outlook on his writing and teaching identity.

His response to, "Do you think writing teachers must be writers themselves?" indicated a little more confidence in his writer identity as well. His initial answer was, "I would say that's a good qualification. At least like, consider themselves a writer based on what their definition is." His later answer was, "I would say that's yeah, a good component to being a writing teacher. I don't have to be Stephen King, but I have to be myself and teach how I want to teach." The shift moves from "themselves" to "myself;" in the second answer, he uses the first person. He indicates that his identity as a writer and teacher is based on a sense of self, on making teaching decisions that are authentic to his ideas. This personalization of the question indicates a stronger sense of his own teacher identity; in the later interview, he seems to respond as if the question more directly applies to him.

His answer to, "Do you consider yourself a writer?" demonstrated some change as well. His first answer was, "I consider myself a writer because I'm always trying to improve my writing." His second answer was, "I consider myself a writer because I consider, you know, everybody who's interested in learning how to write a writer." So, in the first answer, his need to improve dominated his writer identity. In the second answer, his interest in writing dominated.

Similarly, when asked if he was a good writer, he said first, "I think I'm good in that I've improved a lot since I was like, a freshman. But I don't know. I'm an improving writer, I wouldn't say I'm a good writer." Later, his answer was, "I would say I can be good, or I'm decent at writing, but that's not like something that I strive for every time I write, like being the

best." While both answers still indicate some objective image of "good" or "best" writing, the latter is much less focused on achieving this form. He still has a strict understanding of "good" writing, but he does not feel a particular pressure to reach this goal. Rather, his writing is a personal experience aside from any standard.

When asked in the final interview if he believed he was a better writing teacher after completing this study, he said, "I think so, because the last couple semesters, I did not have my students freewrite every day, and I think freewriting is like a good way to open them up, open up their thoughts. So, I think incorporating freewriting into my lessons has made me a better teacher, and I think this study is a part of that, too."

This answer indicates a very narrow sense of improvement. While some of the other participants noted improvement because they were more confident writers, or because they felt more qualified to teach writing, this participant's only measure of improvement was the incorporation of freewriting. While adding freewriting into his curriculum could have numerous benefits for his students, he does not point toward any sense of change in his teacher or writer identity as a result of this study.

Participant Six. The sixth participant began the study with quite a lot of experience freewriting from a summer institute with the Ozarks Writing Project. As an education student, he also had a very well-developed sense of writer and teacher identity. However, his answers still indicate a new understanding of the writing process, particularly regarding revision and struggle.

His answer to the first question, "Do you consider yourself a writer?" introduces this reframing of the writing process. His first answer was, "Umm I do consider myself a writer, because I'm basically writing in any type of format, in my texting to my friends, to classwork, research papers, any type of writing." His second answer was:

Yes, I do consider myself as a writer, because I am frequently writing, but also revising and teaching and trying to improve my writing every day. And this freewriting started to make me think that going back and revising, not just for errors and lower order concern matters, but also higher order concern matters … is starting to be more valuable and important. I started to think or believe I'm more writer now than I was.

This participant self-identified one of his most dramatic changes; he places a new value on revising for concerns other than grammar and usage, and this newfound understanding has increased the strength of his identity as a writer.

This trend continued in his answer to question two. In his first interview, he had actually noted his need to revise as a reason he was NOT an expert writer: "I just started to find myself a writer, and I still make a lot of errors. And I still want to come back and revise and rewrite. So, I don't think I'm an expert." In his later answer, he said, "I still think I'm a very beginning writer … I don't know if I can be an expert writer, but I'm trying to be better at writing." While he still does not identify as an expert, he does not cite his desire to revise and rewrite as a reason this is so.

The new understanding continues in his definition of "writer." His first definition was, "A person who writes is a writer. And when I say writing, I mean texting, emailing, to doing a big research paper, posting some ideas on Facebook." His later definition was, "To define 'writer,' I think a person should keep writing and keep also going back to his writing to seek for improvements. I think it's someone [who is a] reflective practitioner, reflective writer, and trying to be better." The use of revision became intrinsic to his definition; a person is not a writer if they do not revise. While this definition is less inclusive than the first, it contributes to his new understanding of revision as not only valuable, but crucial.

Revision aside, his new understanding of a recursive, flexible writing process is indicated by his answers to, "Do you think you are good at writing?" His first answer was, "I do not think so. Not because I get a lot of feedback, but because I'm constantly stuck and I constantly struggle to put my thoughts into words." His second answer was, "I don't think I am, but I'm trying to be. I can say I'm getting better at writing." He stops listing "getting stuck," as a reason for being bad at writing, and instead may understand writing as a continual process in which periods of stagnation are normal. He sees potential in his second answer; he has control over his writing skills and seeks to improve. This answer indicates a much more process-oriented understanding of writing.

One answer that indicated less change was in response to, "Do you think writing teachers must be writers themselves?" At first, he said, "I do not necessarily think so, but the writing teachers should know how to teach writing and at least like writing … I hope they have a passion to teach how to write." In the third interview, he said, "Being a writer does not necessarily make people good at teaching writing, so I don't think teachers have to be writers, but they should have some knowledge and experience of writing."

