A Multistate Study of Dominant Discourses in Teacher Candidates' Memories of Writing

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Abstract

This article examines the discourses of writing evident in teacher candidates' memories of writing and considers implications for teacher preparation. Data

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sources were written memories from 120 teacher candidates from six institutions across the United States. Grounded in a discourses of writing framework, data were investigated using thematic and discourse analysis. Findings indicate that language associated with a skills discourse of writing, emphasizing structure and correctness, was prevalent in the memories of how teacher candidates were taught to write. More dominant in these memories, however, was language related to negativity and absence, indicating that teacher candidates were critical of their K–12 writing education and that these experiences were limited across multiple dimensions (i.e., writing pedagogy, processes, products, purposes, audiences, writer agency). In contrast, when teacher candidates wrote about their most memorable writing experiences, the majority were replete with language related to positive affect, and discourses of agency and purpose were widespread. These memories suggest that despite their dominant narratives of absence, teacher candidates possess access to broader discourses of writing that might inform their teaching, especially those associated with social practice. Implications include three ways that teacher educators might position future educators to disrupt narrow discourses of writing in schools.

Introduction

Teacher candidates (TCs) enter preparation programs with experiences that include many different, and likely competing, discourses of writing, that is, beliefs about what writing is and related beliefs about how writing is learned and taught (Ivanič, 2004). Most current TCs engaged in a long "apprenticeship of observation" (Lortie, 1975) in schools during a period when writing was often neglected or limited to narrow skills-based approaches (McCarthey, 2008). These same TCs grew up in a period of tremendous global and technological change, involving shifting and expanding opportunities for writing (Yancey, 2009). When TCs reenter schools as educators, they will also encounter various discourses, including those that elevate or dismiss the importance of writing (Applebee & Langer, 2011; Graham, 2019). A major challenge for teacher educators (TEs) is to help TCs recognize and negotiate different discourses of writing as well as position future educators to disrupt many of the same discourses that are a prevalent part of TCs' and TEs' experiences (Bomer, Land, Rubin, & Van Dike, 2019).

Within this context, our team (a group of researchers/TEs from multiple institutions across the United States) has taken on the challenge of collaborating to improve writing in teacher education. An important part of our work to date has involved learning from the writing experiences of our TCs to be in a more knowledgeable position to facilitate their learning. In addition, we have found it valuable for TCs to consider their own writing histories so they might better connect theory and practice and understand writing more broadly (Draper, Barksdale-Ladd, & Radencich, 2000; Hall, 2016). In this article, we focused on our own learning from TCs' memories of writing. The purpose of this study was to investigate TCs memories of writing and to consider implications for teacher preparation. Specifically, the following research question was addressed: What discourses of writing are evident in TCs' memories of writing and learning to write?

Discourses of Writing

This study employed Ivanič's (2004) framework of discourses of writing: "constellations of beliefs about writing, beliefs about learning to write, ways of talking about writing, and the sorts of approaches to teaching and assessment which are likely to be associated with these beliefs" (p. 224). Drawing on multiple theories, the framework illuminates the vast differences in how the term *writing* is used as well as the associated consequences for what it means to learn and teach writing. In our research and pedagogy, we believe it is essential to attend to these differences and to combat narrow definitions of writing that are problematic for all but particularly damaging for students from nondominant communities (Dyson, 2006; Woodard & Kline, 2016).

The framework is composed of six discourses of writing: skills, creativity, process, genre, social practices, and sociopolitical. Each of the six discourses is distinct, but some easily complement others (e.g., genre and process), whereas others are clearly contradictory (e.g., skills and sociopolitical). In schools and wider society, however, it is normal to find discoursal hybridity where complementary and contradictory discourses of writing exist together (McCarthey, Woodard, & Kang, 2014). Given the contested nature of writing, it is unsurprising that when TCs step into college classrooms, they do so with a wide range of experiences and understandings of writing. We now describe each of Ivanič's six discourses of writing and identify the theories and language associated with each discourse.

A *skills discourse* centers solely on text, specifically, linguistic aspects of text. Writing is regarded as an activity that involves the production of letter, word, sentence, and text, devoid of context. From this perspective, learning to write involves learning specific rules. Teaching writing involves explicit rule instruction (e.g., correct handwriting, spelling, punctuation, text structure), and writing assessment is tied to how well students can reproduce these rules. This discourse is associated with language like *correct* and *proper*. It is frequently labeled as traditional and is evident in the media within calls for "back to basics." This popular discourse, however, typically focuses on reading; even when literacy is narrowly defined, writing is often neglected (Applebee & Langer, 2009).

A *creativity discourse* also centers on text; however, unlike a skills discourse, the content and style of text are the primary concern. In addition, a writer's meaning is considered important. Writing is treated as a valuable activity independent of a particular social purpose, except perhaps that of entertaining the writer. Writing is regarded as the product of a writer's creativity. Learning to write involves reading literature extensively and writing as much as possible; teaching is minimal (Elbow, 1973; Graves, 1983). A creativity discourse is associated with language like *expressive*, *voice*, and *style* and is often regarded as connected to "whole language" pedagogy.

