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Shari L. Daniels Dr.

*University of Minnesota Crookston*, danielss@crk.umn.edu

Pamela Beck

*University of North Dakota*, pamela.beck@und.edu

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## **The Path to Self-Authorship: The Pre-Service Teacher-Writer**

By Dr. Shari L. Daniels, *University of Minnesota Crookston*  
Pamela Beck, *University of North Dakota*

The roles, expectations, and responsibilities of teachers are in a state of constant flux. Darling-Hammond and Bransford (2005) assert that teacher preparation programs need to provide pre-service teachers with abilities to be adaptive experts who can make decisions based on varying contexts, choose practices that align with their beliefs and core values, and “exercise trustworthy judgment based on a strong base of knowledge” (p. 2). Unfortunately, many teacher education programs are not designed to support the transformational learning that helps pre-service teachers “learn to negotiate and act on [their] own purposes, values, feelings, and meanings rather than those [they] have uncritically assimilated from others” (Mezirow, 2000, p. 8). This developmental capacity, or “self-authorship” requires new teachers to recognize their internal voices and use them to shape beliefs, how to react and base decisions from here (Baxter-Magolda, 2009). We propose that one avenue to begin the journey of self-authorship is through the development of an identity as a writer.

In this literature review, we suggest there is a relationship between the phases of self-authorship and the transformational development of an identity as a teacher-writer. We adopt Cremin & Myhill’s definition of a teacher-writer as one who writes for both professional and personal reasons and models authentic writing for their students in order to take part in the classroom’s writing community (Cremin & Myhill, 2012).

We explore this relationship as key questions of this study. We also propose several possibilities for designing writing practices in teacher education programs to promote self-authorship in pre-service teachers in preparation for the demands of being a first year teacher. Implications for future research are also suggested.

### **Methodology**

This literature review is organized into six sections:

- 1) A brief summary of the phases of self-authorship theory as established the work of Baxter Magolda (2004, 2009), and Meszaros (2007), key researchers in the most recent development of self-authorship theory
- 2) Relevant research on the demands of new teachers and how self-authorship connects
- 3) An examination of the relationship of the narrative accounts of three well-known teacher-writers’ autobiographical sketches as writers, along with the work of Anne Whitney (2008) and her qualitative research

pertaining to participant transformations during the National Writing Project Summer Institutes to the stages of self-authorship

- 4) Discussion
- 5) Possibilities for faculty and teacher education programs to encourage pre-service teachers to develop a writing identity
- 6) Implications for further research

The perimeters of this study exclude the research on the impact of reflective writing for teachers, which is a key tool for developing teacher expertise. This area has been heavily researched, with an emphasis on professional growth. The decision to use autobiographical sketches, or personal narratives of teachers' development as a writer was to gain a sense of the stages of self-authorship that are embedded in the stories.

### **Self-Authorship Development Theory**

The work of William Perry's Intellectual Development Model (1970), which he began in 1968, is foundational in Baxter Magolda's self-authorship development theory. Perry's seminal research describes four stages college students journey through with respect to intellectual development: dualism/received knowledge, multiplicity/subjective knowledge, relativism/procedural knowledge and finally, commitment/constructed knowledge. The journey through these stages is complex, fluid and are typically repeated in various contexts.

Due to the limitations of Perry's research, narrow participant selection and a subjective interview process, Baxter Magolda, more recently in 1986, sought to build on Perry's work by studying 101 first year college students. Her work extended beyond college into the post-college phase. As her participants reached their early 30s, she "expanded her investigation of intellectual development to include how participants viewed themselves and their interconnections with others" (Meszaros, 2007, p.9). Her findings concluded that "the missing piece of their college experience was the lack of emphasis on developing an internal sense of self" (Baxter Magolda, 2004, p. xxii). Her results revealed these participants had learned the content in their discipline and were able to apply it using processes for thinking about it, yet it was not until the years that followed college that their "thinking, knowing and applying their perspectives to their work all hinged on their internal values and how they defined themselves" (Baxter Magolda, 2004, p. xxii).

This holistic way to construct meaning by "internally generating and coordinating one's beliefs, values, and internal loyalties, rather than depending on external values, beliefs, and interpersonal loyalties" was defined as self-authorship

by Baxter Magolda (Boes, Magolda, & Buckley, 2010, p. 4). A reshaping of beliefs to become self-authored through the journey of developmental transformations can enable us to meet the learning expectations of our personal growth, work and relationships (Baxter Magolda, 2004). This framework for self-authorship includes four phases in which one transforms from external to self-definition, similar to Perry's framework.