When I asked if he believed he was a better writing teacher after completing this study, he answered:

> Yes and no. I'm going to say yes much louder than no. The part that makes me think no is because I find myself struggling with writing, even a short amount of writing every day. But at the same time, the reason I said yes is because now I know I can use freewriting to encourage any [type] of writing. And now I know that I have some – not necessarily bad – but some struggling experiences. So now I can tell [my students] more about writing experiences and what kind of mindset I try to create for the writing. And hopefully that can help students be more… not necessarily successful, but more active writers.

This answer affirms his new understanding of writing as a process that includes struggle and revisions, though the "yes and no" phrasing also indicates that he is still in the process of fully forming these new ideas.

Participant Seven. Participant Seven demonstrated a newfound uncertainty in his ideas about writing and teaching after the study. In the first interview, he had rather well-developed, precise answers to many of the questions. The third interview indicated more hesitation and hedging about ideas that had previously seemed very clear. Additionally, his answers indicate a tendency toward product-orientation that the study may have, surprisingly, increased.

Regarding a shift toward uncertainty, when asked, "Do you consider yourself an expert on writing?" his first answer was, "Yes. I would say more in like a subcategory of kind of the writing that I do. The writing that I do would be mostly like in terms of like … writing poetry. So, I would say that in that particular field I consider myself an expert, but not, in general, a writing expert." His second answer was, "I wouldn't say like a super like an expert, but I would definitely say an expert in some like conventions when it comes to writing and like how to approach it and how to break it down …so in that sense a little bit of expertise, but I wouldn't call myself like a guru of writing."

The shift from a resounding "yes," to an "I wouldn't say…" indicates a shift in this participant's writer identity. He phrases his first answer as an affirmation with a qualification of his specific expertise. His second answer is at first a denial, but with a qualification of some elements of expertise. While the answers are similar, the changes in phrasing between the two interviews indicate a shift away from certainty, which could indicate the beginnings of a reframing of writerly expertise.

When asked how he defines what it is to be a writer, his first answer was:

That's a great question. It's a very meta question. I feel like we are all writers in one way or other. Some just do the work to kind of establish they are writers, and some don't. For me, to be a writer I think it's just knowing that your words matter and your words kind of represent who you are … So, I guess writer, it's really an umbrella term … there could be commercial writers who write for the money, there could be ghost writers, there could be writers who just, they write for themselves.

His answer in the third interview was:

That's a really interesting question. Writer, the word itself is such a broad… I'd say it really depends on the kind of like, writer you're thinking about. If it's creative writing, I would say someone who keeps up a lot with the contemporaries or like the foundations of writing that goes into that, and just keeping up with the writing. It doesn't have to be every day, but just like over the course of a long time, if you just write a lot. But like a writer… I guess a person who writes is a writer, but it really depends on the context that they're writing in. It's hard, oh my gosh!

The second answer indicates an awareness of contradictions or confusions in his definition, which could pave the way for him to embrace contraries.

When asked if he thought he was good at writing, he initially said, "Yes, in poetry, for sure. I would say in terms of like prose writing … I feel like I'm open to criticism and adapting to revisions … In that term, I guess I'm constantly learning ... But I think yes. It just bounces back and forth a lot, that feeling of being a good writer." He later said, "Yeah, I would say I kind of know what it takes to make your writing a little bit sharper. With the creative writing world, definitely I would say I know what it takes to produce the kind of writing that is successful. But I don't want to sound very condescending like, 'I am the best.'"

Again, we see a shift from "Yes," and "for sure" to "I would say I kind of know." The second answer has a humility, maybe even a fear of sounding too certain. And there is a shift

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toward the idea that being "good" at writing is the same as being "successful." He appears to have a measurable sense of "sharp" writing, and his mastery of this sharpness is why he is a good writer. Rather than simply referencing his poetic talent and willingness to revise, as in the first answer, he references his ability to produce.

When asked if he considers himself a writer, his first answer was, "I definitely do consider myself a writer. I do that, since the evidence shows that I'm writing, and I've been published in different literary journals. And I find writing empowering. It gives me a sense of kind of a belonging." His second answer was, "I do consider myself a writer. I write a lot, but as a teacher of writing I think it… makes it easier for me to continue growing into the writing world, and since I've been published, it kind of becomes like a duty to continue writing. So yeah, I consider myself a writer."

One answer that showed a novel change compared to the rest of his interview was in response to, "Would you rather teach writing over other topics?" He first said, "Writing is what I'll go with. I would love to do like literature – something I'm passionate about, reading – but writing is just that comfortable fallback that I can talk about for hours." He later said:

> I would rather teach writing over other topics … like I can talk about the literature that I read, the poetry or fiction, but when it comes to writing, it's very different. It's like you're creating this different kind of literature … You're actually creating the time that you're living in. You're creating your own history kind of through that writing process. I like the power that writing gives you, so I'd rather teach writing than anything else.

His joy of writing is tangible here, as is a dramatic change in his understanding of teaching writing. Rather than framing writing as a "comfortable fallback," he lauds it as a powerful way to make history.

When asked if he believed he was a better writing teacher after completing this study, he

said:

> Yeah, I think the study definitely helped with like the amount of writing I
> produced. I've already been submitting some of this stuff that I wrote during this
> process, and I've been submitting, getting accepted, getting rejected. So, it's an
> experience. It really builds up my expertise when it comes to writing. Not that I
> would say what I learned through this process transferred right away to my
> teaching in this semester, but I'm hoping in the future this will definitely give me
> a lot of great ideas and the writing I produce will be successful.

