

STRAIGHT FROM THE SOURCE: A CANDID ILLUSTRATION OF FOUR SECONDARY
ENGLISH TEACHERS' BELIEFS, EXPERIENCES, AND TENSIONS WITH TEACHING
HIGH SCHOOL WRITING

by

KHADEIDRA NIQUOLE BILLINGSLEY

AMY DAYTON, COMMITTEE CHAIR
KAREN GARDINER
LATRISE JOHNSON
NATALIE LOPER
ALEXIS MCGEE

A DISSERTATION

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
in the Department of English
in the Graduate School
of The University of Alabama

TUSCALOOSA, ALABAMA

2022

Copyright Khadeidra Niquole Billingsley 2022
ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

ABSTRACT

Recent scholarship estimates that approximately 50% of incoming students are unprepared for college-level writing. (Sanoff 2006; Achieve, Inc. 2007; Complete College America 2012; Hechinger Report 2016). For the past 150 years, high school teachers have been blamed for the inadequate writing skills of college-bound students. Their biggest critics are college professors who frequently complain that many of their college freshmen cannot compose effective and rhetorically-sound texts. For some, this added labor could lead to a perpetuation of tension and finger pointing between the two groups of educators. However, in many of these rounds of this ongoing ‘blame game’, there is a side that seems to be missing and a voice that seems to be muted: that of the high school teachers.

This paper illustrates high school teachers’ definitions and perceptions of and about academic writing. Through the facilitation of focus groups and semi-structured interviews, as well as the analysis of course materials, the researcher provides a comprehensive and candid narrative of the beliefs, experiences, and tensions that high school writing teachers negotiate as they integrate writing instruction into their existing English/Language Arts curriculum. In prioritizing the voices of high school teachers, this research will be a necessary first step to inciting more high school-college conversations and future collaborations. This text outlines implications for several groups influenced by secondary writing instruction including teachers, students, administrators, and teacher educators. This research will not only have grand implications for English educators, both at the secondary and postsecondary level, but student

writers as well as we continue to work towards making the transition from high school to college writing easier for our college-bound students.

DEDICATION

To my family, friends, peers, and colleagues, 'Thank You.'

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are so many individuals who were integral in helping make my dream of becoming ‘Dr. K’ a reality and moving along the completion of this dissertation. First and foremost, I want to thank God because without Him, there would be no me. This has been a revelational journey through which I have learned so much about myself and my purpose of this Earth and my faith in Him has become so much stronger throughout this process. I want to give thanks to all my friends, family, students, and peers who provided me with a laugh when I needed the most. I want to acknowledge Dr. McGee, Dr. Gardiner, Dr. Loper, and Dr. Johnson, the members of my committee and my lifelong mentors, who pushed and challenged me, but also supported and motivated me in various ways as I grappled with this project in the times of societal hardships given the COVID-19 pandemic. I thank my committee chair, Dr. Dayton, for her endless support, both personal and professional, throughout this process. I could not have chosen a better person to lead me on this journey. Your leadership is one that I hope to emulate and I am forever indebted to you. To my Daddy, thank you for being my motivation when you did not even know you were. To my sisters, thank you for being my first students and biggest cheerleaders. I did not only do this for me; I did this for us. Lastly, to my life partner, babe, and my everything, thank you so much for being my rock in my times of chaos and my times of celebration. My love for you has grown more than I ever thought it could and I am so happy that you were there to do this with me.

CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	ii
DEDICATION.....	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	v
LIST OF TABLES.....	x
LIST OF FIGURES.....	xi
Chapter 1: Introduction.....	1
Author’s Experiences.....	1
Significance of Project.....	2
Statement of the Problem.....	4
Overwhelming Perceptions of High School English Teachers.....	6
Academic Writing Instruction.....	10
Research Goals.....	13
Methodology.....	13
Research Questions.....	14
Chapter Overview.....	15
Chapter 2: Review of Literature.....	17
Writing Teachers’ Epistemologies and Perceptions of Teaching Writing.....	18
Writing Teachers’ Pre-Service Preparation.....	21
Writing Teachers’ Professional Development.....	22
Secondary Writing Instruction.....	24

External Influences on Secondary Writing Instruction.....	27
Effective Writing Instructional Practices.....	33
High School Student Writers	36
Summary.....	40
Chapter 3: Research Methodology.....	42
Research Questions.....	43
Research Design.....	43
Theoretical Framework.....	46
Site Selection	47
Participants.....	48
Data Collection	52
Data Analysis	56
Measures of Trustworthiness	61
Limitations	62
Chapter 4: Findings.....	65
Findings.....	66
Definitions and Perceptions of Academic Writing.....	66
Content Objectives and Goals for Writing Instruction.....	73
Best Practices of High School Writing Instruction	79
Barriers and Constraints to Writing Instruction	86
Summary.....	108

Chapter 5: Discussion and Analysis of Responses, Implications and Conclusion.....	110
Emergent Theory	112
Emergent Themes Among Participants’ Responses.....	112
High School English Teachers Utilize Multiple Frameworks to Define Academic Writing	112
High School English Teachers Are Aware of the Demands of Academic Writing	116
High School English Teachers Consider Academic Writing to be a Necessary Skill.....	120
High School English Teachers Utilize Effective Writing Instructional Methods	122
Academic Writing is Difficult for High School Students	127
High School English Teachers Negotiate Various External and Internal Pressures	130
High School English Teachers Have to Consider a Multitude of Student Needs	135
Summary of Emergent Theory.....	139
Implications.....	140
Implications for Secondary Writing Teachers.....	140
Implications for School Administrators	141
Implications for Teacher Educators.....	142
Implications for Education Policymakers	143
Implications for College Faculty and Workforce Employers.....	144
Recommendations.....	145
Recommendation #1:.....	145
Recommendation #2:.....	146

Recommendation #3:.....	147
Recommendation #4:.....	147
Future Research	148
Concluding Thoughts.....	150
REFERENCES	153
Appendices.....	167
Appendix A: Institutional Review Board Approval Letter.....	168
Appendix B: Participant Recruitment Email	169
Appendix C: Informed Consent Form	170
Appendix D: Phase 1 Interview Questions	173
Appendix E: Phase 2 Interview Questions.....	176

LIST OF TABLES

1. Participants' Education, Teaching, and Writing Background.....	53
2. Emergent Themes.....	112

LIST OF FIGURES

1. Skills Prioritized in Academic Writing Instruction Among Participants.....73-74
2. Graham’s Writing Community Model.....131

Chapter 1: Introduction

“I think if people blame high school teachers for the reason kids can't write, it's because they forget how much is expected of us before they leave.” – Ms. Branch

“I think that what we need to do is focus less on blame here, that like “Oh, it's the English teacher in high school that failed them because he told her that she couldn't put 'you' in the paper” and focus more on what we expect as good writing and make that more apparent.” – Ms. Creek

“The next time a college teacher is like ‘they didn't prepare them to write’, it's just like look those people had golden retrievers they had to feed, and they had to stay employed.” - Ms. Poppy

Author's Experiences

Since I was a little girl, I knew that my life's purpose was to be a teacher. I still vividly remember the days of ‘playing school’ with my younger sisters, designing assignments and managing my class of two. My love for the act of teaching was also coupled with a fascination with the experiences of my teachers. Growing up, I always loved interacting with these individuals who were living out my passion. From a young age, I was that student who sat at the desk closest to the teacher's desk, stayed inside during recess to talk to her about her life, and was the first to raise my hand when she needed help with menial tasks. I was so intrigued and captivated by the lives of my teachers that I did whatever I could to get a glimpse inside.

This fascination lived within me well into my college years, but during this time, I noticed that not all students had the same admiration for teachers that I did. Even more disheartening were the negative perceptions I encountered from my professors. Most of the

criticism was aimed at high school teachers, who, according to my college instructors, did not adequately prepare my peers and me. As an aspiring English educator, I observed this phenomenon mostly among English faculty as they talked about the subpar writing skills of their first-year college students. As I matriculated through undergraduate studies and several cycles of graduate school, I encountered more negative rhetoric and characterizations of high school teachers and their writing instruction, which caused me, and that little girl who was so memorized by educators, great concern as a future college professor who considers herself to be an ally of all teachers, including K-12 educators. This concern prompted me to develop a research and personal agenda aiming at highlighting the influential work of high school English teachers.

Significance of Project

Teaching writing is not an easy task. However, high school English teachers have been, and continue to be, criticized for the ways in which they teach writing; they are continuously being blamed for students' inadequate writing skills. Some surmise that these educators are not effectively teaching writing or not doing so at all (Beil & Knight, 2007; Fanetti et al., 2010). These critiques seem to be fueled by scores on national tests administered by the National Assessment of Educational Progress showing more than half of 8th and 12th graders perform below grade-level expectations (National Center for Education Statistics, 2012). Large-scale studies are frequently used to examine secondary writing instruction (Applebee, 1981; Applebee, 1984; Applebee, 1993; Applebee & Langer, 2011; Gillispie et al., 2014; Graham et al., 2016; Graham & Rijlaarsdam, 2016). However, much of the data in these projects, which are usually obtained using quantitative methods to yield numerical representations of teachers' practices, lack contextualization illustrating the motivations for and complications of writing

teachers' choices. Not only do numerical data dehumanize students, but they also dehumanize the experiences of teachers. The professional discrediting of these educators' instructional practices and motivations at the hands of government officials, education policymakers, college faculty, and parents seems to ignore and disregard their humanity as unique individuals who live complex lives. Many high school English teachers, in fact, are doing admirable work as they teach academic writing to their students. A comprehensive awareness and understanding of the complexity of these writing teachers' lives is a better, more valuable alternative to any form of professional judgment.

This dissertation elevates the stories of high school English teachers who teach writing. The experiences highlighted here provide a counternarrative to the adverse depictions of 9-12th grade English/Language Arts (ELA) teachers reified in the accusatory dialogue and conversations surrounding student writing. Using a qualitative study with a grounded theory approach, I engage four high school English teachers in extended conversation to understand their experiences teaching writing. As a college writing educator and ally of high school writing teachers, I choose to share, rather than tell, the teaching stories of Ms. Branch, Ms. Poppy, Ms. Biggie, and Ms. Creek¹. For so long, these teachers, and thousands of others like them, have had their stories told and composed by others; thus, this work prioritizes their voices and experiences by providing a venue for them to talk about their teaching lives “from the perspective of an *insider* looking around, and not from that of an *outsider* looking in” (Bishop qtd. in Muchmore 2001). Wendy Bishop posits that “in writing about our teaching lives, we figure out our classrooms, we speak to others, and we compose ourselves in beneficial ways” (1997, viii). The latter two affordances outlined in the preceding quote undergird the goals of

¹ These are pseudonyms to conceal the identities of the participants.

this project. This text serves as a way for the high school teachers to unmute themselves in this conversation that centers them as the subject, but rarely as the speaker. They can show up as they desire, instead of as who someone else perceives them to be. The complex stories uncovered in this study speak life into Fanetti et al.'s proclamation that "the blame here is not for the high school teachers, who are doing valiant work with limited resources and unreasonable constraints" (2010, p. 81). The participants in this study provide invaluable insight as they share an insider's look into their realities as secondary writing instructors.

Statement of the Problem

Following Harvard University's introduction of a written entrance exam in the early 1870s, faculty began to hound the local preparatory schools about improving their writing instruction. Professors were shocked by incoming freshmen's poor performance on the entrance exam, and they seemed to think that fault should lie among the secondary school educators. They "spoke to headmasters at professional meetings...wrote newspaper and magazine articles about the poor quality of writing..." and even went so far as to publish a series of reports "pinpointing the problem and laying blame on the preparatory schools" (Brereton 27). The publication of what came to be known as the "Harvard reports" incited a twenty-year long heated debate between secondary and postsecondary writing instructors about the inclusion of writing instruction in feeder high schools. This contentious discussion was still taking place over 100 years later when, in 1975, *Newsweek* published the seminal "Why Johnny Can't Write" article that claimed, "the U.S. education system [was] spawning a generation of semiliterates" (Sheils 1). Sheils mentions how, during that time, colleges and universities lamented that many of their incoming students were "seriously deficient" (2) when they were asked to organize their thoughts on paper. Professors complained that "by the time they reach

college...it is almost too late to help them" (2). In the article, Elliott Anderson, an English professor at Northwestern University, reported that high school teachers have "simply stopped correcting grammar and sloppy construction" (3). For Anderson, this pedagogical oversight seemed to be an underlying cause for the lackluster composing abilities he observed among his students. Once again, high school teachers were publicly deemed scapegoats for students' poor writing skills.

For the past 150 years, high school teachers across the United States have been blamed for the weak and inadequate writing skills of America's students. Their biggest critics seem to be college professors who frequently complain that "incoming students [are] unable to write coherent essays" (Alliance 1). Although we are four decades post "Why Johnny Can't Write," higher education faculty are still complaining about high school teachers' writing instruction or lack thereof. Differently from the aforementioned illustrations, in the new millennium, these conversations and complaints seem to be happening more behind closed doors and less in public platforms. However, these gripes are not limited to college faculty. The invested publics, parents, and government officials also seem to hold high school teachers to a different pedagogical standard and attribute most of the responsibility for student grades to them (Thompson ix). It is no secret that many high school students do not possess the basic writing skills they need to meet the demands of college-level writing (Graham & Perin, 2007c; Warner, 2018). According to the most recent National Assessment Governing Board, 40% of the 2011 graduating class who completed the ACT writing exam did not possess the skills needed to successfully complete a first-year college composition course (3). Once these students transition to postsecondary education, many college composition instructors feel that they then are forced to re-tailor their curriculum to accommodate the extreme needs of these

students, which many argue should have been addressed by their high school English teachers. This added labor of ‘backtracking’, as some may call it, leads to a perpetuation of tension and the blame game.

This blame game is mostly one-sided with the high school educators taking the brute of the ridicule with little to no interjection. Their voices and experiences are frequently muted despite them being the focus of conversation. As we unpack the factors contributing to the poor writing skills of America’s college students, it is important that we engage in dialogue with English educators both at the secondary and postsecondary levels to better understand the foundation of and motivation for their pedagogies. Within the field of composition, we frequently forget our high school teaching counterparts and assume that we know the rationale behind teacher behaviors without directly consulting them. As Sullivan and Tinberg (2006) assert, “Oftentimes, we talk *about* them rather than *with* them.” However, the dangers of assumption without conversation are far too grave for all parties involved.

Overwhelming Perceptions of High School English Teachers

A subset of literature specifically discusses how high school English teachers are perceived. In their article, “Best Practices in Writing Assessment”, authors Robert C. Calfee and Roxanne Greitz Miller claim that secondary educators are unable to distinguish “between SAT writing and real writing” (2007, p. 269). They argue that many high school educators teach writing to their students in ways that will only help them secure high scores on the “on demand” assessments including state-mandated graduation exams and national assessment tests such as the SAT and ACT, which they describe as being formulaic, unauthentic, and not representative of the range of assessments that characterize college-level writing. Even though they feel we are now living “in a world where student achievement is often gauged by the application of a pencil

to a multiple-choice bubble” (268), Calfee and Miller do embrace the practice of objective testing as a way to measure students’ writing capabilities; however, in their article, they emphasize the importance of a balance between these assessment methods and those that require students to frequently and consistently practice their writing skills through a series of low-stakes and diverse formative writing tasks, rather than one high-stakes summative assessment.

This negative dismissal of the knowledge base of high school teachers has led many scholars to comment on ways that this translates to their pedagogy. Arthur N. Applebee and Judith A. Langer also support the assertions made by Calfee and Miller in a report that they published on behalf of the Center for English Language & Achievement (CELA) entitled “The State of Writing Instruction in America’s Schools: What Existing Data Tell Us” In this 2006 report, Applebee and Langer reveal that nine percent of high school students are doing almost no writing at all as a part of their English classes’ curriculum (2) and when these students do in fact write, much of it is cursory: short and superficial. They imply that the reason for such an emphasis on the actual practice of writing in high school English classes is that teachers do not have the time, and sometimes the qualifications and/or training, to read and assess their students’ writing samples. With all the other facets of writing instruction that these teachers must teach, such as grammar, organization, and the composing process, Applebee and Langer observe that it is “almost impossible” (7) for them to adequately grade several full-length writing assignments from all their students. Although they do not embrace the balance of objective testing and actual writing as much as Calfee and Miller, Applebee and Langer propose that high school teachers should attempt to find alternative ways of minimizing their workload while increasing the amount of writing that students do.

In contrast to these negative perceptions of high school writing educators, some researchers do acknowledge the sacrifices that these teachers make for their students and give them the rightful credit they deserve for teaching in complex environments. As Thomas C. Thompson posits in the preface to his edited collection *Teaching Writing in High School and College: Conversations and Collaborations*, “teaching college is an entirely different world from teaching high school” (11). Based on his assertion, there appears to be certain qualities and dispositions that high school teachers must possess to be effective educators that do not necessarily determine the pedagogical success of college educators. Effective high school teaching seems to necessitate a “more holistic, comprehensive, human approach than college teaching” (24). These educators must not only navigate the rigid demands placed upon them by their administrators and college counterparts, but they also must readily find ways to connect with their students. Plainly put, “to be an effective high school teacher, you have to be wiser in the ways of the world” (25).

To gain a better understanding of these quasi-prerequisites of being a high school writing teacher, several college professors have migrated from their college classrooms to the world of secondary education. In an exposé included in Thompson’s collection, Don Daiker, a professor who has taught in-service teachers at the summer institute of The Ohio State Writing Project, wanted to gain high school teaching experience to enhance his own pedagogy. Having taught at the college level for over 30 years, he decided to take a ‘faculty improvement leave’ from his current position at Miami University to teach at a local high school for one semester. In reflecting on his experiences at Princeton High School, Daiker mentions how he developed a greater appreciation and admiration for his high school teaching counterparts. The physical, mental, and emotional labor that he learned is required of high school teachers daily motivated

him to reframe his own teaching philosophy and provided him with the firsthand experience that he needed to strengthen his pedagogy.

Ron Fortune and other Illinois secondary and postsecondary writing instructors participated in a similar experiment on a larger scale. The English department at Illinois State University, one that has been committed to fostering collaboration across different educational levels in the state, applied for and received a grant from The National Endowment for the Humanities that allowed various English teachers at the university, one of the local community colleges, and one of the high schools in the area to co-teach over the course of an academic year. This project was primarily aimed at dispelling some of the misperceptions about what high school and college English educators are doing in the classroom; the participants were now able to obtain firsthand experiences and observations. Like Daiker, many of the college professors expressed deep gratitude for and high praises of the abilities of the high school teachers. Jan, one of the community college instructors, even commented on how she “awakened each morning to pray that Patsy [her high school co-teacher] would never be ill” so that she would not have to be alone with the high school sophomores (qtd. in Thomas 25). Jan’s wishful thinking illustrates the difference in not only the contexts, but also the student populations, that high school and college writing educators teach and how these variances can sometimes be overwhelming or shocking to someone who is not aware or accustomed to them. The insider knowledge that the participants in this study provide is integral to exemplifying these variations to increase awareness and understanding.

The wide range of views of who English teachers are can be mitigated by acknowledging and valuing their experiences. In the media and even within our own disciplines, high school and college writing instructors are sometimes pitted against each other as we look to find a scapegoat

for the inadequate writing skills of college-bound students. However, one way that we can combat this fabricated tension is by engaging in dialogue with our high school teaching counterparts instead of making and perpetuating hyperbolic assumptions. Unfounded claims and assumptions about what it means to be a high school English teacher can negatively affect not only the way that we interact with them, but also the perceptions that we have of our students who have spent a great deal of time under their instruction.

Academic Writing Instruction

The instructional techniques that most often fall under scrutiny among high school English teachers is associated with academic writing. Yet, wrangling together a comprehensive definition of academic writing is a massive undertaking. Many scholars discuss, examine, and interrogate the concept of academic writing in their scholarship without explicitly defining it. This presupposes that readers have a clear understanding of what academic writing includes and requires, however, this may not be true as the findings of this study highlight the genre's ambiguity. Among those who provide definitions or characterizations of the genre are variations and nuisances that do not seem comprehensive enough when examined in isolation. Elander et al. (2006) argued that academic writing is characterized by four main components: 1) critical thinking; 2) use of language; 3) structuring (i.e. an introduction, topic sentences, supporting body paragraphs, and a conclusion); and 4) argument. According to Hyland (2017), academic writing allows students to demonstrate their “critical and analytic skills, their use of English for reasoning and persuasion, their grasp of subject matter issues and their ability to shape an argument” (p.24).

Academic writing also necessitates that students' ideas, analysis, and arguments are supported by evidence, which requires them to have a grasp on effective source integration (Bruce & Hamp-Lyons, 2015), referencing, and citation practices (Hyland, 2017; Knoch &

Sitajalabhorn, 2013). Academic writing is also characterized by several formal conventions including concision, clarity, focus, objectivity, and grammatical soundness. Formality is usually displayed using academic language or discourse. Scholars have argued that academic language, which is a key component of academic writing, is synonymous with Standard English or White Mainstream English (Alim & Smitherman, 2012; Baker-Bell, 2020). This leaves room for the presence of linguistic discrimination and racism (Baker-Bell, 2019) against students for whom this lexicon is not “standard” or their home language, which oftentimes are Black and Brown students. All the preceding aspects, when viewed collectively, seem to constitute a comprehensive characterization of academic writing from which I operate for the purposes of this study.

Despite its multifaceted nature, academic writing is a staple of most secondary writing classrooms. Among the scholarship that focuses on traditional secondary English classrooms, two prominent themes act as connective threads. First, teachers and students have differing perceptions of academic writing and what means of composing entails. The juxtaposition of the writerly practices and identities of novice and expert writers appears to be important to this conceptual contrast as pointed out by Wolsey, Lapp, and Fisher (2012). Through interviews and observations conducted with 10th grade educators and their students, the researchers found that students tend to associate the absence of local errors and lower-order concepts with academic writing. In contrast, their teachers prioritized use of discipline-specific content, organization of ideas, and cognition as a way of assessing student writers as scholarly apprentices as they spoke of the relevance of higher-order concerns. Secondary teachers exhibit a well-gripped grasp and knowledge of academic writing; however, there seems to be a disconnect between their

perceptions of error and those of their students which could complicate their pedagogical efforts.

Despite the ambiguities, it seems that high school English teachers are aware of what skills are most important for high-level academic writing. In a nationwide survey sent from ACT Inc. to both high school and college writing faculty, researchers found that secondary ELA educators identified the ability to select a topic, formulate a thesis, and edit, revise, and proofread focusing on content rather than mechanics as their top three pedagogical priorities (Patterson & Duer, 2006). The college professors tended to value grammar & mechanics to a greater degree than did the high school teachers. This may be attributed to the perception of many high school English educators that this topic is too simple for college-level writing; it should already be mastered prior to one's entrance into a first-year writing classroom. However, Patterson and Duer's research affirms the pedagogical knowledge and awareness of best practices that high school English educators possess.

Llosa, Beck, and Zhao (2011) investigated the most widely used forms of academic writing in New York high schools, particularly at the 9th and 10th grade levels. Using Schleppegrell's 2004 model of academic discourse, the researchers sought to uncover the ways in which academic writing is integrated into secondary ELA classroom instruction. Results showed that high school teachers utilized a variety of writing genres including exposition, personal narrative, and informational texts. However, there was a wide consensus that analytical expository writing was high on many of the teachers' priority lists. When teaching academic writing in this form, participants shared how they emphasized the use of source-based content the most. Students being able to effectively integrate textual sources to support their arguments and claims was important to many of the teachers. All the participants attributed the most value

to this feature in helping students become effective academic writers. Language conventions and structure were widely emphasized as well.

Research Goals

This study aims to amplify the voices of high school English teachers and illustrate the various aspects of their professional identities as writing instructors. Because their skill sets and knowledge bases are often trivialized and dismissed, this project seeks to illuminate their professional expertise as well as the best practices for writing instruction that 9th-12th grade English educators are utilizing in their classrooms. In addition, this research offers a sketch of the real-world constraints that these teachers encounter and negotiate as they integrate writing curriculum into their English Language Arts pedagogy. Recently, there has been an upsurge of research that rejects the blame game narrative (Kittle, 2006; Warner, 2018); this study adds to that body of scholarship.

Methodology

I conducted a qualitative study utilizing a grounded theory approach to engage in deep conversation with high school English teachers about their experiences teaching writing. This research design allowed me to illustrate the experiences of “people who live through the subject matter” (Wertz et al., 2011, p. 89) through resulting “thick and rich descriptions” (90). According to Opie (2004), a grounded theory approach is one driven by data. This process involves simultaneous data collection and analysis to generate categories, in the form of a theory, to explain an experience. Building a theory that serves a multi-dimensional illustration of high school writing teachers’ experiences can help to combat some of the negative characterizations. It is important to note that transferability or generalization was not an intended purpose of this project. By using a grounded theory approach, I was able to create a

collective conceptualization of what it means to teach high school writing, while also preserving the nuisances and maintaining the integrity of each participants' individual experience. To practice triangulation, I initially planned and received IRB approval to employ semi-structured interviews, focus groups, and course artifact analysis as my three methods of data collection. However, due to the unexpected COVID-19 pandemic during my project, I refined my methods to only include two phases of interviews. I conducted these interviews using Zoom, a video chat application, due to social distancing requirements. Despite the methodological modifications, I was still able to obtain a robust set of candid and transparent personal testimonies and firsthand accounts from the collected stories that both I, and the participants, felt were fully representative of their experiences as high school writing teachers.

Research Questions

To achieve the preceding research goals, this study aimed to answer three main research questions. This study's guiding research questions are as follows:

1. How do high school English teachers define academic writing?
 - a. What skills and conceptual mastery is associated with academic writing?
2. What pedagogical techniques, methods, or best practices do high school English teachers utilize when teaching writing?
3. What real-world constraints do high school English teachers encounter when integrating writing instruction into the English/Language Arts curriculum?

These questions support the grounded theory method in generating a cohesive theoretical background and framework to better understand the perceptions, beliefs, complications, and encounters that shape and characterize the ways that high school English teachers teach writing.

This research intends to draw attention to an important missing piece of the ongoing discussions about the inadequate writing abilities of our student writers. By amplifying the voices of high school teachers and engaging in conversation with them about their teaching experiences, we shine light on, and give the mic to, a presence that has long been missing and/or ignored in our disciplinary conversations about students' writing skills. Unfortunately, we know very little about the perceptions, motivations, and complications shaping writing teachers' experiences in teaching writing. Most secondary writing instruction research is focused on the *What*, and not so much the *Why* and the *Who*. Therefore, this research is not only crucial, but also timely. Few scholars are having extensive conversations with high school writing teachers about their practices. Capturing the authentic, most natural voice of the high school English teachers and allowing them to share their own stories of teaching writing was essential to the integrity and motivations of this study.

Chapter Overview

Establishing the foundation and motivation of the study, Chapter One provides an overview and contextualizes the research considering current perceptions of high school writing teachers. Chapter Two offers a review of the literature of five main research areas that are related to a comprehensive illustration of secondary writing instruction. The study's methodological protocol is outlined in Chapter Three. Here, I provide an extensive description of participants, their pedagogical backgrounds and teaching contexts, and an explication and justification for the chosen methodology. In Chapter Four, I present a summary of the responses yielded from the study's interviews. To conclude, Chapter Five includes an analysis of the participants' experiences and an extended discussion of the seven themes that emerged from the analysis. This final chapter also explicates the implications and significance of the study's findings.

Furthermore, in this section, I also outline the implications of the resulting discoveries for multiple educational stakeholders and provides recommendations for future research and practical means for sustaining the great work being done by secondary writing teachers.

Chapter 2: Review of Literature

“I don’t want people to be like, ‘Who was your English teacher?’” – Ms. Branch

“I’m still figuring out how to get students to understand just beyond the classroom, why the standards of writing matter.” – Ms. Biggie

“I think that administrators and policymakers and board members and funding fail teachers and in turn, that fails kids.” – Ms. Poppy

The National Assessment Governing Board defines writing as “a complex, multifaceted, and purposeful act for communication that is accomplished in a variety of environments, under various constraints of time, and with a variety of language resources and technological tools” (2011, p. 4). Schools have long been a vehicle through which students are exposed to various aspects, genres, and methods of writing. In school settings, writing serves two primary purposes: it is a skill used to accomplish a variety of goals such as production, expression, and persuasion and is a means by which students extend, deepen, and convey knowledge. However, writing has consistently been treated as the ugly stepchild of the educational system (National Commission on Writing, 2003), particularly at the secondary level where although writing is used to facilitate and enhance student learning (Gillespie et al., 2014), few schools offer a course that is exclusively devoted to it. Thus, this content area is frequently embedded in English/Language Arts (ELA) curriculum which encompasses literature, creative writing, and academic writing. This integration, and oftentimes overshadowing, of writing by literary studies (Davies, 2010; Sullivan 2010) stifles the amount of attention that writing receives. Although scholarship that prioritizes secondary writing instruction is growing, most research examines writing pedagogy at the elementary level (e.g., Coker et al.,

2016; Gilbert & Graham, 2010; McGhee & Lew, 2007; Roskos, Tabors, & Lenhart, 2009). That which does focalize secondary writing instruction seems to solely highlight the pedagogical issues and shortcomings of high school teachers.

This chapter reviews extant literature on various topics related to secondary writing instruction focused on high school environments. Due to the grounded theory research design utilized for this study, this literature review was composed after data analysis to prevent any theoretical contamination of the emergent theories uncovered in the participants' descriptions of their experiences as writing teachers. I review existing literature, here, to provide a more comprehensive understanding of relationships between writing teachers' perceptions and beliefs about teaching writing, their experiences with pre-service preparation and professional development. Additionally, I explicate best practices in secondary writing instruction, factors that affect the ways that writing is taught in these spaces and provide a characterization of secondary student writers.

Writing Teachers' Epistemologies and Perceptions of Teaching Writing

Variances in teachers' writing-related epistemologies, experiences, and attitudes explain the diverse ways that they teach writing (Graham et al., 2002). According to Juzwik and Cushman, a writing teacher's epistemology would be defined as their "theory of knowledge and understanding about writing itself and how writing works, but also considering theories of knowledge and understanding about the *teaching* of writing" (2014, p. 89). They go on to denote the importance of acknowledging these writing teachers' epistemologies considering the ways in which they are oftentimes "hyperscrutinized, undervalued, and grossly misunderstood, if taken into account at all" (p. 89). These ways of thinking, knowing, and being – have significant implications for classroom practices and pedagogical choices (Newell et al., 2014). Devoting

time to reflect on one's past experiences is also valuable when developing one's teaching identity (Adler, 2011).

Data collected from K-12 scholars and practitioners in various sectors of the K-12 education system has shown that these perceptions and beliefs exert influence on the ways that these educators teach writing (Gardner, 2014; Englert, Mariage & Dunsmore, 2006; Hillocks, 1986). Applebee and Langer (2013) argue that changing these foundational epistemologies is easier said than done. Just as their students do, writing teachers enter the classroom with their own feelings about and experiences with writing. Cremin and Oliver's (2017) systematic meta-analysis of the contributing factors that comprise teachers' identification as writers revealed that there were three main factors: 1) negative writing histories, 2) low self-efficacy as writers, and 3) parochial conceptualizations of writer identity. The researchers suggest that the answer, to help writing teachers work through these complications, lies in pre-service and in-service professional development. Having teacher candidates explore their writer identities and reflect on their past writing experiences can lead to enhanced pedagogical practice (Daisey, 2009). This holds true, particularly for future teachers of color given the complexity of their racial and linguistic identities (Haddix, 2010) This is an interesting contention since many writing educators feel shortchanged by their teacher education programs. Additionally, research shows that professional development opportunities are limited, or unfeasible, due to lack of time, financial support, or energy for educators to take advantage of. Effective writing instruction that will help students develop into successful writers requires that writing educators are confident in their own ability to write and teach writing (Bifuh-Ambe, 2013). Teachers must engage in deep reflective practices to understand and interrogate personal dispositions that may be transferred to their students. Teachers who have negative dispositions toward writing may shy away from writing

instruction due to personal subjectivities. Gannon and Davies (2007) asked English teachers to share their motivations for becoming English teachers. Among the participants, it was noted that many of them were drawn to the profession by an interest in literature, not writing. According to Morgan (2017), this could have a bearing on how these educators approach writing instruction.