A *process discourse* consists of the composing processes in the writer's mind and their practical realization. This discourse of writing is associated with the

theoretical model introduced by Flower and Hayes (1981) and has prompted a shift toward a process approach to writing instruction in many schools (Calkins, 1986). The application of this model, however, has tended to focus on the practical processes of planning, translating, and revising; the cognitive and environmental components of the model typically receive far less attention. Motivational and affective components, which were part of a later version of the model (Hayes, 1996), are frequently ignored. Also problematic is that the complex and iterative processes of writing are often treated as simple and in lockstep in schools. A process discourse is typically associated with language like *plan*, *draft*, *edit*, *revise*, *share*, and *publish*.

A *genre discourse* views writing as a set of text types shaped by social context. Beliefs about learning to write include learning the characteristics of different types of writing that serve specific purposes within particular contexts. This discourse is related to systemic functional linguistics (Halliday, 1961), a complex theory that centers the social function of language. When the characteristics of narrative, argumentative, and informative texts are taught in schools, this is sometimes referred to as a genre approach. A genre discourse, however, is not evident when these characteristics are divorced from their social context. There are many other issues with the ways in which a genre discourse has been applied in schools, including the limited number of texts that are taught and the limited ways these texts are represented. Argumentative texts tend to be privileged, and the hybrid and multiple nature of genre is typically ignored (Woodard & Kline, 2016). While a genre approach to teaching writing is often associated with the names of different text types, this would only be a true genre discourse if this learning were embedded within the social function of these texts.

A *social practices discourse* views writing as communication intimately connected to social purpose. Within this discourse, context is broadly defined. Not only is it related to the immediate writing event, as it is with the genre discourse; instead, writing is shown to be socially situated within particular practices and communities. Writing is also broadly defined. It is not just linguistic; it also includes other semiotic modes that may be combined to create multimodal artifacts. A social practices discourse is associated with new literacy studies (Street, 1997) and multiliteracies theories (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000; New London Group, 1996). From this perspective, learning to write involves purposeful participation in socially situated writing events—events that are initiated by meaningful goals and influenced by social and political factors. This discourse is associated with language like *context*, *practice*, *purpose*, and *event* and related to people, places, and technologies.

A *sociopolitical discourse* regards writing as socially constructed and tied to power, ideology, and identity. This discourse is similar to, and often found in combination with, a social practices discourse. Context is also central to this discourse, in particular, the broader sociopolitical context. The foundation for this discourse can be seen in critical theory (Freire & Macedo, 1987). Learning to write includes developing critical language awareness, understanding why different types of texts

are the way they are, and how historical and political forces shape and privilege certain ways of writing. Learning to write also involves developing awareness of the consequences of writing in particular ways, including reproducing or subverting hegemonic structures. From this view, the teaching of writing must include attention to sociopolitical factors and issues of social justice. It must also provide opportunities for writers to draw on their own cultural and linguistic resources and challenge norms of correctness. This discourse is connected with terms like *power*, *identity*, *privilege*, *representation*, and *ideology*. In recent years, this discourse is evident in critical literacy approaches to teaching and learning (Hill, Thomas-Brown, & Shaffer, 2018; Winn, 2016; Woodard, Vaughan, & Machado, 2017).

When she introduced the framework, Ivanič (2004) demonstrated the multilayered nature of language. That is, all layers of language, including text, cognitive processes, the event (the immediate social context), and the broader sociocultural and political contexts, are inseparable. Ivanič also acknowledged that other factors not mentioned in the framework may also be important in terms of writing. She provided affective factors as an example, which we found significant in our data. The framework was designed and has been widely used, as a research tool for investigating what is meant by writing in a wide range of contexts, such as policy documents, curriculum materials, and classroom talk (e.g., McCarthey et al., 2014; Stagg-Peterson, 2012). More recently, Bomer et al. (2019) applied it to examining research on writing in teacher education. In this study, we use the discourses framework as a tool to interrogate the dominant discourses in TCs' memories of writing.

Method

Participants and Settings

Data were collected from 120 TCs enrolled in literacy methods courses from six teacher preparation programs across the United States: Georgia, Illinois, New York, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, and Virginia. Figure 1 shows the wide range of licensure and/or endorsements sought by participants.

The population consisted of 115 TCs who identified as women and five who identified as men. Of the 120 TCs, 108 identified as White/Caucasian, five as African American/Black, four as mixed race, one as Asian, one as Latinx, and one as Pacific Islander.

Data Sources

Data sources were narrative responses to two open-ended questions, which were part of a larger questionnaire administered at the beginning of a literacy methods course:

1. Describe what you remember about how you were taught to write when you were a K–12 student.

2. Describe your most memorable writing experience, including what you wrote, why you wrote it, and how you felt about your writing.

The first question specifically addressed school experiences. The second question focused on whatever experiences the TCs found most memorable, whether inside or outside of school.