The product-orientation is evident here, throughout his answer. Also, his immediate

response is how the study improved his writing, not his teaching of writing

Participant Eight. The eighth and final participant demonstrated significant changes

across multiple concepts. This person shared with me that much of his freewriting was focused

on the topics of writing and teaching; he used the freewriting not only as a space to practice

writing but to engage in concept formation about writing. He also shared that he was comfortable

with the digressions of freewriting and would not force himself to stay within a prompt. Perhaps

because of this combination of intentional exploration of writing as a concept coupled with

random digressions, he demonstrated a radical reformulation of his ideas. His new definition of

"writer," seems to have had the greatest influence across many of his answers.

His first definition of "writer" was, "Being a writer, I think, requires some kind of

publishing element, like in the same way that you're a professional when you get paid to do

something." His second definition was:

> I think it has to be somebody who is interested in developing their writing in some
> capacity, so not necessarily anybody who just writes for fun or just for themselves
> or just for … an emotional dump. Yes, I think it has to be with some kind of intent

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to improve. If you are a writer, you must want to improve your writing in some kind of way. Not necessarily to be published – I know I said that the first time – not just anybody who does it, but it has to have some kind of intent behind it.

When asked if he identifies as a writer, his first answer was, "Umm yes. But only slightly. Only by association, because I'm an English major and I have to write. Once I get published, I would consider myself a writer." His second answer was: "I've grown to hate this question. The answer is yes, I guess. I've thought about this. I think about this because I know that I have to talk to you, but I think the answer has to be yes, if I'm going to stay consistent with my own definition. But it's hard for me to say yes. So, I think the answer is yes." As his definition of "writer" changed, so too did his reason for identifying as such.

When asked if he believed writing teachers must be writers themselves, his initial answer was, "No, both because it would be hypocritical for me to say yes, and because I think that's it's true … It's better to have more knowledge, but it doesn't require a vast in-depth knowledge to teach somebody something." His later answer was, "Yes. I'm actively trying to become a better writer myself, because of that, I am able to be a teacher. If I were complacent, then I think that I would be less than an effective teacher. I think more likely, I would be a failure as a teacher. I would not have been a teacher in any capacity if I were not actively trying to be a better writer myself." When asked if he thought he was better at teaching writing than other topics, his first answer was:

> When I think about teaching writing, I think about teaching things like how to use a comma, like grammar and usage rules. So, like the skills involved with writing, which I think are pretty simple to teach. When I think about turning students into professional writers, like somebody who might be able to be published … I think about logic and reason … So, teaching writing is teaching skills. Some skills are easier to teach than others …. So, I'm good at teaching some parts, bad at teaching others.

His later answer was:

Probably because I have experience doing it now, I think I've found out a little bit about many of my students – my clientele, if you will – what they struggle with, how they view their own writing. I think that I've gotten good at identifying the major problems that they have. But I think I would still probably be better if somebody threw me in the classroom and was like, teach something like British literature, because I have more foundational knowledge in that area.

When asked if he thought he was good at writing, his answer in the first interview was, "I'm adequate, I'm not good. I think that I can fit the criteria of whatever is asked of me, but I would never say that I'm good at it. I can fit what's needed, what's necessary." In the third interview, he said:

I think so. Umm I'm not sure that I'm in a place that I could make that claim. I think I would need somebody else to tell me that, try to be objective … I think the biggest problem that I have as a writer is that I know what I meant to have said. And when somebody will point it out to me, like no this is kind of confusing, I'm like, oh yeah, you're right. It becomes very clear to me why something is confusing when somebody points it out… but I think that the answer is probably yes. I think that I'm probably good most of the time, not always.

Again, some lingering hints at his initial definition of "writer," are evident here, as in the idea that an "objective" third party must validate whether one is good at writing. However, the first answer leans much more strongly in the stratification of explicit, objective writing skills, the idea that there are "necessary criteria" that make one good at writing. The second answer is focused on the ability to transmit a message clearly, which is a much more contextualized skill. And his discourse surrounding this skill does not use words like "needed," "criteria," or

"necessary," indicating a less criterion-based frame of reference when discussing writing abilities.

His definition of "expert writer" underwent a change as well. When first asked if he identified as an expert in writing, he said, "No. I think that I know enough about writing to be able to teach it, but I wouldn't say that I'm an expert on writing. I think expertise requires a much wider array of knowledge and a much deeper knowledge of writing." His answer after the study was, "Umm no, not an expert. I think that I know enough to get by. I think I know enough to teach people that I can help, probably. I can probably help anybody at a certain point. Even if they were a very experienced writer, I think I could give them feedback. But no, I wouldn't consider myself an expert."

When asked if he would prefer teaching writing over another topic, his first answer was, "I don't know. The problem is that when I teach literature, I teach writing, because I teach writing as a mode of thinking. So, cognition is important, thinking about things is important, logic is important. So, I don't know that I necessarily would even separate the two. I don't think that I would separate writing from literature, or from any other field for that matter." His later answer was:

> No. But I have grown to like teaching writing more. I remember when I first got the assignment, I was excited about the teaching, not about the teaching writing. Because you can write about anything. I was like, they can do whatever topics they want. I wasn't necessarily interested in teaching students how to write. But I think that has changed … Getting them to get their thoughts out on the paper, anticipate the audience, that's actually really challenging. And that challenge makes it fun, worthwhile.