It has also been shown that it is beneficial for teachers, as well as their students, to share their writing-related experiences and beliefs in class. A possible explanation for students' overwhelming negativity toward academic writing is the lack of semblance they see between in-school and out-of-school writing practices. When teachers make their students aware of their personal writing engagement, it could help to cultivate a class culture that values writing and helps students to see its relevance in their personal lives. There are multiple advantages for writing educators who identify as writers (Colby & Stapleton, 2006; Hall & Grisham-Brown, 2011; Zimmerman et al., 2014). These benefits also extend to their students because "until teachers know as insiders what writing is like, they will never truly be able to teach their students to write well" (Cremin & Locke, 2017, p. 56). After surveying secondary English teachers about their perceptions of writing instruction, Shim (2009) found that they exhibited low interest in teaching writing, were not confident in their abilities to do so, and did not see any urgent need to integrate writing into their existing ELA curriculum. Shim's findings preceded the widespread adoption of Common Core curriculum; thus I would surmise that his study would have most likely yielded different results had it been carried out just a few years later.

Writing Teachers' Pre-Service Preparation

Many teachers express apprehension and discomfort about teaching writing. This is often tied to the lack of educational and field training in writing instruction offered by their teacher education programs. Universities are not providing students with adequate writing instruction coursework. Although there has been an increase in the number of English departments that offer writing instruction courses to pre-service candidates, it is usually only one semester-long class (Tulley, 2013). Students' field training may or may not include writing instruction, as it is contingent upon the supervising teachers' pedagogical priorities. This has contributed to a widespread sentiment of unpreparedness to teach writing among English educators (Nagin, 2006; National Commission on Writing, 2003). In their 2009 study, Kiuvara, Graham, and Hawken collected survey responses from 316 ELA, Science, and Social Studies high school teachers to gauge the extent and methods they utilize to integrate writing into their curricula. The educators were asked about their pre-service preparation, personal writing practices, and assessment techniques. Findings of the study showed that several participants felt unprepared, despite considering themselves to be writers. The authors surmised that many of the assignments that these teachers used did not require the use of higher order thinking concepts such as interpretation and analysis, were not evidence-based, and did not provide much guidance for struggling writers. The need for reform in English teacher education programs is apparent as many teachers feel that they did not receive the necessary theoretical knowledge or practical experience to successfully teach writing upon graduation. As Roen et al. (2008) observe, there exists a great discrepancy between the training of higher education composition instructors and K-12 writing educators. Teacher education programs are beginning to redesign their curriculum to better accommodate the needs of their pre-service candidates. From developing communities of practice among pre-service candidates (Johnson & Eubanks, 2015) to capitalizing on

partnerships with other university writing practitioners (Cook & Caouette, 2013), teacher educators are taking the necessary steps to foster an experience for their teachers-in-training that will position them to be successful and confident writing teachers.

This holistic representation in teacher education programs is imperative since once they enter their respective schools, high school English teachers feel that they carry most of the responsibility to teach writing. Not only does student performance on national writing assessments have implications for the writers, but also their teachers as well. Few studies have investigated how teachers perceive themselves as writers. Yet, research has shown that there is a relationship between a teacher's writerly identity and their writing instruction.

Writing Teachers' Professional Development

As previously illustrated, much of the research on secondary writing instruction focuses on the needs of student writers. On the other hand, there is a dearth in scholarship that focalizes writing teachers' personal and professional needs (Marsh et al., 2019). In the existing literature, the lack of professional development available to writing instructors is a prevalent concern (Cutler & Graham, 2008; Troia & Maddox, 2004).

School administrators are often tasked with providing professional development opportunities for their teachers. However, research has shown that teachers' experiences of professional development have been lackluster. According to a recent survey conducted in 2014 by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, and affirmed by Calvert (2016), teachers characterized professional development as being "not relevant, not effective, and most important of all, not connected to their core work of helping students learn" (p. 3). There are different ways that administrators can support teachers to teach writing in a transformational and impactful manner. Providing accessible and adequate professional development opportunities are one. However, it

is worth noting that despite professional development efforts, recent scholarship has highlighted external factors that prevent teachers' participation (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). This requires leaders and administrators to engage in dialogue with writing educators to gauge their needs and barriers. Upon interviewing a group of writing teachers, Marsh et al. (2019) identified five needs from their administrators that these educators had in their pedagogical pursuits of teaching writing: 1) a schoolwide vision; 2) supportive language; 3) allocation of resources for writing instruction; 4) instructional time devoted exclusively to writing (i.e. "sacred writing time" (p. 19); and 5) knowledge of writing instructional practices. (Calkins et al., 2018).

Professional development does not solely have to be localized within teachers' school or even their district. Other disciplinary organizations, such as the National Writing Project, provide support for writing instructors that can be just as powerful and transformational (Dean et al., 2015; Pritchard & Honeycutt, 2005). Teacher educators may also continue to provide support for in-service teachers during the early years of their teaching careers as well (Bentley & Cason, 2019). Providing this continuation of professional development could help aid new secondary writing educators with the struggle of translating theory to praxis, negotiating the ideologies of their new teaching environment (Vetter et al., 2014), and developing their identities as writing teachers.

Exposing teachers to professional development opportunities has been shown to improve their pedagogical self-efficacy and confidence (Bifuh-Ambe, 2013). In 2019, the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) revised their 2006 position statement on professional development to elevate the importance of teacher empowerment. The new statement titled *Shifting from Professional Development to Professional Learning: Centering Teacher Empowerment* recommends that there are four characteristics that are representative of an

empowering professional development experience. The disciplinary organization states that these opportunities must promote collaborative learning, encourage participation, prompt collaborative knowledge production, and be committed to cultural competency. Given the external factors that impact the ways that writing is, or can be, taught in secondary schools, in meeting the needs voiced by writing teachers and utilizing these tenets as a foundational framework for the creation of professional development opportunities, institutional leaders can provide a space for writing instructors to not only survive, but thrive.

Secondary Writing Instruction

Despite a dearth in research focusing on the composing practices of high school students in traditional U.S. classrooms, researchers have examined the writing instructional practices used by secondary teachers. Given the high-stakes learning environment in which they teach, secondary writing teachers frequently express that they do not feel that they have enough time to integrate writing instruction into their ELA curriculum (Bifuh-Ambe, 2013). This issue is not a new topic of concern or discussion. Historically, the amount of writing assigned to students has been a prominent point of contention. Applebee's (1981) prominent study examined writing instruction across six content areas of high school curricula. Applebee and his team found that students only spent 3% of school time, across the disciplines, producing compositions of one paragraph length or longer. They observed that most of the writing assignments were mostly objective in nature and called for rote memorization and recollection of information. Specifically in English/Language Arts courses, students engaged in writing tasks approximately 10% of the time. Although this study's findings were grim, to say the least, the researchers do integrate praise of educators. However, much of the data lacks context pertaining to the factors or pedagogical barriers that may have prompted such curricula.

In 1984, Applebee expanded on the previous examination in a second phase of the project. Instead of focusing on the teachers, this project was centered on students' writing skills and the changes that occur because of teachers prioritizing writing as a tool for prompting innovation and discovery rather than to assess comprehension of previous knowledge in their classrooms. Applebee also analyzed ELA textbooks to gauge the extent to which writing was focalized in these texts. Findings showed that 12% of the writing assignments in the textbooks required compositions longer than a paragraph and 95% of these tasks were designed to test previous knowledge. This led Applebee to characterize the high school writing curriculum as "being typically first-and-final draft, completed in class, and requiring a page or less of writing...[where] students' task is to get the answer 'right' rather than to convince, inform, or entertain a naïve audience" (p. 184). He concluded that secondary ELA teachers were more concerned with the products their students produced, rather than the process and that writing in high schools was mostly assessed and not taught.

Applebee (1993) provided an update on his earlier studies as he reported the findings of a national survey sent to high school educators to determine any changes to the amount of writing being completed. On average, participants stated that their students wrote 3.9 pages in the previous week. This quantity greatly differed from those identified in Applebee's previous scholarship; he attributed the increase to the participants' inclusion of low stakes writing assignments, such as answering comprehension questions and journaling, which he did not address in the prior studies. Hillocks (2006) sought to update Applebee's early research on secondary writing instruction. Although he found that students were writing more than the 3% of the time that Applebee reported, the assignments were still superficial in nature, like what was discovered twenty years prior.

Despite the grim outlook of his preceding scholarship, Applebee's most recent research shows that secondary writing instruction is improving in various aspects. In a 2011 study, Applebee and Langer outlined the changes over the course of a 30-year period by comparing the results of a similarly structured study conducted during the 1979-80 academic year. They found that high school students are writing almost double the amount, 7.7% compared to 3.8% reported in the earlier study (Applebee, 1981). It was evident that teachers across the disciplines are including various integral components of the writing process, including peer review, drafting, and multimodality, to a greater extent. Applebee and Langer's work seems to affirm that secondary educators are aware of writing pedagogy best practices. Nevertheless, there are external factors, particularly standardized testing, that impact the ways that they can translate this awareness into praxis. Although Applebee and Langer contest that these numbers are still distressing and relatively low compared to their expectations, their findings do highlight some direct commentary from high school teachers who provide explanation and reasoning for their pedagogical choices regarding their writing instruction.

Applebee subsequently collaborated with Langer to release *Writing Instruction That Works* (2013), which presents the results of a study of 20 secondary schools from various regions of the United States that had earned distinction for excellent writing instruction. Data was collected in courses across the disciplines including surveys and interviews with school administrators and teachers as well as student writing artifacts. Three main themes structure the text's composition: the forward-moving progress of writing instruction over the past 30 years; the external constraints that stifle the teaching of writing in many secondary schools; and the call to focalize reading and writing at the center of disciplinary curriculum and

instruction. Applebee and Langer challenge scholars and educators alike to take a deeper look at the discord between theory and practice as it pertains to secondary writing instruction.

To elaborate and complicate existing scholarship (e.g., Consortium for the Study of Writing in College, National Commission on Writing, National Curriculum Survey and National Assessment of Educational Progress), Addison and McGee (2010) juxtapose an empirical-based project they conducted under the sponsorship of a Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) research grant with precedent large-scale projects commenting on writing instruction across the curriculum. The researchers surveyed high school and college students, as well as secondary and postsecondary faculty members at an array of different learning institutions to gather direct evidence of students' and educators' experiences with, perceptions of, and feelings about writing. In this cross-publication analysis, Addison and McGee found three main similitudes: 1) secondary and postsecondary educators are assigning writing and students at both levels are engaging in the writing process; 2) deep learning is occurring through the medium of writing; and 3) faculty members in high schools and colleges acknowledge the importance and value of writing outside of academic spaces. They advocate for composition and rhetoric scholars' access to the instruments, raw data, and results of preceding studies which they contend will allow them to draw their own conclusions about the state of writing instruction at the secondary and postsecondary educational level.

External Influences on Secondary Writing Instruction

Several factors affect that ways that high school English teachers can teach writing. Unrealistic numbers of curricular standards, state and national policies and varying pressures from multiple fronts, these educators endure a great deal as they implement writing instruction. Prior to the implementation of Common Core State Standards, state-

level writing learning standards lacked clarity, cohesion, and consistency (Gilbert & Graham, 2010). With the advent of Common Core Standards, writing has been centrally positioned as a content area of value and pedagogical attention (Graham et al., 2015). As Graham and Harris (2018) proclaim, “a basic goal of the CCSS was to revolutionize how writing was taught in U.S. schools and classrooms” (p. 4). There have been mixed feelings about the standards (Troia & Olinghouse, 2013) and as of now, I am unaware of any studies that have assessed its correlation to improved writing instructional practices in high schools. In their investigation of writing teachers’ perceptions of the Common Core writing and language standards, Troia and Graham (2016) found that, no matter what grade they taught, teachers felt both positively and negatively to CCSS. The researchers found that, among their 482 respondents, teachers shared that there were too many standards associated with the curriculum. They also expressed that they were wary of whether the content was appropriate to use when working with struggling writers. On a more positive note, the participants believed that the standards did have a new level of rigor that was satisfying and encouraged them to incorporate writing more into the curriculum. There is growing optimism that the curriculum will yield more writing and writing instruction in K-12 schools (Graham et al., 2016; Kohnen, 2013). Although its ultimate success remains unknown, CCSS is sure to have some form of influence on how writing is taught in high schools.

An examination of the influences on secondary writing instruction would not be comprehensive without a consideration of the impact of standardized testing and assessment. Since the introduction of national assessment, the concept of ‘teaching to the test’ has been prevalent in discussions about the effects of standardized testing on classroom instruction. In some cases, institutional pressures for students to perform well on these assessments prompt formulaic writing instruction that is counterintuitive to the development

of good academic writing practices. Jessica Early et al.'s (2016) "Wresting with the Cat Lady: Teaching Writing in an Era of Standardization," describes the pressures that standardized tests impose on educators as "a distant judgmental presence...and an imaginary audience for her students" (p. 104). This apparition-like presence (Franzak, 2008) is very much felt by students and teachers. Not only does standardized testing impact curricular design, but it also limits the boundaries of teachers' instruction as well. For many teachers, "district- and state-mandated assessment pressures reduce [their] freedom as a dedicated and skilled writing teacher" (McCarthy qtd. in Early et al., 104). According to Lucenko (2017), "widespread testing limits the beliefs about, and approaches to, writing by students and teachers" (p. 92). Given time constraints, testing conditions, and discriminatory test biases against certain types of writers, standardized testing exercises culpable control over secondary writing teachers and forces them to decide to work two-fold to balance effective writing instruction with test preparation or succumb to 'teaching to the test.' In a PDK/Gallup poll conducted to gauge the public's views on public schools, 50% of respondents expressed disbelief in the claim that standardized testing posed additional benefits for teachers (Bushaw and Calderon, 2014). As Applebee & Langer (2011) states, "The complication is that although teachers seem to have a better understanding of appropriate techniques to use when they assign writing, competing priorities such as test preparation constrain the amount of time given to writing instruction" (p. 21). Unfortunately, for both teachers and students, is that "what standardization threatens to ignore, or even to remove from teaching, learning, and especially writing – as processes – is heart" (Early et al., 2016, p. 105).

The dark clouds of mandated standards also dampen or narrow the ways high school English teachers may conceptualize college-level writing. In *The Testing Trap: How State*

Writing Assessments Control Learning, Hillocks (2002) advocates for the practice of process-oriented writing as the sole method of writing assessment to be used in schools across the nation. Since the implementation of state assessments, Hillocks claims that there has been a drastic shift in the way that writing is taught in secondary education settings. He strongly contends that most state-mandated and national tests “actually have a harmful effect on the way students are taught to write” (p. 26). He posits that the formulaic writing skills that these tests ask of students encourages low levels of critical thinking and analysis, which he believes is being reinforced in many American high school classrooms. These assessments, although widely accepted by politicians and federal policymakers, are what Hillocks feels is hurting students who complete them. Therefore, he proposes the reevaluation of these objective and detrimental methods and the full support of process-oriented writing instruction.

If too many of their students perform poorly on statewide assessments, educators run the risk of losing their job or at least losing the little bit of autonomy they have in their schools to the reins of the state (Thompson & Gallagher, p. 3). Tom Thompson, a college professor, and Andrea Gallagher, a high school English teacher, co-wrote an article in which they compared their assessment styles based on the institutional contexts in which they teach. Both educators graded three of the same student papers and compared their feedback. Not surprisingly, they discovered that they differed in their assessment and the features that they prioritized, noting that Andrea seemed to “internalize” (23) the standards under which she has taught for many years. In her piece, “The Truth about High School English,” Milka Mosley (2006) discusses the culture of standardization that envelopes secondary institutions: curricula, tests, rubrics, etc. She describes how both students and teachers “have to conform to and cover the curriculum approved by our school boards because everything we do is closely monitored by standardized testing” (Mosley

60). Oftentimes, this aura of standardization dissipates once students encounter college writing instructors as these educators tend to have more autonomy and control over their pedagogical priorities and what they deem to be good writing. Therefore, it seems that the internalization of standards, both of testing and mandated curricula concepts, could potentially have an impact on the ways that certain individuals and scholars perceive high school English teachers and how they perceive the writing that their students will be doing at the college level.

Additionally, Fanetti, Bushrow, and DeWeese (2010) describe the grips of standardized testing in their examination of the factors that shape secondary writing instruction. The authors differentiate the purposes and goals attributed to high schools and colleges by interviewing groups of both high school teachers and college first-year writing instructors to surmise any semblances between their participants' expectations and realities. Through surveying their participants, the researchers discovered that high school teachers lament having to 'teach to the test' and composition instructors abhor their incoming students' overreliance and overuse of the five-paragraph essay model. Several participants in Fanetti et al.'s study who identify as secondary writing instructors critiqued the methods they often utilize in the classroom while attesting that oftentimes they are being forced to do so within a system that is grossly dependent on test scores to statistically exhibit success.

Eddy et al.'s (2018) polyvocal exposé, "The Way We Teach Now: The Secondary School Perspective," succinctly outlines other contributing factors that influence their pedagogical decisions and methods as high school English teachers. The authors enumerate class sizes; institutional, local, and national standards and mandates; and standardized testing as the primary forces which contextualize their classroom practices. The multiple personal narratives within the text "make visible" (p. 172) the pedagogical changes they have worked to promote

and share to improve the teaching lives of English educators like themselves. Although they reside and teach in Michigan, Eddy et al. argue that their experiences are most likely not exclusive to locale but are shared by many secondary writing instructors across the country.

State standards are so much a part of the professional landscape for high school teachers that it is difficult to escape their influence (Mccarthey, 2008). McCrimmon (2005) declares that “never before has there been more centralized and systematic state and federal control over writing instruction in grades K-12” (p. 248) Yet, she maintains that, despite these restrictions, high school teachers are finding ways to prioritize effective writing instruction while adhering to the policies in place. She shares that one of the high school teachers at her partner institution is reforming her writing curriculum “in spite of the SOLs [standards of learning], not because of them” (253). Higgins et al. (2006) validate this occurrence as they insist that, using the right instructional strategies, teachers can prepare their students to perform well on national assessments while also maintaining the integrity of effective writing instruction.

Technological access among students also affects the ways that teachers can integrate writing into their curriculum. The Digital Divide as it pertains to access to electronic devices in school settings is beginning to dwindle. As of 2013, K-12 schools spend over \$17 billion per year on technology and instructional materials (Rotella), and one-to-one technology is becoming more of a norm in public education spaces (Rafalow, 2020). However, the Digital Divide is still very much present outside the classroom, which is affecting ways teachers structure classroom activities. This lack of access, known as the “homework gap,” causes many students not to be able to complete out-of-school assignments. This phenomenon affects students who live in rural or socioeconomically disadvantaged neighborhoods, who are less likely to have access to high-speed Internet. In a recent study, the ACT Center for Equity in Learning (2019) found that

students who resided in rural neighborhoods were twice as likely as those who live in urban areas to characterize their internet connection as “unpredictable.” This access discrepancy is also contingent upon socioeconomic status (Milheim, 2006; Moore & Vitale, 2018) and race, as Latinx and African American students are most likely to not have reliable broadband connection (Banks, 2006; Rafalow, 2020). In a recent study conducted at the PEW Research Center, “Roughly one-third of households with children ages 6 to 17 and an annual income below \$30,000 a year do not have a high-speed internet connection at home, compared with just 6% of such households earning \$75,000 or more a year” (Auxier & Anderson, 2020). Home access, particularly to broadband internet, can limit the amount and type of out-of-class writing tasks that secondary writing teachers assign their students.

Effective Writing Instructional Practices

Graham and Harris (2018) contend that there are three main aspects of a writing teachers’ practice and philosophy that will allow them to deliver effective writing instruction. The authors claim that educators must know “why writing is important,” “how writing develops,” and possess “effective tools for writing” (pg. 4). In the introductory chapter of *Best Practices in Writing Instruction*, the authors denote best practices as being either evidence-based or teacher-based. Evidence-based practices are those that are supported by empirical data, whereas teacher-based strategies are those that, over the course of time, have been widely used among exceptional literacy educators. In the end, both types are weighed equally in terms of effectiveness. Kiuahara, Graham, and Hawkens (2009) assert that “although evidence-based or research-supported practices are emphasized in reform efforts (NCLB, CCSS), there is virtually no current evidence on high school teachers’ use of such practices in the teaching of writing” (p. 137). This could imply that secondary educators use instructional methods and strategies that are

best practices for writing instruction, but this finding has yet to be supported by empirical study.

Smith (2017) highlights the tension and discord that seem to exist between theory and practice as they pertain to the ways that writing is taught at the secondary level. She affirms that high school teachers are aware of the best practices for writing instruction while as she simultaneously ponders why this awareness does not appear to manifest in classroom praxis as has been historically shown on multiple fronts (e.g., Applebee and Langer, 2011). Smith rhetorically asks, “What accounts for this gap between research in the teaching of writing and students’ daily classroom experiences?” (p. 70). Instead of following this line of inquiry, she elevates Peter Smagorinsky’s concept of *principled practice*² as a pedagogical, and personal, revolutionary act for secondary writing educators to respond to the call for change in the way that high school writing is taught.

Read and Landon-Hays’s (2013) findings suggest that high school English teachers are aware of best practices for effective writing instruction; however, the conditions and contexts in which they teach are counterproductive to implementing such praxis. In their article, “The Knowing/Doing Gap,” the authors highlight the pedagogical knowledge of the 10th grade educators whom they interviewed and observed as it pertains to their perceptions and implementations of secondary writing pedagogy. The participants referenced several essential components of the writing process including pre-writing, drafting, and receiving individualized feedback in their interviews, yet many of these facets were absent in their classroom observations. Why? Time constraints, unwieldy class sizes, and high-stakes testing seemed to be

² This concept refers to the action of teachers considering the various forces, needs, and resources operating in the classroom, planning instruction from a platform of informed teacher knowledge, and engaging consistently in reflective practices with others.

the biggest barriers. The secondary ELA teachers spoke of unrealistic expectations placed on them by their administrators, policymakers, and testing officials to expose students to efficient writing instruction in a learning context that is characterized by and perpetuates ineffectual conditions. Read and Landon-Hays call for a more in-depth examination of the milieu of the educational system, secondary institutional landscapes, and individual classroom spaces which augment this divide between knowing and doing for these teachers.

There are diverse ways in which effective writing instruction can manifest. (Graham and Perin, 2007a; Hillocks, 1986). Some instructional strategies and techniques have been empirically proven to be more effective than others. According to Graham and Perin (2007a), it is integral for teachers to provide support and encouragement for students throughout the writing process. Since student writers often have negative viewpoints of academic writing. Thus, it is important for writing teachers to foster a classroom environment that is “interesting, pleasant, and nonthreatening” (Graham and Harris, 2018, p. 14). Research has shown that writing teachers who are effective in their instruction frequently adopt this perspective (Graham, et al., 2015). In 2012, Zumbrunn and Krause interviewed seven of the leading writing studies scholars and practitioners – Linda Flower, Steven Graham, Karen Harris, Jerome Haste, George Hillocks, Thomas Newkirk, and Peter Smagorinsky. The experts were asked to characterize effective writing instruction; five main findings resulted from the interviews. According to the participants, writing teachers who identify as writers; encourage student discovery by encouraging them to tap into their personal interests and life experiences; and create engagement opportunities for students to be active participants in the writing process are effective writing teachers. Having students write daily and clearly designing lessons with specific learning objectives were the other two prominent pedagogical actions utilized by successful writing

educators. In 2010, the National Center for Education Statistics found that 69% of teachers reported using technology in classroom daily lessons. 61% of use was attributed to preparing written text. This aligns with the National Commission on Writing's (2010) claim that allowing students to compose using technology is also indicative of effective writing instruction (Karchmer-Klein, 2013).

Scaffolding the writing process for students, using the process teaching model, has also been shown to have various student benefits. The process-writing approach has long been a staple in K-12 writing curriculum and CCSS has worked to increase its reach to other content areas outside of English. Pritchard and Honeycutt (2005) posit that “an overall finding of research on the process approach is that all the stages must be fully implemented if students are to build a repertoire of writing strategies” (p. 28). The authors go on to say that a “holistic instructional model” (p. 29) is paramount to effective implementation of the process approach. In their meta-analysis of studies concerning the process approach, Graham and Sandmel (2011) report an overall finding that the model contributes to success among both elementary and secondary level writers. As Beltran and Decker (2014) argue, teachers can build students' confidence levels in their writing abilities by teaching the various stages. Writing teachers who provide their students with more time and space to write (Buckley-Marudas, 2018; Jago, 2014) while also exposing them to diverse formats and styles are keystones of effective writing teachers.

High School Student Writers

Although this study focuses on secondary writing teachers, it is important to be aware of the composing practices, behaviors, and motivations of the high school students these educators teach. Even though student dispositions can greatly

influence curricular design and implementation, there are only limited studies that investigate academic writing practices of high school students.

Janet Emig's 1971 *The Composing Processes of Twelfth Graders* is one of the first research studies that examines high school students' writing behaviors during an actual writing task. In this book, Emig shared the findings of her analysis of high school students' writing practices, focusing primarily on 12th graders. Utilizing a case-study approach, Emig observed a group of eight student writers of various academic and cultural backgrounds, all of whom had been identified as 'good' writers. Participants were to engage in a "think aloud" protocol, which required them to verbally talk through the writing process as they completed a provided writing task. Emig was interested in the reflexivity involved in the act of composing. One of the most prominent findings of this study was that extensive writing primarily occurred as a school-sponsored activity that warrants more attention and dedication of instruction in secondary schools. Although the reliability of the 'think aloud' methodology is questionable and unreliable, in my opinion, Emig's work served as a vivid illustration of and introduction to high school students' writing behaviors for many scholars and practitioners.

Academic writing is an "identity-shaping activity," (Camp, 2013, p. 24) that prompts students into a mode of decision-making which affects the ways that they represent themselves as writers. This poses great difficulty for many as represented by Smagorinsky et al. (2007) and Smagorinsky et al. (2010b). These studies provide contemporary illustrations of advanced secondary students' composing practices. Like Emig (1971), in both studies, Smagorinsky and his fellow researchers utilize a think-aloud protocol to capture the composing behaviors of senior high school writers in real-time. The 2007 study focused on understanding the two student participants' writing experiences on two different writing tasks:

one of a personal nature and the other academic. They were also interested in examining the relationship between the writing and the students' teacher's writing instruction. The findings of the protocol showed that the student writers found the academic task to be "frustrating" (p. 59) while they exhibited more engagement and personal satisfaction with completing the more creative writing tasks. Smagorinsky's (2010a) study utilized only one student writer as the participant, but also framed its analysis of the lone high school senior's writing behaviors using the construct of "academic bullshitting." As the student wrote, the researchers observed that during times of faulty content awareness, she employed academic writing skills and genre moves to misrepresent the accuracy of her content knowledge. This study necessitates further investigation into the cleverness of high school writers when engaging in writing tasks.

While there is not much empirical evidence about how high school students approach academic writing tasks, it is evident that many of them do not enjoy academic writing. Possible explanations for the overwhelming dislike vary, yet this disdain appears to be widespread among high school student writers. Wilcox and Jeffrey (2014) show that when surveyed about the subjective nature of their stances toward writing in various content areas, students possessed an equal level of positive and negative feelings about their English classes. However, when the type of writing was delineated, they found that students overwhelmingly exhibited negative stances toward academic genres and writing tasks. Williams (2019) confirms Wilcox and Jeffrey's assertion that students tend to turn away from academic writing tasks. After engaging sixteen students in freewriting exercises about their views of academic writing, Williams suggests that students' avoidance of academic writing is more than a surface matter of like or dislike; she complicates students' experience of writing as one that is rooted in holistic embodiment. Williams delineates between emotion and affect to explore students' perceptions of

academic writing beyond ‘I hate/love it [writing]’ to uncover tensions between in-school (i.e., academic) and out-of-school (i.e., creative) writing contexts, composing wants and needs, and pleasure and pain among her participants as it relates to their writing experiences. She notes that only 10% of the students expressed that they like or love writing in school contexts. Based on her findings, she advocates that a deeper examination of students’ overt disdain for academic writing is necessary to fully grasp the depth and full nature of such sentiments. This research suggests that students’ sentiments toward academic writing are dependent on the type of task and context in which writing is occurring. (Smagorinsky, 1997; 2007).

Other scholars have also approached the issue of student sentiments of academic writing. Addison and McGee (2010) found that students prefer personal writing more than academic writing in qualitative analysis of high school upperclassmen writers. Among the 1,412 high school students they questioned, only 28% reported that they enjoy writing. Compared to Williams’s (2019) inquiry mentioned above, Addison and McGee’s findings yielded drastically higher percentages of students who claimed to enjoy writing but still confirmed Williams’s results showing that students favor out-of-school (i.e., personal) writing instead of those required in academic contexts. This observation is further supported by Beck and Jeffery (2009) in which students express a more favorable perspective of genres such as personal narratives and journaling, which they felt allowed them to break free from the rules and restrictive nature of academic writing tasks.

There are various factors that could account for the overwhelming student disdain for academic writing: agency (Ahearn, 2001); motivation (Troia et al., 2012); writing ability (Carpenter et al. 2009; Wilcox, 2011); and affect (Smagorinsky & Daigle, 2012; Williams, 2019) among others. Despite the diverse rationales, a solid awareness of the

contributors to varying perceptions, behaviors, and sentiments about writing among high school writers is important as these factors are relevant to the ways that teachers implement writing instruction. Summed up succinctly by Addison and McGee (2010), “if people just do not like to write, [writing teachers] have an entirely different battle to wage” (166).

Summary

This review of literature draws attention to various aspects that are related to high school writing teachers’ experiences including their beliefs and perceptions of themselves as writing teachers; their pre-service preparation and experiences; and their engagement with professional development. Additionally, I outline the extant literature concerning secondary writing instruction; factors that affect the ways writing is taught in high schools; and the student writers with whom these educators work. Research shows the perceptions, beliefs, and past experiences that teachers associate with writing greatly affect the ways, and extent to which, they integrate it in their curriculum. The scholarship also reveals that high school students’ composing struggles and reluctance, in addition to an overwhelming dislike for academic writing, call for writing teachers to utilize evidence- and teacher-based instructional strategies that allow them to motivate and encourage them. The idea that teachers are underprepared to teach writing is widespread; however, scholars have begun to show that these educators still work to balance the demands of state and national policies and high-stakes assessments to deliver effective writing instruction.

This project aims to complicate the scholarship and existing findings by adding another layer to the multi-dimensional complexity of secondary writing instruction. Many of the extant studies only scratch the surface and reiterate the notion that there is a problem with the way that writing is being taught, yet they are not considering the magnitude or breadth of

the circumstances, conditions, and experiences that influence how writing pedagogy is created and implemented in high school settings. Rather than blame the teachers, we must establish an understanding of the teaching conditions and contexts they inhabit and negotiate daily. Representation of this experience should come directly from the teachers as they are the ones who are on the front lines of these classrooms. The next chapter provides a description of and rationale for the researcher's chosen methodology to capture the full stories of secondary writing teachers.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

“I was just exhausted all the time.” – Ms. Poppy

“You know, [in] my English department, there are twelve of us and each of us teach reading, writing and grammar all in the same year and no other department has that much to cover.” – Ms. Branch

“We try to really instill in the kids that when we teach them writing, even if they choose to go straight into the workforce, or if they choose a degree that has nothing to do with English, those skills are going to be paramount to whatever they choose to do.” – Ms. Biggie

As evidenced in Chapter Two’s literature review, few scholars are directly talking to secondary English educators about their writing pedagogy or perceptions of academic writing. I advocate for deeper meaning-making through extended dialogue with these teachers. As Sullivan and Tinberg (2006) assert, “Oftentimes, we talk *about* them rather than *with* them” Thus, the purpose of this qualitative study was to understand teachers’ perceptions and experiences of teaching academic writing in a high school setting. There is a need for extended conversations with these educators to complicate and contextualize surface-level findings of many of the large-scale studies that concern secondary writing instruction. This study aimed to obtain insight directly from teachers of writing. A grounded theory research design complemented this research goal best. I was interested in illustrating the ways that the participants’ perceptions and definitions aligned with, and differed from, the widely accepted theoretical definitions of academic writing embraced, embodied, and used for English educators in the field. The storytelling aspect of a grounded theory approach allowed me to highlight the corresponding conditions and constraints that impact the ways that these educators work to translate these perceptions into pedagogy.

Research Questions

This study was guided by the following research questions:

- 1) How do high school English teachers define academic writing?
 - a. What skills and conceptual mastery is associated with good academic writing?
- 2) What pedagogical techniques, methods, or best practices do high school English teachers utilize when teaching writing?
- 3) What real-world constraints do high school English teachers encounter when integrating writing instruction into ELA curriculum?

Each of the research questions serves its own purpose. Research question #1 was developed to gauge writing teachers' definitions of academic writing. The participants' responses to this question work to illustrate their pedagogical expertise and knowledge about writing, which is frequently scrutinized and undermined. I designed question #2 to highlight best practices utilized by the teachers. Oftentimes, their instructional practices are called into question and heavily criticized, thus, the purpose of the second research question was to elevate the effective pedagogical methods they use with their student writers. The third research question was intended to uncover the real-life barriers and constraints that high school English teachers encounter when teaching writing. This line of inquiry is necessary because it elucidates possible motivations for the educators' instructional choices.