Data Analysis

Analysis involved both thematic and discourse analysis. For the thematic analysis, we first created a data matrix to organize data (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). We read significant portions of the data together, line by line, generating either in vivo codes or interpretive codes (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Next we conducted focused coding by rereading open codes to determine which made "analytic sense" to explain "larger segments of data" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 57). Table 1 provides an example of coding for one TC's responses for each question.

We also conducted discourse analysis (Gee, 2014). Through our extensive re-reading of the data set, we noticed patterns in the ways in which TCs used language. In particular, we explored the use of negative language structures (e.g., *don't*, *can't*) and the use of, and lack of use of, affective language (e.g., *excited*, *great*, *anxious*) and agentive language (e.g., "I was able to . . ." and "I decided to . . ."). We also considered the ways the teacher and teaching methods were represented or not represented in the data (e.g., "taught by being told," "we had to"). We did not try to

Figure 1
Licensure/endorsements sought by participants.
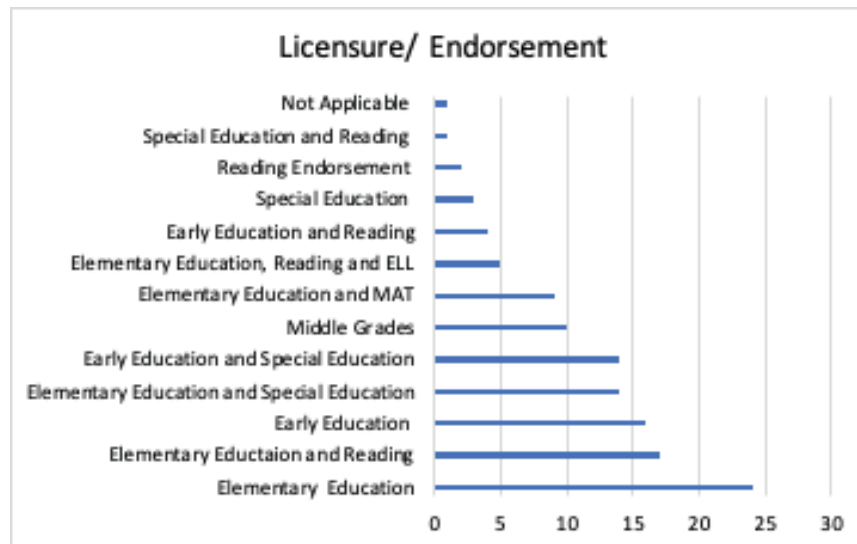
neatly fit TCs' responses into the discourses of writing framework (Ivanič, 2004); instead, we employed the framework as a tool to look across the data set and identify the dominant discourses that were apparent in TCs' responses. Using the framework also helped to illuminate discourses that were minimal or absent from the data.

Limitations

The study's limitations center on the data sources. Data were obtained from a convenience sample of TCs (authors' students). Since we teach these TCs, there is a possibility of socially desirable response bias because TCs may have responded based on what they believed their teachers wanted to hear. The data were also memories, which are inevitably incomplete and possibly flawed. Furthermore, we relied solely on the use of narrative responses without triangulation of other data. We did, however, benefit from hearing from TCs across multiple states and from varied institutional settings (public/private; research focused/teaching focused)

Table 1
Example of Thematic Coding for One TC

Question and response	Category	Code
Describe what you remember about how you were taught to write when you were a K–12 student.	Context Time	in school k-12
I mostly remember being taught how to write an essay using an introduction, then having two or three supporting paragraphs, and a conclusion when I was a K–12 student.	Audience Initiated by Topic chosen by Product Teacher/Teaching Affective language Experience	unclear teacher unclear essay "being taught how to" 0 unclear
Describe your most memorable writing experience, including what you wrote, why you wrote it, and how you felt about it.	Context Time	out of school unclear
I specifically remember writing in a notebook when my parents were going through a divorce. I wrote because it helped me get my feelings out and because it made me feel a sense of relief from getting my emotions out. This writing was very informal but definitely was a way to help me cope with my own feelings.	Audience Initiated by Topic chosen by Product Teacher/teaching Affective language Experience	self self self journal 0 "helped," "sense of relief," "help me cope" Positive (view of writing experience)

and education programs (early childhood, elementary education, middle grades, and special education), which was an important addition to this body of research literature. As a group of researchers from different institutions, we also brought multiple perspectives to the analysis. In addition, we considered both the TCs' general memories of being taught writing and their most memorable writing experiences, which added to our understanding of TCs' discourses of writing.

Findings

Distinct discourses of writing, or ways of thinking about writing, were evident across the TCs' memories. There were also major differences between the dominant discourses of how they were taught writing and their most memorable writing experiences. Consequently, we present findings for each separately, beginning with TCs' memories of how they were taught.

Teacher Candidates' Memories of How They Were Taught Writing

When TCs were asked to write about their memories of how they were taught writing as K–12 students, their responses focused on *what* rather than *how* they were taught. That is, their responses almost exclusively related to the content of what they were taught. Out of the 120 responses, 52 focused on writing structure (e.g., the five-paragraph essay) and 41 on writing conventions (e.g., spelling and grammar). The most frequently mentioned product was the essay ($n = 49$). Only a few TCs mentioned other products, such as stories ($n = 5$) or journal entries ($n = 5$). Sentences were also mentioned as writing products ($n = 5$). Almost half of the TCs, however, did not mention any writing product.