According to Baxter Magolda (2004), the first phase in the journey toward self-authorship is defined as *following external formulas* in which epistemological assumptions, or ways of knowing, is through *absolute knowing*. In this phase, students seek outside authority and use formulas from the external world to navigate their decisions about who they are, in their work and in relationships. To those in this stage, knowledge exists as "right or wrong in all areas of knowledge and those in authority hold the answers" (Baxter Magolda, 2004, p. 27). In the second phase, students begin to recognize that these external formulas do not work to achieve their goals and enter *the crossroads*. Here students begin to realize that knowledge is uncertain in some areas and they begin to adopt a *transitional way of knowing*. These students still seek guidance of authority in the parts of their lives in which certainty exists for them, yet begin to "shift from acquiring knowledge to understanding it" (Baxter Magolda, 2004, p. 30). The recognition of their dissatisfaction stemming from ignoring their own internal needs and perspectives prompts them to develop strategies for looking inward, which leads to the third phase, *becoming the author of one's own life*. In this phase, students "decide what to believe about one's identity, the world, and how to interact with others" in a way that is true to their beliefs and assumptions about the world (p. xix). They enter a more *independent way of knowing* as they recognize discrepancies amongst authorities and begin to see a variety of views possible. They realize there are other sources of knowledge and include themselves as valued in seeking and contributing to knowledge based on their opinions (p. 32). Continued movement through self-authorship enables students to develop an *internal foundation*, which Baxter Magolda identifies as the fourth stage (p. xix). In this stage, one recognizes their own sense of power in their life and makes decisions based on their values and *contextual knowing*.

Baxter Magolda found that "minimal self-authorship was often the source of struggle in the contexts of college education, employment, community and in their personal lives" (Baxter Magolda & King, 2004, p. 41). She recognized how important it was to achieving self-authorship in one's early to mid-20s is for success in adult life. As stated by Coughlin (2015) "Magolda's 27-year study of college students, in which she has traced student's development from the age of 18 well into adulthood found that achieving self-authorship is important, getting there is not automatic, and *Learning Partners* are a critical support on the journey" (Baxter

Magolda, 2009, p. 18). These findings align with the challenges new teachers encounter in their first few years of teaching.

### **Self-Authorship Importance in New Teachers**

The skills and capabilities new teachers must attain can be arduous and complex. When considering the classroom context, within any given moment, a teacher must “develop a classroom presence and good radar for watching and interpreting what many different students are doing and feeling at each moment, skills for explaining, questioning, discussing, giving feedback, constructing tasks, facilitating work, and managing the classroom – all at once” (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2011, p. 374). Teachers are continually making instructional decisions to meet their students’ needs. These decisions are based on their beliefs, prior experiences and professional judgement, yet also multifaceted, due to multiple contextual factors: knowledge about students, goals of the task, context and dispositions of the teacher at that moment (Siuty, Leko & Knacksted, 2018). Schwartz and Sharpe (2010) advocate that for teachers to have these necessary skills, they need the ability to frame a problem by applying it to their beliefs, have the skills to make adaptations, and have had relevant experiences in decision making to draw from.

The ability to attain decision-making skills based on beliefs and values describe Baxter Magolda’s self-authorship stage. For new teachers, these beliefs and values may have been identified in their teacher education programs, but the pressures from colleagues, administration, parents and society causes them to ignore their internal voice that speak to these beliefs. Once in the classroom, they choose practices as compliance to others or to keep the status quo, adhering to a false identity of who they want to be as teachers. Continuing down this path leads to dissatisfaction as they are making decisions based on what others expect of them as opposed to their own self-determined criteria (Baxter-Magolda, 2009).

#### *Relationships*

A teacher also must have exceptional skills to initiate, build, and nurture many layers of relationships consecutively. She must strive to create strong relationships with her students, communicate effectively with parents and work collaboratively with colleagues and administration. While she is building relationships with her students, she is also creating conditions for her students to develop positive and safe relationships with each other. “Interpersonal relations have tremendous impact on the quality of teaching and learning. Students perform much better in environments where they feel comfortable and valued” (Gay, 2010, p. 232). Veenman (1984) reviewed 83 studies on perceived problems of beginning teachers,

and relations with parents ranks in the top five. Parents tend to place pressure on beginning teachers voicing expectations of traditional academic work, while also receiving a lack of parental support in other cases (Ferguson & Johnson, 2010; Veenman, 1984). Relationships with colleagues, mentors and administration can be a significant challenge. New teachers often report difficult interactions with colleagues attempting to seek support or meaningful feedback only to receive resentment or even hostility from veteran teachers (Fry, 2007).