Research Design

In choosing the most beneficial research design to capture the experiences of high school writing teachers, a qualitative study appeared most appealing. Too much of the existing scholarship concerning writing teachers' experiences is represented by quantitative data that lack context. According to Creswell (2013, p. 48), qualitative research presents a stage on which we

may “hear silenced voices” It also allows us to understand “the meaning that people have constructed” (Merriam, 2009, p. 13). Given this project’s prioritization of the participants’ voices and teaching experiences, such a research design was befitting. Its subjective nature provides context for behaviors, actions, and perspectives and offers a more humanistic depiction of research participants (Creswell, 2007) which is integral to combat some of the negative portrayals of their lives’ work. Qualitative research also allowed participants to provide rich and detailed descriptions that I was then responsible for interpreting and re-presenting. This approach “recognizes the self-reflexive nature of qualitative research and emphasizes the role of the researcher as an interpreter of the data and an individual who represents information” (Creswell, 2007, p. 248). The affordance of re-presentation of data that Creswell speaks of works to solidify a qualitative approach’s emphasis on storytelling which was appealing for the aims of this study. “We conduct qualitative research when we want to *empower individuals* to share their stories...” (248) and then as researchers, we further disseminate these narratives for public consumption. Therefore, a qualitative approach was paramount to capture, understand, and re-present the perceptions, perspectives, and lived stories of high school English teachers concerning their academic writing instruction.

Because of the nature of my research goals, a grounded theory study design was most suitable. According to Opie (2004), grounded theory is “a process of collecting qualitative data and undertaking data analysis to generate categories (i.e., a theory) to explain a phenomenon” (p. 13). In utilizing a grounded theory approach, I did not intend for the participants’ responses to be representative of a universal experience of teaching academic writing in high school, but rather to serve as snapshots of multiple, varying experiences of a shared phenomenon (i.e., teaching high school writing) like how puzzle pieces conjoin to illustrate a cohesive visual while each

piece still maintains its own uniqueness and individuality. The lack of interference from multiple instruments, inductive nature of the process, and vividness of descriptive data sets (Merriam, 2009) were all benefits that undergirded my use of a grounded theory approach. Creswell (2007) states, “in a grounded theory study, the researcher chooses participants who can contribute to the development of the theory” (p. 128). Thus, it was paramount that I recruited high school English teachers who were currently teaching writing as a part of their ELA curriculum. Although valuable, given the ever-changing landscape of K-12 instruction, retrospective recollections of teaching writing were not relevant to this project’s goal to represent experiences of contemporary teaching contexts. Creswell (2007) asserts that a homogeneous sample made up of individuals sharing the same experience would help in developing a theory “to confirm or disconfirm the conditions” (p. 34); therefore, this study solely focuses on high school English teachers and their writing instruction.

Grounded theory prioritizes shared human experience: “People sharing common circumstances, such as teachers in a middle school, share patterns of meanings and behavior as well. These patterns are the stuff and substance of grounded theory research” (Hutchinson, 1986, p. 65). In a grounded theory approach, the researcher lets the data guide the meaning-making process by using constant comparative analysis to generate meanings, categories, and grounded theory. Grounded theorists see meaning as being “constructed, situated, and negotiated” (Charmaz qtd. in Wertz et al., 2011, p. 167). Discovery is fundamental to this methodology as the researcher discovers first the world seen through the eyes of the participants and then interprets these perspectives in the context of the basic social processes and structures that shape and organize that world. The resulting theory provides a new way of understanding the social situations that is ‘grounded’ in the data from which the theory was generated as researchers “aim

to look at how experience is constituted, its implicit meanings, and to understand the contexts and conditions that give rise to it" (Charmaz qtd. in Wertz et al., 2011, p. 166). Grounded theory is characterized by emergent themes, and those themes that manifest during data collection and analysis, which grounded theory posits are mutually dependent, recursive, and iterative processes, serve as the basis for the resultant theory. Through the pursuit of tacit meanings, grounded theorists consider the larger social, cultural, and historical realities in tandem with the explicit data. As a methodology that "attends to silences... [and that] what is left out," (Charmaz qtd. in Wertz et al., 2011), grounded theory was the most suitable design for this study of high school English teachers' experiences and teaching lives as writing instructors.

Theoretical Framework

Constructivism was utilized as the theoretical framework for this study which corresponded to a specific type of grounded theory design. A constructivist framework presupposes that to understand and make sense of a phenomenon, one must be exposed to diverse perspectives and circumstances of those who have experienced it. There are three main types of grounded theory research designs (Chong & Yeo, 2014): Straussian, classic, and constructivist. Spearheaded by Kathy Charmaz and Antony Bryant (see, e.g., Bryant, 2002, 2003; Bryant & Charmaz, 2007; Charmaz, 2000, 2006, 2007), a constructivist approach highlights multiple and diverse realities by acknowledging the subjectivities and positions of the researcher and participants. For its emphasis on how "the collective lies embedded in the personal" (Charmaz qtd. in Wertz et al., 2011), this qualitative study embodied a constructivist grounded theory design to generate substantive grounded theory of high school English teachers' lived experiences of teaching academic writing.

Site Selection

The site for this study was a midsize city in the South. Due to its proximity to several higher education institutions and well-known automotive suppliers, the city has experienced substantial growth over the past 20 years. According to the 2020 census, its population was almost 100,000, making it one of the highest populated cities in its state. There is a wide variety of diverse racial identities and socioeconomic statuses represented by the members of the community. Home to over fifty K-12 educational institutions, including ten high schools, the city includes two public school districts³. However, the city's public education system has a long history rooted in racial discrimination whose remnants are still felt and observed in the area's schools. Most of the schools in Tribe District are comprised of majority White, middle-class and wealthy students whereas several of the schools in Village District serve large percentages of Black and Brown children who come from working-class families. This phenomenon is not coincidental as there has recently been national attention given to contemporary re-segregation efforts on the behalf of the city's public-school administrators and board members in both districts to appease White parents who have begun to remove their students from the public school system due to the increasing number of enrolled students of color.

Over the course of the past three academic years, the two school districts in the study's site city have shown improvement in their state report card rating. For the 2018-2019 school year, Tribe District and Village District both received a B grade, represented by a numerical value of 83 out of 100 possible points. No data was available for the 2019-2020 academic year due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Although there was one for reading, math, and science, there

³ To maintain confidentiality, the two school districts will be referred to as Tribe and Village District hereafter.

was no reporting marker for student writing proficiency, which could be the result of the lack of a state-level writing assessment.

Participants

The participants in this study were 9th through 12th grade high school English teachers who work in one of the city's two public school districts. Following IRB approval of the study (Appendix A) in February 2020, fifty-six current secondary English teachers were sent a recruitment email (Appendix B) in March 2020. Since I was not interested in observing the teachers' classroom practices or interactions with students, I was not required to obtain approval from the school districts. I utilized purposive sampling to acquire the email addresses of potential recruits by conducting an online search in the faculty/staff directories on the two school systems' websites. I also obtained some email addresses of potential participants from interactions with mentors who currently work in the school districts, friends who knew of teachers who fit the criteria in the area, and a call that I posted on my Facebook page as I have several social media friends who are educators in the community who could refer possible research candidates. Following the initial sending of these emails, I received some responses stating that one may no longer be teaching English or working in the two chosen school districts. Some potential recruits replied asking for more information about the details and requirements, particularly time commitments, associated with the study. A few copied me on an email thread with their school administrators to confirm that their participation was supported by the institution and district in which they teach.

At the conclusion of the two-week recruitment period, five potential participants responded expressing interest in participating in the study. Several of them felt that this research was necessary and wanted to share their stories. Of the five participants that were recruited and

interviewed, I only included data from four of them; one of the participants was no longer teaching English, and described her experiences retrospectively in the first interview, so we did not move forward with the second one. Subsequently, these individuals were sent a consent form (Appendix C) via email to electronically sign and digitally return. Once the consent form was returned in electronic form, the participants were sent a link to a Doodle poll to schedule their first interview. A brief overview of the four participants follows:

Ms. Poppy (all names herein are pseudonyms) was a Caucasian female with five years of teaching experience. Having earned her undergraduate degree in English with a minor in Creative Writing – the only participant who did not matriculate through an undergraduate teaching program – Ms. Poppy taught Creative Writing for the first two years of her teaching career as a college adjunct instructor. After struggling to find gainful employment, “except selling wedding dresses,” she enrolled in a graduate Education program and subsequently secured a position at one of the local high schools in Tribe District teaching 9-12th grade English. The need for financial stability and the desire “to have health insurance at some point” propelled Ms. Poppy into secondary teaching; however, she described how she “completely fell in love with [her] job” after finishing her master’s program in Secondary English Education. She has taught General 11th and 12th and Honors 10th. After serving in her first high school teaching role for three years, at the time of the first interview, she was in transition and was seeking another teaching position elsewhere. The school at which she was teaching at the time of the study is one of the most affluent and resourceful high schools in the area’s public school system with a largely Caucasian student and faculty population.

When asked if she considers herself to be a writer, Ms. Poppy enthusiastically answered, “I definitely think so,” as she revealed that she still writes in her free time. Her passion for

writing, particularly creative forms, led her to get a Creative Writing elective course established at the high school where she was teaching. According to her, “being a teacher has made me a better writer.” Ms. Poppy also shared that her domestic partner is a college instructor, which has drastically magnified the stark differences between high school and college teaching for her.

The veteran teacher of the bunch, Ms. Branch, was a Caucasian female who has taught secondary English for ten years. She stated that she was drawn to Education for “the people aspect of it.” As she explained the philosophy behind her writing instruction, Ms. Branch asserted that she “helps students feel that that they can be successful in something that feels very intimidating to them” She noted that, even as a young child, she “knew how to write, was always a good writer, so [she] wanted to be an English teacher.” Ms. Branch told of how she still has compositions that she wrote when she was a young student, which she frequently brings into class to share with her students. Her entire career has been spent teaching at one of the high schools in Village District. She was the most experienced educator among the participants, having taught all grade levels from 9-12th as well as General, AP, and Advanced (the equivalent of Honors) English courses. She also teaches Freshman Seminar, which she described as a “soft skills” course for first-time high schoolers. She holds a bachelor’s degree in Secondary English Education. At the time of the study, she was enrolled in graduate school pursuing a degree in School Counseling as she aspires to transition to an administrative role at the school where she has been a long-time educator. She was the only participant who was married and had children, which did not leave her much free time as she stated, “my plate is very full in terms of [my] personal life and teaching life.” The school where she teaches is perhaps the most diverse high school in the research site in terms of racial and socioeconomic student demographics.

Ms. Creek was a Caucasian, female, newly minted English educator who had just received her Bachelor's in Secondary English Education and started her first year of teaching high school English a few months prior to the first interview. Although she had the least amount of secondary teaching experience, Ms. Creek was very knowledgeable about composition theory and best practices for writing instruction, which she attributes to the four years that she worked as a tutor in her undergraduate institution's writing center. When asked to describe her journey as a writer, Ms. Creek revealed that she could not read and write in English until she was in the 3rd grade. She grew up in a military household and lived in Germany during her early school years where she shared, "I was not allowed to speak English, write in English, do anything in English because I was in a German school." During these formative years, Ms. Creek was also diagnosed with dyslexia which she says has a great impact on the way that she engages with struggling writers: "I understand, and I sympathize with my students who are on 504s or IEPs." Ms. Creek was the only participant who taught IB (International Baccalaureate), a rigorous high school curriculum that prioritizes both personal and professional development among students, and she taught primarily with 11th and 12th graders. The school at which she teaches is classified as a Title I institution and had just been removed from the state's 'failing schools' list. The school where she teaches in Tribe District is also primarily comprised of African American students who reside in either working-class or poverty-ridden neighborhoods.

Ms. Biggie was a Caucasian female who had been teaching high school English for five years at the time of the first interview. Like Ms. Branch, she had also taught at only one high school in Village District for the duration of her teaching career. Most of the students she teaches are in the 10th-12th grade and she is primarily tasked to teach General and Advanced English courses. She received her undergraduate degree in Secondary English Education and is a self-

proclaimed lover of writing. Even though she frequently stated, “I love writing...I love to write,” this was not always the case for Ms. Biggie. In her early school-aged years, she recalled how she “would have never labeled [her]self as an English lover.” The restrictive nature of academic writing made all writing repulsive to her. However, she described how it was not until she got to high school that she started to appreciate and fall in love with writing. She shared how she started writing in a prayer journal, and as she put it, “that opened up, just exploded the way I saw writing not just as a means of learning...but more so as a way to express the depths of yourself that people often don’t get to see.” Ms. Biggie spoke of how she still composes in her prayer journals and even dabbles in song lyric writing now. She tells her students about her experiences as she hopes that it will help them see the relevance of out-of-school and in-school writing, like how she did as a young high school student. Ms. Biggie teaches at a small high school which is in a rural area of the city. The student population is comprised mostly of Caucasian students, with a small African American population. There is a high percentage of students on reduced and free lunch at the school as well.

These four participants comprised the sample population for this research study. Although homogeneous in terms of race and gender, the teachers represent diverse teaching backgrounds and contexts, motivations for and pathways to becoming educators, and identities as writers. Additional background demographic information about each participant is outlined in Table 1 below.

Data Collection

When conducting grounded theory research, to ensure rich data, data collection is a crucial stage to obtain different kinds of sources as an endeavor to develop explicit theories. Typically, data is collected in the form of interviews, observations, focus group discussion, and

documents. Of these, interviews are arguably the most frequently reported method (Egan, 2002). To gain a comprehensive illustration of the participants’ lived experiences as secondary writing educators, I utilized various means:

Teacher Interviews: Interviews allow researchers to “elicit participants’ stories” (Miller et. al, 2009) and to represent in their most authentic form. They allow us to capture the voices of participants and can manifest in various iterations. For this project, I chose to use semi-structured and structured interviews. Structured interviews allow for a collective analysis of specific

Table 1

Teachers’ Relevant Education, Teaching, and Writing Background

Teacher	Years of Teaching	Subjects/Grade Levels	Educational Background	Relevant Writing Experience
Ms. Poppy	5	General 11 th and 12 th Honors 10 th	Bachelor’s in English; minor in Creative Writing; Master’s in Secondary English Education	Avid Creative writer Previous college adjunct instructor
Ms. Branch	10	General, AP, Advanced (i.e., Honors); 9 th – 12 th Freshman Seminar	Bachelor’s in Secondary English Education; Master’s in School Counseling (in progress)	Lifelong writer
Ms. Creek	1	International Baccalaureate-IB 11 th and 12 th	Bachelor’s in Secondary English Education	University writing center tutor
Ms. Biggie	5	General, Advanced (i.e., Honors; 10 th – 12 th)	Bachelor’s in Secondary English Education	Lyricist Prayer journaling

phenomena while also prioritizing diversity of lived experience (Patton, 2015). Using a focused set of questions (Appendix D and E) enabled me to create specific areas of interest and make the data set more manageable in terms of analysis for commonalities and differences in participants' narratives. The questions for the follow-up interview were informed by the responses and conceptual gaps found in the data following the first interaction. The two different interviews that were conducted with each participant varied in terms of degrees of formality. Although both rounds of the teacher interviews were structured with a predetermined set of questions used to guide the conversation, the first interview was more informal. During this rapport-building process (Miller et al., 2009), the participants and I engaged in a significantly higher degree of small talk or back-and-forth dialogue that digressed from the scope of the questions but that was prompted by one of the responses given than we did in the second interview. Therefore, the length of the Round One's interviews ranged from 45 minutes to 1 hour and 30 minutes. The second phase of interviewing was more structured, and the amount of extraneous conversation was reduced. These interviews were much shorter, with an average time of 25 minutes.

Course Artifacts: Artifacts can enrich a research study by providing insight or information that is not obtainable through an interview or observation (Given, 2008). These records, which may come in either written or multimodal form, provide material evidence of the past to supplement personal testimonies or accounts. For this study, I solicited documentation of previous writing lessons, professional development endeavors, and/or institutional, district, state, and national standards-based requirements. Collected course artifacts served as an illustration of how pedagogical perceptions and constraints manifested in the participants' praxis. The type of requested artifacts was dependent on the responses shared in both interviews, so these documents differed among the participants.

Triangulating data is not only good research practice, but it also enhances the validity of one's findings (Mathison, 1988). Therefore, this study's data collection was initially slated to be threefold and consist of 1) one individual semi-structured interview; 2) collection of course artifacts, such as curricular materials and professional development documentation; and 3) a focus group session comprised of all the participants. However, due to the unexpected school closures, online instruction transition, and compounded demands placed on K-12 educators during the pandemic, I altered my methods halfway through data collection to accommodate the teachers' dynamic and unpredictable schedules. Instead of facilitating a focus group, which was not possible due to the lack of uniformity among the participants' scheduling availabilities, I utilized a follow-up structured individual interview that sought to fill in some of the conceptual gaps from the first phase of interviews. The first round of interviews was scheduled and conducted within the subsequent two-week period following the recruitment stage of the study in late April – early May 2020. Each of these conversations averaged between 45 minutes and 1.5 hours in length. Due to personal circumstances and inconsistent communication lines with the teachers during the summer months, the second round of interviewing did not take place until October – November 2020. Initially, I planned to converse with the participants in-person at my home institution. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic social distance requirements, all interviews were conducted via Zoom.

All Zoom interviews were audio-recorded for transcription purposes. Following the conclusion of data collection and analysis, these recordings were destroyed. Subsequently, after each round of interviews, all their participants were emailed their corresponding transcripts to review. One of the affordances of grounded theory is that it allows the researcher and participants to share control over the re-presentation of experience (Gergen, 2000). I wanted the

teachers to understand that I viewed them as co-creators of the knowledge that I was presenting about their experiences as writing teachers and encouraged their active participation in constructing and validating the data. Given the limitations on the participants' time and energy, they were moderately involved in "fact-checking," but, it was still beneficial to the overall presentation of their responses.

Immediately after the second round of interviews, I also requested any documents via email that each participant may have mentioned or alluded to in their individual interview. For example, if a participant mentioned a particular lesson or assignment or a meeting that they had with their literacy coach, this documentation was solicited. I requested 3-4 pieces of supplementary course artifacts from each teacher; I only received 1 from the collective group. I do not think that this was due to overt resistance or disregard on the behalf of the teachers; again, we were operating in an unprecedented time, so I was flexible and utilized the content I collected in the interviews, which provided me with a robust and illustrative data set to represent their lived experiences as high school writing teachers.

Data Analysis

Grounded theory research prioritizes data analysis just as much as it does the collection of data (Charmaz in Wertz et al., 2011). According to Strauss (1987), data analysis commences at the onset of data collection. This section explains how constant comparative analysis, memo writing, coding, and theory generation were used to analyze the participants' responses.

From the initial start of the study, the researcher should be engaged in constant comparative analysis. This process calls for close examination and interpretation of data, as it is being collected, into minute units of study or indicators, as Strauss (1987) denotes them. At each stage of data collection, a systematic comparison of these indicators to each other, then

subsequently, to new data obtained in the next phase of the study, should be conducted.

Throughout my study, I was constantly and simultaneously engaged in data collection and analysis. During the interviews, I took field notes that allowed me to identify future lines of inquiry as well as statements that needed to be clarified with the participants. After each phase of interviewing, I reviewed the transcripts to begin identifying some of the themes and patterns that were emerging. I was also interested in discovering any relevant aspects or characteristics of the participants' lives would be viable frames for future questioning. For grounded theorists, this most frequently takes place in the form of memo writing which is the writing of extensive notes to explicate and analyze our codes (Wertz et al., 2011). Memo writing should take place throughout the entire research process. Not only does it allow the researcher to record their immediate thoughts and interpretations of data following an interaction with participants, but it also permits analytic interrogation of the previously noted emerging codes and categories in real time rather than after data collection has completely ceased. The goal here is to identify similarities and differences that incite inductive coding, generate, and refine old and new concepts, categories, and theories. This recursive act of comparing highlights the "cumulative nature of knowledge and theory" which involves a "progressive building up of facts" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 35). In this study, I used the participants' words, responses, and statements to comprise those "facts" in my effort to amplify their experiences as their truth and illustrate the varying components of their experiences as secondary writing teachers.

Coding is a key strategy employed when generating and grounding theory using firsthand accounts. Through this task, indicators become codes, which then become categories, which then become constructs, which ultimately leads to the creation of theory. As Charmaz explains, "*Grounded theory coding* means applying a shorthand label to a piece of data that takes this

datum apart and defines what it means" (qtd. in Wertz et al., 2011, p. 165). Once I had complete copies of all the transcripts, I entered the responses into NVivo, a coding software program. I delegated a folder for each participant (case, according to NVivo terminology) that included the transcript of their first and second interview, and any supplementary course artifacts that they shared. Data analysis in grounded theory research necessitates three stages of coding: open, axial, and selective (Strauss, 1987; Corbin & Strauss, 1998; Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

Open Coding – Open coding involves taking data and breaking it down into smaller parts. These smaller pieces are then closely examined, compared, and interrogated (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). The concept-indicator model (Strauss 1987) serves as the foundation of grounded theory; in this stage of data analysis, indicators, which include words, phrases, and sentences from the data, are used to create concepts. Meticulous attention is warranted here as the researcher should thoroughly and “minutely” (p. 31) seek authentic language that is used by participants. As I analyzed the participants’ responses, I began to use some of the language they used to create nodes, representations of an emergent theme, pattern, or relationship. The NVivo software was most useful during this initial stage of coding. Grounded theorists may utilize incident-by-incident or line-by-line coding to analyze at this point (Wertz et al., 2011). Since I wanted to dive deep into the data from the start, I chose to use the line-by-line approach. Charmaz posits that this technique can be used by researchers “as [a] heuristic device for becoming involved in the analysis, shedding their preconceptions, and seeing the data anew” (qtd. in Wertz et al., 2011). This process continued until no new nodes emerged. In a grounded theory approach, theoretical saturation, the point where no new insights are attainable, is the end goal.

Axial Coding – The second phase of grounded theory data analysis, axial coding, requires the researcher to begin to condense and compile the indicators yielded during open coding into categories (Hutchinson, 1986). Data that is deemed to be irrelevant may be discarded at this point (Hutchinson 1986; Wertz et al., 2011). Subsequently, these categories are closely examined individually to determine any possible subcategories and question the who, what, when, where, and why (Strauss, 1987). During this stage of coding, I refined my list of codes to create broader categories and characterizations that were flexible enough for emergent patterns. To thoroughly complete this stage, I utilized a line-by-line review approach of the transcripts' content instead of using the NVivo software. Although helpful during open coding, I felt that the software slowed my analysis process and preferred to physically engage with the written transcripts by hand. I marked excerpts and phrases that seemed to relate as I began to observe more explicit patterns among the responses. For example, 'lack of student motivation,' 'home life circumstances,' and 'student disdain for writing,' were all grouped and enveloped under 'student-based needs.' In this stage, relationships are also established between categories. This was guided using the three main research questions that I set out to answer from the onset of the study. At this stage, a "core category" begins to emerge which acts as the comparison point for all other categories. According to Strauss and Corbin (1990), the core category is that which illustrates the focal theme of the study. This category is one that should show frequently in the data (Strauss, 1987) and is "that special something that ties together all other different categories to create a coherent story" (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

Selective Coding – This coding phase “pertains to coding *systematically* and concertedly for the core category” (Strauss, 1987, p. 33). At this stage, the researcher begins to interpret the categories’ interrelationships (Creswell, 2012) which yields explicit theory. At this point, I was able to identify seven overarching themes that emerged to characterize the high school English teachers’ experiences of teaching academic writing. This theory could then be presented as a “story line” (Chong & Yeo, 2015, p. 259) which outlines the ways that “certain factors affect the studied phenomenon and how certain strategies lead to certain outcomes” (p. 259) As the focal point of analysis in this phase, the core category could guide subsequent rounds of theoretical sampling and data collection if theoretical saturation has not been achieved. After reviewing the transcripts, a myriad of times, I felt that the established themes were representative of the responses. This three-pronged cycle of coding could occur several times before the researcher finalizes their theory. The codes, categories, and theories that emerge arise out of the data, instead of preconceived notions and assumptions applied by the researcher. Once a theory has been generated, the researcher may then turn to extant scholarship as substantiation and support (Hutchinson, 1986; Wertz et al., 2011). Internal consistency is a requisite for grounded theorists to maintain soundness. Glaser (1987) advocates for the researcher to stay centered in the research and cautions them from drawing from extant theory; he claims that scholarship predisposes one’s data to preconceived ideas that could taint the collection, interpretation, and analysis of data. Because of this, many grounded theorists attempt to develop their analyses first then integrate them with other ideas and research through a post-data collection/analysis literature review which is the strategy that I embodied. Reflexivity (McGhee et al., 2007) is encouraged as an ongoing process for grounded theorists to engage in as a possible means to mediate some of the

influence of existing theory and literature. This act asks the researcher to constantly re-assess their own stances, biases, and subjectivities as they move through the research process and interact with the data and the participants.

Measures of Trustworthiness

Establishing trust between myself and my participants and integrity of the research was key throughout the facilitation of the study. There are four areas in qualitative research – credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability – which allow researchers to measure trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In qualitative research, the researcher is a key data collection instrument through which the data is filtered and potentially influenced by one's own values, beliefs, and knowledge. Thus, confirmability (i.e., objectivity) is not an applicable element of a grounded theory approach. Transferability, or the generalization of research findings, was not a goal of this project either as I wanted to prioritize the individual experiences of the participants rather than be able to use participants' experiences across various situated discourses. Nevertheless, I did work to address the other two aspects, credibility, and dependability.

Credibility, or internal validity, was constructed by elevating the participants as the experts and disseminators of valuable knowledge in my attempt to generate theory. Although in a position of power as the researcher (explained more below), I oftentimes deferred to the expertise and truth of the writing teachers who embody the identities that I am interested in learning more about. There were no right and wrong answer to any of the research questions, which I intended to allow the participants to display a high level of candidness and transparency about their experiences. Furthermore, the teachers were reassured at various stages of the study

of their freedom to withdraw at any moment if participation became uncomfortable, personally and professionally compromising, or traumatic.

Dependability is more about authentic representation, rather than accuracy which is not a prominent concern of grounded theory research. By recording the interviews, I was able to review and correct any misrepresentations, misunderstandings, or ambiguities in comparison with the participants' actual voices. I also worked to involve them in the review and writing stages, calling on them to check that I was re-presenting their experiences in the most natural and representative manner. I maintained copious, detailed notes due to the possibly unwieldy amount of data that I was handling.

Limitations

Although qualitative research effectively provides a venue through which a researcher can capture an experience in a localized context, it can present issues about widespread verification or applicability. The “limited generalizability of findings” (Creswell, 1994, p. 158) make it difficult to project the findings of a particular sample population and deem them as representative of the characterization of the masses. In this case, the pedagogical perceptions, ideologies, and experiences of the four participants are not hailed as being characteristic of all high school English teachers as a collective community of educators. However, that was not an aim of this study from the onset which supports the researcher's use of a grounded theory approach which prioritizes individual experiences of a shared phenomenon. This project did not seek to assert that the participants' stories could adequately or accurately depict the experiences of other high school English teachers. I would suspect that readers who are secondary writing educators could find some connection or semblance between their personal narratives and the stories presented of the participants. Yet, it is the presence of difference that I hope would

motivate these educators to share and amplify their own diverse, and equally important narratives and self-characterizations. More so, it is my hope that this limitation galvanizes other teacher-scholars to replicate this study among other groups of high school English educators in their local areas to contribute to the illustration of diverse teaching experiences.

With any chosen methodology, power dynamics are naturally inherent in researcher-participant relationships (Wertz et al., 2011). Despite qualitative research's aim to remove this power imbalance, in this study, this tension could be magnified given the professional identity of the researcher. As a college instructor, I recognize that my teaching title could carry certain intimidations when discussing specific topics, particularly those that concern college-level writing, among my participants. Fear of possible judgment and skepticism of my intentions, given the long history of exploitation of high school teachers by college faculty, could possibly limit the scope and breadth of the responses that the participants felt comfortable sharing.

In qualitative research, "the goals are to establish collaborative and non-exploitative relationships, to place the researcher within the study so as to avoid objectification, and to conduct research that is transformative" (Creswell, 2013, p. 28). Terms used to denote the researcher and the 'researched' contribute to the perpetuation or disruption of power relations existing in the research environment. It encourages a low-hierarchical power dynamic, therefore human subjects are referred to as 'participants' emphasizing their agency as collaborators and co-meaning makers in the research process (Miller et al., 2009). Given the long history of professional judgment of high school teachers by college writing faculty (Brereton, 1995), this would be understandable. Therefore, I prefaced each interaction with a disclaimer that our encounters were simply peer-to-peer and mutually reciprocal. To mediate the possible power imbalance, I frequently empathized – not to be mistaken for sympathy – with their experiences as

they shared their narratives to establish a sense of community and furthermore worked to dispel the notion that teaching writing at the high school and college level are complete opposites, dissimilar experiences. My primary research goal was to understand, and not judge, these teachers' experiences with teaching high school writing, and utilizing a grounded approach allowed me to do that.

Lastly, the racial and socioeconomic demographics of my participant group are starkly homogenous and in contrast, in most cases, to that of the student populations they describe whom they teach. Coincidentally, all the teachers who partook in this study identify as white, middle-class females who teach large populations of students of color. This is not shocking since almost 90% of K-12 educators are white (Douglas et al., 2008; Lewis, 2006; U.S. Department of Education, 2004). Their identities as such bears influence on their perceptions and conceptualizations and the practices they utilize in their classrooms, particularly the English classroom (Johnson & Gonzalez, 2014). As Johnson and Sullivan assert, in the American schooling system, "curriculum, discipline practices, achievement data reporting, and pedagogies tend to center whiteness." (2020, p. 421). Although this is not a study of race dynamics in English classrooms, it is worth noting that the homogenous demographic characteristics of the participants do not allow for examination and interrogation of sociodemographic differences, such as gender, socioeconomic status or race, that could impact their pedagogical perceptions and practices. Even though generalizability is not an intended goal of the study, this homogeneity serves as additional evidence undergirding my choice to not elevate the illustrated individuals' experiences as being representative of high school English teachers as a collective.

Chapter 4: Findings

“I learned to not go so hard on the lower order concerns as much as the higher order concerns.” – Ms. Creek

“The tank is not full most of the time just because of the demands that we have.” – Ms. Branch

“I mean you really get attached to your kids. And sometimes you learn way more about them than you want to. But in a way, they become kind of family. So, there is this kind of really deep personal involvement to make sure that when you were teaching rhetoric and writing whether it's creative or research or analytical, that you are doing what will benefit that kid...” – Ms. Poppy

As mentioned in the preceding chapter, a qualitative, grounded theory approach was utilized in this study to identify secondary English teachers' perceptions of academic writing and the factors that impact their writing pedagogy. Several of the studies reviewed in Chapter One characterize and examine high school writing and its instruction, but they do not provide a comprehensive or in-depth consideration of the various influences that impact the ways that writing is taught in secondary education spaces. Additionally, much of this scholarship omits commentary from actual high school teachers, especially in extended form. This chapter presents the findings yielded from the results of the two phases of interviewing of the four high school English teacher-participants. The following research questions guided data collection:

- 1) How do high school English teachers define academic writing?
 - a. What skills and conceptual mastery is associated with academic writing?
- 2) What pedagogical techniques, methods, or best practices do high school English teachers, utilize when teaching writing?

3) What real-world constraints do high school English teachers encounter when integrating writing instruction into ELA curriculum?

These questions were used to determine the general categorization of the data, thus will be used to broadly structure and organize the subsequent explanation of the findings. The following section summarizes the participants' responses that led to the emergent theory discussed in the next chapter.

Findings

Definitions and Perceptions of Academic Writing

The ways in which we define and perceive are two different iterations. Perceptions are usually informed by experience whereas definitions are typically rooted in knowledge, usually that which has been transferred to us from other material or immaterial forms. Our perceptions of an experience, concept, or phenomenon can fluctuate depending on our relation to the source of inquiry. However, definitions are static. Perceptions are subjective; definitions are objective. The participants utilized various frameworks to define academic writing, yet their perceptions were collectively represented by the assertion that although academic writing is difficult for their students, it is necessary for future success in their post-high school endeavors.