Rather than framing writing as a vehicle for understanding other fields, he notes writing as a skill in and of itself. He has shifted from teaching with writing to teaching writing. Again, this change could reflect a wider definition of "writer."

When asked if he believed he was a better writing teacher after completing this study, he said:

> Yes, because freewriting to me was something that I think I was viewing as almost a high-level skill … You know, writing for ten minutes straight, I thought was kind of hard. But then when I did it in class, the overwhelming response from my students was that it didn't feel like ten minutes… So, I think that watching them do that made me realize that's a skill that I need to try to teach them. I need to try to get them to do that more often, because I think it will help them, because it helped me. I think that by me understanding what the action of freewriting was for me, I can now do that for my students.

DATA ANALYSIS OF INTERVIEW THREE

Aside from my own attempts at believing, the notion of embracing contraries also frames my analysis of interview three. In this sense, I will highlight how freewriting encouraged the participant to embrace contraries. While interview one revealed various contradictions and oppositions, interview three revealed many participants to have a reframed notion of themselves as writers and writing teachers. I attribute these wider frames of reference to their previous engagement with contradictions. Elbow writes if we need to understand a topic that is challenging to "check" or "verify," then "our best hope of doing so is to gain as many different and conflicting knowings as possible. Holding all these conflicting views in mind, we must then try to get a sense of the unknown behind them" (p. 242). Teacher-writer identities are not a verifiable topic, so when the participants were asked to discuss these ideas, many immediately gave conflicting answers. Then, as participants were given time and space to write, having already begun the process of considering these questions via interview one, they were able to seek what was behind the contradictions, to take the time to "[do] justice to any possible novelty in the matter under investigation" (p. 252). Given this opportunity, the participants moved into the newer frames of reference regarding their teacher-writer identities.

To aggregate the data, I returned to the contradictions found in interview one and examined how they were resolved or otherwise addressed by the participants in interview three. I began by examining how their definitions of "writer" changed, as many of the contradictions had been dependent on these definitions.

Next, I returned to the contradiction, "participant believes writing teachers do not have to be writers, but also believes writers are simply people who write." I examined how participants

answered, "Do you think writing teachers must be writers themselves?" and looked for new ideas regarding the teacher-writer relationship.

I then returned to the contradiction, "participant does not identify as an expert on writing but does consider themselves to be good at writing." For many participants, this contradiction was created in interview three rather than resolved, as participants changed their answers to questions two ("Do you identify as an expert on writing?") and six ("Do you think you are good at writing?").

The third contradiction I returned to was, "participant identifies as a writer, but not with the definition they present." I looked at how participants developed more consistency between their definitions of "writer" and their answers to, "Do you identify as a writer?" Some participants changed their definitions to match their explanation of their identities, while others adjusted the logic behind their identities to be more consistent with their definitions.

The fourth contradiction I examined was, "participant does not mention grammar or usage in their definition of 'writer,' but notes grammar as a skill on which writing is contingent." I looked at the questions where participants had mentioned grammar in interview one, which were different for each participant, and evaluated whether these concerns were still present in interview three.

After addressing each contradiction, I explicate the significance of the variations in each participants' freewriting process on the development of their writer and teacher identities. I draw connections between how each participant engaged in freewriting and how their ideas changed.

Definitions of "Writer"

All four of the contradictions coded in interview one dealt with the participants' defintions of "writer." It seems quite fitting, then, that many of the ways in which these contradictions were resolved was contingent on changes in these definitions. Participants Six, Seven, and Eight demonstrated dramatic changes in their defintions of "writer."

Participant Six's newfound definition of "writer" as someone who revises and "seeks improvement," is demonstrative of his reframing of the writing process as inherently recursive and embracing the necessity of revision even for experienced writers. This new definition had dramatic implications for his writing identity. However, his answer to the question, "Do you think you are a better writing teacher after completing this study?" did indicate some lingering doubts regarding this new definition. At first, he seemed to suggest that struggling as a writer indicates that he is somehow bad at teaching writing. But he almost talked himself out of that answer when he noted that even struggle can be a lesson for the writer. Thus, he is still exploring his notion of struggle and revision as part of his definition.

Participant Seven's initial definition felt like it was going in several directions. The idea that writer identity rests on an understanding of self-representation narrowed the definition significantly, but he did not seem to settle on this requirement. It was almost as if he explored one idea – knowing your words matter – and another – we are all writers in one way or another – and another – we have not all established ourselves as writers – and another idea, that "writer" is an umbrella term for many different types of writers. More than anything, this answer indicated that he had not been given an opportunity to consider this question before. In interview three, he seemed to be newly aware of the multiplicities of his ideas about writing. It was almost as if he wanted to believe that everyone who writes is a writer, likely because that is what we have been

taught to tell our students. But he struggled to explain exactly how that definition is so, especially given his much stricter ideas about creative writing, which is his primary field.