In 94 out of the 120 responses, no audience for writing was specified. Thirteen TCs indicated the teacher was the audience for their writing; however, given the lack of mention of other audiences, it is possible to infer that the teacher was likely the primary audience for much of this school writing.

Also noticeable across these memories was the limited use of affective language, which made it difficult to interpret how TCs felt about their experiences. Out of the 120 responses, 10 included positive affective language (e.g., *loved*, *enjoyed*), 18 negative (e.g., struggled, hated), and 11 a combination of positive and negative affective language. However, negative language structures, particularly the use of the word *don't*, were widespread across these memories. The most prominent discourses—(a) structure and correctness and (b) negativity and absence—will now be discussed in more detail.

Discourses of structure and correctness. TCs' memories of how they were taught writing when they were K–12 students were abundant with discourses related to writing structure and correctness. In particular, a large number of TCs from across the spectrum of states wrote about being taught how to organize a five-

paragraph essay, often including requirements for the number of sentences within each paragraph. For some, this was all they wrote about. One example follows:

> During my years as a K–12 student, I was taught a pretty standard way of writing. The typical introduction, three body paragraphs, and conclusion. Usually the paragraphs were supposed to contain 4–5 sentences and the topics were always given to us.

Phrases within these responses, such as "a pretty standard way of writing" and "the typical writing format," suggest that this simple view of writing became normalized for TCs. Other phrases, such as "during my years as a K–12 student" and "5 paragraph essays was the thing that I always had to do," indicate the pervasiveness of this way of structuring writing over an extended time period.

Also common in TCs' K–12 memories was the mention of being taught to structure writing using the "hamburger approach." An example of this follows:

> I remember being taught how to write by doing the "hamburger" and having the buns be the introductory and concluding paragraphs, and then the meat being the body paragraphs and the details being the other parts of the sandwich. I remember it being very structured and having to go in the specific order from start to finish.

Perhaps TCs remembering being taught this way of structuring writing is unsurprising, as metaphors and visual images are powerful, and often helpful, ways to support memory. More concerning, however, is that for many TCs, being taught "the way to set up a paper" using a simplistic formula was the dominant or sole substance of what they wrote when asked to describe how they were taught to write as K–12 students. This suggests that the form of writing was emphasized over the function of writing (e.g., its purpose, audience, content) and that TCs were taught to organize writing as if there is one correct way to do so.

This emphasis on "correctness" was also evident in TCs' responses associated with other aspects of writing, as the following five extracts demonstrate: "Use correct spelling and punctuations is the main thing I remember"; "I was taught to write by following grammar rules"; "I remember memorizing grammar rules and following layouts for all of my writing assignments"; "The MLA format was drilled into our brains"; "I remember constantly doing the tracing letter papers to know how to properly write my letters."

Language like *correct*, *proper*, *rules*, and *right way* was widespread. This focus on textual correctness closely aligns with what Ivanič (2004) described as a skills discourse of writing. In these TCs' reported experiences, "what counts as good writing is determined by the correctness of the letter, word, sentence, and text formation" (p. 227). It is important to note that while a skills discourse of writing was pervasive within the TCs' memories of how they were taught writing, there were also widespread critiques of this discourse. One TC, like many others across the data set, not only wrote about a focus on structure and correctness but also critiqued this emphasis:

> When I was taught to write when I was younger I remember a lot of stressing over if my papers were grammatically correct and if it was structured correctly. Everything has to be set up the right way and I feel like I was being graded more on these things than what I was actually writing.

Even before these TCs completed a course emphasizing writing and teaching writing, it is clear that many possess a strong awareness that the teaching of writing should involve more than structure and correctness. In the next section, TCs' critiques of how they were taught writing are further explored.

Discourses of negativity and absence. Language related to negativity and absence was also widespread across the TCs' responses about how they were taught writing. That is, TCs frequently used negative language structures, in particular, *not*, as well as other language related to limitation, deficiency, or absence. In addition, TCs' responses about how they were taught were typically lacking in detail; therefore a lot of possible information about the many ways they might have been taught to write was not present.

In their memories of how they were taught to write when they were K–12 students, many TCs used negative language, such as *do not*, to report remembering little about writing in K–12 schools. A couple of TCs simply stated "I cannot remember" and "Not much that I remember" as their full responses to this question. Many TCs, however, made such a statement and then went on to describe what little they remembered. Their limited memories, as reported earlier, typically related to writing structure and conventions, as the following full response shows: "I don't really remember learning anything when it came to writing except how to format papers and write in cursive." The following two extracts were also typical: One TC wrote, "I don't remember much about being taught to write. I remember learning very briefly about correct grammar and punctuation"; another wrote, "I have little to no memory of this. Other than a ridiculous hamburger graphic organizer that I hated having to use." Across these memories, it was possible to sense TCs' frustration with these limited experiences and their desire to do something different. Sometimes this was explicit, as with the following response: "I do not remember anything about being taught to write. I hope to make my students remember and be a good impact on their lives."