The participants used a variety of frameworks and criteria to define academic writing. Ms. Poppy defined academic writing in terms of “the place [one] would submit that writing” or its audience. She described academic writing as that which students are most likely to turn in to their teachers and professors. Interestingly, she also included potential employers in the readership as well. This may be attributed to the fact that, depending on their career trajectory, students may be asked to transfer some of the academic writing skills and concepts that they learned in her classroom to their jobs. Ms. Poppy expressed that, for her students, audience awareness is the most effective concept to associate with academic writing for them to

understand that all writing is not the same. She also mentioned assessment as a defining characteristic of academic writing; for her, it is “what you would want graded.” Furthermore, she described the relationship between academic language and writing. She spoke of how she stresses for her students to realize that “our casual voice is not our professional voice.” From her perspective, academic writing denotes professionalism. She explained how difficult this is to relay sometimes because many of her students struggle with grasping the idea that academic writing often does not often allow writers, particularly those who are from racially marginalized communities, to write as they speak. Given the large percentage of Black and Brown students in her classes, Ms. Poppy recognizes the importance of discussing the implications of Standardized English when she teaches writing.

The affordances and limitations of academic writing were also key characteristics mentioned in some of the other participants’ denotations. In her definition of academic writing, Ms. Biggie describes it as a multi-phased process that is “specialized, focused, and autonomous.” She explains how, oftentimes, this form of writing lacks creativity, but can be one that encourages self-discovery. When she is teaching academic writing, she constantly reminds her students, “you’re not just writing to learn how to write essays, you are writing to, for a lot of you, figure out passions that you don’t even yet know you have.” As she described her own personal journey as a writer, Ms. Biggie mentioned the relationship between personal and academic writing and how initially, as a young writer, she was not fond of the limitations academic writing presented: “It was just these are the rules, you learn the rules, period.” However, when she began to write in her prayer journal at home, she realized that she could transfer some of the practices and skills that she utilized in this intimate context into the classroom. Although she delineates

between the purposes of academic and personal writing, Ms. Biggie alludes to the semblance in the way one can compose in both settings.

Ms. Creek echoed many of the foundational tenets of the participants' definitions, particularly the restrictive nature of academic writing and its process-oriented nature. She reiterated the notion of limitations, voiced by Ms. Biggie, in her definition as she characterized academic writing as a "list of frameworks [and] stipulations." For her, academic writing is bound by a litany of rules. Like Ms. Poppy, she denotes the importance of audience when categorizing writing as academic. She succinctly explicates her denotation even further as she states that this form of composing is "writing that we are producing about scholarship to scholars." In her response to this section of questioning about definitions, Ms. Creek referenced various Composition scholars and texts including *Everyone Can Write* by Peter Elbow as having great influence on the way that she defined academic writing as she had recently graduated from her undergraduate program and worked in a writing center whose tutors' practices were framed by the referred theory. Structure was also a keystone of Ms. Branch's definition; however, she described the form of writing more extensively in terms of genres and modes such as literary analysis, rhetorical analysis, and nonfiction. She also used a process-writing framework in her definition as she mentions the various stages (i.e., freewriting, brainstorming) that are usually reserved for this type of composing. Akin to Ms. Biggie, she begins her explication by contrasting creative and academic writing, yet she does contest that academic writing can prompt creativity among student writers. Although the teachers' definitions of academic writing differed, all the participants possessed a guiding framework of the writing form that framed their writing instruction.

Regarding their perceptions of academic writing, the participants' responses were student-focused as they discussed how the genre presents a variety of struggles and hardships for their students. Several of them mentioned how their students do not have a lot of experience with writing in academic forms prior to entering their classrooms. Ms. Poppy expressed how she feels that it is an unfamiliar and difficult genre for many of her students. This was discussed in conjunction with standardized testing which she juxtaposed against effective academic writing:

...they're not used to doing that. High school kids are only required to write 2 research papers a year, and so that's really not enough practice to do that because the focus is mainly on standardized testing...so they want them to know how to read thoroughly and answer questions. There is not as much pressure on structure and writing and things like that.

Ms. Biggie affirms Ms. Poppy's observations of the hardships her students encounter when writing in academic contexts and settings. As she describes her writing instruction, she contends "that's the hardest thing to teach." She details how her students have trouble in creating a cohesive composition and navigating through the various stages of the writing process: "I think one thing I see a lot with my students is it's very scatterbrained when they're writing. And that's fine when they're freewriting, but when it's time do the essay...take the broadness of their thoughts and focus it...that part can be difficult." Many of the teachers shared how they often pondered the reasons behind such overwhelming struggle among their students, but they did not offer any tangible hypotheses.

Along the same lines, Ms. Branch also recounts how the transition from the earlier stages of freewriting and brainstorming to drafting and solidifying an argument is "super, super tough for kids." She posits that academic writing is "something that feels very intimidating to them"

which may explain why Ms. Creek has trouble in acquiring student buy-in to complete the IB track curriculum:

By the time students get to me, they have a decision about reading and writing. They've already made that decision. It might be that there's a great teacher who told them that they couldn't do it or it might be that they've decided I'm not going to college so I don't have to do it. So getting student buy-in after they've made a decision to not want to write or read is a barrier at the 11th and 12th grade level.

Although academic writing is an endeavor that is sometimes problematic for their students, all the participants amplified its value as a necessary skill for them to master to be successful in their post-graduation journeys. They talked about how college- and career-readiness colored the ways in which they attempt to make the task appealing to their students. Even though the teachers teach other forms of writing, mastery of academic writing seems to have the highest stakes for their students' professional success after high school. Expectations among colleges and workforce employers greatly impact the emphasis that the teachers place on academic writing. Due to the proximity to a national automotive supplier of the two school districts that the participants teach in, many of them described how, among their students, there seems to be an even split between those who plan to attend college and those who will be transitioning directly into the workforce. This choice affects the type of English class (e.g., regular, honors, AP, IB) that the students decide to enroll in. For Ms. Biggie, this tracking greatly informs her pedagogy as she recalls her constant consideration of "Okay, if a student is not going into an AP course, a dual enrollment, or even college, what is something that they need that will help them beyond just this class right now?" This inquiry led her to revitalize an event called 'Interview Day' which one of her former mentors had started at her school but that had ceased

due to her retirement. During the event, representatives from different local employers come and conduct mock interviews for interested students. “I love that I can do something like ‘Interview Day’ in an English class because then I can talk to them about resumes, cover letters...all the stuff that they’re gonna need no matter what job they get.” This integration of career preparation into her writing instruction is one of the most unforgettable experiences for many of her students that they report in their end-of-the-year course survey.

Ms. Creek also shared how her writing instruction is structured around two main frameworks: college readiness and life preparedness. As the sole International Baccalaureate (IB) educator among the participants, many of her students are planning to continue their education post-high school so she regularly mentions “this is what your college professor might expect” during her instruction. For those students of hers who do not express the desire to attend postsecondary institutions, she still pushes the same curricular priorities, yet she frames them in a different way: “You’re not going to submit a letter asking for something to your boss that’s five pages and has an intro and conclusion and solid thesis, right? Then you still need to learn how to be concise in what you’re writing.” She simultaneously connects that back to higher education as “a lot of that also overflows into college writing.” Ms. Branch assumes similar thinking as she proclaims, “I also want them to be prepared for whatever their career or college and then career is going to expect of them” In reference to her college-bound students, “if I can just get [them] ready for what [they]’ll see in [Composition] 101, then I’ll feel comfortable.” However, she also discusses the real-life application that navigating through the writing process can have for her students:

I think I want them to have an appreciation for the fact that writing is a process. It’s not just a finished product because that will serve them as they move into their careers. It’s

not a skill that translates just to writing. It's the research that you're doing at your job or the problem solving you're doing on the assembly line when something is not working. It's a process and you're not just gonna get it on the first time and you're gonna have to change things.

She describes how her most reluctant writers are those who decide to pursue vocational trades. Yet, she still perseveres in trying to demonstrate the value, specifically in the extrinsic form of promotion and higher pay:

[They say] 'I'm not gonna need this' and I'm like, 'Yeah, you may not need *The Great Gatsby*, but you're going to have to write reports for your boss or write an incident report or whatever you know like if they want to go and work at [local automotive supplier name redacted]. And I'm like I promise you're going to have to write. And if you're good at it, they're gonna give you the manager side and not the tap the screw into something side.

Having recently acquired an Advanced Placement class which has caused her to be more aware of college writing expectations, Ms. Branch reveals that, for most of her almost ten-year long teaching career, she has been tailoring her instruction to "teach with that kid who doesn't plan to go to college in mind." As she outlined the ways that post-graduation plans impact how she teaches writing, Ms. Poppy also considers her students' particular needs:

They get surveys from me...so I have a pretty clear picture of what kids' intentions are post-high school. So if I have kids that are wanting to go straight to college, when I work with those kids, I give them way more feedback on like academic structure in writing, like the way they phrase things to not be repetitive. But if I have kids that you know are going straight into the workforce, I'll work more with them on grammar and just the

basic stuff and proofreading and making sure that they can present it in a way that works for them. Like obviously I grade them on the other stuff but if you're not planning on going to school, I'm not going to just like push and push and push citation into you when what you really need is a way to converse and articulate yourself.

Even though, as Ms. Branch observed, “a lot of kids won't become English scholars”, the participants all perceived academic writing as a necessary skill for their students to acquire to be successful in any post-high school endeavor they choose to pursue.

Even though all the teachers observe students struggle with academic writing tasks, each of them stressed its importance because of the long-term implications associated with being a good writer. As the participants highlighted, not only can one's writing aptitude affect their success as a future college student or employee, but it can also affect their daily existence as a citizen of society. Although student perceptions of the relevance of writing in their lives after high school differs depending on the type of English class they are enrolled in, the teachers still make it a pedagogical priority across the gamut even though it may be presented in different forms.

Content Objectives and Goals for Writing Instruction

Results from the analysis of interview transcripts show that the high school English teachers prioritize most of the same skills and concepts (see fig. 1) when they are teaching writing. Of the nine common items listed, drafting, revision/editing, and proper citation practices were mentioned most often, yet it is important to note that the number of times that a particular skill was brought up did not seem to convey a higher level of value.

FIGURE 1. Top Skills Prioritized in Academic Writing Instruction Among Participants

Formulating a Sound Argument

Cohesion

Drafting

Revision/Editing

Analysis

Proper Citation Practices

Concision

Inclusion of Supporting Evidence

Reading Comprehension

Reading Comprehension and Analysis

As the participants were asked about the skills that they prioritize in their writing instruction, the connection between reading and writing quickly surfaced in the interviews. All the teachers agreed with Ms. Poppy that “if you can’t read, you can’t write.” This skill was also frequently discussed in conjunction with analysis. As she expressed how she wants her students “to obviously read and analyze,” Ms. Branch, the veteran teacher among the group, subsequently revealed a phenomenon that has recently become apparent among her students: “I don’t know if it’s because we have, more than ever, kids who don’t read and that’s not an excuse and it’s not a problem that we can really pin on anybody. There’s a lot of different reasons why our kids don’t read.” Student aversion to reading was a common occurrence that the participants encountered as Ms. Poppy elaborated on the breadth of this as she detailed how she not only observes the same in her classroom, but the lack of reading comprehension as well: “One thing I notice is that you pick up very quickly the kids that can read well but they can’t comprehend anything they can read out loud. They know everything but it just doesn’t make real world connections with them.” She then shared that she restructured her writing instruction to focus more on reading as she “kind of taught them how to reread.” Just like Ms. Branch, Ms. Creek aligned reading

comprehension with analysis in her pedagogical goals and practices. For both educators, reading is an antecedent to writing exemplified here through Ms. Creek's words:

So we are reading material and analyzing the language that's being used in that material. But in order to do so, we have to produce something, and so that's how I teach my class is, we read literature. We analyze the literature and the language used in that literature and then we make a production of our own voice about what we've read and analyzed...that's kind of how writing comes into the mix...I would say analysis is the biggest thing that I teach for academic writing.

The reciprocal relationship between reading and writing was also echoed by Ms. Biggie as she discussed how engaging with a text can help students craft their own compositions as she states, "we tell the kids often, 'learn to read between the lines, read the nuanced language' and if you can do that well and often, great. But at the same time, you don't want to be the person where other people are having to read between the lines." For all the participants, establishing effective reading practices and analysis skills among their students is one of the first priorities of their writing instruction. The participants collectively associate good reading comprehension skills with effective academic writing so they prioritize it in their instruction. Most of the teachers' ELA curriculum is literature-based. For them to be able to effectively engage their students in writing tasks that require a general understanding of the text of topic, many of them must incorporate reading instruction into their writing curriculum.

Argumentation, Concision, Cohesion

Many of the participants also shared how argumentation forms the basis of their writing instruction. When they are teaching their students to write in an academic setting or context, for them, it is important that they provide guidance for them "to be able to formulate something that explains their thinking" (Ms. Branch). The high school English teachers collectively emphasized

the “ability to frame an argument and to write a proper thesis statement and to be able to defend what you’re saying” (Ms. Creek) and situated it as one of the foundational components of writing an effective piece of academic text. Furthermore, not only is it important for students to be able to formulate an argument that represents their opinions and perspectives, but the participants also stressed the ability of being able to do so in a cohesive and concise manner. As she discussed how she works with her students to focus their thoughts once they have a workable draft, Ms. Creek reminds them that “we need to learn how to say what we need to say in a concise manner.” In her description of how she promotes the same ideal to her students, Ms. Biggie described it as “learning to take all the thoughts that are in your head and just narrow it down.” As she detailed the relation between concision to cohesion, which she considered to be the overall connectivity between the different parts of a piece of writing, in her lessons, Ms. Biggie also stated that she works to stress the importance of not compromising your argument for the sake of brevity but also giving adequate attention to the different parts of the paper and the ways that they connect to one another: “you have a particular focus or direction that you want to take and you have to maintain the integrity of that idea throughout the course of the paper.” Both she and Ms. Branch mentioned how they are constantly “aiming to help [their] kids get to the point where they can write cohesively” through their writing instruction.

Inclusion of Supporting Evidence and Proper Citation Practices

In addition to prioritizing the development of a concise and coherent argument, the participants also elevated the inclusion of evidence to support said argument and the utility of proper citation practices. When instructing students on how to make their arguments more credible and trustworthy to their audience, Ms. Poppy advises them that “you need to prove it with evidence.” The importance of integrating source material effectively is also one of the key areas that Ms. Branch also looks for in her review of her students’ writing. She recalled an

instance in which she remarked on a student's paper, "you don't really have a whole lot of evidence here...you threw in three sentences out of a quote to take up more room on your page instead of actually making them flow into a sentence that actually makes sense." Despite the subsequent groans among her students in response to her feedback, she described how she remained steadfast in pushing the student to work to seamlessly integrate her own words with that of the external source. For Ms. Branch, she stressed the fact that this was not an isolated instance.

Several of the teachers talked about the use of supporting evidence in tandem with the necessity of proper citation. Although within the discipline of English, MLA style is used as the primary citation model, the participants expose their students to other citation styles as well. Ms. Branch described when she is seeking models to integrate into her lessons, she attempts to find examples that are formatted in a different style: "Look, I'm writing these APA style papers and the writing itself isn't significantly different, but the structure of the citations and footnotes are...I do that kind of thing just to show them different styles so that they are exposed to that." Exposure to different citation styles is also a staple of Ms. Creek's writing pedagogy as, in her definition of academic writing, she listed a variety of styles, "MLA or APA or AMA or Chicago", that her IB students can choose from as they compose. As she detailed the ways that proper citations manifest in her writing instruction, Ms. Poppy introduced the concept of plagiarism which is something that she attested that many of her students struggle with: "I'm also just like really hard on them about like making sure that everything is cited because it is a theft if they don't, even if it's unintentionally and like my high school kids have a horrible, horrible problem with that." To help them overcome this conceptual barrier, she detailed how she would integrate specialized assignments that focused on citation into her research unit: "I would

go over MLA format with them cause that's what they use. We would do citation exercises and then I would actually give them a template so they would practice putting in their information" Although in different forms, all the participants integrate supporting evidence integration and proper citation into their writing curriculum.

Drafting and Revision/Editing

Once their students have engaged with a text through the act of reading, analyzed it to be able to formulate a strong and concise argument that can be communicated through various parts that create a cohesive whole that is supported by cited evidence in the form of a tangible written product, the high school teachers state that they then work to articulate the necessity of drafting. For most of the participants, drafting and revision and editing are complementary tasks. This could be expected since, in their definitions of academic writing, all the participants talked about it as a process. Ms. Creek articulated that she repeals the 'one and done' mentality that she observes among many of her students: "I tell them it's a process and you have to, you have to go through and edit it" In order to drive home this idea, she introduces her students to a short reading that she encountered and used in her position as a writing tutor at her undergraduate institution:

We read a paper that I make all of my kids read now and they're like 'Ms. [Creek], I don't wanna read this'. It's called "Shitty First Drafts" by Anne Lamott and it really helps teach that whatever they put on paper the first time is not going to be what they turn in, and it's not even like that. Amazing writers like the best writer you can think of off the top of your head, their first draft is still like shit and not going to be fantastic.

Similarly, Ms. Biggie affirmed Ms. Creek's experience as she often encounters "students [who] come in with this idea that it has to be perfect the first time." In our discussion, Ms. Branch

recounted how difficult it is to get her students to understand the importance of not only writing multiple drafts, but intentionally reviewing the texts and making substantial revisions:

They want to write something and turn it in and be done. Like they have no time and chill for the idea that you might write something and then you write four other drafts of it...then when I say we're going to revise...they want to fix the commas and then they're like, 'OK, I revised it.' I'm like 'No.'

For several of the participants, “being aware enough to know that your idea can be golden, but the way that you communicate it must be changed over and over” (Ms. Biggie) in the form of multiple revised drafts is an integral skill that they strive to instill in their students. Given the overwhelming emphasis on these different stages of writing in an academic context, it can be said that many of the teachers embrace a process-based approach to teaching academic writing. Collectively, the nine skills form the basis of the high school English teachers’ pedagogy when academic writing is the topic of instruction.

Best Practices of High School Writing Instruction

As they outlined the skills and concepts that they prioritize in their writing instruction, the participants reported that they utilize a variety of techniques that correspond with best instructional practices. Modeling and direct explicit instruction, by far, were the most widely used methods. The teachers also spoke of how they utilize writing workshops and individual conferencing in their classrooms. Additionally, the high school English teachers who teach in Tribe District discussed a new district-wide Writing Across the Curriculum model that their schools were embracing to make writing an institutional priority.

Modeling

One of the most utilized practices among the high school English teachers was modeling. Many of them shared how they oftentimes navigate the writing process alongside their students

as they are teaching it. When reading and brainstorming ideas for future writing assignments, Ms. Poppy mentioned how she “likes to annotate with kids.” She often will broadcast a text or a blank sheet of paper on the classroom projector, and work alongside her students as they identify areas of inquiry and exploration for future writing tasks. Ms. Branch, who has recently started teaching an Advanced Placement course, also talked about how she joins in on the fun sometimes and demonstrates meta-talk for her students:

As I get more into the AP side of it, I write with the kids. I give them an example and I go through things with them and I do think-throughs a lot. I don’t know if that’s a real term...where I will look at a prompt and I will literally just narrate what I’m thinking if I were writing a paper.

Rather than simply telling her students what steps to take as they are composing, Ms. Branch shows them how it may look by assuming the role of a writer as she is simultaneously acting as teacher. Ms. Biggie also tells of how she adopts a similar approach when she is illustrating the process of revision in her classroom. She reports, “I will write a sentence on the board and look at it 3 seconds later and I’m like, ‘Mmmm that looks terrible, let’s get rid of that.’” Even though she did not explicitly identify this process as such, Ms. Biggie also employs the think-aloud method that Ms. Branch was describing in her pedagogy. As experienced academic writers, the teachers’ use of modeling could be viewed as a form of apprenticeship in which they are introducing the novice student writers to the unfamiliar genre.

As an extension of their modeling, the participants also mentioned how they frequently bring in other examples of compositions for their students to review. Ms. Branch shared how she still has binders of her high school writing that she completed when she was younger, and she often uses them as models of different texts to help her students see how to transition from

assignment prompt to written product. Not only is she sharing her past work completed as a novice writer, but she also is helping to dispel some of the pressure to produce a pristine piece of writing that she sees among many of her students. As she shares her writing, she says, “Look OK, I did this as an 11th grader, and this is what I look like as an 11th grader. So, you're not gonna be a polished college-educated writer when you're 16...like this is what my writing looked at like at 16.” She admits that she does share some of her writing “sometimes to get them to laugh...they're like, ‘Oh, look at this cheesy thing Ms. Branch wrote.’” Yet, it does serve a larger purpose as she describes how this practice also helps her to get her students to “buy in to the assignment.” Utilizing these models that seem to be more representative of the type of writing that they may produce with her students is a staple of Ms. Branch’s writing pedagogy. Early on in her teaching career, Ms. Poppy recalled how she also shared some of her compositions with her students. She subsequently stopped doing so because she did not want the way that she wrote to influence the writer identities that her students subsequently embodied. Thus, she recounted how she “started pulling examples that weren’t [her] writing for them” since she still wanted them to see how different writers approach tasks in different ways. Even though they are viewed as expert writers by their students, the teachers utilize diverse writing samples of their own and from other sources to show how different writers interpret the affordances and requirements of academic writing.

Direct Explicit Instruction

For several of the participants, providing direct explicit instruction was a cornerstone and necessity of their writing pedagogy. Delivering content and assignment requirements and expectations to their students was one of the primary pedagogical goals for the high school English teachers. Ms. Poppy emphasized how important it is to be clear and concise about what it is that she is always looking for. She explained that “you can’t be abstract at all. You have to

be very concrete about expectations and give them rubrics and make it definable.” Not only does this manifest through her verbal instruction, but also in her assignment sheets that she provides to her students. For her, she has found that providing too much direction frequently proves to be more effective than not giving enough guidance. Ms. Branch also discussed the efficacy of using rubrics as a form of direct explicit instruction. She shared that it is one of her primary pedagogical goals to convey what she is looking for in her students’ work in the clearest way possible which they can connect to as she states, “I think that’s the thing that I strive for as an educator is to help them in a way that makes sense to them.” For her and her departmental colleagues, rubrics serve this purpose most effectively. These are not only useful tools for the teachers while they were assessing student work, but they also help them crystallize their expectations for their students. Ms. Branch and her fellow English teachers experienced so much success with rubrics that she went on to describe how, during the initial stages of her school adopting a new WAC model, in order to assist their cross-campus colleagues, she and some of the other English faculty members created a more general version for any faculty member who was incorporating writing into their content curriculum could use: “So we came up with a standard rubric, which is very different than any of us English teachers would use in our classrooms. It’s way easier, but you can’t, you know, like you can’t make geometry guy look for technical errors and that kind of thing.” Having some form of tangible document to complement their verbal directives has been productive for both Ms. Branch and Ms. Poppy.

Ms. Biggie also used similar language to Ms. Branch as she described the way that she strives to teach writing in a “way to get it to make sense.” Her approach translates more directly to her classroom practices as she recalled how she commonly must break her assignments down into different parts for her students which she admits that she does not really enjoy having to do:

“I hate the way I have to teach this, but I have to teach it this way to get it to make sense: by paragraph...I just realized that I had to communicate it a little bit more mechanically.” Despite Ms. Biggie’s disdain, she is still committed to breaking down the parts of the assignment’s tasks for her students for them to have a clearer idea of what is expected.

Writing Workshops and Individual Conferences

One of the activities that Ms. Poppy uses in her implementation of direct explicit instruction is writing workshops, particularly when students are composing their research papers. Within this unit, which she proclaims requires a great deal of scaffolding and hands-on touches, she integrates a day where her students can engage in a writing workshop to receive feedback from their peers. Ms. Creek embraces a more one-on-one approach with her students through the guise of individual conferencing. She explains how she usually begins the school year “teaching writing” and incorporating more whole-class activities that focus on composing. However, by the last nine-week block, she starts to “tutor writing” and prioritize the individual writer more:

We end with more so a tutoring model in which I’m hosting a lot of writing conferences. I’m giving a lot of the power to the students to determine...I can tell them ‘I don’t think this word sounds really good here, it might be awkward,’ but I’m giving the power to the student to determine if they’re going to leave that word there. I’m giving that power to the student to determine what is important and what is not.

After watching their progress over the course of a school year, Ms. Creek considers her students to be young adults and “when you treat them like young adults, they act like young adults.” Therefore, by the end of the school year, she starts to decenter herself as the omniscient teacher and allows her students to assume and exert power through the act of decision-making as it pertains to the quality and presentation of their writing.

Although to a lesser extent, Ms. Poppy also engages in individual conferencing with her students. Instead of giving them feedback in passing when they inquire about necessary revisions to their papers, she responds by saying, “I will look over your paper, but you have to sit here with me. We’re gonna go over it together.” She asserted that the desire for constructive feedback is usually enough to entice her students to converse with her on a one-on-one basis about their work.

Writing Across the Curriculum

Some of the teachers are currently involved in writing across the curriculum initiatives that aim to elevate writing as a pedagogical priority among all content areas in their schools. Two of the participants, Ms. Branch and Ms. Biggie, are currently utilizing a WAC model as a part of a district-wide adoption of the *Literacy for All* curricula. This program was created in 2000 by Sue Szachowicz, a Massachusetts secondary English teacher as an intervention to help get her school off the state’s failing schools list. As a part of a collective effort to prioritize literacy in all subjects, Tribe District adopted the program two years ago. All schools within the district were then tasked with integrating Szachowicz’s program into their existing curriculum. As described by Ms. Biggie, “it’s essentially a program that pulls Math and Writing into every content area.” Although each discipline within her school has the autonomy to decide how they integrate these subjects into their curriculum, “the whole idea is to make sure that there’s a cross going on no matter what class you’re in.” Her school chose to prioritize writing first across campus and she expresses how it has been “an interesting transition.” Many of her fellow teachers in other disciplines struggle with finding ways to incorporate essays and fuller writing tasks beyond short answer or fill-in-the-blank assessment questions.

Yet, although the faculty at her school are still slightly apprehensive and intimidated by the program, Ms. Biggie expresses that so far, in their 3rd year of subscribing to *Literacy for All*,

“everybody did a great job with it.” She also details the value and advantages that *Literacy for All* has brought about for her students:

I think after the students got over the initial ‘Oh my gosh, I’m having to write in every single class now.’, I think they started to realize, okay, wait a minute, writing is important in every single area and not just my English class. If anything, it’s taught them...it’s given them a mindset shift, you know it’s not just in Mr. A’s class or Ms. [Biggie]’s class, it’s across.

She mentions her colleagues in the History department specifically as being some of the more willing participants:

History in particular...they do weekly essays. They teach more so, their focus is more so on length so they’ll give a prompt and say, fill up one page so they may not be critiquing for the stuff that I am in my class, but they are definitely looking for length, they’re looking for ideas and so I like that there’s a marriage of the two going on.

Ms. Branch’s school was the first institution to adopt *Literacy for All* and is currently in its fourth year of integration of the program. She explained how one of her vice principals was the one to introduce the WAC model to the Tribe District Central Office leadership which then led to the program being adopted as a district-wide initiative. As she described the program’s implementation at her school, she also reiterated some of the cross-campus disdain from faculty in other disciplines for the program:

We have *Literacy for All* so every semester, our calendar starts with English teachers and then it rotates through every department in the building. Kids write, read, and annotate in the vein of that class. And so, the teachers who aren’t English teachers don’t love it. A lot of them don’t, they don’t take it very seriously...if you say *Literacy for All* in the

building, it's collective groans, but like as a professional, I think it's important. But the other teachers are very upset that they're being expected to bear the burden of reading and writing.

Because she values literacy to a great extent, Ms. Branch offers support to her cross-discipline colleagues as they work to integrate writing into their lesson plans. She shared how her fellow teachers from other department will “email [her] and say, ‘Hey, does this sound right?’ or ‘Hey, does this prompt look right? Is this how you would ask this?’” However, she detailed how teaching writing does not seem to be as nerve-wrecking for them as is assessing writing. She explained how, “they’re more so intimidated not necessarily by creating the assignments but by grading them.” Thus, as mentioned earlier, to assist her colleagues, she and some of the other English faculty created a general rubric that she described as being “way easier” and “very different than any of us English teachers would use in our classrooms” for teachers in other departments to use when grading their students’ written products. However, for Ms. Branch and her departmental peers, it became apparent that it was not being used as the students would more often receive completion grades of their written work in other departments because of the sentiment, “Oh he did it, it’s a grade.” Nevertheless, Ms. Branch elevated *Literacy for All* as an effective way for her and her colleagues to prioritize and focalize writing in their classrooms. Neither Ms. Creek nor Ms. Poppy mentioned *Literacy for All* during their interviews and upon further investigation, it was discovered that their district, Village District, has not yet adopted the program.

Barriers and Constraints to Writing Instruction

In addition to explicating their definitions of academic writing and highlighting some of the most effective instructional practices they utilize when teaching the subject matter, Ms. Biggie, Ms. Branch, Ms. Creek, and Ms. Poppy detailed various barriers and real-life constraints

that influence the ways that they teach writing. As Ms. Poppy proclaimed, “The hard thing about teaching at public school is like not actually teaching. It’s like the things that come with that.”

The actual actions involved with being an educator (e.g., lesson development, classroom management) pose little to no trouble for the participants regarding their writing instruction. Many of them expressed wanting to integrate writing more fully into their ELA curriculum; however, they concurrently enumerated various factors, both external and internal, which complicate translating this desire into reality.

Lack of Preparation to Teach Writing

All the high school English teachers that were interviewed mentioned their underwhelming sentiments about the training and preparation they received as a part of their college education programs. Ironically, all of them attended the same university as undergraduate students, with three majoring in English Education and one in English. The teachers collectively voiced that they felt underprepared to teach writing once they transitioned from the role of student to teacher, concisely represented in the following comment from Ms. Poppy: “I wasn’t given a lot of instruction on how to teach writing...so when I started my job, I was in no way prepared.” When explicitly asked if she felt that her undergraduate program prepared her to teach writing, Ms. Branch answered, “to teach writing specifically, I don’t.” Ms. Creek affirmed Ms. Branch and Ms. Poppy’s observations as she noted that she too did not feel that her degree program prepared her “to teach writing per se.”

As she delved into the outcomes she received from her educational training, Ms. Creek discussed how the goals of the instruction did not seem to transfer well to the student population that she currently teaches: “being inside of English classes was interesting in that I learned more about English [the language] and I kind of learned how to mimic the way that professors taught English. But it doesn’t really prepare you to teach adolescents.” Guidance on how to translate

theory to praxis was a shortcoming of her education program for Ms. Poppy as well. She recounted how, “the way they teach you to teach will make you not passionate about it...this is not how kids learn...I just feel like there’s always miscommunication between the people that tell teachers what to do and like what teachers actually do.” Having majored in English Education at the undergraduate level, Ms. Creek, Ms. Branch, and Ms. Biggie all outlined the curricular structure of their program, which required them to take classes in the English department in addition to their College of Education coursework requirements. As they described the attention given to writing as a content area, the high school English teachers could only recall one course, titled Teaching Writing, that focalized writing. Ms. Branch recollected how excited she was to take the class because of a desire to be better equipped to teach writing:

I was interested in taking the Teaching Writing class because I didn’t feel like I had an adequate background in teaching writing. I knew how to write; I was always a good writer...but it’s difficult for most people to break down the thing that they love and very good at fairly naturally into something that other people can digest.

This course seemed to be an invaluable resource for not only Ms. Branch but also Ms. Biggie. As she provided recommendations for ways that their undergraduate experiences as English Education majors could have been improved, Ms. Biggie shared how, for her, a sequence of the Teaching Writing course that most of the teachers recalled – “like I wish that there had been a Teaching Writing 401 and 402 if that makes sense” – would have been advantageous to her and her peers. For Ms. Poppy, “what would have been more helpful, I think, is to kind of hear from people that were teaching then on how to teach,” because as she has realized through her career, “you learn by experience really with teaching.” This remark raises the question of the effectiveness of the ways that teacher education programs are structured and if more experiential

learning would be advantageous for pre-service candidates who will teach writing. As she further pondered the issue, Ms. Poppy subsequently drew a connection between one's educational preparation and training and their classroom practices:

The reason why some English teachers fail so bad at this is that you only have to have three of your discipline courses to be a teacher. So like if you want to teach English, you only have to take like 3 specialized courses. So some people are going into this and they really don't understand the content they're teaching. Like I had coworkers that would teach things and like they had no idea what they were teaching. And so I'm like, How can you do this?

Ms. Poppy's comment echoed many of the assertions made by the collective group of high school English teachers as they detailed the ways that they felt that their degree programs did not equip or prepare them to teach writing specifically as a content area. It is interesting that all the teachers felt that they were unprepared to teach writing given the solid understanding of academic writing that they all possessed and the effective writing instructional practices that they proclaim to use in their classrooms.