Participant Eight's interview three definition of "writer"– "If you are a writer, you must want to improve your writing in some kind of way" – conflicted with his answers to "Do you think you are better at teaching writing than other topics?" In both interviews, the participant stratified writing into skills when answering this question; even his answer in interview three listed the use of identifying problems, targeting specific student skillsets. Even though the interview three answer did not mention publishing explicitly, as in his interview one answer, the use of the word "clientele" to describe students indicated some lingering notions of his initial definition of "writer." By understanding a writer as someone who is paid to do so, as in interview one, he defined himself as a writing teacher who is paid to work with "clients." However, the inclusion of how students perceive their own writing in the list of skills in his interview three answer indicated more of a shift toward the new definition. If being a writer requires an intentionality, then the students' self-perceptions as writers would be a part of that, as their intentions would certainly be influenced by their perceptions. This participant is still in the stage of reconceptualization regarding his new definition; some of the discourse suggests his initial ideas, but there are indications of change.

Additionally, Participant Eight's new definition is demonstrated by his answers when asked if he would prefer teaching writing over another topic. When only professionals could be considered writers, then teaching average students how to write could naturally be interpreted as teaching them other skills, using writing to do so. But if everyone who writes with intention is a writer, then the teaching of Composition and Rhetoric as its own subject becomes more important, and the shift from teaching with writing to teaching how to write follows suit.

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Teacher-Writer Relationship

The first contradiction coded in interview one was, "participant believes writing teachers do not have to be writers, but also believes writers are simply people who write." Interview three revealed many reconcilations and/or newfound discoveries regarding the relationship between writing and teaching writing.

For Participant Eight, the change in his definition of "writer" is the root cause of his changed conception of the writer-teacher relationship in response to, "Do you think writing teachers must be writers themselves?" When writers are published professionals, it follows that many teachers are not and likely could not be writers. When writers are simply those who write with intent, as in the new definition he presented in interview three, then it is quite reasonable to ask that writing teachers meet that criterion.

While the spirit of Participant Six's answer to, "Do you think writing teachers must be writers themselves?" did not necessarily change, the logic of the second answer is much clearer. To him, being a writer does not make one a good writing teacher; there are plenty of educators who are successful in their field but not in the classroom. A professional writer may even be an awful teacher. So, to this participant, being a writer is a helpful qualification, but being a teacher seems to be much more important.

While Participant Seven's answer to, "Do you think writing teachers must be writers themselves?" did not change, his answer to "Do you think you are a better writing teacher after completing this study?" presents new ideas regarding the teacher-writer relationship, similar to the other responses noted here. His answer indicates that he sees writing and teaching as so intrinsically linked that a question about teaching may be answered with thoughts about writing. Even in his answer to "Do you prefer teaching writing over other topics?" his love of writing

(not teaching) is his justification. His personal writing identity seems far more sentient than his teaching identity, as he cannot discuss teaching without discussing his own writing. This participant's teacher-writer identity seems unique compared to the other participants, as none of his answers seem to separate teaching and writing into separate skillsets.

Expert Identity

Another contradiction coded in interview one was, "participant does not identify as an expert on writing but does consider themselves to be good at writing." Regarding the contradiction between question two ("Do you identify as an expert on writing?") and question six ("Do you think you are good at writing?") five participants changed their answers from interview one to interview three. What is particularly fascinating, is that with the exception of Participant Two, all of the changes created contradiction rather than resolved it. Participants One, Five, Seven and Eight negated themselves as experts of writing but acknowledged that they are good at writing. For some, this involved changing their answers to question two, and for others, changing their answers to question six.

Participants One and Seven changed their answers to question two. Participant One shifted from calling herself an expert on "aspects" of writing to claiming that "no one can be an expert." Participant Seven demonstrated the nuanced change from, "Yes. I would say more in like a subcategory of kind of the writing that I do" to, "I wouldn't say like a super like an expert, but I would definitely say an expert in some like, conventions." Both participants maintained that they were good at writing in both interviews one and three, so their answers to question six stayed the same. Both participants created a contradiction that was not present in interview one

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by changing their answers to question two while maintaining their answers to question six; they consistently believed they were good at writing but negated that they were experts.

Participants Five and Eight both created contradictions by changing their answers to question six ("Do you think you are good at writing?"). Participant Five's interview one answer was, "I'm an improving writer, I wouldn't say I'm a good writer." In interview three, his answer was, "I would say I can be good, or I'm decent at writing, but that's not like something that I strive for every time I write." Participant Eight in interview one said, "I'm adequate, I'm not good." In the third interview, he said: "I think that the answer is probably yes. I think that I'm probably good most of the time, not always." Yet, both participants consistently denied that they were experts. So, by shifting from a "no" answer to both questions two and six in interview one to a "yes" answer to question six in interview three, they both created contradiction.

Participant Two also changed her answer to question six, but for her, this change resolved a contradiction rather than created one. In both interviews, she denied the existence of expertise. However, when asked if she was good at writing, she shifted from saying "Sometimes" to, "I don't wanna say flat out that I'm good, because there's always room for improvement." So, while there was a contradiction in interview one – she denied being an expert but believed that she was sometimes good at writing – there was a resolution in interview three, as she denied both that she was an expert and that she was good.