TCs also used negative language structures to state their lack of enjoyment with regard to writing instruction focused on rules and structure. For example, one TC wrote, "I always loved writing, but I did not enjoy such heavy rules it came along with." Another TC wrote, "I was taught to write in a system. We had specific lengths, topics, rules, setups, etc. It was not fun and mostly informational."

In addition, TCs used negative language to describe things they were not taught or ways they did not learn:

> I felt that my teachers did not model the writing process to my peers and I. I felt that they provided us with templates for essays and posters with transition words,

and expected us to follow along with the template, but they did not show us an example of how to complete the writing.

In such responses, it is possible to see glimpses of TCs' awareness of other possible approaches to teaching writing: "We did not focus as much on the topics we wrote about, but more on technical things: varying sentence beginnings, using transitions, etc." It is also possible to see the recognition of the importance of other factors, such as writer agency: "We never had journals, all my writing had to be from a prompt so it was never something I enjoyed because it never felt like it was actually my paper."

TCs also used negative language in more direct ways to criticize teachers and their teaching, or lack of it, including the following:

> I remember being in third or fourth grade and writing an essay that ended with me waking up from a dream. The teacher pulled me aside later that day and told me that that was unacceptable because many other students use that idea. I remember feeling lost because I felt that I was never taught how to end a written piece.

Others wrote about their lack of preparation due to their teachers' inadequate instruction, for example, one TC wrote, "I feel like my teachers didn't do the best job to prepare their students for college writing." Another TC wrote, "I don't think I received any proper teaching on how to write."

The prevalent use of negative language across TCs' K–12 memories indicated that many TCs were critical of their experiences. Many of their responses also indicated their awareness of the need for something more and/or different from a skills-based approach to writing. In terms of Ivanič's (2004) discourses of writing, the data suggest that some TCs had knowledge of and perhaps favored creativity or a process discourse of writing. This is apparent in some of the foregoing examples when TCs talk about what they were not taught or what their teachers did not do. Interestingly, the few responses of learning to write in K–12 settings that were coded as positive aligned more closely with creativity and/or a process discourse of writing and showed writer agency. An illustrative example follows:

> I remember that we had a dedicated amount of writing time each day. In my younger grades we would have around 15 minutes to do a free write each day. The teacher didn't care about what you wrote about, just that you practiced writing. I also remember doing a lot of peer revision and editing. That really helped me become a better writer.

There were other positive examples, for instance, one TC wrote, "I had a good relationship with writing growing up. I remember doing a lot of free writing and creative writing in school that made me really love it." Another TC wrote, "In elementary school I remember loving to write because I got to create my own stories about things that interested me." However, these kinds of responses were rare (10 out of 120 were coded as positive). Far more common were responses involving negative language related to limited instruction and/or a skills-based approach.

Also telling were all of the things that were absent from TCs' K–12 memories of how they were taught writing. In particular, there was an absence of descriptions of teaching methods in the responses. One interpretation of these responses is that writing was likely assigned rather than taught. Another possible interpretation is that explicit methods related to skills-based approaches were dominant. Considering that we specifically asked the TCs to describe how they were taught, it is interesting that we were unable to find any teaching methods in almost all of the responses. We did find many instances where TCs described being "told": "I remember being taught by being told the order and pattern my sentences should be in"; "Never taught, just told to write"; "I do not really remember how I was taught to write but from fifth grade and on, I always remember being told to use the hamburger model for your cliché five-paragraph essay."

Similarly, descriptions of writing products, except for the five-paragraph essay, were noticeably absent from the TCs' memories. Few examples indicated that writers had agency in terms of their writing or suggested an audience beyond the teacher. In terms of Ivanič's (2004) framework, the experiences that TCs described predominantly centered on a skills discourse of writing. There was some mention of creativity and process discourses. A genre discourse of writing, in its superficial form (e.g., text type devoid of purpose), was also occasionally evident. Social practices and sociopolitical discourses were entirely absent from TCs' memories of how they were taught writing.

Teacher Candidates' Most Memorable Writing Experiences

When TCs wrote about their most memorable writing experiences, the majority (95 out of 120) wrote about an experience in an educational setting. These memories included ones that occurred at elementary school, middle school, high school, and college. Memories related to an out-of-school writing experience (e.g., home or community writing) were far less common ($n = 17$), and only one TC wrote about an experience that bridged in and out of school. The writing product that TCs most commonly described was an academic essay ($n = 46$); others mentioned fictional stories/personal narratives ($n = 18$), journal entries ($n = 11$), letters ($n = 10$), poems ($n = 9$), and songs ($n = 2$). The teacher was the most common audience for the TCs' most memorable text ($n = 68$). Only a small number of TCs' memories included other audiences, such as classmates ($n = 3$), other peers ($n = 11$), self ($n = 12$), and the wider community ($n = 2$).