Access Issues

Another barrier that the high school English teachers brought up during their interviews which influences their writing instruction is access. They discussed this complication at both the student and educator level. A prevalent student access issue identified among the participants was the lack of home access to technology. Ms. Branch described how she "operate[s] on the assumption that nobody has access to it" She spoke of how many of her students live in rural areas that do not allow for the existence of Wi-Fi access so for them, it's not so much of "a financial issue, but more of a location issue" Even some of her colleagues, other teachers in her school, face the same problem as they also reside in similar locales where they do

not have Internet service in their homes. Ms. Branch's school does have a computer lab and laptop carts available to teachers, but these resources are limited and must be reserved since they are shared among all faculty. She noted that many of her students have smartphones; however, in Tribe district where she teaches, Ms. Branch revealed that Wi-Fi is not available for personal devices to be used. Therefore, as she articulated, "you can have all the fancy laptops in the world, but if you can't access the Internet, it's not gonna do you a whole lot of good"

Ms. Creek, who teaches in Village District, faces the same issue of student access. However, among her students, differently from Ms. Branch's, race and socioeconomic status are determining factors. To her, Internet access is a necessity: "It's a basic utility. It's power, it's water, it's Wi-Fi you like, you need them all." Yet, like Ms. Branch's students, many of hers do not have this basic need. In developing her lesson plans, she stated, "I have to understand that not all of them have access to technology or Wi-Fi at their house." She explained that the COVID-19 pandemic allowed her to be more creative and innovative with her writing assignments since some of the Internet service providers offered free Wi-Fi for a few months due to the widespread shift to online learning. However, before this time, she mentioned how many of her students, particularly her seniors, did not have Wi-Fi, laptops, or computers in their homes which required her to "vary the way [she was] assigning work." Although it was a pedagogical blessing for her, Ms. Creek questioned why it took a global crisis for this type of access to be acknowledged as a necessity as she inquired, "if we can provide free Wi-Fi for three months, and we recognize now that it's a basic utility, why has it not been a utility all along?"

Ms. Biggie agreed with Ms. Creek's categorization of Internet access as an essential component of students' lives. She shared, "I feel like with the way society is moving like it's eventually going to become a necessity for there to be computers in every class, especially with

English classes.” Like the other participants, she has also had to accommodate for this absence in her classroom. The lack of access among her students to reliable Internet has greatly affected how Ms. Biggie assigns homework in her classes:

So my first year I was sending home constant assignments that required computer access...this was a flaw on me, but when I was not having the percentage of students turning in assignments that I thought I would get back, I was getting upset. I was like, ‘Why are you not doing this homework?’ and they kept saying, ‘Well I don’t have a computer.’ Well I heard that as, ‘Well, they just don’t wanna do it.’ Finally when I sat down and took time to really understand what was happening, I realized OK, they’re not just saying that. They truly do not have access to the Internet, or they don’t have, you know the phone service because this is a rural school, and so even if they have a phone, half the time, you can’t get service and so upon hearing that, I realized the next year, like I can’t, I can’t keep assigning things outside of the classroom that requires technology because it’s not fair to my kids who can’t do it.

For Ms. Biggie, as well as the other high school English teachers, student access to adequate Internet service affects, and sometimes constrains, the way and extent to which they can integrate writing into their ELA curriculum. The Digital Divide is still very much present in many of their learning spaces. This revelation was not entirely unexpected but was nevertheless still shocking in the 21st century.

Regarding their own access barriers, most of the participants claimed to have adequate access to materials and resources that they needed to effectively teach writing. However, a split manifested between this access being attributed to administrators’ and institutional support and the teachers’ innovative and resourceful personal tendencies and actions. Although she feels that

“you don’t always have to have material resources to teach,” Ms. Poppy maintained that her school and administrators gave her anything she asked for because “they had the money for it.” She recalled an instance where there was an older, low-quality movie that she wanted her students to watch, and she was able to secure funds to add subtitles to the film for her students who had trouble during the viewing. Unlike Ms. Creek’s students, her students have take-home electronic devices given to them by their institution. As a result of these occurrences, Ms. Poppy expressed how fortunate she was that her school receives “an abundance of donations coming in constantly” which provided her, as well as her students of need, with endless access to material resources.

When teaching, Ms. Biggie mentioned how she oftentimes contemplates whether a tool is a need or a “personal instructional desire,” as she would “love to have a smartboard” because “every English teacher should have a smartboard.” Yet, for her, even though she does not have this tool, she affirmed that her school does provide her with the necessary materials when she asks, and her students’ parents also contribute by sending “more than just what their individual student needs.” Even though she has this institutional support, she evinced some of the resourcefulness that was observed in several of the other participants as she “always give[s] the disclaimer of if money is an issue, I will buy it myself.” Like Ms. Poppy, Ms. Biggie has access to the resources that she needs to teach because of her school’s allocation. In those few instances where her students experience access issues, she goes above and beyond to eradicate such need, including using her own personal money. Ms. Branch embodies a similar experience as she shared that she has “administrators and tech people who take good care of” her. However, she subsequently revealed that she attributes some of her access to her own savviness as she denoted,

“I think I do [have access to materials]. Sometimes that’s because I’m creative and you know like I’ll figure something out.”

Just like Ms. Biggie, Ms. Branch also stated that she sometimes spends her own money on materials that she feels that she needs, not necessarily because her school will not provide it for her but the process to secure institutional funds for resources is time-consuming and oftentimes does not accommodate immediate need. In terms of teaching resources, such as exemplars of writing or lesson plans, she credits an AP Language Teachers Facebook group as a key source that she relies on for shared curricula items: “even if I don’t have models, they do.” Although a veteran educator, as a new AP teacher, Ms. Branch appreciates the graciousness of her distant colleagues in helping her acclimate to the new course that she is teaching and providing resources that may not be readily available to her. Ms. Creek further highlights the benefits of digital networks and technology for access as she describes her own experience with acquiring materials: “there are avenues, but I have to work extra hard for those avenues. I don’t think that I’m always provided with the tools, but I have access to the tools.” The Internet allows her to “make it work”; for example, she “might not always have a class set of a text, but [she] can access that text through purchasing the copyright for educational purposes, providing students with PDFs.” Again, this option may require her to sacrifice some of her own personal funds, but she, just as many of the other high school English teachers interviewed, are willing to do so for the benefit of their students.

Another area of access that many of the participants described as lackluster was that of professional development on secondary writing instruction. Most of the teachers stated that there were few, if any, trainings or workshops offered at the district level that focalize writing pedagogy. Other than the adoption of the Literacy for All initiative, Ms. Branch relayed that

writing is valued and at her institution, yet the same priority did not seem to be extended across the district in which she teaches:

Districtwide it's a little harder to say that writing is important across the board. Our school has just made it important to us, so it feels important in the culture of my school. But I don't know that that carries over to the district level. Yeah, especially in terms of like tracking or anything like that, like the writing instruction training that's been done at the district level has come from people in my school doing it because we've led the program but a lot of other schools have given up on that program since then.

Although Ms. Branch's colleagues at her school are constantly seeking ways to improve their writing instruction, oftentimes, they are responsible for initiating and facilitating the opportunities to do so. Although she reiterated the lack of districtwide instructional support, Ms. Creek did mention she and her colleagues have a literacy coach who directly works with the English faculty at her school since the institution was recently removed from the state's failing schools list. However, she explained that her coach's primary focus was not writing, but more so the entire gamut of the ELA curriculum. The participants' overwhelming desire for more writing-related in-service professional development is an emergence that warrants further exploration and attention.

Overwhelming Expectations and Pressures

Collectively, the teachers voiced that they must negotiate various unrealistic expectations, imposed on them most often by the state and their institutions, as they contemplate their writing instruction. In her first couple of years as a high school educator, Ms. Poppy recalled how she "did not realize like how many guidelines teachers have for like what they can teach and have to grade." The participants spoke of how they are "bound by a lot of standards" which exert great influence on the ways that they can, and must, structure their curriculum. Ms. Branch vividly

detailed the abundance of standards that are imposed on secondary English teachers and how it impacts the quality of secondary writing instruction that students receive:

I think something that's important for them to know is that sometimes we feel pigeonholed by the state standards. There's so much we have to do in any given year of English in high school in the state of [state name redacted]. There's more than 40 required standards that we're supposed to meet and we break them down and we have our primary standards, and where each grade level should spend more focus but ultimately we're responsible for all of them every year and so they probably don't get as authentic of an experience in writing.

She subsequently elucidated how the quantity of standards set for English teachers greatly outnumbered those of their colleagues in other disciplinary departments as she revealed, “our standards for 11th and 12th grade English include 42 standards...that’s a lot just for baseline requirements...in Math and History, they have 15.” This almost threefold increase for Ms. Branch and her fellow teachers in her department does not seem to garner much sympathy from their administrators at the institutional or state level as the teachers are expected to meet all the standards over the course of the school year. Additionally, there seems to be a lack of awareness about how these standards can be effectively and holistically implemented among upper administrators. Ms. Branch described how one of her school’s leaders characterized the task of meeting multiple standards in one class period as “impossible” to which she responded, “I do it every day.” Finding ways to concurrently accommodate the expectations placed on her by the system and the learning needs of her students is a staple of Ms. Branch’s pedagogy. However, that does not negate the fact that she does not feel the weight of this act of pedagogical juggling as she expressed, “we’re the only department that is that way and so sometimes it’s tough for us

and it's like we teach three subjects...it's sometimes tough to remember, 'Ok, I must hit these standards. Ok, I have to do these things that are required of me but also I have to keep the human factor in mind.'" Negotiating these two requirements that are expected of her as an educator is a constant occurrence for Ms. Branch. Ms. Poppy also shared how standards shaped the culture at her school and explained how administrators would regularly become pre-occupied with a particular standard:

It seems like every semester they would just get like really fixated on some weird like strategy or component that wasn't that valuable, and like would make our lives a living hell with it. They got really into like learning targets for some reason and like your classroom could be on fire, but you better have the learning target on the board.

She affirmed Ms. Branch's sentiments of feeling overwhelmed at times attempting to meet the pedagogical requirements set forth by the standards as well as the explicit, and differing, learning needs of all her students as she expressed, "it was really hard for me to try to figure out like how to help when you have like over 34 kids in a classroom." Yet again, striking a balance between the two, arguably counterproductive, expectations is a daily practice for a high school English teacher.

Assessment was also a pressure point for some of the participants as Ms. Poppy asserted, "There is a lot of pressure on how fairly we can assess and grade kids." She discussed how the pressure is "not from just like higher ups...even like above administration because it hurts the state report card and if it hurts the state report card, it hurts funding," thus insinuating that school funding is contingent upon not only course grades, but also testing scores. This directly affected writing instruction for her and her colleagues as they were to follow a particular instructional style that she did not feel was conducive to producing effective student writers:

We had like no wiggle room in what assignments we gave like I could never choose what paper topics we did. I couldn't even make up my own rubric. Like everything was assigned to us from the LTF, the, I forgot what it, it's like Learning Foundational Skills or something, LTF assigned everything and like the AP Society gave us stuff, and then we had to teach it based on that. Everything was very structured, um, which as you could imagine, it made all the kids write alike. So, there wasn't a lot of room for individuality because they all had to meet these marks, so we were expected to teach that way.

At her school, Ms. Poppy and her fellow English teachers sacrificed their power and autonomy over not only the ways they assessed good writing, but also the means they employed to teach it. High school curriculum is oft perceived to have two overarching purposes: college and career readiness. Having to negotiate these general expectations projected on them in addition to all of the other insurances they face as educators, the teachers shared how “it doesn't feel like we have adequate time to prepare them for what most of us probably know is going to be expected of them in college. But it's just tough cause we have so many demands as educators.” Ms. Branch further extended these sentiments to the second widely perceived goal of secondary education, career preparation, in the following comment: “And even with the workforce, we don't have a ton of time to focus on industrial writing or technical writing, I guess would be the better term for that, because we don't have that many opportunities because they have to read and write and speak and listen all in the same 50 minutes in one year.” As she denoted earlier in the interview when speaking about the overwhelming number of standards that she and other statewide high school English teachers are responsible for meeting, the fact that these educators are usually expected to teach three subjects – reading, writing, and speech – sometimes compromises the overall quality of instruction that they can offer their students. Between the dozens of curricular

standards and regulations from administrators, legislators, and policymakers, high school ELA teachers must walk a tight rope in terms of how they teach writing.

Lastly, for some of the teachers, parents also added another layer of expectations and pressures. When discussing parental involvement, on average, the participants purported to have moderate levels regarding academics. Across the gamut, the high school English educators expressed a desire for more interaction and engagement with the parents of their students who exhibit the most academic need. As Ms. Biggie so eloquently surmised in the following quote that encapsulates an observation shared by many of the other teachers, “the students who seem to require less attention in terms of instruction and getting them on the right track are usually the parents that are most involved.” Although some of the communication was comical and seemingly irrelevant to student learning – Ms. Poppy described how “there was this one mom that emailed every day just to tell what her kid had for breakfast” – most of the pressure that the high school English teachers felt from parents concerned grades which magnified the already existing assessment regulations imposed by the “higher ups” She vented that, “it’s just so many parent emails because like you know, you’re not allowed to make a B. And so, the pressure like changed. But it was always like the same level of pressure, just in different ways” Ms. Branch verbally illustrated a similar experience as she revealed, “I get emails from the same five parents every week. Like Johnny still has an A, leave me alone” For Ms. Poppy, these emails were excessive to the point that she had to constantly devote out-of-school time to meet the demands. She stated, “I have to answer like at least an hour and a half of emails every day from parents. And normally they were just like the same email every freaking day like so I don’t even look at it as like involvement. They were just like helicopters.” Represented by this experience, pressure is sometimes masked as involvement.

However, parental pressure was not just confined in email form or concerned solely about grades in her case. Ms. Poppy described a recent instance where the parents “pretty much rioted at Central Office” in response to the department’s decision to assign what they deemed to be a controversial summer reading text⁴. The school board appeased the parents by offering alternative reading options with no notice of such action given to the teachers. Once the academic year began and Ms. Poppy began to discuss the book with her students, she shared how “parents came to [her] classroom...the Open House night got really tense about it...and one mom actually tried to get another English teacher fired because she mentioned the book.” She attributed this “parent privilege and entitlement” to the high socioeconomic status that many of her students’ families hold as “wealthier parents think they can tell you what to do.” Ms. Poppy candidly shared how this excessive parental oversight caused her to question her role as an educator on various occasions. For many of the high school English teachers, overwhelming pressures and expectations subjected on them by not only state educational policymakers, upper administrators, and parents exert great influence on their pedagogical choices.

Standardized Testing

In addition to the preceding constraints, all the participants discussed the influence of some form of standardized testing on their writing instruction. Balancing the skills needed for student success on national assessments, including the ACT, AP, and IB exam, in conjunction with the learning standards imposed by state curriculum requirements and their own personal pedagogical priorities and values, propelled the high school teachers to be intentional and strategic in the ways that focused on writing in their classrooms.

⁴ To protect the identity of the teachers and school involved, I refrain from elaborating on this situation.

Both Ms. Poppy and Ms. Biggie talked about the emphasis that their schools placed on preparing students for the ACT, which their students take toward the end of the academic school year. Most often administered to 10th and 11th grade students, and widely used as a determining tool, among others, for admission into higher education institutions, the two educators extensively spoke of the large portion of class time that ACT prep necessitated in their schools' culture. Ms. Biggie shared that her school had recently integrated a course into their general curriculum that focused on ACT prep. Called the REACH class, this course is analogous to a homeroom session, but the course content is centered primarily around test-taking strategies. Since "the focus right now is more so on how we can get all of the kids ready for ACT," Ms. Biggie explained that her school invested in an online program that allows students, during the allotted class time, to complete ACT-style questions and watch answer explanation videos. The teachers of these classes then lead discussion with the students based on the practice lessons, which may or may not be of the same subject area in which they primarily teach and are certified.

Ms. Poppy also revealed that "the focus is mainly on standardized testing" at her school as well, specifically the ACT. Unlike Ms. Biggie, she explicitly delineated the connections between standardized testing and writing as she revealed, "all the writing was very rigorous, very structured and there was an order that we had to teach it in." She shared how, during the summer, she and her colleagues were required to attend ACT training, there was a course like the one described by Ms. Biggie, and there was also a club that was only accessible to students who received a certain score or above on the test. For Ms. Poppy, it all seemed to overshadow all other, more valuable, learning goals and outcomes and was in direct contrast to what she considered to be "quality teaching":

One of the most stressful things about working at [School X] that I will not miss is the pressure for the ACT...they actually have a club at [School X] so that when you make like a certain score, you get to join that club. We have like an ACT club. We have a class for it. We have after school programs for it. It was told to me at almost every curriculum meeting that everything I plan should have the ACT in mind. I hate the impact of standardized testing because, like you know, the most brilliant people I know can't put like a piece of furniture from IKEA together so how good is like standardized testing? Kids know how to answer questions, but they don't know how to think.

The ACT even amplified the pressures subjected onto Ms. Poppy by parents after they noticed that students in her classes were scoring higher on the exam:

One thing that started being noticed is that after I would teach kids, their ACT scores would go up in that area. Like it got to a point where parents were requesting me to work with their kids because like they wanted their scores to go up and I, honest to God, I don't know how it happened. I think it might have been, I don't think that it was causation. It might have been correlation of like... or maybe it's just that like I would make them read for quality like we would spend so much time on stuff like I kind of taught them how to reread, I don't know. I don't think it was me, but it made my life more stressful because while all schools have like an ACT Prep Class, I came in one day and my roster was completely changed. And like all of a sudden, I had like just these kids that were on the verge of getting like that score they needed to join the club or get a free ride [scholarship to college], but they weren't there yet. And so, there's all this pressure on me to make that happen.

Ms. Poppy asserted that for these students and even their parents, “standardized testing is like the big thing...more so than like their literacy or writing [skills].” Ensuring that students perform well on national assessments was equally as important to her school’s culture since even though Ms. Poppy was fired prior to the ACT on-site testing this past academic year, one of her administrators still called her to come in and help on testing day. This seemingly widespread obsession with high test scores was in direct opposition of her teaching philosophy as she sternly articulated that she was “never going to look at a kid and think let’s make a test taker.” As she shared some of the criteria she was looking for as she searched for a new teaching position, she was extremely optimistic about the possibility of finding a school that was not so focused on standardized testing and the ACT because, for her, “those three letters will give me post-traumatic stress.”

Although to a lesser extent, Ms. Branch also mentioned the relevance of the ACT to her curriculum design as she relayed, “It’s a push districtwide, but we as a school have really kind of embraced that in terms of like posters and flyers and talking about it and practice ACTs and that kind of stuff.” However, as a new AP instructor, she attributes more focus to that exam as she states, “my whole 4th nine weeks was going to be focused on obviously practicing for the AP exam.” Also connected to college admission and credit accumulation, Ms. Branch affirmed that this standardized test did move to the top of the list of pedagogical priorities as the academic year progressed, thus reducing the amount of time that she devoted to writing. Due to school closures because of COVID-19, Ms. Branch outlined some of the changes that the AP exam underwent as it was going to be administered virtually instead of in-person. These changes were causing her angst as she described how she “was freaking out” because her students would have much less time to complete the writing portion of the exam, yet she simultaneously expressed the

confidence that she had in her students who she felt would “do just fine” despite the unfamiliar format and tighter time constraints.

Ms. Creek introduced another form of standardized testing that accompanies the curriculum program that she teaches, the IB exam. One of the differences between the other tests is that students who complete the IB diploma must take an exam for each one of their core content areas and pass them all to receive the credentials. Ms. Creek described how this sometimes complicates a proper or holistic assessment of students’ writing capability, which is heavily engrained in the IB curriculum: “It’s kind of hard to judge students’ ability to write, for example, if they didn’t pass their biology exam.” On a broader level, Ms. Creek also interrogated how much testing seems to be an integral and staple component of not only the culture of secondary education, but just education period. When asked what she would want colleges and employers to know about her students as writers, she answered:

What would I want them to know about my student writers...that it’s not always a test. So I recently got into this idea that I don’t think that tests work very well. Mainly because no employer in their right mind would want to not give every resource that they had to their advantage, right? So if we are testing our students, we’re saying we’re gonna take all of the resources that you have away from you, and you’re going to do this on your own ability, right? And ability is a major part of writing, right? But we’re better when we have all of the resources that we need to do that writing. Same with tests. I’m not going to give you a test on Quantum Physics and then not give you all of the handbooks that you need. Her critique of the ways that assessment does not usually align with deep learning echoed the sentiments alluded to in Ms. Poppy’s evaluation. Nevertheless, standardized testing does affect the ways that many of the high school English educators organize and structure their curriculum

and lessons and it is a constraint whose grip seems to extend far beyond their classrooms. It is also worth noting that, despite the overwhelming pressures surrounding standardized testing, none of the participants mentioned ‘teaching to the test’ which seems to suggest that they are finding ways to balance these pressures with effective academic writing instruction.

Student-Based Needs

Lastly, one of the most impactful factors on their writing instruction that the high school English teachers denoted were those that centered on student attributes and behaviors. As Ms. Branch eloquently articulated, “there’s so many more aspects to a kid than just what they produce in school that we have to deal with.” According to the participants, negotiating students’ disdain for writing, varying writing proficiencies, and personal life circumstances is a staple component of their teaching lives.

When asked to describe their students’ sentiments toward and about the writing process, several of the secondary English teachers expressed an overwhelming dislike among their students. Several of them detailed it as a strong hatred that appeared to be fostered long before the students entered their classrooms. Ms. Poppy connected these adverse feelings with the content of the required curriculum which does not seem to consider students’ interests:

Oh my God, they hated it. Like it was, you know, it wasn’t, the topics were not that fun, it was so structured and like I tried to make it fun but like you know things like one 10th grade Literature is not fun. There’s very little diversity in it, it’s just mainly about people fighting for court and like witch trials, and it’s not fun for them. But I think with it being so structured, it wasn’t personally rewarding to them because it wasn’t relatable.

Some of the high school English teachers categorized their students’ sentiments as a diverse variance, yet widespread disdain was still present. Ms. Biggie relayed that her students’ feelings about writing spans a wide range, depending on the type of class she is teaching:

So I would start with there is always a very broad spectrum of responses. There are...every single year, there are kids, they're just super motivated and have a genuine love for writing whether that's poetry, songwriting, even essays. And then you also have students that just abort and they, a lot of times, I find with those students, they can't even articulate necessarily why they dislike it, they just [do]...that's like their catch phrase. They just they say they hate writing.

Ms. Branch also encounters a similar continuum of emotions, some of which she feels are shaped by peer pressure to save face:

In my advanced 11th grade class, their general consensus is that they hate it. But my AP kids, for the most part, enjoy the writing process. They groan and they act like they don't like it because I think that's what teenagers expect each other to do and they don't want to look lame in front of their friends if they think writing is cool.

The overwhelming hatred for writing that the participants observe among their students complicates the ways that they introduce and facilitate writing lessons in their classes for many of them. Ms. Creek amplified the difficulty in negotiating students' overwhelming disdain for the writing process as she explained, "by the time my students get to me, they have already made a decision about reading and writing...getting student buy-in after they've made a decision to not want to write or read is a barrier at the 11th and 12th grade level." Attempting to get students to complete a task that many of them do not enjoy is a recurring battle fought by many of the high school English teachers.

In addition to attending to a widespread dislike for writing, many of the participants shared stories about traversing a wide range of student literacy proficiencies. Ms. Poppy recalled that she once "had a senior that could not read." As she recalled the contextual circumstances,

she highlighted the mutually reciprocal relationship between reading and writing as she recounted,

He was trying to join the army and like he could not write his own address. He couldn't even read on like a first-grade level. But this child had been passed every year because, like you're not allowed to fail, and so because of that, like how can you assess someone that can't read because if you can't read, you can't write.

This student encounter illustrates just one of many diverse student profiles that the secondary educators encounter on a consistent basis, most often simultaneously. As Ms. Branch articulated, “We have such a diverse group of kids who need so many different things that we have to accommodate as well. And so, you know we have students with IEPs and 504 plans and that brings a whole different dynamic to a classroom in terms of differentiating instruction for those kids.” Balancing the attention given to their students as individual learners and writers with that devoted to fostering a wholesome, integrated learning community is a constant battle for some of the participants.

The relevance of previous educational experiences, both positive and negative, that Ms. Poppy alluded to above crept up in the discussions among some of the high school English teachers as well. The influence of prior writing instruction was also mentioned by Ms. Branch as she denoted, “a lot of our kids have, I would say, very little to no writing experience before they get here or no experience with what we're expecting of them...so then we spend a lot of time, I guess we would call it backtracking.” She described how, no matter how much she revamps her curricula design, “there are a lot of kids who just struggle.” Ms. Poppy echoed that evaluation as she observed, “with high school kids...just a general structure of writing is so hard for them.” She again referenced their previous classroom experiences as she hypothesized that, “They

weren't ignorant, they had just...they had never been taught, and they had no idea what to do," which, for her, made writing one of the hardest subjects that she teaches because "they're not in the practice of it." The broad-spectrum of writing proficiencies and abilities that the high school English teachers illustrated as being the norm in their classrooms also constitutes another student-based barrier over which they must hurdle in their efforts to integrate writing into their ELA curriculum.

Lastly, some of the participants spoke of the ways that their students' personal life circumstances affect the ways that they structure writing assignments, particularly those that require attention, labor, and effort outside of the classroom space. Both Ms. Poppy and Ms. Creek addressed the role as financial provider that some of their students serve for their families which sometimes limits the amount of time that they can devote to their schoolwork. According to Ms. Creek, this necessitates a sense of empathy during lesson planning:

I have to keep in mind that a good number of my students are working to provide for their family and so a lot of times, that means that they leave school, go to work, don't get home from work until 9-10pm so I have to understand that I cannot assign hours of homework, for one, because it's not going to get done but two, I have to realize that when I'm assigning work outside of class, then it might take days to get done. I have to understand the amount of time that they have available to provide to my classroom because it's definitely secondary when you're working to provide for your family to provide lights and power and food.

Ms. Poppy elaborated on this concept in her first interview as she described how these responsibilities colored the way that she perceives her students: "they pretty much weren't kids anymore. If you have to work and pay bills and you're working at McDonald's till like one in the

morning, you're not a kid." Some of the students that the participants teach come from working class families. Some of them are employed to contribute to and sustain their families' livelihoods. As Ms. Poppy revealed, this greatly impacts their structuring of class time, particularly those units, such as the one devoted to research writing, which require more scaffolding. As she rationalized her decision to devote two weeks of class time to composing a research paper, she justified it as "if you're not doing it with them in class, they're not gonna go home and research" which she did not attribute entirely to voluntary unwillingness or disregard, but more so competing personal and survival priorities. Coupled with the previously mentioned student access issues, their students' out-of-school demands also require the high school English teachers to be mindful as they consider the extent to which they assign homework and other outside writing assignments.

Summary

This chapter revealed several discoveries that emerged during two phases of interviews with four high school English teachers as they talked about the ways they teach writing. The participants were asked to discuss their definitions and perceptions of academic writing, describe some of the instructional practices and strategies they use when teaching the subject, and share real-life barriers and constraints they negotiate in their pedagogical pursuits. Overall, the participants defined academic writing in multiple ways as they highlighted the importance of audience, formality, and genre. They contextualized their definitions by outlining nine different skills and concepts that they aim to address to provide a comprehensive representation of academic writing to their students. They also listed three of the most effective instructional practices they utilize in their writing instruction: modeling, conferencing/writing workshops, and direct explicit instruction. The teachers perceived academic writing to be a difficult task with

which many of their students struggle, yet there was a widespread consensus that it is necessary for their future success in college, employment spaces, and life in general.

Additionally, they displayed candid transparency as they outlined a multitude of unrealistic pressures and expectations they are faced with daily because of an overwhelming systemic emphasis and prioritization of standardized testing success, overbearing parental involvement, and a litany of curricular standards and regulations. As a result, the high school English teachers provided a vivid illustration of what it means to teach writing in a high school setting. The next chapter contains a synthesis of the revelations into seven overarching themes, an extensive discussion and analysis of the findings, as well as a conclusion that includes implications of this research and recommendations for further study and ways that we can improve the educators' experiences as writing instructors.

Chapter 5: Discussion and Analysis of Responses, Implications and Conclusion

“I feel like we do the best we can...” – Ms. Poppy

“I’m teaching to the person...my students are people first always.” – Ms. Creek

“I think my attitude has just evolved from the joy of being a writer myself into the joy of like helping other people enjoy writing or at least not hate it as much as they think they do.” – Ms. Branch

This study was designed to generate an understanding of perceptions that secondary educators have of academic writing as well as factors that impact their writing instruction. Chapter Four summarized the responses from two phases of participant interviews. From the conversations with the four high school teachers, several themes emerged that comprise diverse, vivid portraits of what it means to teach writing as a high school English teacher. These patterns were couched in responses that addressed the three following research questions:

- 1) How do high school English teachers define academic writing?
 - a. What skills and conceptual mastery is associated with good academic writing?
- 2) What pedagogical techniques, methods, and/or best practices do high school English teachers utilize when teaching writing?
- 3) What real-world constraints do high school English teachers encounter when integrating writing instruction into ELA curriculum?

As can be observed in Chapter Two’s literature review, much of the extant scholarship shows that the discourse concerning secondary writing instruction, in both public and professional spheres, often fails to acknowledge the pedagogical expertise and writing-related subject area knowledge of high school English teachers, in addition to the factors and constraints

that could complicate and prevent them from integrating effective composition best practices into their existing ELA curriculum. Thus, as elucidated in Chapter Three, I adopted grounded theory as a methodology to formulate a comprehensive portrayal of what it means to teach writing in a secondary school setting, heavily led by and rooted in the voices of the teachers themselves. It was unfortunate and disheartening to hear the educators converse about the variety of pressures and constraints they negotiate in their everyday teaching lives, yet it was simultaneously refreshing and necessary to listen as they exhibited transparency when discussing how they persevere despite these barriers to provide effective writing instruction to their students. My analysis reveals that these educators are fully committed to the success of their student writers, even in times of tension, pushback, and exhaustion. In this study, the teachers were candid about not only their shortcomings and areas for improvement related to their writing instruction, but also their persistent will and acumen to do the best they can in the different contexts and spaces in which they teach. Evident by the themes generated from the study, the high school English teachers displayed commonalities in relation to their responses concerning all the areas of inquiry. Yet, each one of them described their own unique teaching life and experiences as they live it. This chapter provides a discussion, analysis, and interpretation of the key themes that emerged from the secondary teachers' responses. As they provided firsthand accounts of what it means and looks like to teach writing in high school, the high school English teachers embodied a level of vulnerability that amplifies the necessity of engaging these educators in dialogue about their experiences rather than making presumptive and uninformed assumptions.

Overall, the stories shared by the participants show that high school English teachers possess a solid and robust definition of academic writing and the conceptual masteries and skills that the genre requires of students. Furthermore, the data indicate that there are multiple real-life

barriers and constraints, including both internal and external pressures, lack of writing-related educational preparation and professional development, and a multitude of diverse student-based complications that greatly impact the ways they can integrate and prioritize writing in their ELA classrooms. The following seven themes, which are further explicated below and represented in Table 2, expand on the summary provided in Chapter Three. In the following section of this chapter, I bring the participants' responses in conversation with each other to characterize and illustrate their collective experiences of teaching high school writing based on the descriptions straight from the ELA educators on the frontline.