The creation of contradictions regarding the relationship between writing skill and writing expertise indicates a more nuanced understanding of the writing process. Rather than a consistently hierarchical perception of writing (whether that hierarchy goes from "good writer" to "bad writer" or "expert" to "novice") the participants understand writing as less of a linear process. Writing is recursive and cannot be charted along a linear path, and therefore it is

possible to deny one's expertise while simultaneously laying claim to one's writing skill. Being "good" at writing is not simply a point on some direct path to being an "expert" in writing.

Definitions of "Writer" and Writer Identity

Prior to the study, I assumed none of the participants would identify as writers. All eight participants did identify as writers in interview one. However, throughout the study, many participants developed a better sense of what it meant to claim this identity. The third contradiction coded in interview one was, "participant identifies as a writer, but not with the definition they present." For Participants Two, Five, Six, and Eight, the contradiction was resolved, rather than embraced. For Participants Two and Five, the resolution came from a change in their explanation of their writer identitites when answering, "Do you consider yourself a writer?" For Participants Six and Eight, a change in their defintion of "writer" sparked this resolution.

Participant Two's answer regarding her writer identity indicates a new prioritization of the mere act of writing. Rather than the "writer" identity being connected to a particular amount of "a lot," or to a particular genre of "creative" writing, as in interview one, it is connected to any regular practice of writing, including freewriting. This identity is more consistent with the definition of "writer" she presents in both the first interview – "If you've ever written a word, you're a writer" – and the third interview: "Someone who writes with intention and purpose."

Participant Five's answer to "Do you consider yourself a writer?" signifies a personalization of the writer identity; rather than trying to improve based on some understanding of what "improved" writing is, he identifies as a writer because he takes interest in learning how to write. "Learning" and "improving," have different connotations in this context. The former

indicates a more process-oriented understanding of the writing journey; as a writer, one can learn without necessarily striving toward some objective, final goal of "improvement." This answer is consistent with his definition of "writer" in interview three: "Just anybody who's interested in communicating their thoughts onto paper."

Participant Six's identification as a writer shifted along with his defintion of "writer." As his defintion became more focused on the revision process, on being a "reflective" writer, his identity became simiarly contingent on "revising and teaching and trying to improve [his] writing every day." Revision became part of his definition, so it also became part of his writing identity.

While both of Participant Eight's answers to "Do you consider yourself a writer?" indicate some oscillation or uncertainty, the change in his notion of writing is dramatic, and his identity follows this change. By initially framing writing as a career, contingent on a paycheck, he identified as a writer because he was associated with and employed by an English department. However, by reframing writing as an intention, or even an approach, he now identifies as a writer because he shares in that attitude of intentionality.

Reconciliation of Grammatical Concerns

Another contradiction coded in interview one was, "participant does not mention grammar or usage in their definition of 'writer,' but notes grammar as a skill on which writing is contingent." Participants Two and Six both experienced a reconciliation of their grammatical concerns as they explored their writing identities. A move away from the focus on grammar is a natural result of freewriting; out of every shift I have noted thus far, this one is perhaps most obviously connected to the ten weeks of freewriting. It is hard to imagine another reason why

these writers' grammatical concerns were suddenly lifted. A microcosm of this study's claim could be that for people who struggle to teach writing because they struggle with grammar, freewriting can help refocus them on other concerns

Participant Two, when asked if she preferred teaching writing over other topics, was quite firm in interview one that her ability to teach writing was grossly limited by a lack of grammatical knowledge. She gave the same explanation when asked if she thought she was better at teaching writing than other topics. She also emphasized that her background is in literature, not writing, in both answers. In interview three, she does mention that she is a "literature person" but then says that she would prefer teaching writing and literature "the same" and that she would "not be worse" at teaching writing. This participant's notion of what it means to be a writing teacher became much broader and more inclusive; rather than understanding the job as contingent on a discrete set of skills, she accepted her own contributions to the classroom and moved away from the literature-major-versus-writing-teacher dichotomy.

The attitude expressed by Participant Six in interview one, when asked if he was an expert on writing – "I still want to come back and revise and rewrite. So, I don't think I'm an expert" – makes his new understanding of the writing process as inherently recursive even more interesting. Not only did he value revision more at the end of the study, but he also no longer viewed revision as a limitation on his ability to identify as an expert. He also noted shifting his focus from "errors and lower order concern matters" to "higher order concern matters." So, his concept of revision has been reframed as more than correcting grammar and usage.

The Importance of the Process of Freewriting

The experiences of many of the participants seem to correlate with how each participant practiced freewriting. This data corroborates the relationship between the practice of freewriting and the formation of writer identity that was introduced in interview two.

Participant Three's responses were remarkably stable. She did come to trust her right to an opinion on "good writing," which affected her answer to, "Do you think you are better at teaching writing than other topics?" She also shifted responsibility for her preference toward teaching literature from her own discomfort in the writing classroom to the types of students found in general education composition. But these were the only changes she demonstrated. I attribute the stability of this person's experience to a dramatically different understanding of the freewriting process. She shared during interview two that when her students freewrite, it is usually in the "6-10-minute range," once or twice a week, and if the students are "restless," she will end the session early. She also noted that her students' freewriting is always prompted with up to four questions, so that the students do not "run out" of content. The number of prompts and the pressure to complete them all in an arguably too-short time may interrupt the digressions aspect of freewriting so valued by Elbow. She may have practiced freewriting differently with her students than she did for this study. But I believe her classroom practices indicate a different conception of the purpose and process of freewriting. This difference could account for why her reconceptualization took a rather narrow path. If she is comfortable using prompts and cutting freewriting sessions short, then she may see freewriting as more of a brainstorming technique and may not embrace freewriting as a means of generating words better. That conception would certainly influence her performance of freewriting, which could affect how her self-perception developed during the study.