In the majority of memories, a teacher initiated the writing (91 out of 120); however, in most cases, the teacher gave the writer some choice over the topic ($n = 77$). Only 17 TCs described a writing experience where they both initiated the writing and chose the topic. Least common were memories where the teacher initiated the writing and also chose the topic ($n = 9$).

In contrast to their memories of how they were taught writing, the TCs' most

memorable writing experiences were replete with affective language. Based on this language, the majority of their most memorable writing experiences appeared positive (94 out of 120); nine were negative; eight were mixed; and nine were unclear. In contrast to when TCs wrote about how they were taught to write, when they wrote about their most memorable writing experience, most responses contained language related to positive affect, for example, *proud*, *passionate*, *accomplished*, *excited*, *inspired*, *interested*, *pleased*, *happy*, *confident*, and *successful*. Associated with this positive affect, we identified discourse related to two central, and related, themes: agency and purpose. We will now discuss these themes in more detail.

Discourses of agency and purpose. When TCs' most memorable writing experience was set outside of school (17 out of 120), these memories all contained positive affective language, and all contained language related to agency and purpose. These TCs wrote about journals, songs, and letters. For example, one TC wrote,

> My most memorable writing experience would be when I had to write a letter to my Aunt. I had so much passion and so much I was excited to tell her. I was really proud of the letter I wrote her. I wrote it to her because she is dying and I haven't seen her in a while. I felt like God was telling me to write to her and I felt way different writing it then I have felt about writing stuff before. I was proud of what I had wrote and I couldn't believe that I wrote that.

In this memory, the TC's purpose (audience, form, content) for writing is clear. Her use of affective and agentive language demonstrates her positive feelings toward this memory and the power that she felt from it. Similarly, the same is visible in the next memory:

> I remember writing a "love letter" to my boyfriend and it was such an easy way to express my feelings. I was able to put down exactly what I was thinking and make it meaningful. I felt pretty confident with my writing because it wasn't something I was getting graded on.

Within these memories, the TCs demonstrate a strong emotional connection to the writing. They also often contrast this writing to other writing experiences, for instance, "I felt way different writing it than I have felt about writing stuff before" and "I felt pretty confident with my writing because it wasn't something I was getting graded on." In these examples, it is possible to gain a glimpse of a phenomenon apparent across the broader data set, that is, the misalignment between writing experiences that TCs identified as meaningful and the ways in which TCs described being taught to write in the K–12 setting.

When TCs wrote about an out-of-school writing experience, it is perhaps unsurprising that these memories contained language related to positive affect, agency, and purpose, as they chose and shaped these experiences. However, when TCs wrote about an in-school most memorable writing experience (which was the majority of TCs), most of these experiences were also positive and contained language related to agency and purpose. In fact, this was true for all of the experi-

ences where the teacher assigned the writing but gave some choice to the writer. Many of these memories included language such as "I had to . . . ," indicating the writing was assigned/required. However, key in all the positive memories was that the writer possessed some agency and/or felt that the writing had purpose or was meaningful. Many of these memories related to writing about themselves or family:

> My most memorable writing experience was last semester when I had to write a poem for one of my classes. I wrote my poem about my grandfather who had just recently passed away. I sat down and began writing and the words just flowed and the poem actually made sense. It was from the heart and it was very deep.

Other positive experiences initiated by the teacher focused on writing about topics that were personally meaningful:

> I had to write a 12 page research paper on a topic of my choice. I wrote about mental illness, specifically eating disorders. It was very important for me to write since it was very close to heart for me. It was very interesting to research about this topic and learn more about it.

Also, evident were topics or assignments that were interesting or enjoyable to a writer:

> I loved writing a comparison essay for my jazz appreciation class. I wrote about Tommy Dorsey and Glenn Miller and their similarities and differences. I had so many ideas and things to say that a 6 page paper became a 10 page paper and then I had to go back and edit the pages to meet the requirements. But I loved listening to their styles of jazz and analyzing the material. Writing about it was painless.

When TCs described a time when their writing was published, these experiences were also, perhaps unsurprisingly, positive and contained language related to agency and purpose. The following example is from college, but publishing was something that was mentioned across all of K–12 education:

> My most memorable writing experience would be when we got to write our own books in college and have them published. It was incredible to hold books that we had written/illustrated in our hands. We wrote them originally as an assignment but they had developed into so much more for each individual person.

These positive school memories containing language of agency and purpose stand in contrast to the TCs' general memories of learning to write. At times, the TCs make these contrasts themselves:

> One of my most memorable writing experiences was in seventh grade because we were able to write a whole story on whatever we wanted. We weren't given so many rules. We were able to write a story and really use our imagination. I remember my story was fictional and I was able to make it my own.