Emergent Theory

Table 2

Emergent Themes Among Participants' Responses

High School English Teachers Utilize Multiple Frameworks to Define Academic Writing
High School English Teachers Are Aware of the Demands of Academic Writing
High School English Teachers Consider Academic Writing to Be a Necessary Skill
High School English Teachers Utilize Effective Writing Instructional Practices
Academic Writing is a Difficult Genre for High School Students
High School English Teachers Negotiate Various Internal and External Pressures
High School English Teachers Have to Consider a Multitude of Student Needs

High School English Teachers Utilize Multiple Frameworks to Define Academic Writing

The ambiguity of academic writing, described in Chapter One, was illustrated and affirmed by the high school English teachers' responses when asked to define the genre. This emergence prompted a plethora of lines of further inquiry about the ways that we, as a profession and discipline, define academic writing which are way beyond the scope of this study. Academic writing is a broad concept that, evident in the diversity of the respondents' definitions, seems to be subjective and dependent upon one's personal writing philosophy, writerly identity, writing-related experiences. Each one of the teachers used a different framework to ground their definition. Ms. Poppy defined it in terms of audience, context, and assessment. Ms. Biggie

described it as a specialized and formal process that provides writers with choice and autonomy. Ms. Creek also discussed the influence of audience, but further complicated her definition by adding the relevance of the nature of the content being written about. Ms. Branch utilized a whole-parts descriptive approach to characterize academic writing by the types of writing that it includes as she named various sub-genres such as literary analysis, rhetorical analysis, and technical writing. Even though their denotations were in line with those offered by scholars and practitioners who have attempted to define academic writing, it is best to view them in tandem rather than in isolation. There is no one universal definition of academic writing that would flag one of the respondents' definitions as the most accurate or representative of the genre. Even in reviewing the abundance of scholarship that describes academic writing, very few texts provide an explicitly comprehensive definition that includes all the genre's requirements, affordances, and limitations. Most seem to assume that readers are aware of or will be able to infer its denotation based on the context in which the author is writing. For those that do, the characterizations seem to differ widely. Elander et al. (2006) denotes how the criteria of what academic writing necessitates consistently changes. They compare the requirements outlined in four different scholarly publications and they range from as low as 10 to as many as 50! This wide range could not only be confusing for teachers of academic writing, but also students. In his 2016 text, *Academic Writing: Process and Product*, Andrew P. Johnson characterizes the genre as "the types of writing used in college-level writing courses at both the undergraduate and graduate levels" (p. 2). This definition, rooted in the space of academia, seems to perpetuate many of the other definitions (Bartholomae, 1985; Bizzell; 1992). In a more contemporary piece, Yung and Cai (2020) argue that it is important for students transitioning into postsecondary writing contexts learn "how the kind of English students generally use in secondary school is

similar to and different from that required in academic writing” (p. 639). Undergirding this assertion seems to be the premise, once again, that the writing done in high schools is not a proxy for academic writing. Two of the participants, Ms. Creek and Ms. Poppy, embodied this context-specific approach as they defined academic writing. But considering the other two participants’ responses to this question, it calls into question the limited connotation of “academic writing” that this space-specific denotation assumes. Is the writing done at the high-school level not considered ‘academic’? If academic writing is solely that which is done by college students or academic scholars, how can the teachers in this study motivate their students who do not plan to embody either of these identities, to engage in the practice?

In her definition of academic writing, Ms. Poppy claimed that academic writing sometimes requires a split between one’s personal and professional – or writerly in this case – identity is relevant here as it could offer a possible explanation for why some of Ms. Branch’s and Ms. Biggie’s students sometimes interpret constructive writing feedback as personal attacks. Remembering that African American students comprise most of both these teachers’ classes, the linguistic discrimination that undergirds the register of academic language could be at play here. Many students of color struggle with the reality that oftentimes, their home language is not that of what is considered the “standard” when writing or speaking in what is deemed to be a professional or academic manner (Alim & Smitherman, 2012; Baker-Bell, 2017; Baker-Bell, 2019). Helping students “to try on a variety of voices and interpretative schemes – to write” (Bartholomae, 1986) seems to be a difficult yet paramount initial step to effectively teaching academic writing. Yet, while showing students the differences between their native speech and that which is required for academic writing, writing teachers must be careful not to inadvertently, or intentionally, perpetuate these ideologies. Although we did not delve into Ms. Poppy’s

conceptualizations of personal and professional, this is an area where her pedagogical practices could have been doing more harming than helping when teaching writing to students of color.

Many of the participants encompass a combination of the definitions and/or characterizations of academic writing. Using Johnson's (2016) text as a comparison point, due to its robust and detailed description of academic writing, when examined collectively, the high school English teachers identify many of the main characteristics of academic writing. Johnson succinctly describes academic writing as "an art, a science, and a craft" (p. 2) When pieced together like a puzzle, the participants' definitions embody a similar characterization as they denoted how academic writing allows students to express themselves and their thoughts. It can be scientific-like in terms of the specific forms, rules, and requirements that accompany the practice. They also emphasized the long-term development that the craft necessitates for adequate mastery. Like Johnson, the teachers elevate the notion that academic writing is a process that can manifest in different modes for various audiences. Utilizing such an approach when teaching writing can have profound benefits for students such as reducing writing anxiety (Bayat, 2014) and increasing students' metacognitive awareness of their writing practices (Loretto et al., 2016; Midgette, 2008). Additionally, Giouroukakis and Connelly (2015) affirm the value of a process-based approach when teaching argumentative writing, which was one of the four characteristics of academic writing mentioned in Elander et al.'s (2006) definition. To deliver effective writing instruction, teachers should have a keen awareness of what academic writing is and its main focuses. If they do not have a strong framework for their pedagogical choices and priorities, it could jeopardize their success as writing instructors and subsequently, their students' success as writers. The content knowledge that the teachers displayed in their definitions of academic writing nullifies claims by scholars such as Applebee and Langer (2011)

who presuppose that high school English teachers are not cognizant of the demands of academic writing. Even though the teachers highlighted varying aspects of academic writing in their denotations, the clear and solid understanding exemplified among the participants will benefit all the educators as they design and implement writing curriculum that prioritizes these diverse elements.

High School English Teachers Are Aware of the Demands of Academic Writing

The interviews revealed the nine most prioritized writing-related concepts and skills and three of the most utilized instructional practices among the participants. The following list denotes the writing-related concepts and skills outlined that the teachers focus on in their writing instruction: 1) formulating a sound argument (i.e., thesis), 2) cohesion, 3) drafting, 4) revision/editing, 5) analysis, 6) proper citation practices, 7) concision, 8) inclusion of supporting details, and 9) reading comprehension (as shown in fig. 1 on pg. 66). Several of these concepts and skills are representative of a process-writing approach, which many of the teachers expressed as the framework for their writing instruction. Hillocks (1986) purports that the teacher's role when utilizing this instructional approach is to facilitate and guide writers through the various stages rather than to provide direct instruction. The educators in this study embody both roles; during their initial (re)introduction stages, they serve as a director providing more explicit directions and scaffolding for students. As they observe their students becoming more comfortable and confident with the concept, they become more of a guide. Ms. Creek's shift from teacher to tutor mid-year, as she describes it, exemplifies this transition in the role of the writing instructor. The process-based approach used by the participants could be connected to the overwhelming use of the Common Core State Standards (2010), which centers the writing process as an important component across K-12 curriculum. The process model's infrastructure allows it to be widely utilized in various contexts of writing instruction (Graham & Sandmel,

2011). Most of the participants spoke highly of the CCSS curriculum and its prioritization of writing. They described how process-oriented instruction humanizes writing and prepares students to meet writing requirements for any purposes they may encounter throughout their lives (Higgins, Miller, and Wegmann 2006). However, Graham and Perin (2011) found that when secondary teachers did not receive professional development on the process model, it became ineffective. Thus, it is imperative that teachers are provided with trainings, workshops, and material resources about the writing process to sustain and enhance their use of the approach.

The relationship between reading and writing skills (Shanahan, 2016) arose as several of the participants discussed how their weaker writers are usually equally weak in reading. This observation pushes many of the teachers to teach the two literacy acts in tandem. Secondary students' lack of reading skills is not a new phenomenon. The *NCTE Principles of Adolescent Literacy Reform* (2006) reported that 6-12th grade students were reading at significantly below average levels and that one in four could not read and comprehend class texts. This data only slightly softens the shock value of Ms. Poppy's story about the senior she taught who could not read but who had been promoted each year and was now preparing to enlist in the military. Although this student is an extreme example of the subpar reading skills that the participants encounter in their classrooms, Kelly Gallagher's term 'aliterates' seems to be more representative. In his 2009 *Readicide: How Schools Are Killing Reading and What You Can Do About It*, Gallagher introduces readers to the concept of aliterates, which he defines as people who can read but do not. The widespread disdain for reading among their student writers complicates the ways that the educators teach writing as it poses another student need that they must consider. Research has connected high school students' below-average reading skills in their secondary school years to the presence of literacy struggles in as early as kindergarten

(Mateos et al., 2008; Kershaw & Schatschneider, 2012; Sparks et al., 2014; Stanley et al., 2018). This suggests that poor reading ability and comprehension is a struggle that high school students enter the participants' classrooms with. As Ms. Creek noted, most secondary English classes, outside of AP Language and Composition, are literature-based. Thus, it is integral for students to be able to engage with text and develop a solid understanding of its content before they can produce a composition that expresses any opinions, feelings, and/or arguments about said text. For the teachers, this requisite adds another layer to their writing instruction.

Even though the components are essential to characterizing the teachers' writing instruction, it became evident that some of their students have more time to practice with the concepts and skills than others. When asked to quantify the amount of writing that students complete in their classes, the participants' responses varied. Articulated in percentage form, the high school English teachers estimated that writing constituted anywhere between 25-90% of their ELA curriculum. These approximations are all drastic increases compared to estimates articulated in previous studies (Applebee, 1981; Applebee and Langer, 2011; Hillocks, 2006). Thus, we can surmise that these educators are having their students write more than what has been reported by secondary educators in the past, despite the myriad issues they must hurdle in the process. However, those who taught more rigorous courses, such as AP and IB, provided the percentages on the higher end. Ms. Biggie and Ms. Branch, both who currently or have previously taught General sections of ELA, shared how some of their administrators explicitly stated that writing does not need to be prioritized in these specific courses. Research has shown that there is a discrepancy between the type of writing instruction delivered in higher and lower track classes (Watanabe, 2008; Wilcox, 2015). Among the classes, there is variance in terms of the nature of writing tasks and the composing skills asked of students to demonstrate proficiency.

In a study administered by NCTE, Knudson (1995) found that high school teachers were twice as likely than their K-8 counterparts to be in a homogenously grouped classroom. Student and parent choice in addition to recommendations provided by guidance counselors all contribute to student placement. Data shows that students who are tracked into the upper-level courses (Honors, AP, and IB) do have higher college admissions rates. However, writing should be a curricula priority for all students because even for those who will pursue vocational trades or enter directly into the workforce in some other capacity, writing is still a relevant skill to master.

Although college and career preparation were the two primary purposes that the participants attributed to their writing instruction, they also mentioned the pedagogical desire to show their students that writing could also help them develop as holistic individuals. These responses should cause us to complicate the purposes that high school writing should serve. These educators' success is frequently measured by their students' performance on standardized tests, in first-year college courses, and on employer aptitude tasks. However, helping their students to be competent civic participants, discover individual passions, and engage in self-reflection and expression were all equally important to the secondary writing instructors in this study. They all collectively felt that this was applicable to all their students, not just those taking more rigorous classes. The participants all subscribe to this philosophy and exemplify Cynthia's Coburn's (2004) concept of decoupling. In these moments, the high school teachers detach their pedagogical practices and priorities from those of their institution. These acts are not intended to be forms of rebellion, but simply instances in which they elevate the long-term needs of their students as writers over the seemingly archaic and unsubstantiated views of the necessity of writing held by their school administrators. In their responses, the teachers exhibited a solid

awareness of the conceptual and skill masteries required in academic writing contexts and work to prioritize these in all their ELA classrooms, no matter the population of student writers.

High School English Teachers Consider Academic Writing to be a Necessary Skill

The high school English teachers stressed the importance for their students to be proficient writers no matter their individual post-high school trajectory. This philosophy shaped many of their instructional practices for teaching writing. The collective response from the participants mirrors that reported by Addison and McGee (2010) as they shared the views of secondary faculty from various institutions that they gathered through a nationally disseminated survey. Of their surveyed participants, an overwhelming 96-100% expressed that they felt that writing is an important contributor to students' future success. Writing is not only one of the benchmarks for college admission by way of standardized test scores and personal statements but is also one of the primary means through which students demonstrate competency and learning in their college courses. Statistics from various educational organizations (e.g., College Board, Achieve, Inc., Alliance for Excellent Education) report that almost half of first-year college students are unable to meet the demands of college-level writing. Additionally, effective writing skills are becoming more necessary for gainful employment. As the National Commission on Writing (2003) reported, employers are becoming more attentive to the writing aptitudes of potential employees. In their publication *Writing: A Ticket to Work...or a Ticket Out* (2004), survey results showed that over two-thirds of salaried workers have some form of writing responsibilities as a part of their job description. Also, the study found that organizations and companies spend over \$3.1 billion annually on writing remediation for their employees. Thus, it is no surprise that all the high school English teachers continue to engage and motivate their students' constant participation in writing-related tasks because of the long-term implications that writing mastery can have on their career paths.

The teachers expressed how most of the thinking that writing will no longer be relevant after high school frequently comes from their students who are seeking vocational trades. The area where many of the participants teach is near several automotive facilities that provide employment for a large portion of the neighboring populations. Students who aspire to work in these industrial environments frequently say, 'I won't need writing at my job.' However, Ms. Branch, whose husband has an established career in this industry, emphasizes otherwise. She, and several of the other participants, reiterate that writing is a necessary skill no matter what career trajectory one may be on and consistently highlight the connection between effective writing skills, professionalization, and upward mobility. This rhetoric is supported by the National Commission on Writing data presented above. As the educators acknowledge and share with their students, writing is a determining factor in who inhabits managerial or leadership roles in workforce spaces.

Additionally, the fact that writing, particularly in public and digital spaces, is connected to one's identity and is sometimes used to measure or judge one's intelligence (Inoue, 2018; Rowan & Greenfield, 2011) also appears to undergird some of the participants' emphasis on the integrality of their students developing adequate writing skills. Many of the teachers in this study teach many students from ethnically marginalized communities. Several of them also work in schools where the median socioeconomic status is not much higher than the national poverty line. Therefore, many of their students are among those who are likely to be most critically judged based on the ways they write. Although none of the teachers explicitly mentioned these factors in their interviews, all of them seem to be aware of the greater stakes that not being able to effectively communicate through writing could have for these students, which may be another reason why they stress its importance to such an extent. Whether for college success, job security

or promotion, and the avoidance of inaccurate judgment from others, the participants all felt that writing was a necessary skill for their students to master and were vocal about these sentiments. Collectively, the teachers agreed that writing is an essential tool for their students to possess once they leave their classrooms.

High School English Teachers Utilize Effective Writing Instructional Methods

Another key theme that emerged from my conversations with the high school English teachers is that they are using instructional methods that have been empirically proven and supported as effective writing instruction practices. Modeling, conferencing, facilitating peer writing workshops, and providing direct explicit instruction were all mentioned extensively by the participants. To write effectively, according to Higgins, Miller, and Wegmann (2006), students need choice, time, and holistic feedback. Ms. Biggie demonstrating meta-talk while brainstorming on the board and Ms. Branch parallel composing a draft for an AP practice prompt with her students expose them to different ways of responding to a written task that may influence their subsequent composing choices. The teachers were equally committed to giving their student writers space and time to create community among their peers. Cooper and Kiger (2003) assert that a writing workshop is “a flexible plan that places students and teacher in a partnership for learning” (p. 442). The teachers stressed the value of peer feedback as for some of the students, it seemed to be less intimidating than receiving that from their teacher. Evidenced by the work of Flower and Hayes (1981), writing is a recursive process that is characterized by many stop-and-go moments. Thus, it is still important for writing teachers to be present along the way with their students to provide constructive criticism as they actively engage in the writing process.

Contrary to data yielded from Kihara et al.’s 2009 study that argued that high school English educators do not use evidence-based pedagogical methods, the practices of the educators

in this study aligned with best practices advocated for by leading authorities and writing educators in the field (Zumbrunn and Krause 2012). Utilizing writing strategies instruction is one of the teacher-based best practices that is conducive to effective teaching of writing. Direct explicit instruction is one of the purported components (Graham and Harris, 2019) in which teachers provided an explicit and elaborate explanation of the purpose and rationale of a writing strategy (i.e. revision, source integration). Modeling, an instance in which a teacher demonstrates the action of a particular strategy is also supported as a key part of effective writing strategies instruction. Although grammar did come up sparsely (only in two instances), none of the teachers identified it as a priority in their writing instruction.

The educators in this study also embodied several of the 11 empirically supported focus points recommended in Graham and Perin's 2007 *Writing Next* report, compiled under the funding and direction of the Carnegie Corporation and published by the Alliance for Excellent Education. As outlined in the seventy-seven-page document, providing students with models of good writing, teaching writing as a process, promoting collaborative writing, and integrating technology into students' composing practices, among others, were listed as elements of effective writing instruction. The participants extensively described how many of these were integral in shaping their writing pedagogy. Students should have a clear idea of what is expected of them, the rationale or purpose of the writing task, as well as the criteria for assessment. The participants, specifically Ms. Branch and Ms. Poppy, stressed the importance of providing students with this explicit instruction from the onset, whether it is communicated on the whiteboard alongside verbal instructions or in the form of a physical or digital copy of an assignment sheet and rubric. Doing this in tandem with the introduction of exemplars of both effective and ineffective interpretation of the task at hand through writing samples, either

composed by the teacher or other students, is crucial in helping the participants help their students navigate the writing process. Additionally, despite the numerous duties and responsibilities they have, several of the participants find time to discuss their students' writing with them on a one-on-one basis. This personal time allows them to address some of the individualized student needs and composing nuisances that cannot be addressed in a whole class setting given the varying learning proficiencies and needs among their students. When teachers give students feedback throughout the process, particularly of the formative nature, students are equipped to better monitor their own progress and make the necessary adjustments (Paas, Van Merriënboer, & Van Gog, 2012).

The teachers collectively admitted that they did not feel they were adequately prepared by their education programs to teach writing. Many ELA educators feel ill-equipped to teach writing because of the lack of educational training and preparation offered to them in during their undergraduate matriculation (National Commission on Writing, 2003; Troia, 2006). In affirming Troia's assertion, most of the participants could only recall one semester-long class that explicitly centered writing as the subject matter of instructional practice. This was alarming since the NCTE/NCATE Standards for Initial Preparation of Teachers of Secondary English Language Arts (2011) predicates that, upon graduation, pre-service candidates should possess a comprehensive knowledge of writing that will situate them to teach adequately and effectively. The participants expressed a deer-in-the-headlights mentality in their first years of attempting to integrate writing in their English curriculum. As one of Pasternak et al.'s (2017) focus group participants articulated, "teaching writing is the most difficult challenge for teacher candidates" (p. 104). Diverse writing ability levels, varying student home life circumstances, and restrictive instructional constraints can compound to pose serious complications for teachers who may not

feel confident in their ability to teach writing. Even though they felt unprepared as they transitioned into their teaching careers, the teachers' use of effective instructional methods and acute awareness of academic writing as a genre suggest the influence of other contributing factors on their writing instruction. Many of their experiences support Premont et al.'s (2020) assertion of the relevance of teachers' writer identities to their writing-related classroom practices. The participants utilize their personal writing practices and experiences as pedagogical tools (Dawson, 2017) to compensate for the shortcomings they observed in their teacher education programs. Ms. Biggie's description of her transfer between her journaling practices and Ms. Branch's explication of how she shares some of her school-aged compositions with her students exemplify Alsup's (2006) borderland discourse, in which we see a merging of the teachers' personal and professional identities to enhance their teaching of writing. The name-dropping of previous effective teachers they encountered as students, in both K-12 and college spaces, also affirmed how residual impact of former English educators can greatly influence teachers' writing instruction. Ms. Creek's crediting of her experience as a writing tutor as being very influential on the ways that she currently teaches writing amplifies the benefit of experiential learning opportunities for pre-service teachers, in addition to their required student teaching hours. Experience could also explain the strengths in the teachers' current practices, particularly for Ms. Biggie and Ms. Branch who have both been teaching for over five years. When asked to describe their sentiments about their teacher program's levels of writing instruction preparation, it is possible that the teachers were reflecting retrospectively back to their first year of teaching and considering how they struggled to teach writing then. As Merrill J. Davies (2006) posits, "student teachers often seem much more comfortable teaching literature than they do teaching writing" (p. 35). This relates back to Ms. Creek's assertion that most

secondary English courses are literature-based which is primarily the topic with which many pre-service candidates may encounter and teach during their student internships. Engaging more with composition theory may have been beneficial for these teachers, but actual practical experience with engaging with student writers might have been advantageous based on the expressed desires from the participants. Mosley's (2006) contention that "college theory and high school practice differ greatly" (p. 60) emphasizes the necessity of both a strong theoretical and practical foundation of writing instruction for secondary ELA pre-service candidates. Recent efforts to restructure ELA teacher programs in ways that engage more with teachers' writer identities (Alfred & Jensen, 2021; Olan & Richmond, 2019) and more experiential learning opportunities (Fowler-Amato, 2020; Knight & Block, 2019) provide a glimpse of optimism for the adequate preparation of future secondary writing instructors.

Removed from pre-service candidacy, the participants would benefit from in-service training and engagement opportunities that allow them to continue to grow as writing teachers. Secondary writing educators desire writing-related professional development both at the institutional and district level. Sadly, not much is offered for the participants in this study. This tension between teacher desire and institutional/district support (Gallo & Hermann, 2014) can stifle one's teaching performance as it could limit one's exposure to a breadth of available pedagogical resources. Since "teaching writing requires explicit pedagogical training," (Langeberg, 2019, p.36), the necessity of this training should not only be confined to pre-service candidacy. As highlighted by the teachers, this professional development is even more integral once these teachers transition into their full-time roles as educators tasked with teaching writing. The lack of writing-related trainings and workshops available to teachers also speaks volumes about the extent to which school districts value writing as a pedagogical priority. Though, given

the abundance of responsibilities that these teachers have between their teaching and personal lives, taking advantage of offered professional development may be easier said than done. Evident by the participants' responses, practicality is a big deterrent for many of the teachers. Traditional forms of professional development take the form of "sit and go" (Gallo & Herrmann, 2014), in which teachers attend a workshop or training that requires them to be passive consumers of information for extended periods of time. Although usually a one-time occurrence, the time commitment required of attendees is often not feasible for teachers, especially if the professional development occurs outside of normal school hours. Several of the teachers shared how they are pursuing advanced degrees, taking care of children and spouses, and actively engaging in their communities in addition to the demands of their teaching positions. Despite their overwhelming desire to engage in these writing-related professional opportunities, the demands of their personal lives, coupled with those from their teaching lives, pose a challenge for the teachers to capitalize on writing-related professional development opportunities.

Academic Writing is Difficult for High School Students

If high school English teachers are utilizing effective writing instructional methods, and are aware of the demands and requirements of academic writing, why is it that high schoolers still experience great difficulty with the task? The participants shared a communal perception of academic writing as a genre with which many of their high school students struggle. Like the complaints of college writing faculty, the high school English teachers lamented the fact that their students do not seem prepared for the type of writing that high school requires. In the eyes of many, elementary school should prepare students for middle school, middle for high school, and high school for college (Graham & Harris, 2019). Thus, the issue of preparedness seems to be one that is consistent as students matriculate from one main sector of the education system to the next. Research shows that students' early literacy aptitudes and struggles are related to their

performance in reading and writing once they reach high school. By the time awareness spreads of students' inadequate writing skills outside of K-12 educational spheres during the transition from high school to college or career, high school teachers are the last in the sequence, thus rendering all the blame to them. I suspect that some of these students' writing shortcomings are not the result of ineffective writing instruction by their high school teachers, but are illustrative of long-term, deep-rooted literacy needs they have carried throughout the educational system with them. As several of the teachers revealed, many K-12 educators are operating in a system that does not embrace failing or remediating students who are not performing according to grade-level expectations. This observation calls for a more holistic examination of the interconnectedness of writing instruction within K-12 public education systems as we seek to create a better network to address the needs of all student writers.

Another reason why high school students may struggle so extensively with academic writing is their overreliance on formulas. Hillocks (2008) shares Matsuhashi (1981) findings in her analysis of Janet Emig's seminal 1971 study on the composing processes of 12th graders. Matsuhashi "suggests that the writers have 'years-long familiarity with a script for narratives of personal experience and that when confronted with a task of writing about an experience, they can simply call on this script. She notes, however, that when it comes to writing prose that involves argument and explanation, the case is different and students are often lost, perhaps because they lack scripts or schemata for generalizing and supporting assertions" (p. 317). The participants noted how their students often struggled the most when faced when unfamiliar writing concepts and skills. Academic writing frequently necessitates argumentation and exposition beyond the limits of one's own personal experiences. The types of writing that are required on the standardized tests, on which many of these students score poorly, require them to

engage in similar modes of writing. Even though the teachers expose their students to sample writing tasks and prompts that they will encounter on these assessments and frequently guide them through how to best approach the writing task at hand, there seems to be a lack of transfer between practice and actual testing contexts.

Students' overwhelming dislike for writing is also key to consider here as well as how students' perceptions of the writing process have been related to their writing performance (Carpenter et al., 2009; Wilcox, 2011). In a 2010 study conducted by Addison and McGee, only 28% of high school students self-reported that they enjoy writing and are enthusiastic about engaging in writing tasks. Furthermore, approximately 48% of the students expressed that they do not like school-related writing. Although this research was conducted a little over a decade ago, I suspect that a more contemporary examination of high school students' sentiments about writing would yield similar results. Although there are outliers, most high school students do not like writing, especially not the academic writing tasks that they are asked to do in school settings (Smagorinsky & Daigle, 2012). This amplifies the disconnect between in-school and out-of-school students' composing practices. Assuming Johnson's definition of academic writing, it could be interchanged with school-related writing in the preceding data. Thus, when considering the two statistics together in the context of students' subpar writing abilities, as denoted by assessments such as the NAEP, a deeper examination of affective components of students' secondary writing experiences is necessary.

The task of writing involves more than just structuring and organizing ideas onto paper; it requires metacognitive behaviors, phonological and orthographic encoding, and fine motor skills (Alamargot and Fayol, 2009; Clay, 2001; Graham and Harris, 2009; Harmeey and Rodgers, 2016). Ritchey and Coker (2014) posit that students who struggle in the earlier stages of their

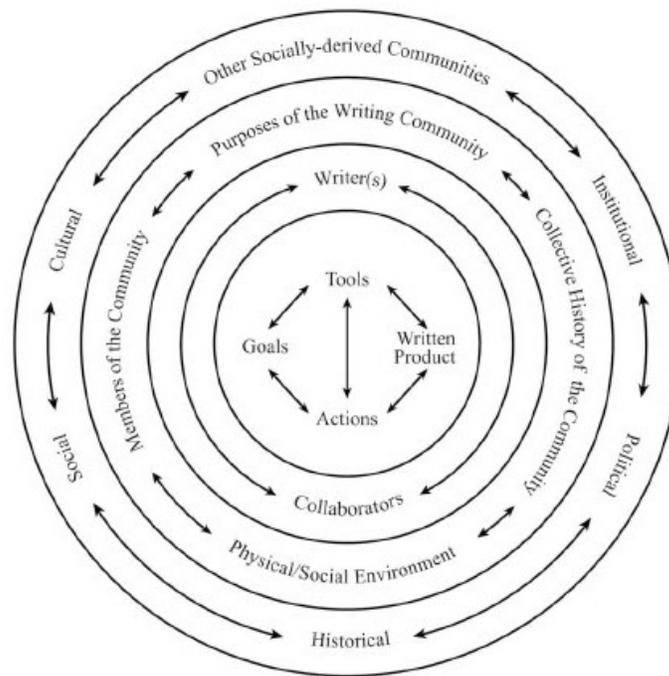
educational career with writing are more susceptible to experience difficulties in latter stages of schooling. Considering students' previous educational literacy experiences and performance is integral when attempting to contextualize students' composing practices in secondary learning settings. Mosley (2006) surmises that college professors ponder if high school educators "are aware of their students' incompetence in writing" (p. 60) and the interviewees would answer this inquiry with a resounding 'Yes!' Several of the participants extensively noted the struggles that they observe among their student writers. As discussed in the preceding section, they consistently utilize a multitude of instructional methods to help their students work through writing tasks. However, for some of them, it does not seem to have much effect. As Addison and McGee (2010) point out, "even when faculty do engage in best practices for teaching writing, many students do not engage in best practices for learning how to write," (p. 160). Contrary to popular belief, teacher and miracle-worker are not synonymous and as the participants highlighted in their responses, academic writing is a prevailing struggle for many of their students that is not always the result of ineffective practices of high school writing teachers.

High School English Teachers Negotiate Various External and Internal Pressures

The participants were candid and transparent about the myriad pressures that they are subjected to and must operate within daily. From unwarranted parental intervention to demands of high stakes standardized testing, the teachers' responses were rampant with descriptions of the different external pressures that impede or affect the way that they teach writing. If we consider the physical and social environments component of Graham's (2018) writing community model, these outside forces can greatly influence, either positively or negatively, the educators' teaching space. In his visual representation of a writing community (fig. 3), Graham identifies seven main components: purpose, members, tools, actions, written products, physical and social environments, and collective history. For this portion of this discussion, we shall only focus on

the members and physical/social environment. Based on the participants' responses, I would argue that these are the two components within a secondary writing community, particularly those in which the participants teach, that have the greatest ability to constrain or prevent effective writing instruction from occurring. The first source of pressure for several of the participants was students' parents. All the teachers iterated that they do appreciate parental

FIGURE 3: Graham's Writing Community Model



Source: Graham, 2018

involvement and attention to students' academics. Ms. Creek and Ms. Biggie voiced a desire for more engagement with their students' parents, particularly among their struggling writers.

Conversely, Ms. Poppy and Ms. Branch detailed instances where they felt that parents were too involved in classroom activities. Within high school writing communities, arguably most K-12 writing spaces, parents could be considered as non-visible members. Non-visibility does not infer that they are not present, simply that they are not physically seen (in most cases). Their influence – and control in some instances as evidenced by Ms. Poppy's experience with the summer

reading fiasco and rearranging of her class rosters based on her classes' impressive performance on the ACT practice assessment – is much felt by the participants, both implicitly and sometimes directly. Socioeconomic status was one of the main correlations between the amount of parental overindulgence in the classroom. Ms. Poppy succinctly summed up this notion as she shared, “They think just because they have money that they can tell you what to do.” The inverse seemed to be even more telling as some of the teachers dealt more with parents attempting, and in some cases succeeding, to eliminate certain topics of discussion, writing prompts, and readings from the curriculum. Too much intervention from outside parties in a learning space can cause unnecessary disruptions, distractions, and chaos for not only instructors, but also students. Nevertheless, all the participants appear to be able to push forward despite these instances.

Another source of overwhelming pressure that the teachers spoke about centered around standardized testing. In secondary instructional spaces, particularly within the content areas of reading, writing, and math, curricula is governed by standardized testing. When mentioning writing necessary to perform well on standardized tests, most of the high school teachers juxtaposed it as counterintuitive to effective academic writing. This rejects Calfee and Miller's claim that secondary educators are unable to distinguish “between SAT writing and real writing” (qtd. in Graham et. al 269). However, the authors' contestation that many high school educators teach writing to their students in ways that will help them secure high scores on the “on demand” assessments including state-mandated graduation exams and national assessment tests such as the SAT and ACT, is not too far from the truth as is affirmed by Ms. Poppy. However, teacher choice is an important concept to consider when making such an assertion, which Calfee and Miller fail to do. As is evidenced by the participants' narratives, this type of writing instruction is

forced upon them, not necessarily one that they would willingly promote or utilize if, and when, given the choice.

Yet, as Mosley (2006) articulates, “preparing our students for standardized tests does not mean that we strictly teach to the tests” (p. 61). The teachers in this study all seemed to agree; even though they note the aura of standardized testing that is a staple of their institutional cultures, they collectively talked about it as an addition to their pedagogical priorities, rather than a replacement of skills and content that they feel are necessary for their students’ holistic growth. Despite the pressures subjected on secondary educators to ensure that students perform well on standardized testing, Higgins, Miller, and Wegmann (2006) contend that test preparation can be balanced with effective writing instruction and best practices for teaching writing. They argue particularly in favor of the writing workshop which equips students as agents of their own learning with independence and freedom. This is supported by the high school English teachers’ descriptions of their instructional methods in the interviews: writing workshops, modeling, and conferencing. Although all the participants described the influence and overt prioritization of standardized testing, the fact that none of them mentioned subscribing to the concept of ‘teaching to the test’ suggests that high school teachers can adequately mesh test preparation with adequate writing pedagogy.

The interview responses affirmed that English teachers are often held solely responsible for teaching writing within most educational institutions. Collectively, the participants felt the burden and primary responsibility for their schools’ writing curriculum. The Literacy for All program seems to be a step in the right direction of prioritizing writing as a content area across the district. However, it is only implemented in half of the participants’ districts. Expanding its reach to the other district would broaden its impact and amplify the value of writing in the city

schools. Even in schools that utilize the Literacy for All curriculum, teachers noted that their colleagues in other departments relied on them for advice, assistance, and reassurance on integrating writing with their disciplinary content. Despite its long-time existence, Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) is still a difficult endeavor to implement at any educational level. Yet, as Walley et al. (2000) contend, placing all the responsibility for writing instruction on English teachers is not only illogical, but also counterproductive. Some of the teachers mentioned efforts by their colleagues, particularly in History, but the onus largely falls on them. The responsibility for writing instruction should be shared among all content-area teachers, especially since writing is one of the main ways that students demonstrate disciplinary understanding and deep learning. Instead of being viewed as a burden, educators should acknowledge the value of writing as a meaning-making process that can exemplify and support student learning in all content areas. Ms. Branch's revelation that student test scores increased after a full cycle of Literacy for All curriculum is evidence that cross-campus prioritization and integration of writing instruction can benefit students on multiple levels.