Participant Five did demonstrate some change when asked if he was a good writer; he shifted from focusing on his improvement over time to the idea that he does not strive to be "good" every time he writes. He also demonstrated a little more confidence and personalization in his writer identity. But, the rest of his answers demonstrate a remarkable stability. One potential reason for why this person did not undergo a significant reframing of ideas is because one of his chosen environments for freewriting was his classroom. According to this participant, he wrote in his classroom for approximately one third of the time. He also often used his freewriting to prepare for his lessons or to study for his own coursework. By writing in the classroom, with very specific topics, he may have limited the scope of his freewriting and therefore, the potential for change regarding his writing and teaching identity.

Participant Seven's understanding of writing seems to have become more product-oriented after the study. This participant used some of his freewriting to draft submissions for publication, which makes me wonder if his freewriting practice was more product-oriented than would be expected. If he spent ten weeks drafting potential products, his focus on production may have actually increased. When asked if he considered himself a writer, both his answers in interview one and three reference his publication history. Neither answer lists this publication history alone, and I do not want to claim that his commercial success is the only reason he identifies as a writer. He clearly feels a strong passion and connection for writing in addition to his accomplishments. It is, of course, natural to be proud of his publications, and I believe many people would mention them in these contexts. But I believe it is just as natural to measure one's writing identity by these publications. If one submits often and is in a constant cycle of write, submit, acceptation or rejection, it would be very difficult not to let the publication process dominate one's writer identity. This logic could be why, when asked if he thought he was good

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at writing, he was quite certain of his skill in poetry but less-so in prose; poetry is the genre in which he is most extensively published. Even his answer to, "Do you think you are a better writing teacher after completing this study?" references his desire to "produce" writing that "will be successful." And, since he used freewriting to contribute to this process, I could not expect the study to cause a shift toward process-orientation. This participant's experience demonstrates the importance of treating freewriting as a process, not a product; doing otherwise led to a very different shift in his notions regarding the writing process than was demonstrated by the other participants.

Participant One demonstrated four changed answers throughout the study. She had a reframing of the idea of expertise, she decided that students should write every day, and she demonstrated a stronger sense of enjoyment and preference toward teaching writing. This participant is one of two who seemed to practice freewriting with her students the same way I instructed participants to freewrite. She does not use prompts, and while she does do completion grading for the freewriting, she does not discuss or evaluate what was written. So, her conception of the purpose of freewriting may have facilitated freewriting practice that was well-attuned to how Elbow describes it, which could account for the greater number of changed answers.

Participant Eight's reframing of what it means to be a writer was likely due to his focus on concept formation about writing; he often started a freewriting session with the topics of writing and teaching writing in mind, even though he was comfortable straying into digressions if he felt the impulse to do so. He was able to see the value in freewriting because he practiced it as Elbow defines it, but he was also able to reframe his notions of writing and teaching because he freewrote about these topics. As he demonstrated the most substantive changes across six answers, his experience indicates that to foster the development of teacher and writer identity,

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teachers should take time to explicitly consider these issues, whether in freewriting or elsewhere.

CONCLUSION

The limited scope of this study, and the sizaeable variation among the results demonstrated by each participant, make it difficult to state a general effect of freewriting on writing teachers' self-perceptions. However, what I can say, is that most of the participants entered the study with contradictory ideas about writing and teaching. While I had not expected these contradictions, recognizing them helped me track important changes in thinking. By the end of the study, many of these contradictions had been reframed into much more nuanced and complex notions, whether through a resolution or through an awareness and embrace of the contraries. The participants have newfound understandings of the writing and teaching processes, as well as their places within these processes, which could benefit their work inside and outside of the classroom.

To maximize our potential as writers and teachers, we must each understand how we are defining writing and teaching. Many of the participants had never been asked the types of questions presented in this study. I suspect that many teachers enter the profession having never been asked what it means to be a writer or teacher. Or, if they have been asked, it was for a formal essay assignment or job interview, where they either eliminated contradictions before they could be explored or charged through the task, blissfully unaware of any contradictions in their thinking. And, once the essay was submitted, the interview complete, the answers were never revisited. Freewriting offered a space for participants to think about the foundations of their profession without the stakes of a formal written piece, without a due date or audience inhibiting the embrace of contraries.

My colleagues were all trained, when we were appointed as GAs, to believe that students are writers, that we are writers. But upon further examination, it seemed that many of them did not believe what they initially thought they did. Inherent contradictions arose as the participants tried to manage different definitions of writing, teaching, expertise, etc. Exploring the cognitive dissonance among their ideas creates a much firmer foundation from which these participants can teach and write.

Additionally, many participants came to value freewriting much more after the study. Simply trying freewriting for ten weeks lended validity to this exercise for those who inititally questioned its value. Freewriting gave a place for the participants to manage their emotions, to tap into feelings about writing and teaching of which they were previously unaware. Even for graduate students who write more regularly than many classroom teachers, the addition of freewriting into their writing routine made a difference in their understandings of writing and their work as writing teachers. If one thing is for certain, it is that the ten weeks of freewriting gave the participants an opportunity to explore writing that they did not have elsewhere, and that many had never had.