It is important to note, however, that there were examples where the writer had limited agency and also recalled the experience as positive: "My most memorable writing experience was surprisingly the essay on the ACT. The question made me take a stance on an issue I was very passionate about which made me very

excited to write." This example demonstrates that when the writer is interested in the topic and confident in the form of the writing, it may not be as important that he or she has limited choice or agency. This brings up an important consideration: Some topics and forms are more valued in educational settings, and these tend to be associated with dominant groups in society, whereas other topics and forms that are less valued are typically associated with nondominant groups. Consequently, individuals from these marginalized communities may be less likely to experience writing styles, forms, and practices that engender positive emotions (Hill et al., 2018; Winn, 2016).

TCs' general memories of learning to write tended to paint a negative picture of teachers, but their most memorable writing experiences revealed that many had positive experiences with teachers:

> My most memorable writing experience was in my senior year of high school. I was in an AP writing class with a teacher who really knew his stuff. He taught me how to plan, draft, revise, and compile a final draft of an essay. All of the essays I wrote for that class were meaningful to me because we were always required to pick a side on any argument and discuss why it mattered to us and why others should care. It influenced my ability to create professional written essays that included a piece of myself in them while also being formal. After that class I felt so much more confident in my ability as a writer.

The next example also shows a positive experience with a teacher. It is particularly interesting when considered alongside a memory presented earlier in the findings about how TCs were taught. Whereas the TC from the earlier example recalled the teacher telling her that the ending where she woke up from a dream was "unacceptable" and "feeling lost," the teacher in this memory acted differently: "In fifth grade we were asked to do creative writing. I wrote an elaborate story about a sea monster and ended it with the main character waking up from a dream. My teacher read it aloud to the class."

Similarly, the following memory demonstrates the power of a teacher's actions. In this example, the TC claims that her feelings of confidence and passion about writing and school were a direct result of the professor's words:

> In my freshman year of college, I wrote a piece about why liberal arts was necessary, but what mattered was that my professor called me into her office, poured into my heart that I had the makings of a great writer, and encouraged me to consider pursuing it. I then felt confident about my writing, about school, and my passion grew.

There were also negative examples related to teacher actions:

> My most memorable writing experience would have to be writing a huge research paper. . . . I wrote about feminism in Hollywood and celebrities' effects on feminism. It was not the best piece of work I have ever written and something my teacher did not like so much. There were many mistakes in the paper and probably were not well supported. I thought it was good and even had my older sister look over

it, who is really good at writing. But, once I got the feedback from my teacher I did not think my paper was that good anymore and that kind of distorted my view on writing and made me anxious about the next time I would have to write a paper in that class.

TCs' strong and/or shifting emotional responses were also evident in relation to grades, as the following example shows:

One of my most memorable writing experiences was when I was writing my capstone paper [as an] undergraduate. Compared to the other students in the class, I felt like their writing was better than mine. For my topic and paper, I ended up getting a good grade on it which I was surprised because the professor I had was good, but also tough. It made me feel good and proud of my writing.

These examples indicate that positive and negative affect were not always connected to agency and purpose. Teachers' actions often had a powerful influence on how TCs felt about their writing and themselves as writers.

A major difference between TCs' general memories of K–12 writing and their most memorable writing experiences is that a much broader range of discourses of writing was evident across their most memorable writing experiences. The discourses of agency and purpose evident in the memories discussed were the most dominant. These discourses can also be seen in two TCs' examples, as well as glimpses of other discourses. One TC wrote,

I remember writing a research paper about Black Lives Matter. I put a lot of passion and effort into that paper, and I am still so proud of it to this day. I wrote it because it is a topic I feel very passionate about and I wanted to be able to educate my peers more about the movement itself.

Another wrote,

My most memorable writing experience was conducting a research based paper. I had written about the positive outcomes of children being enrolled in a pre-kindergarten program, and the need for financial support within our country. I decided to write about this because I believe it is a topic that many are unaware of or look past without thought. I felt passionate about this writing piece because I was interested in the topic, and after the paper was written I felt accomplished and informed further on the topic.

These examples use agentive language and show clear social purpose for writing: "I wrote it because it is a topic I feel very passionate about and I wanted to educate my peers" and "I decided to write about this because I believe it is a topic that many are unaware of." These examples, like the majority in their most memorable writing experiences, clearly showed discourses of agency and purpose. These factors are closely associated with Ivanič's (2004) social practices discourse of writing. The two preceding examples (and several others within the most memorable writing experiences) also lean toward a sociopolitical discourse of writing by showing attention to issues of social justice.

Discussion and Implications

The TCs' general memories of how they were taught to write were limited and typically related to narrow discourses of writing. Given this long "apprenticeship of observation" (Lortie, 1975) in K–12 settings, perhaps we should be concerned that these TCs will go on to replicate these ways of teaching and the inequities reproduced when writing is treated as a simple and ideology-free skill (Dyson, 2006). The TCs, however, were critical of these experiences. In addition, their most memorable writing experiences revealed broader discourses of writing, in particular, discourses of agency and purpose, which most closely relate to a social practices view of writing. The concept of *apprenticeship of observation* emphasizes the conservative nature of schooling and makes the assumption that educators do not take an analytical stance toward their school experiences (Lortie, 1975). Similar to Smagorinsky and Barnes (2014), we found that TCs have access to more progressive discourses and often take up critical stances toward their experiences. As TEs, we recognize the importance of valuing their propensity for critique and their desire for change. With this in mind, we consider implications for TEs.