It is worth noting that the COVID-19 pandemic also seemed to augment the pressures and requirements subjected onto the participants. Several of the participants talked about the unrealistic expectations they felt from all fronts. Their sentiments were in line with those felt by teachers all over the nation as many chose to retire or quit their careers as educators due to the overwhelming conditions prompted by the pandemic (Bush & Bentley, 2020). In the participants' state, there is currently a teacher shortage in the K-12 education system, with over 3,000 vacant statewide positions. Ms. Branch's description of how her teaching load doubled from seven to fourteen classes, because of her district allowing parents to choose virtual or in-

person instruction for their children, is an exemplar of the unbelievable demands imposed on educators during this time.

High School English Teachers Have to Consider a Multitude of Student Needs

Although they exhibit a clear understanding of what academic writing is and requires of students, the participants shared various student needs that they must consider when designing writing instruction. The differing levels of writing proficiencies with which students enter their classrooms is not only a complication for college faculty; high school English teachers encounter variation as well, particularly in their general or regular classes. As mentioned above, the type of class in which a student is enrolled affects the type of writing instruction they receive. Many of the participants discussed how, for the general or regular classes, administrators did not feel that writing should be much of a pedagogical priority, particularly given the fact that a large majority of these students did not have subsequent college enrollment plans. In her exposé about the truths of teaching high school English, Mosley (2006) delineates how the demographic make-up of the various classes affects the type of writing instruction that she was able to provide. She describes, like Ms. Branch, Ms. Poppy, and Ms. Creek, how her advanced courses have fewer students, most of whom are proficient writers with parents who are involved in and committed to their academic success. By contrast, as Ms. Biggie highlighted, Mosley shares how her general classes have a starkly different composition. These classes are large in terms of enrolled students who are of varying learning abilities. Ms. Biggie's revelation of teaching a general class full of students with "IEPs and 504s" hints at the notion that some of the classes these teachers encounter have an extreme continuum of diverse learning needs among the student writers. Based on their approximations, the average number of students per class was twenty-two. Writing is an individualized practice, but it is much easier to teach to a class of students who have similar levels of writing aptitude and capability. As highlighted in a previous section, the

teachers do use different instructional methods, including conferencing, to accommodate the diversity, however, they are only able to do so much. For some of the participants, the varying learning needs among their student writers is one of the most difficult challenges of their writing instruction.

Motivating students to engage in writing tasks was also highlighted among the respondents. Getting their students to acknowledge the value of academic writing practices, even for the sake of transfer to non-academic writing contexts, is easier said than done for many of the teachers. It seems that we forget that students must make a conscious decision to engage in the writing, and more broadly learning process (Graham & Harris, 2019). No matter how great an assignment, activity, or task a teacher designs, if a student has not given themselves permission to participate or has made an active choice toward non-participation, all efforts to engage them will most likely not yield the desired results. As the teachers shared, motivating reluctant student writers is an ongoing battle. As Graham (2018) points out, writers “make a multitude of decisions that drive and shape what is written. In effect, they exert some degree of agency over the writing process that extends beyond the influence of the writing community” (p. 284). Students must give themselves permission to write and despite all valiant efforts by the ELA teachers, if this does not occur, the attempts could be considered unproductive or ineffective. For example, Ms. Biggie shared how one of her students chose to draw male genital parts over his exam paper instead of completing the written section of the ACT test, which serves as a prime example of the effects of lack of will of an unmotivated student writer. Although an isolated occurrence, this example could carry broader implications because in this case, we see a student demonstrate agency, not necessarily the kind that we would want to see, but whose consequences are arguably jointly experienced by him and his English teacher. It’s not that the student’s

teacher did not teach him how to write, he actively decided to not write at all! This type of behavior amplifies the need to consider other contributors to the poor test scores of high school students which are interpreted by some to imply that their teachers are not doing a good enough job at teaching writing.

Additionally, although not anticipated, technological access was a prominent student need that most of the participants must negotiate when developing writing assignments, particularly those that require out-of-class completion. Although different writing tools can be utilized within a writing community (Yancey, 2009), empirical data has shown that K-12 students who use technology to compose, instead of composing by hand, exhibit greater gains over time in terms of their writing ability (Goldberg, Russell, & Cook, 2003; Morphy & Graham, 2012). In a 2010 study, the National Commission on Writing discovered various benefits of technology use in the classroom, including an increase in students' writing self-efficacy, a sense of accomplishment, and a more focused consideration of the value of writing in various realms of their personal and academic lives. In terms of student access to electronic devices in school, there was an even split among the institutions represented in the study. Ms. Poppy and Ms. Branch teach in schools where students had one-to-one devices, meaning that each student was given a laptop or tablet that they could use for instructional purposes while at school. On the other hand, Ms. Creek and Ms. Biggie's schools only have rentals available for teachers to check out on a first-come, first-served basis as there are not enough devices available for all faculty to have their own class set. Here, we observe another disconnect between resources needed to encourage proficient writing and those available to teachers. Most of the participants disclosed that their students did not consistently have access to electronic devices at school due to various reasons, but most profoundly, institutional finances.

Ms. Branch and Ms. Biggie's students' home circumstances also further exasperate such a phenomenon as many of their students' homes are not equipped with personal laptops or computers. Even in the 21st century, when technology has been deemed a necessary tool for student composing (Yancey, 2009), the Digital Divide is still very much present and felt by students writing in high school English classrooms. Although 87% of U.S. households have access to a computer, laptop, or cell phone, the accessibility of high-speed broadband internet (Pew Research Center, 2020), a tool that is invaluable to student academic writing, is still an issue. Student demographics self-reported by the teachers highlights how this divide most frequently affects their students of color and those with meager financial means. The National Center for Education Statistics (2018) found that approximately 90% of the students without adequate internet service were from racially marginalized communities. This disproportion is also amplified by socioeconomic status for many of the participants' students. Ms. Biggie candidly shared how some of her students do not even have adequate food supply at home. Thus, access to technology is not a priority in terms of survival needs. Therefore, if the students do not have access in their school or home, this could potentially be a contributing factor to why these students may develop slower as student writers. According to the ACT Center for Equity in Learning, approximately 17% of students cannot complete their homework because of limited access to the World Wide Web. This was a contributing factor to why many of the teachers stated that they do not assign out-of-class writing assignments, particularly those that require outside research. The teachers interviewed in this study must be more cognizant of and aware of their students' home lives and personal circumstances than, say, their college counterparts. Diverse learning needs, lack of motivation, and inadequate technological and internet access

among their students greatly affect the ways they design, structure, and facilitate writing instruction.

Summary of Emergent Theory

The purpose of this study was to generate a comprehensive understanding of what it means to teach high school English from the perspectives of ELA educators. Much of the existing scholarship that focuses on secondary writing instruction lacks context and input from actual teachers of writing. As Sullivan and Tinberg (2006) proclaim, "Oftentimes, we talk *about* them rather than *with* them" (p. 33). This project was an attempt to directly engage high school English teachers in conversation to learn about and understand their experiences when teaching writing. To do so, this research focused on three main aspects of the teachers' writing instruction: 1) their awareness and definition of academic writing; 2) the best practices that they utilize to teach writing; and 3) the real-life constraints and barriers that affect their writing instruction. Although the four teachers who participated in the study represented a variety of instructional approaches and educational contexts, their responses to the research questions collectively illustrates a vivid shared experience. The high school educators were diverse in terms of age, teaching experience, and type of teaching institution, however, there were semblances among their representations of what teaching high school writing requires and demands of them.

The teachers embraced teaching writing as a process that is necessary for their students' future success in college, workforce, and global communication spaces. They described various ancillary skills and conceptual mastery that is required of effective academic writers and shared several instructional strategies they use to expose and engage their students to them. They also chronicled a litany of real-life constraints and barriers, many over which they have no control,

that affect the ways that they teach writing. Despite the connective thread between their responses, the experiences highlighted in this study are not intended to be generalized or deemed as representative of all ELA teachers. Some educators may identify with the stories of the participants, but some may not. The characterizations that emerged are solely representative of the group of educators who served as participants in this study. However, this does not negate or trivialize their stories and experiences. Wilcox, Jeffrey, and Gardner-Bixler (2016) highlight the commendable work that K-12 writing instructors are doing in the face of the new standards and old systemic problems. Considering public criticism, it is important that we elevate high school English teachers' expertise on academic writing and draw attention to the hardships that they encounter when attempting to teach the subject as they see and live it, not how we interpret it.

Implications

As this research illustrates, the teaching of writing at the secondary education level is a multifaceted endeavor, thus, the implications of this project involve multiple parties.

Implications for Secondary Writing Teachers

ELA teachers often carry the most responsibility in developing students' writing abilities, thus, they would benefit the most from this study. Although writing is not yet prioritized to the desired extent in secondary ELA curriculum, there are high school English teachers who are making it an instructional priority in their classrooms. This research provides empirical evidence that these educators do, in fact, use empirically based instructional methods to teach writing. Despite a multitude of challenges and complications to their writing instruction, secondary writing instructors are teaching the writing process as a tool and foundational asset to their students' future success in both college and career endeavors. The teachers in this study show that they can balance the demands of effective academic writing instruction with standardized testing preparation. Even in spaces where student and teacher resources are limited, teachers find

ways to effectively teach writing. Having a positive mindset about writing and a humanistic perspective of their student writers as more than mere ‘test takers’ is important to have when teaching writing in a high school setting.

The results of this research are not only beneficial for high school ELA teachers of writing, but also secondary educators in other content areas as well. With the Common Core State Standards now expecting all content area teachers to integrate writing into their curriculum, more and more educators, outside of English, will now be faced with having to navigate how to teach writing in a high school learning context. This is a long overdue requirement since writing is frequently used to demonstrate competency and understanding of specific subject matter knowledge in many disciplines. Evidenced by the participants’ observations of discomfort and hesitancy among their cross-discipline colleagues when asked to teach writing, social studies, science, and mathematics teachers’ aversion to writing instruction may be a result of unfamiliarity with the task and ignorance of all that it will entail. Thus, the commentary and candid narratives from ELA instructors could serve as a glimpse into the energy, labor, and beauty of the experience of teaching secondary writing and possibly provide instructional resources and methods that can help to support them in their endeavors to support their student writers in their respective content areas.

Implications for School Administrators

School administrators are an important stakeholder in elevating writing as a pedagogical priority in an institution’s culture (McGhee & Lew, 2007). The teachers in this study expressed that they did not feel that their school leaders were fully aware of the amount of work that is required when teaching writing, which is a problem that many ELA teachers may identify with. Even though writing was becoming more of a central instructional focus in one of the districts in which the participants teach, within the schools, administrators spanned a wide spectrum in

terms of preparation and readiness levels to implement and promote such curriculum. Therefore, this research could help to enlighten these individuals in power and assist in the transition. ELA teachers need space and time to voice their concerns, opinions, and ideas about writing instruction and should not feel pressured or deemed as the sole omniscient beings of writing among the faculty. School administrators should provide such opportunities and platforms for these teachers to do so where their expertise can be respected, but their struggles can additionally be heard. They can also assist teachers who are teaching writing by providing the necessary instructional resources such as technological devices and software, as well as professional development opportunities that will allow them to continue to stay abreast on the best practices and trends in writing pedagogy. Although the participants in this study were innovative in seeking out these materials and information on their own, having the support of their schools' leaders will be invaluable.

Implications for Teacher Educators

Several of the participants vocalized that they felt unprepared to teach writing in their early years of teaching due to the lack of focus on writing instruction in their undergraduate teacher education programs. Even though the teachers developed confidence in their ability to teach writing as they matured as educators, it is important for teacher educators and programs to provide pre-service teachers with the necessary theoretical grounding and experiential praxis in writing instruction prior to graduation. Coincidentally, all the teachers completed their teacher program at the same university, and they could only recall one course that prioritized writing as its central focus. Although not the case with the participants in this study, this inadequate preparation could explain why some secondary teachers do not teach writing to the desired extent. Teacher educators must do a better job of preparing ELA pre-service candidates to teach writing. This may manifest in the inclusion of more writing-related courses or opportunities for

on-the-ground training. This exposure could be achieved through a collaboration with the English department, particularly Composition & Rhetoric programs, to allow their pre-service candidates to take more coursework related to composition pedagogy. As Ms. Creek explained, her time as a writing tutor greatly influenced her subsequent writing-related classroom practices; more ELA undergraduates may benefit from an experiential learning component in university writing centers, in addition to their coursework, that allows them to acquire more hands-on experience in working with student writers. Since these educators are likely to be characterized as the writing experts in the schools where they will subsequently teach, it is imperative that they have both a strong theoretical foundation and the praxis experience that will support their future writing instruction. Based on their roles in higher education institutions, teacher educators are often abreast of the latest trends and best practices in writing instruction and student composing; therefore, they are best situated to exert the greatest and perhaps, the most impactful influence, on pre-service candidates to ensure that they are fully supported and confident in their abilities to teach secondary writing.

Implications for Education Policymakers

This research could also provide crucial background information for educational policymakers. K-12 education is extensively regulated by state and national policies that heavily influence teachers' instructional practices. Even with the advent of Common Core, which does focalize writing as a distributed responsibility among all educators, there is still more work to be done in terms of writing instruction. Yet, many on-the-ground practitioners are oftentimes left out of the design stage of the policies, standards, and legislation that dictates when and how they integrate writing into their curriculum. Teachers need to be involved more in the creation of standards and legislation that will affect the ways that they are able, or required, to teach writing. This can manifest in various forms, including collaboration with disciplinary organizations such

as the National Council of Teachers of English. K-12 educators comprise a large majority of this organization's membership, thus it would be an opportune space to engage and partner with current classroom teachers. Task forces and committees of teachers of writing, from all content areas, would be advantageous in gauging the effectiveness of policies in a more complex manner than just utilizing student assessment scores. Importantly, these groups should not solely include highly successful educators of writing, but also those who struggle with balancing policy demands and effective writing instruction. However, until these efforts are feasible for educational policymakers, in lieu of their presence, the narratives provided by the teachers in this study can greatly inform the creation of writing-related standards and curriculum requirements at the state and national level.

Implications for College Faculty and Workforce Employers

Historically, college professors have been the most fervent critics of high school teachers' writing pedagogy. This denunciation is loosely grounded in, or devoid of, representative truth like that offered through the explicated experiences of the high school teachers in this study. College faculty's criticisms of high school teachers' writing instruction needs to consider the multiplicity of factors that can affect students' writing performance at the post-secondary level. More importantly, they need to be more empathetic to the demands on and efforts of high school teachers of writing. Although there are several differences between teaching writing at the high school level versus the college level, both groups of educators carry most of the responsibility for preparing student writers in their respective institutions. Therefore, this shared weight should undergird more empathy and less criticism on the behalf of college writing instructors. The data in this study reveals a desire among high school ELA teachers to collaborate and partner with college writing faculty, which is an endeavor that, due to various constraints, may be more feasible for higher education professionals to spearhead. Nevertheless,

the want is present. The candidness and transparency of the teachers' responses should broaden the parochial perspective that some professors have of what writing in, and teaching writing in, high school, looks like. This study provides firsthand illustrations, for not only college faculty, but also workforce employers, of the writing contexts and spaces from which their students and employees are coming. Recently, there has been an increased demand for adequate writing skills among entry-level workers in diverse industries. Thus, the responses in this study could be utilized among workforce employers who are seeking opportunities to connect with high school teachers. Companies and organizations who employ large numbers of students from a particular school district or system can delegate representatives to meet with writing teachers and/or student writers to share some of the real-world writing tasks that they will be tasked with completing in prospective careers or jobs. This distributed knowledge-sharing between college faculty, workforce employers, and high school writing teachers is integral to fostering a network of stakeholders who are all committed to the success of student writers.

Recommendations

To address some of the exigencies mentioned by the participants, the following recommendations are offered to better support them as writing instructors.

Recommendation #1:

Integration of more writing-focused courses in teacher education ELA programs is imperative. This move is necessary to not only provide these educators with a stronger theoretical foundation of writing pedagogy, but also enhance their confidence as writing teachers when they graduate and begin their teaching careers. Most colleges offer a limited amount of writing pedagogy courses to their pre-service candidates (Grisham & Wolsey, 2011). Since college coursework underserves these educators, as the participants shared, they are often led to rely on strategies they emulate from past educators or encountered as student writers themselves

(Smagorinsky, Wilson, & Moore, 2011). Creating a pipeline or network of communication between past graduates and teacher program administrators could be fruitful in gauging the needs of pre-service candidates who will be teaching secondary writing. Leaders can distribute a brief survey among alumni to inquire about their writing-related on-the-job experiences. In higher education, designing a course and getting approval for its addition to the course catalog and specific degree requirements can take a long time. However, teacher programs can utilize existing Composition & Rhetoric coursework offered by the English department at their institutions to better prepare and equip their aspiring teachers with the necessary knowledge needed to teach academic writing.

Recommendation #2:

There need to be more professional development opportunities available to secondary teachers of writing. Curricula reform of teacher education programs is necessary for pre-service candidates; however, it is integral to provide some form of sustained learning and instructional enhancement options for in-service teachers as well. Listening tours or sessions are an effective way to engage writing teachers in conversation and identify areas of need or improvement. Surveys are also another and quicker means for school and district leaders to develop an awareness of the professional development opportunities that would be most beneficial to teachers. If they are not willing to create these opportunities, administrators need to invest more support, in the form of time release and/or funding, to allow writing teachers to attend external professional development workshops and seminars that could help them sustain and enhance their current writing instructional practices. As mentioned below, interaction between high school and college writing faculty is minimal or non-existent, for many ELA high school teachers. To rectify this issue while also providing space for professional growth, school leaders can invite college faculty and/or writing scholars to campus to share best practices and current

trends with high school teachers. Providing these educators with diverse professional development opportunities can tremendously increase teacher morale and writing instruction.

Recommendation #3:

In line with more professional development opportunities, increased engagement between college and high school writing faculty should equally be prioritized. There are various national venues through which this can occur. School administrators can provide funding for English faculty members' membership in one of the disciplinary organizations like the National Council of Teachers of English or the National Writing Project which are both committed to fostering community among K-16 writing educators. Sponsoring one ELA teacher's attendance at the NCTE Annual Convention or participation in the NWP Summer Institute per year would be advantageous for not only the department, but also the school. These networking opportunities would allow the teachers to converse with other secondary writing instructors, as well as college writing faculty. As the participants shared, any type of conversation with their college teaching counterparts would be beneficial. This dialogue could serve as the foundation for long-term partnerships including future co-teaching, publications, and other forms of collaboration. Interaction with college professors at the national level was not as feasible for the participants. For them and other secondary educators who teach at schools that are near higher education institutions, a brief email or phone call could be the start of fruitful communication.

Recommendation #4:

This final recommendation is less practical and more subjective; however, I feel that it needs to be addressed. Teaching, particularly at the high school level, is a multifaceted task that is embedded with complexities and complications that are not easily identified. Thus, it is imperative that we (i.e. college faculty, policymakers, school administrators, and the public) show more empathy to high school ELA teachers who teach writing. "High school education is

designed to be standardized and quantifiable" (Fanetti, Bushrow, and DeWeese, 2010, p. 77-78) meaning that oftentimes, teachers' success is measured by student test scores and statistics. However, as this study has shown, the issue of high school students' low-test scores on national writing assessments is much more complex than just ineffective writing instruction by their teachers. The participants' philosophies and practices speak for themselves; there is great work being done in high school English classrooms. Unfortunately, it is often overshadowed by numerical data that lacks integral contextualization. Before we rush to criticize, it is first necessary to establish an understanding of these educators' experience. This will then allow us to make more informed interpretations of the decisions they make and the difficulties that they encounter.

Future Research

As stated in Chapter One, this project is just the starting point of a multi-dimensional examination of high school writing instruction. Conversing with the teachers who are doing the work that is so frequently criticized is the first step in understanding and elevating the pedagogical expertise and acumen of these educators, while also illuminating the constraints and barriers that affect the diverse ways, they teach writing. Given the limitations of this project, specifically the effects of COVID-19 on educational institutions' operations and the participants' scheduling availability, a limited amount and type of data was collected. Subsequent phases of this research would benefit from the utilization of a more robust methodology, such as a long-term ethnographic study of high school English teachers' writing instruction. The data in this project was primarily comprised of participants' firsthand accounts of their classroom practices. To expand on the data, it would be worthwhile to build on this research by examining and comparatively analyzing the teachers' stated writing-related objectives, goals, and intentions and

their actual day-to-day instruction. An extended examination of the teachers' uses of the instructional strategies that they mentioned during our conversations would enhance the existing data collected. Additionally, although ELA teachers were the focus and sole participants of this study, engaging teachers from other content areas (e.g. social studies, science, and mathematics) as participants and inquiring about their writing instructional practices and the difficulties that they encounter when teaching writing would also add another layer of complexity to a more comprehensive understanding of high school writing instruction. With the emphasis on writing across the curriculum in K-12 schools promoted by the decade-old CCSS legislation, future research gauging the experiences of non-ELA educators, may yield some useful and enlightening discoveries. Lastly, a follow-up discourse analysis of the institutional, district, state, and national policies, guidelines, and legislation would be worthwhile due to the amount of influence and constraint these materials exert on teachers' instructional choices and practices. A thorough examination of these documents may show that the resources that are likely intended to assist writing teachers are counterintuitive and counterproductive to their success in teaching writing.

Student perspectives and experiences with writing in a high school environment should also be explored. This project revealed various student elements that affected the ways that the high school educators teach writing, so uncovering more about high school students' composing practices is necessary to create a more vivid illustration of secondary writing instruction. Although seminal, Emig's 1971 study of 12th grade student writers is outdated given all the new writing-related education policies, legislation, and shifts in instructional methods among teachers of writing. It can be inferred that student writing behaviors have evolved as well. Therefore, answering the question, *How?* is a viable research endeavor. This could be accomplished through extensive class observations of students' engagement with and completion of writing tasks in

their ELA classes, as well as in other subject courses that utilize writing activities and assignments.

Concluding Thoughts

Since the creation of Composition college courses in 1894, high school English teachers have been blamed for the inadequate writing skills of college- and career-bound students. Often viewed as the omniscient writing expert in their respective institutions, English/Language Arts teachers often carry the responsibility for developing students' writing abilities in not only high schools, but K-12 education spaces in general. Yet, their efforts are oftentimes overshadowed and underappreciated due to students' poor test scores on national writing assessments. This research's goal was to deter from the typical scapegoat rhetoric that so frequently colors the characterization of these educators and highlight the positive aspects of their professional identities and experiences as secondary writing instructors in the form of a counternarrative grounded in their words and led by their voices. The candidness and transparency exhibited by the teachers throughout our various stages of discussion offers a vivid illustration of teaching high school writing – the good, bad, and not so easy. The importance of this project was to engage the writing educators in dialogue to obtain firsthand accounts of their teaching lives. This approach is necessary to the contribution of K-12 writing pedagogy research because limited studies that prioritize the voices and experiences of secondary writing teachers exist. During this study, the participants articulated their strengths, successes, and frustrations when implementing writing instruction in the classroom. This study aimed to confront readers' assumptions about high school English teachers, not to antagonize, but to expose them to authentic and firsthand accounts. As writing becomes more of a pedagogical priority in K-12 curriculum, the stories, trials, and triumphs shared by the participants in this study, and subsequent similarly designed

iterations, will be imperative to foster and disseminate an awareness of all that writing instruction requires of educators. According to Kiuahara, Graham, & Hawken (2009), the last known time a teacher was asked about their writing instruction practices was in 1998.

Befittingly, this study responds to Kiuahara, Graham, and Hawken's call for "a broader and more current update of high school writing instruction" (p. 743) particularly from the perspective of high school English teachers themselves. As this project sought to illuminate, these educators persevere through all the ebbs and flows that they encounter to ensure that their students receive the best writing instruction that they have to offer. Despite the myriad constraints and barriers that they negotiate, they display a level of pedagogical acumen that is simply unmatched.

This study showed that teaching high writing is not a job for the weak. Effective writing instruction is vital for students to be able to compete and succeed in postsecondary education and the workforce. The teachers that I interacted with clearly understand the stakes and implications of their students mastering academic writing and take the necessary steps to make sure that they are rightfully exposed to the necessary knowledge and tools that will position them to be successful writers no matter their future endeavors. There is great work being done among high school English teachers regarding writing instruction and this research just spotlights the efforts of only four. There are thousands more who deserve their time to shine. With this project, I hope to incite more empathy among other K-12 and college educators, policymakers, and the public for these teachers. I hope that other writing scholars and college writing instructors will follow suit and begin to share stories of secondary writing instructors in their neighboring school districts who are also doing valiant work. High school English teachers do not need critics; they deserve allies. Each day, these educators enter their classrooms with the intention to teach

academic writing to the best of their abilities. And to end in the words of Ms. Poppy, they “do the best [they] can.”

REFERENCES

- ACT's Center for Equity in Learning. (2019). Closing the Rural Digital Divide. *FttX*, 31(2), 2–3.
- Addison, J., & McGee, S.J. (2010). Writing in High School/Writing in College: Research Trends and Future Directions. *College Composition and Communication*, 62(1), 147–179.
- Adler, S. M. (2011). Teacher epistemology and collective narratives: Interrogating teaching and diversity. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 27(3), 609–618.
- Ahearn, L. M. (2001). Language and Agency. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 30, 109–137.
- Alim, S., & Smitherman, G. (2012). *Articulate while black: Barack Obama, language, and race in the U.S.* Oxford, CA: Oxford UP.
- Alliance for Excellent Education. (2007). Making writing instruction a priority in America's middle and high schools. *PolicyBrief*, 1-7.
- Applebee, A. (1981). *Writing in the secondary school*. National Council of Teachers of English.
- Applebee, A. (1984). *Contexts for learning to write: Studies of secondary school instruction*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publishing Corporation.
- Applebee, A. (1993). *Literature in the secondary school: Studies of curriculum and instruction in the United States*. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.
- Applebee, A. N., & Langer, J. A. (2006). *The state of writing instruction in America's schools: What existing data tell us*. Albany, NY: Center on English Learning and Achievement University at SUNY, Albany.
- Applebee, A. N., & Langer, J. A. (2011). A snapshot of writing instruction in middle schools and high schools. *English Journal*, 100(6), 14–27.
- Applebee, A. N., & Langer, J. A. (2013). *Writing instruction that works*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Auxier, B., & Anderson, M. (2020). As school close due to the coronavirus, some U.S. students face a digital 'homework gap.' PEW Research Center.
- Baker-Bell, A. (2017). I can switch my language, but I can't switch my skin: What teachers must understand about linguistic racism. In E. Moore, A. Michael Jr., & M. W. Penick-Parks (Eds.), *The guide for white women who teach black boys* (pp. 97–107). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Baker-Bell, A. (2019). Dismantling anti-black linguistic racism in English language arts classrooms: Toward an anti-racist black language pedagogy. *Theory Into Practice*, 59(1), 8–21.

- Baker-Bell, A. (2020). *Linguistic justice: Black language, literacy, identity, and pedagogy*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Banks, A. J. (2006). *Race, rhetoric, and technology: searching for higher ground.: NCTE-LEA research series in literacy and composition.: NCTE-LEA research series in literacy and composition*. Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Bayat, Nihat. (2014). The effect of the process writing approach on writing success and anxiety. *Educational Sciences: Theory and Practice*, 14(3), 1133-1141.
- Beck, S. W., & Jeffrey, J. V. (2009). Genre and thinking in academic writing tasks. *Journal of Literacy Research*, 41, 228-272.
- Beil, C., & Knight, M. A. (2007). Understanding the Gap between High School and College Writing. *Assessment Update*, 19(6), 6–8.
- Beltran, V., & Decker, J. C. (2014). Beyond error correction: Modeling strategies for writing instruction. *California English*, 20(8). 18-19.
- Bentley, E., & Cason, K. (2019). Tailor-made professional development to nurture preservice and early career teachers. *English Leadership Quarterly*, 41(3), 14-18.
- Bifuh-Ambe, E. (2013). Developing successful writing teachers: Outcomes of professional development exploring teachers' perceptions of themselves as writers and writing teachers and their students' attitudes and abilities to write across the curriculum. *English Teaching: Practice and Critique*, 12(3), 137–156.
- Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. (2014). Teachers know best: Teachers' views on professional development. Retrieved from <http://collegeready.gatesfoundation.org/wpcontent/uploads/2015/04/Gates-PDMarketResearch-Dec5.pdf>.
- Bishop, W. (1997). *Teaching lives: essays and stories*. Utah State University Press.
- Brereton, J. C. (1996). *The origins of composition studies in the American college, 1875-1925: A documentary history (Composition, literacy, and culture)*. Pittsburgh: PA: University of Pittsburgh Press.
- Bruce, E., & Hamp-Lyons, L. (2015). Opposing tensions of local and international standards for EAP writing programmes: Who are we assessing for? *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, 18, 64–77.
- Buckley-Marudas, M. F. (Molly). (2018). Making Room for the Writers: Creating Time and Space for Secondary School Writing. *English Journal*, 107(3), 47–53.
- Bushaw, W. J., & Calderon, V. J. (2014). Americans put teacher quality on center stage: The 46th annual PDK/Gallup poll of the public's attitudes toward the public schools: Part II. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 96(2), 49-59.

- Calfee, R. C., & Miller, R. G. (2007). Best practices in writing assessment. In S. Graham, C. MacArthur & J. Fitzgerald (Eds.), *Best practices in writing instruction* (pp. 265-286). New York: Guilford Press.
- Calkins, L., Ehrenworth, M., & Pessah, L. (2018). *Leading well: Building schoolwide excellence in reading and writing*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Calvert, L. (2016). *Moving from compliance to agency: What teachers need to make professional learning work*. Oxford, OH: Learning Forward and NCTAF.
- Camp, H. C. (2013). Exploring identity-based challenges to English teachers' professional growth. *Teaching/Writing: The Journal of Writing Teacher Education*, 2(2), 16-32.
- Carpenter, C., Falout, J., Fukda, T., Trovela, M., & Murphey, T. (2009). Helping students repack for motivation and agency. *Proceedings of JALT Conference, Tokyo*, pp. 259–274.
- Cook, J. S., & Caouette, B. L. (2013). All hands on deck: Bringing together high school teachers and adjunct instructors for professional development in the teaching of writing. *Teaching/Writing: The Journal of Writing Teacher Education*, 2(1), 49-56.
- Coker, D. L., Farley-Ripple, E., Jackson, A. F., Wen, H., MacArthur, C. A., & Jennings, A. S. (2016). Writing instruction in first grade: an observational study. *Reading and Writing*, 5, 793.
- Colby, S. A., & Stapleton, J. N. (2006). Preservice teachers teach writing: Implications for teacher educators, *Reading Research and Instruction*, 45(4), 353-376.
- Common Core State Standards Initiative. (2010). *Read the Common Core State Standards*. Council of State School Officers and the National Governors' Association. Retrieved from <http://www.corestandards.org/the-standards>.
- Cremin, T., & Locke, T. (2017). *Writer identity and the teaching and learning of writing*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Cremin, T., & Oliver, L. (2017). Teachers as writers: A systematic review. *Research Papers in Education*, 32(3), 269–295.
- Creswell, J. W. (1994). *Research design: Qualitative & quantitative approaches*. SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Creswell, J. W. (2012). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research* (4th ed.). Pearson.
- Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Cutler, L., & Graham, S. (2008). Primary grade writing instruction: A national survey. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 100(4), 907–919.

- Daisey, P. (2009). The writing experiences and beliefs of secondary teacher candidates. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, 36(4), 157–172.
- Darling-Hammond, L., Hyler, M. E., & Gardner, M. (2017). *Effective teacher professional development*. Palo Alto, CA: Learning Policy Institute.
- Davies, M. J. (2006). Whistling in the dark. In P. Sullivan & H. Tinberg (Eds.). *What is “college level” writing?* Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.
- Davies, M.J. (2010). Making the leap from high school to college writing. In P. Sullivan, H. Tinberg, & S. Blau, *What is college level writing?* Vol. 2. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.
- Dean, D., Heaton, M., Orme, S., & Woodward, G. (2016). More than skin deep: Professional development that transforms teachers. *Voices From the Middle*, 23(2), 10-13.
- Douglas, B., Lewis, C. W., Douglas, A., Scott, M. E., & Garrison-Wade, D. (2008). The impact of white teachers on the academic achievement of black students: An exploratory qualitative analysis. *Educational Foundations*, 47-62.
- Early, J., Saidy, C., & Parker, T. (2016). Wrestling with the cat lady: Teaching writing in an era of standardization. *English Journal*, 105(6), 104-106.
- Eddy, L., English, K., Shaum, B., & Andrew-Vaughan, S. (2018). The Way We Teach Writing Now: The Secondary School Perspective. *PMLA: Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*, 133(1), 171–178.
- Egan, T. M. (2002). Grounded theory research and theory building. *Advances in Developing Human Resources* 4(3), 277-95.
- Elander, J., Harrington, K., Norton, L., Robinson, H., & Reddy, P. (2006). Complex skills and academic writing: A review of evidence about the types of learning required to meet core assessment criteria. *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*, 31(1), 71-90.
- Emig, J. (1971). *The Composing Processes of Twelfth Graders*. NCTE Press.
- Englert, C. S., Mariage, T., & Dusmore, K. (2006). Tenets of socio-cultural theory in writing instruction research. In C. A. MacArthur, S. Graham, & J. Fitzgerald (Eds.), *The handbook of writing research* (pp. 235-247). New York, NY: Guilford Press.
- Fanetti S., Bushrow, K. M., & DeWeese, D. L. (2010). Closing the Gap between High School Writing Instruction and College Writing Expectations. *English Journal*, 99(4), 77–83.
- Flower, L., & Hayes, J. R. (1981). A cognitive process theory of writing. *College Composition and Communication* 32(4), 365-87.