I came into this study expecting to prove that freewriting could strengthen teachers' sense of identity. I cannot prove that freewriting is the only, or even the most effective, means of doing so. Instead, I found that providing the space and time for teachers to embrace contraries, whether through freewriting or otherwise, can lead to a wider frame of reference through which teachers know themselves and their profession.

This study indicates that teachers can benefit from a space to explore theoretical and personal questions about our profession and our place within it. They should be able to reframe their identities, develop new ones, fail, try again, and come to understandings and claims that

may explicitly contradict the ones they held when they began. And this process takes time; ten weeks may not have been enough for some of the participants. Teachers should be given the time it takes to develop thorough understandings.

Rather than asking pre-service teachers to focus their notes on classroom interactions, formative assessments, and other practical, observable matters, maybe we should also ask them how they define what it is to be a writer. And we should let them linger on this question, and similar questions, entirely on their own. Teacher education should not confine these explorations to graduate-level study, or to high-stakes graded assignments. We should be asking teachers to answer these questions for their own sake, and to thoroughly consider their answers for reasons beyond earning a grade or approval. And writing teachers whose interests are not necessarily composition – as many of the participants in this study – most especially need this opportunity. I do not suggest that we eliminate the other types of questions asked, merely that we include explorations of writer and teacher identity alongside the more practical elements of teacher education and do so in a way that embraces contraries.

Even graduate assistants, who may only teach writing for a couple of years before transitioning to other areas, benefit from an exploration of what it means to be a writer and teacher. Perhaps we should strive for graduate assistants, and all other compostion teachers, to form their own frames of reference, and to seek to identify as a writing teacher regardless of their scholarly focus. It seems quite logical and necessary to ask that anyone teaching writing should be aware of their notions of teaching and writing. And, as the eight participants in this study were largely unaware of their ideas surrounding these topics prior to the study, it cannot be assumed that these explorations happen automatically.

Given the opportunity to explore these foundational questions, the natural contradictions in teachers' answers may generate a wider frame of reference through which we as a teaching community understand ourselves. And these newfound notions of writing and teaching may extend to how we perceive our students as writers, and how we can best contribute to their writing journeys, or how they can contribute to ours. It is easy to claim that teachers of writing must be writers, that we should model our work as writers for our students. But to foster this identity requires an occasion to define these words and understand them, and if freewriting offers one way to do that, then teachers should be freewriting.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Research Compliance Certificate

To:
Margaret Weaver
English
Margaret Weaver

Date: May 3, 2021 7:52:01 AM CDT

RE: Notice of IRB Exemption
Study #: IRB-FY2021-491
Study Title: The Impact of Freewriting on Writing Teachers' Self-Perceptions

This submission has been reviewed by the Missouri State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) and was determined to be exempt from further review. However, any changes to any aspect of this study must be submitted, as a modification to the study, for IRB review as the changes may change this Exempt determination. Should any adverse event or unanticipated problem involving risks to subjects or others occur it must be reported immediately to the IRB.

This study was reviewed in accordance with federal regulations governing human subjects research, including those found at 45 CFR 46 (Common Rule), 45 CFR 164 (HIPAA), 21 CFR 50 & 56 (FDA), and 40 CFR 26 (EPA), where applicable.

Researchers Associated with this Project:
PI: Margaret Weaver
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Other Investigators: Katherine Busch

Appendix B: Interview Questions

Interview One was completed prior to the beginning of the freewriting sessions. Interview Two was completed after five weeks of freewriting. Interview Three was completed after the ten weeks of freewriting were complete.

Interview One:

1. Do you consider yourself a writer? Why or why not?
2. Do you consider yourself an expert on writing? Why or why not?
3. How do you define what it is to be a "writer?"
4. Do you think writing teachers must be writers themselves?
5. Do you enjoy writing?
6. Do you think you are good at writing?
7. Do you prefer teaching writing over other topics?
8. Do you think you are better at teaching writing than other topics?
9. How often should students write in a writing classroom?
10. Is casual writing, such as freewriting, of equal learning value to formal essay writing?

Interview Two:

1. Do you include freewriting in your definition of "writing?"
2. Has that definition changed since the beginning of this study?
3. Do you enjoy freewriting?
4. Do you think you are good at freewriting?
5. Has the freewriting experience been positive or negative?
6. Has freewriting had an effect on your other writing?
7. Do you think of yourself as a writing teacher?
8. Is casual writing, such as freewriting, of equal learning value to formal essay writing?
9. What would your students think of freewriting?
10. Would you try freewriting with your students?

Interview Three:

1. Do you consider yourself a writer? Why or why not?
2. Do you consider yourself an expert on writing? Why or why not?
3. How do you define what it is to be a "writer?"
4. Do you think writing teachers must be writers themselves?
5. Do you enjoy writing?
6. Do you think you are good at writing?
7. Do you prefer teaching writing over other topics?
8. Do you think you are better at teaching writing than other topics?
9. How often should students write in a writing classroom?
10. Do you think you are a better writing teacher after completing this study?