First, we believe it is important for TEs to start with the assumption that TCs already possess access to a broad range of discourses of writing. If we had only asked the TCs to write about their general memories of learning to write, we might have assumed that they only had access to narrow discourses of writing. Asking them to write about their most memorable writing experience illuminated other discourses, albeit discourses mainly related to school and traditional forms of writing. As TEs, however, we are part of the educational establishment that has privileged certain conceptions of writing. It is perhaps unsurprising that when we ask TCs to write about memories of writing, they write mainly about traditional forms of writing. They rarely wrote about experiences involving community writing, and they did not write about experiences involving multimodal composing. We might, however, be cautious in making the assumption that they have not had such experiences. As TEs, we could ask different questions: How might we raise TCs' awareness of writing across a wide range of contexts? How might we challenge TCs to consider multiple perspectives, backgrounds, and languages of their students? How might we better support TCs' understanding of writing and the teaching of writing in our education programs? We suggest three ways to rewrite, reposition, and reframe traditional understandings of writing and the teaching of writing.

Position Teacher Candidates as Critical Inquirers of Discourses of Writing

TCs are already critical of many of their experiences with writing in schools. TEs might provide opportunities and theoretical frames to support their critical inquiry. For example, after exploring various theories of literacy, TCs might examine their own memories of learning to write to highlight the discourses of writing present

and absent from their experiences. Given the typical demographics of TCs and the diversity of the children they will teach, it is also important for TCs to investigate beyond their own experiences. We might provide opportunities for TCs to conduct ethnographic research of writing in various communities. We might also provide opportunities for conducting investigations of writing in popular culture and the media. In addition, TCs might critically examine discourses of writing in different writing programs. Such an examination would highlight the problems involved with "one-size-fits-all" materials that inevitably fail to attend to the local contexts of students. Another important component of this work is to support TCs to investigate the sociopolitical reasons why certain discourses of writing tend to be privileged in schools and why others are marginalized, as well as the implications of this for students from nondominant communities.

Position Teacher Candidates to Resist and/or Reposition Narrow Discourses of Writing

We cannot expect our future teachers to single-handedly upturn structures deeply embedded in our schools. We can, however, support TCs to resist and/or reposition narrow discourses of writing. For instance, we might engage TCs in an investigation of the "hamburger." They might consider what makes its use problematic and when and how it might be used differently. They might also investigate the five-paragraph essay. Perhaps they could be challenged to find a five-paragraph essay outside of a school setting or encouraged to explore with children the problems associated with following the five-paragraph model. In addition, they might explore the writing processes of various writers to illuminate the complexity of writing processes and contrast this to the simple ways that the writing process is treated in schools. We might pose the broad question to TCs, What happens when tools and structures designed to support student writing are treated as rules to be followed? We can work alongside TCs to support them as they navigate and negotiate curricula and mandates to find space for agency and purpose in student writing (Kang, 2016; Yoon, 2013).

Position Teacher Candidates to Bring to Life Broader Discourses of Writing

To borrow a phrase widely used during writing workshops, we should "*Show*, don't *tell*" (Calkins, 1986). That is, we need to *show* TCs how to bring to life broad discourses of writing, particularly social practice and sociopolitical discourses. TEs can *tell* TCs that they should create authentic experiences based on meaning and purpose with real audiences and attention to sociopolitical issues. It is one thing to explain audience, but it is quite another to help them realize how to consider audience and social issues within the classroom context. It is incredibly challenging to create authentic writing experiences in schools. Such experiences cannot be reduced to a simple series of lessons and do not typically come from writing that is

assigned and graded. Real writing experiences are driven by a writer's intentions and agency (Dyson, 2020). With that said, emerging scholarship is bringing to life the ways that TEs might center broad definitions of writing in schools (e.g., Bomer, 2017; Dharamshi, 2018; Woodard et al., 2017). We must draw on this research and contribute to it. Particularly important to this work is for TEs to seek out and partner with K–12 educators who teach from critical perspectives and engage with communities outside of classroom walls.

Conclusion

This study revealed that TCs likely possess access to much broader discourses of writing than those shown in their general memories of how they were taught to write. An important component of our work as TEs is to raise awareness of various discourses and to position TCs as agents of change and ambassadors for broad conceptions of writing. This is vital; however, it is not enough. We must also push back against larger structures that promote narrow discourses of writing in educational institutions, in particular, factors that deprofessionalize teaching and treat it as a contextless activity, such as scripted curricula and testing mandates. Perhaps even more immediately, we must advocate for more space within our education programs for writing, as there is a lack of writing in teacher education connected to a long history of privileging reading (reading endorsements, reading master's programs; Myers et al., 2016). We need to combat these broader issues so that our future teachers might promote broader discourses of writing with children. Only then will these children grow to own a multitude of writing memories full of discourses of agency and stories of writing as a powerful and purposeful activity.

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