- Fowler-Amato, M. (2020). New possibilities for field experiences: Learning in practice in a university writing center. *Teaching/Writing: The Journal of Writing Teacher Education*, 9(1).
- Franzak, J. K. (2008). On the margins in a high-performing high school: Policy and the struggling reader. *Research in the Teaching of English*, 42, 466-505.
- Gallagher, K. (2009). *Readicide: How schools are killing reading and what you can do about it*. Stenhouse Publishers.
- Gallo, J., & Herrmann, B. (2014). Transforming writing teachers: Two professional development possibilities. *Teaching/Writing: The Journal of Writing Teacher Education*, 3(2), 124-136.
- Gannon, S., & Davies, C. (2007). For love of the word: English teaching, affect and writing. *Changing English*, 14(1), 87–98.
- Gardner, P. (2014). Becoming a teacher of writing: Primary student teachers reviewing their relationship with writing. *English in Education*, 48, 128–148.
- Gergen, K. J. (2000). Qualitative inquiry: Tensions and transformations. In N.K. Denzin & Y.S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 1025-46).
- Gilbert, J., & Graham, S. (2010). Teaching writing to elementary students in Grades 4 to 6: A national survey. *Elementary School Journal*, 110, 494–518.
- Gillespie, A., Graham, S., Kiuahara, S., & Hebert, M. (2014). High school teachers' use of writing to support students' learning: A national survey. *Reading & Writing: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, 27, 1043–1072.
- Giouroukakis, V., & Connolly, M. D. (2015). Utilizing the writing process to develop meaningful arguments. *Voices From the Middle*, 23(2), 21-30.
- Given, L. M. (2008). *The SAGE encyclopedia of qualitative research methods*. SAGE Publications.
- Glaser, B. and Strauss, A. (1967). *Discovery of grounded theory*. Aldine.
- Goldberg, A., Russell, M. & Cook, A. (2003). The effect of computers on student writing: A meta-analysis of studies from 1992 to 2002. *Journal of Technology, Learning, and Assessment*, 2(1), 1–52.
- Graham, S. (2019). Changing how writing is taught. *Review of Research in Education*, 43, 277-303.
- Graham, S. (2018). *A writer(s) within community model of writing*. In C. Bazerman, V. Berninger, D. Brandt, S. Graham, J. Langer, S. Murphy, . . . M. Schleppegrell (Eds.), *The lifespan development of writing* (pp. 271–325). Urbana, IL: National Council of English.

- Graham, S., Bruch, J., Fitzgerald, J., Friedrich, L., Furgeson, J., Greene, K., Smither, & Wulsin, C. (2016). *Teaching secondary students to write effectively* (NCEE 2017-4002). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance.
- Graham, S., & Harris, K. R. (2018). An examination of the design principles underlying a self-regulated strategy development study based on the writers in community model. *Journal of Writing Research*, 10, 139–187.
- Graham, S., & Harris, K. R. (2019). Evidence-based practices in writing. In S. Graham, C.A. MacArthur, & M. Hebert (Eds.), *Best Practices in Writing Instruction, Third Edition* (pp. 3-28). The Guilford Press.
- Graham, S., Harris, K. R., & Chambers, A. (2016). Evidence-based practice and writing instruction. In C. MacArthur, S. Graham, & J. Fitzgerald (Eds.), *Handbook of writing research* (Vol. 2, pp. 211–226). New York, NY: Guilford Press.
- Graham, S., Harris, K. R., Fink, B., & MacArthur, C. (2002). Primary grade teachers' theoretical orientations concerning writing instruction: Construct validation and a nationwide survey. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 27, 147–166.
- Graham, S., Harris, K. R., & Santangelo, T. (2015). Research-based writing practices and the Common Core: Meta-analysis and meta-synthesis. *Elementary School Journal*, 115, 498–522.
- Graham, S., & Perin, D. (2007a). A meta-analysis of writing instruction for adolescent students. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 99, 445-476.
- Graham, S., & Perin, D. (2007b). What we know, what we need to know: Teaching adolescents to write. *Scientific Studies of Reading*, 11, 313-335.
- Graham, S., & Perin, D. (2007c). *Writing next: Effective strategies to improve writing of adolescents in middle and high schools—A report to the Carnegie Corporation of New York*. Washington, DC: Alliance for Excellent Education.
- Graham, S., & Rijlaarsdam, G. (2016). Writing education around the globe. *Reading & Writing: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, 29, 781–792.
- Graham, S., & Sandmel, K. (2011). The process writing approach: A meta-analysis. *The Journal of Educational Research*, 104(6), 396-407.
- Haddix, M. (2010). No longer on the margins: Researching the hybrid literate identities of black and Latina preservice teachers. *Research in the Teaching of English*, 45(2), 97-123.
- Hall, A. H., & Grisham-Brown, J. (2011). Writing development over time: Examining preservice teachers' attitudes and beliefs about writing. *Journal of Early Childhood Teacher Education*, 32(2), 148-158.

- Harmey, S. J., & Rodgers, E. M. (2017). Differences in the early writing development of struggling children who beat the odds and those who did not. *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk*, 3, 157.
- Higgins, B., Miller, M., & Wegmann, S. (2006). Teaching to the test...not! Balancing best practice and testing requirements in writing. *The Reading Teacher*, 60(4), 310-319.
- Hillocks, G. (1986). Research on written composition: New directions for teaching. Urbana, IL: National Conference on Research in English/ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading and Communication Skills.
- Hillocks, G. (2002). *The testing trap: How state writing assessments control learning*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Hillocks, G. (2006). Middle and high school composition. In P. Smagorinsky (Ed.), *Research on composition: Multiple perspectives on two decades of change* (pp.48-77). New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Hyland, K. (2017). Learning to write for academic purposes: Specificity and second language writing. In *Teaching writing for academic purposes to multilingual students: Instructional approaches*, edited by Bitchener, J., Storch, N., & Wette, R. 24–41. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Jago, C. (2014). Do no harm. *Voices From the Middle*, 21(3), 10-12.
- Jeffery, J. V., & Wilcox, K. (2014). ‘How do I do it if I don’t like writing?’: Adolescents’ stances toward writing across disciplines. *Reading and Writing*, 6, 1095.
- Johnson, A. P. (2016). *Academic writing: Process and product*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- Johnson, L. P., & Eubanks, E. P. (2015). One good lesson, community of practice model for preparing teachers of writing. *Teaching/Writing: The Journal of Writing Teacher Education*, 4(2), 139-160.
- Johnson, L. P., & Gonzalez, J. (2014). Culturally relevant practices and management of an ELA teacher: A tale of two classrooms. *The Journal of Balanced Literacy Research and Instruction*, 2(1), 18-24.
- Johnson, L. P., & Sullivan, H. (2020). Revealing the human and the writer: The promise of a humanizing writing pedagogy for black students. *Research in the Teaching of English*, 54 (4), 418-438.
- Jordan, J. (2006). Am I a liar? The angst of a high school English teacher. In P. Sullivan & H. Tinberg (Eds.). *What is “college level” writing?* Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.

- Juzwik, M.M., & Cushman, E. (2014). Teacher epistemology and ontology: Emerging perspectives on writing instruction and classroom discourse. *Research in the Teaching of English*, 49(2), 89-94.
- Karchmer-Klein, R. (2013). Best practices in using technology to support writing. In S. Graham, C.A. MacArthur, & J. Fitzgerald (Eds.), *Best Practices in Writing Instruction, 2nd Edition* (pp. 309-33).
- Kershaw, S., & Schatschneider, C. (2012). A latent variable approach to the simple view of reading. *Reading and Writing: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, 25(2), 433–464.
- Kittle, P. (2006). It's not the high school teachers' fault: An alternative to the blame game. In P. Sullivan & H. Tinberg (Eds.), *What is "college level" writing?* National Council of Teachers of English.
- Kiuhara, S. A., Graham, S., & Hawken, L. S. (2009). Teaching writing to high school students: A national survey. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 101(1), 136–160.
- Knight, J.A., & Block, M. K. (2019). Writing across campus: Using authentic writing experiences to help pre-service teachers learn to teach writing. *Teaching/Writing: The Journal of Writing Teacher Education*, 7(1).
- Knoch, U., & Sitajalabhorn, W. (2013). A closer look at integrated writing tasks: Towards a more focused definition for assessment purposes. *Assessing Writing* 18(4), 300–308.
- Kohnen, A. (2013). Content-area teachers as teachers of writing. *Teaching/Writing: The Journal of Writing Teacher Education*, 2(1).
- Langeberg, M. E. (2019). Changing EPP curriculum: An ethnographic study of preservice English teachers and writing feedback methodology. *Issues in Teacher Education*, 28(1), 36-51.
- Lewis, C. (2006). African American male teachers in public schools: An examination of three urban school districts. *Teachers College Record*, 108(2), 224-245.
- Lincoln, Y.S. & Guba, E.G. (1985). *Naturalistic Inquiry*. SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Llosa, L., Beck, S. W., & Zhao, C. G. (2011). An investigation of academic writing in secondary schools to inform the development of diagnostic classroom assessments. *Assessing Writing*, 16, 256-73.
- Loretto, A., DeMartino, S., & Godley, A. (2016). Secondary students' perceptions of peer review of writing. *Research in the Teaching of English*, 51(2), 134-160.
- Lucenko, K. (2017). Reframing readiness: The "Framework for Success" as writing comprehension. *English Journal*, 106(6), 91-94.

- Marsh, J., Sigler, H., & Kissel, B. (2019). What new writing teachers need: The conditions administrators foster to enable writing instruction. *English Leadership Quarterly*, 42(1), 17-20.
- Mateos, M., Martin, E., Villalon, R., & Luna, M. (2008). Reading and writing to learn in secondary education: Online processing activity and written products in summarizing and synthesizing tasks. *Reading and Writing* 21(7), 675-697.
- Mathison, S. (1988). Why triangulate? *Educational Researcher* 17(2), 13-17.
- Matsuhashi, A. (1981). Pausing and Planning: The Tempo of Written Discourse Production. *Research in the Teaching of English*, 15(2), 113-134.
- Mccarthey, S. J. (2008). The impact of no child left behind on teachers' writing instruction. *Written Communication*, 25(4), 462-505.
- McCrimmon, M. (2005). High school writing practices in the age of standards: implications for college composition. *Teaching English in the Two-Year College*, 32(3), 248 – 260.
- McGhee, M. W., & Lew, C. (2007). Leadership and writing: How principals' knowledge, beliefs, and interventions affect writing instruction in elementary and secondary schools. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 43, 358–380.
- McGhee, G., Marland, G.R. and Atkinson, J.M. (2007) Grounded theory research: Literature reviewing and reflexivity. *Journal of Advanced Nursing* 60(3), 334-342.
- Merriam, S. (2009). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. Jossey-Bass.
- Midgette, E., Haria, P., & MacArthur, C. (2008). The effects of content and audience awareness goals for revision on the persuasive essays of fifth- and eighth-grade students. *Reading and Writing*, 21, 131–151.
- Milheim, K. L. (2006). *Not just an access issue: Further analysis of the digital divide from a socio-economic perspective*. Harrisburg: Penn State University.
- Moore, R., & Vitale, D. (2018). *High school students' access to and use of technology at home and in school*. Iowa City, IA: ACT.
- Morgan, D. N. (2017). 'I'm not a good writer': Supporting teachers' writing identities in a university course. In T. Cremin & T. Locke (Eds.), *Writer identity and the teaching and learning of writing* (pp. 39-52). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Morphy, P., & Graham, S. (2012). Word processing programs and weaker writers/readers: a meta-analysis of research findings. *Reading & Writing*, 25(3), 641–678.
- Mosley, M. (2006). The truth about high school english. In P. Sullivan, H. Tinberg, & S. Blau (Eds.), *What is College-Level Writing?* National Council of Teachers of English.

- Muchmore, J. A. (2001). The Story of “Anna”: A Life History Study of the Literacy Beliefs and Teaching Practices of an Urban High School English Teacher. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, 28(3), 89–110.
- Nagin, C. (2006). *Because writing matters: Improving student writing in our schools*. Jossey-Bass education series.
- National Assessment Governing Board (2011). *Writing Framework for the 2011 National Assessment of Educational Progress*. U.S. Department of Education.
- National Center for Education Statistics (2012). *The Nation's Report Card: Writing 2011* (NCES 2012–470). Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education, Washington, D.C.
- National Commission on Writing (2003). *The neglected “r”: The need for a writing revolution*. College Board.
- National Commission on Writing (2004). *Writing: A ticket to work...or a ticket out: A survey of business leaders*. College Board.
- National Council of Teachers of English. (2006). *NCTE Principles of Adolescent Literacy Reform*. <https://cdn.ncte.org/nctefiles/resources/policyresearch/adollitprinciples.pdf>.
- National Council of Teachers of English. (2011). *Draft NCTE/NCATE standards for initial preparation of teachers of secondary English language arts, grades 7-12*.
- National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE). (2019). *Shifting from professional development to professional learning: Centering teacher empowerment*. Retrieved from <https://ncte.org/statement/proflearning/>
- Newell, G.E., VanDerHeide, J., & Olsen, A. W. (2014). High school English language arts teachers’ argumentative epistemologies for teaching writing. *Research in the Teaching of English*, 49(2), 95-119.
- Olan, E. L., & Richmond, K.J. (2019). Using literacy quadrants in preparing teachers of writing: Reflective tools for identity, agency, and dialogue. *Teaching/Writing: The Journal of Writing Teacher Education*, 6(1).
- Opie, C. (2004). Research Approaches. In C. Opie (Ed.), *Doing educational research* (pp. 73-94). London: Sage.
- Pasternak, D. L., Caughlan, S., Hallman, H. L., Renzi, L. & Rush, L.S. (2017). *Secondary English Teacher Education in the United States*. Bloomsbury Academic.
- Patterson, J.P., & Duer, D. (2006). High school teaching and college expectations in writing and reading. *English Journal*, 95(3), 81.
- Patton, M. Q. (2015). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods*. SAGE Publications.

- Premont, D., Kerkhoff, S., & Alsup, J. (2020). Preservice teacher writer identities: Tensions and implications. *Teaching/Writing: A Journal of Writing Teacher Education*, 8(1).
- Pritchard, R. J., & Honeycutt, R. L. (2005). The process approach to writing instruction: Examining its effectiveness. In C.A. MacArthur, S. Graham, and J. Fitzgerald (Eds.), *Handbook of Writing Research* (pp. 275-290). New York, NY: Guilford Press.
- Rafalow, M.H. (2020). *Digital Divisions: How Schools Create Inequality in the Tech Era*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Read, S., & Landon-Hays, M. M. (2013). The Knowing/Doing Gap: Challenges of Effective Writing Instruction in High School. *Teaching/Writing: The Journal of Writing Teacher Education*, 2(2), 3.
- Ritchey, K. D., & Coker, D. L. (2014). Identifying writing difficulties in first grade: An investigation of writing and reading measures. *Learning Disabilities Research & Practice (Wiley-Blackwell)*, 29(2), 54–65.
- Roen, D., Goggin, M.D., & Clary-Lemon, J. (2008). Teaching of writing and writing teachers through the ages. In C. Bazerman (Ed.), *Handbook of Research on Writing*. New York: Lawrence Erlbaum, 347-364.
- Roskos, K., Lenhart, L. A., & Tabors, P. O. (2009). *Oral language and early literacy in preschool: Talking, reading, and writing* (2nd ed.). International Reading Association.
- Rotella, C. (2013). No child left untableted. *The New York Times*.
- Shanahan, T. (2016). Relationships between reading and writing development. In C. A. MacArthur, S. Graham, & J. Fitzgerald (Eds.), *Handbook of writing research* (pp. 194–207). The Guilford Press.
- Sheils, M. (1975). Why Johnny can't write. *Newsweek*.
- Shim, E. (2009). An investigation of secondary English teachers' perceptions of writing instruction. *Modern English Education*, 10(1), 114–130.
- Smagorinsky, P. (1997). Personal growth in social context: A high school senior's search for meaning in and through writing. *Written Communication*, 14(1), 63–105.
- Smagorinsky, P. (2007). Experiences with personal, academic, and hybrid writing: A study of two high school seniors. *English in Australia*, 42(3), 55–73.
- Smagorinsky, P., & Daigle, E. A. (2012). The role of affect in students' writing for school. In E. Grigorenko, E. Mambrino, & D. Preiss (Eds.), *Handbook of writing: A mosaic of perspectives and views* (pp. 293–307). New York: Psychology Press.

- Smagorinsky, P., Daigle, E. A., O'Donnell-Allen, C., & Bynum, S. (2010a). Bullshit in academic writing: A protocol analysis of a high school senior's process of interpreting. *Much Ado About Nothing Research in the Teaching of English*, 44(4), 368–405.
- Smagorinsky, P., Johannessen, L. R., Kahn, E. A., & McCann, T. M. (2010b). *The dynamics of writing instruction: A structured process approach for middle and high school*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Smagorinsky, P., Wilson, A. A., & Moore, C. (2011). Teaching grammar and writing: A beginning teacher's dilemma. *English Education*, 43(3), 262–292.
- Smith, N. B. (2017). A principled revolution in the teaching of writing. *English Journal*, 106(5), 70-75.
- Sparks, R., Patton, J.M., & Murdoch, A. (2014). Early reading success and its relationship to reading achievement and reading volume: Replication of '10 years later.' *Reading and Writing* 27(1), 189-211.
- Stanley, C. T., Petscher, Y., & Catts, H. (2018). A longitudinal investigation of direct and indirect links between reading skills in kindergarten and reading comprehension in 10th grade. *Reading and Writing*, 31, 133–153.
- Strauss, A. (1987). *Qualitative Analysis*. Cambridge University Press.
- Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1998). *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory* (2nd ed.). Sage Publications, Inc.
- Sullivan, P. (2010). "What can we learn about 'college-level' writing from basic writing students? The importance of reading" In P. Sullivan, H. Tinberg, & Blau, S. (Eds.), *What is college level writing?* Vol. 2. (pp. 233-253). Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.
- Sullivan, P., & Tinberg, H. (Eds.). (2006). *What is "College-Level" writing?* National Council of Teachers of English.
- Thompson, T. C. (2002). *Teaching Writing in High School and College: Conversations and Collaborations*. NCTE.
- Thompson, T., & Gallagher, A. (2010). When a college professor and a high school teacher read the same papers. In P. Sullivan, H. Tinberg, & S. Blau (Eds.), *What is College-Level Writing?*, National Council of Teachers of English.
- Troia, G. A. (2006). Writing instruction for students with learning disabilities. In C. A. MacArthur, S. Graham, & J. Fitzgerald (Eds.), *Handbook of writing research* (pp. 324-336). New York, NY: Guilford Press.

- Troia, G., & Graham, S. (2016). Common Core Writing and Language Standards and aligned state assessments: A national survey of teacher beliefs and attitudes. *Reading & Writing: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, 29, 1719–1743.
- Troia, G. A., & Maddox, M. E. (2004). Writing instruction in middle schools: Special and general education teachers share their views and voice their concerns. *Exceptionality*, 12(1), 19–37.
- Troia, G. A., & Olinghouse, N. G. (2013). The Common Core State Standards and Evidence-Based Educational Practices: The Case of Writing. *School Psychology Review*, 42(3), 343–357.
- Troia, G. A., Shankland, R. K., & Wolbers, K. A. (2012). Motivation research in writing: Theoretical and empirical considerations. *Reading and Writing Quarterly*, 28, 5-28.
- Tulley, Christine E. (2013). What are preservice teachers taught about the teaching of writing?: A survey of Ohio's undergraduate writing methods courses, *Teaching/Writing: The Journal of Writing Teacher Education*, 2(1), 38-48.
- United States Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (2004). *The condition of education 2004*. Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office.
- Vetter, A., Myers, J., & Hester, M. (2014). Negotiating ideologies about teaching writing in a high school English classroom. *The Teacher Educator*, 49(1), 10–27.
- Warner, J. (2018). *Why they can't write: Killing the five-paragraph essay and other necessities*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins UP.
- Watanabe, M. (2008). Tracking in the era of high-stakes state accountability reform: Case studies of classroom instruction in North Carolina. *Teachers College Record*, 110, 489-534.
- Wertz, F. J., Charmaz, K., McMullen, L. M., Josselson, R., Anderson, R., & McSpadden, E. (2011). *Five Ways of Doing Qualitative Analysis*. New York, NY: The Guilford Press.
- Wilcox, K. C. (2011). Writing across the curriculum for secondary school English language learners: A case Study. *Writing and Pedagogy*, 3(1), 79–111.
- Wilcox, K. C. (2015). An Urban Secondary School Case Study of Disciplinary Writing in Tracked Classrooms. *Education and Urban Society*, 47(2), 242–268.
- Wilcox, K. C., & Jeffery, J. V. (2014). Adolescents' writing in the content areas: National study results. *Research in the Teaching of English*, 49(2), 168-76.

- Wilcox, K., Jeffrey, J., & Gardner-Bixler, A. (2016). Writing to the Common Core: Teachers' response to changes in standards and assessments for writing in elementary schools. *Reading & Writing: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, 29, 903–928.
- Williams, A. D. (2019). I can't do cartwheels, so I write: Students' writing affect. *Composition Studies*, 47(2), 68-87.
- Woolsey, T. D., Lapp, D., & Fisher, D. (2012). Students' and teachers' perceptions: An inquiry into academic writing. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 55(8), 714-724.
- Yancey, K.B. (2009). *Writing in the 21st century*. National Council of Teachers of English.
- Yung, K. W. H., & Cai, Y. (2020). Do secondary school-leaving English examination results predict university students' academic writing performance?: A latent profile analysis. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 45(4): 629-642.
- Zimmerman, B. S., Morgan, D. N., & Kidder-Brown, M. K. (2014). The Use of Conceptual and Pedagogical Tools as Mediators of Preservice Teachers' Perceptions of Self as Writers and Future Teachers of Writing. *Action in Teacher Education*, 36(2), 141-156.
- Zumbrunn, S., & Krause, K. (2012). Conversations with Leaders: Principles of Effective Writing Instruction. *Reading Teacher*, 65(5), 346–353.

Appendices

Appendix A: Institutional Review Board Approval Letter

THE UNIVERSITY OF
ALABAMA

Office of the Vice President for
Research & Economic Development
Office for Research Compliance

February 7, 2020

Khadeidra Billingsley
Department of English
The University of Alabama
Box 870244

Re: IRB # EX-20-CM-046 "Straight from the Front Line: High School Teachers' Perceptions of College Writing"

Dear Ms. Billingsley:

The University of Alabama Institutional Review Board has granted approval for your proposed research. Your protocol has been given exempt approval according to 45 CFR part 46.104(d)(2) as outlined below:

(2) Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording) if at least one of the following criteria is met:

(iii) The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects can readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects, and an IRB conducts a limited IRB review to make the determination required by §46.111(a)(7).

The approval for your application will lapse on February 6, 2021. If your research will continue beyond this date, please submit the annual report to the IRB as required by University policy before the lapse. Please note, any modifications made in research design, methodology, or procedures must be submitted to and approved by the IRB before implementation. Please submit a final report form when the study is complete.

Please use reproductions of the IRB approved informed consent form to obtain consent from your participants.

Good luck with your research.

Sincerely,

Carpanato T. Myles, MSM, CIM, CIP
Director & Research Compliance Officer

Jessup Building | Box 870127 | Tuscaloosa, AL 35487-0127
205-348-8461 | Fax 205-348-7189 | Toll Free 1-877-820-3066

Appendix B: Participant Recruitment Email

8/8/2021

Mail - Khadeidra Billingsley - Outlook

Research Interest Invite

Khadeidra Billingsley <knbillingsley@crimson.ua.edu>

Wed 4/8/2020 5:41 PM

To:

Hello _____,

My name is Khay Billingsley and I am currently a Ph.D. student in the CRES (Composition, Rhetoric, and English Studies) program at The University of Alabama.

I am reaching out because I am currently recruiting high school English teachers to participate in my dissertation project which is focused on illustrating secondary teachers' perceptions of college writing and the ways they translate those perceptions into their pedagogy. Participation would require no more than 3 total hours of your time (a 1-hour one-on-one interview and a 2-hour focus group). These interactions have been approved by the IRB to occur via Zoom in the wake of our current societal circumstances.

If this sounds of interest to you, feel free to reply expressing your interest and I can forward you the IRB consent form. If you are unable to participate, I completely understand and appreciate you reading this email. Also, if you know of other 9-12th grade English teachers in the area that may be interested, feel free to share this email with them!

--

Khadeidra N. Billingsley | Ph.D. Student; Graduate Teaching Assistant; First-Year Writing Program
Graduate Student Administrator

Composition, Rhetoric, and English Studies
The University of Alabama
knbillingsley@crimson.ua.edu



Appendix C: Informed Consent Form

Project Title: 'Straight from the Front Line': High School Teachers' Perceptions of College Writing

Informed Consent Form

Please read this informed consent carefully before you decide to participate in the study.

Consent Form Key Information:

- Participate in a 3-hour study about attitudes and beliefs about college writing
- Take part in a focus group and individual interview
- No information collected or published that will connect identity with responses
- Opportunity to share ideas and engage in dialogue with other high school English teachers

Purpose of the research study: The purpose of the study is to examine high school teachers' perceptions of college writing. Through the use of semi-structured interviews and focus groups, the researcher aims to understand the definitions and conceptualizations of what writing at the college level requires. This study will be the initial foundations of a broader conversation that needs to occur between high school and college writing educators to incite potential future collaborations.

What you will do in the study: In this study, you will be asked to share your perceptions about college writing. You will participate in a focus group with other high school English teachers to discuss what you believe college writing to be and what you think it requires college-bound students to know and do. This session will be audio-recorded for transcription purposes. After taking part in this group dialogue, you will be asked to do a one-on-one interview to discuss how you incorporate your perceptions into your classroom practices. You are able to skip or not answer any questions asked. To gain a further understanding, the researcher may ask to review some of your pedagogical materials.

Time required: The study will require about 3 hours of your time. This includes a 1 2-hour long focus group and a 1-hour one-on-one interview with the researcher.

Risks: There are minimal risks associated with participation in this study. During the focus group, I cannot guarantee confidentiality for my participants, however, you will not be asked to disclose any self-identifying information during this part of the study.

Benefits: There are no direct benefits to you for participating in this research study. The study may help future college-bound students as it prompts future dialogue and possible collaboration among high school and college English educators about the alignment of writing curricula.

Confidentiality: The information that you give in the study will be handled confidentially. Your information will be assigned a pseudonym. The list connecting your name to this pseudonym will be kept in a locked file in a locked unit. When the study is completed, and the data have been analyzed, this list will be destroyed. Your name will not be used in any report. After the researcher has transcribed the files, the audio recordings of the focus group and individual interviews will be destroyed no more than a week after the sessions. It should be noted that during the focus group, I cannot guarantee your data will be confidential from the other participants, however, you will not be asked to present any self-identifying information (name, school where you teach, etc.) during this session.

Project Title: 'Straight from the Front Line': High School Teachers' Perceptions of College Writing

Voluntary participation: Your participation in the study is completely voluntary.

Right to withdraw from the study: You have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

How to withdraw from the study: If you want to withdraw from the study during the focus group session, tell the researcher and leave the room. If you want to do so during the interview, tell the interviewer to stop the interview. If you choose to withdraw during the class observation, ask the researcher to leave the room. There is no penalty for withdrawing.

Compensation/Reimbursement: You will receive no payment for participating in the study.

If you have questions about the study or need to report a study related issue please contact, contact:

Name of Principal Investigator: Khadeidra Billingsley
Title: Ph.D. Student; Graduate Teaching Assistant
Department Name: English
Telephone: 254-768-9273
Email address: knbillingsley@crimson.ua.edu

Faculty Advisor's Name: Dr. Amy Dayton
Department Name: English
Telephone: 205-348-5049
Email address: adayton@ua.edu

If you have questions about your rights as a participant in a research study, would like to make suggestions or file complaints and concerns about the research study, please contact:

Ms. Tanta Myles, the University of Alabama Research Compliance Officer at (205)-348-8461 or toll-free at 1-877-820-3066. You may also ask questions, make suggestions, or file complaints and concerns through the IRB Outreach Website at <http://ovpred.ua.edu/research-compliance/prco/>. You may email the Office for Research Compliance at rscompliance@research.ua.edu.

Project Title: 'Straight from the Front Line': High School Teachers' Perceptions of College Writing

Agreement:

I agree to participate in the research study described above.

I do not agree to participate in the research study described above.

AUDIO RECORDING CONSENT:

I understand that part of my participation in this research study will be audio recorded and I give my permission to be recorded.

___ Yes, my participation can be audio recorded.

Signature of Research Participant

Date

Print Name of Research Participant

Signature of Investigator or other Person Obtaining Consent

Date

Print Name of Investigator or other Person Obtaining Consent

Appendix D: Phase 1 Interview Questions

Experience:

1. How much experience do you have in teaching writing?
2. Describe your collegiate training/program of study. How do you feel that the curriculum did or did not prepare you to teach writing?

Definition of Academic Writing

1. How would you define academic writing?
2. What skills/knowledge do you think academic writing requires/necessitates?
3. What do you perceive to be goals of academic writing?

Identity

1. Do you think of yourself as a writer? If so, Describe your personal journey as a writer. If not, tell me how your journey into the classroom and how you became responsible for teaching writing.
2. What frames your conceptualization of academic writing? Education? Identity? Experience?

Institution Demographics

1. Describe student demographics of your school and of the specific courses that you teach.
2. What are common post-graduation plans among your school's students?
3. What exposure opportunities (dual enrollment, vocational training programs) are students able to participate in? (Ask for corresponding percentages/estimations)
4. In what ways are parents involved/present as it relates to the students' academics?

Pedagogy

1. What are the underlying goals of your writing pedagogy? College preparation?
Real-world use?
2. How do the different courses that you teach (basic, regular, Honors, AP) align with these goals? Do they differ at varying levels? How so?
3. What standards/accountabilities at the institutional, district, state and/or federal level are you required to adhere to?
4. How do you balance those with your own pedagogical priorities?
5. In what ways do you integrate your perceptions of college writing into your classroom practices?
6. What types of barriers complicate your pedagogy?

Access

1. Do you feel that you have adequate access to educational materials that help you reach your own pedagogical goals? Meet the standards/outcomes set at the institutional, district, state, and/or federal levels? Elaborate.
2. What types of resources are available to students?
3. Based on the demographics of your institution, what kind of student access issues do you have to accommodate?

School-College Communication/Collaboration

1. How much contact/communication do you have with college level writing faculty?
2. Does the school system help you with in-service training about what is happening in college?

3. How long does it take your curriculum to adjust to those changes?
4. Are you a member of any disciplinary organizations like NCTE and CCCC?

Writing Across the Curriculum

1. Do you feel that the English department is largely responsible for writing pedagogy at your institution? Explain.
2. How much do your colleagues in other departments integrate academic writing into their curriculum?
3. How much communication/collaboration is there between you and your colleagues?

Appendix E: Phase 2 Interview Questions

- 1) How do you describe the culture surrounding writing instruction in your department, school, and district?
- 2) What percentage of your curriculum is devoted to writing?
- 3) How would you describe your students' feeling toward the writing process?
- 4) How do you think your personal journey as a writer and/or your educational background influences the way that you teach writing specifically?
- 5) In his book about building collaboration among high school and college English educators, Thomas C. Thompson asserts that, "teaching college is an entirely different world from teaching high school". Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Why or why not?
- 6) What do you want college instructors or workforce employers to know about your student writers?
- 7) What do you want the naysayers to know about what it means to teach high school English?
- 8) If you could respond to those who say that high school teachers are to blame for students' poor writing skills, what would you say?