To manage these relationships, new teachers need a solid foundation in knowing how to trust themselves to decide what to believe and to recognize the diverse perspectives of others. Self-authorship involves the understanding that many things are beyond one's control, yet realizing one can control their reaction to others and situations. These reactions can be shaped by committing to the internal foundation that guides them to make meaning about reality and therefore, make choices that align with this foundation (Baxter-Magolda, 2009). Adults with a developed internal foundation gives a solid grounding where they have the ability to develop mutual relationships with others yet also function interdependently of one another (Baxter-Magolda, 2004). The ability to maintain healthy relationships to others and oneself is vital in the well-being of successful teachers.

#### *Expectations and Reality*

The abilities a new teacher must obtain are innumerable, and "scholars indicate there are discrepancies between preservice teachers' expectations and the reality of full-time teaching" (Bentley, Morway & Short, 2013). Other studies report new teachers are unprepared. "Classroom discipline, motivating students, dealing with individual differences, assessing students' work, relationships with parents, organization of class work, insufficient materials and supplies, and dealing with problems of individual students" are frequently areas of challenge for new teachers (Veenman, 1984, p. 160). High attrition rates, 29% leaving the profession during the first three years of teaching, are a result of the overwhelming and often challenging conditions of a new teacher's experience (Ingersoll, 2001). Muller-Fohrbrodt et al. (1978) cites three personal causes for the reality shock that often prompt new teachers to leave the profession: "1) a wrong choice for the teaching profession; 2) improper attitudes; and 3) unsuitable personality characteristics" (Veenman, 1984, p. 147) along with situational causes which are beyond the teacher's control.

#### *Identity and Dispositions*

Making career decisions based on your personal identity, developing dispositions that shape attitudes about students, teaching and the profession and recognizing that your personality traits do not match your chosen profession are all characteristics of self-authored individuals who have developed an internal foundation. If pre-

service teachers do not receive opportunities to reflect on who they are and what their dreams are, they continue to conform to parents', teachers' and society's formulas of who they should be. This brings about a disillusionment and an internal battle once in the classroom as their internal self does not match their external conditions. It is common practice to blame the conditions for the distress of the job, but in fact, much may be due to a lack of self-authorship. If these teachers do not begin to listen to their internal voice, they will continue to be dissatisfied with many aspects of teaching and teach in survival mode.

### *Following External Formulas*

New teachers that do stay in the profession often resort to teacher centered, and traditional practices in order to maintain order and control, with students working on worksheets at their desks, as opposed to utilizing the innovative methods they were introduced to in their teacher education programs (Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Veenman, 1984). These teachers seek *external formulas* or resign to the customary methods of those around them rather than to access prior knowledge from the courses and practicum experiences in their undergraduate work (Clark, 1999). The first phase, *following external formulas*, is prevalent in the early years after college. In Baxter Magolda's study, "most participants realized the necessity of developing their own minds and voices soon after college graduation, they did not have experience in developing their internal voices" (2004, p. xvii). Opportunities for new teachers to have experiences making decisions prior to their first teaching assignment and reflecting on them was lacking.

While most new teachers are aware of best practices, ample time to utilize them in practice and reflect upon them propels development of their own repertoire or belief system about what they value in teaching. Seeking outside formulas and programs with minimal critical thinking or skepticism, their decisions weigh on the belief that others know more than themselves. New teachers must be prepared to "move away from uncritical acceptance of knowledge to critically constructing one's own perspective . . . and change assumptions about the certainty, source and limits of knowledge" (Baxter Magolda, 2006, p. 50). Accepting knowledge from any source without questioning ultimately underserves the students they teach.

Teacher effectiveness predicts student success. We cannot wait for teachers to become experienced before we expect student success (Linda Darling Hammond, 2011). We need effective teachers in their first year of teaching. The students of an ineffective teacher will, on average, will learn only half of one year's material in one year, while a student in an effective teacher's classroom will learn a year and a half's worth (Hanushek & Lindseth, 2009). "For a student with an ineffective teacher, the negative affect on her achievement may not be fully remediated for up to three years" (Stronge & Hindman, 2003). Our students deserve effective teachers, and our new teachers deserve to be prepared to be effective. In

the following section, we analyze the development of being a teacher-writer, self-authorship attained and the shift from attending to external formulas to internal foundations.

### **The Self-Authored Teacher-Writer: A Transformation**

The following three narratives of well-known teacher-writers, Penny Kittle, Nancie Atwell, and Donald Murray, can give us a peek into how self-authorship unfolds in the context of a developing teacher-writer and self-authorship. After examining the relationship to Baxter-Magolda's self-authorship phases (2004), we share the literature describing the National Writing Project Summer Institutes and how this experience also supports teachers, as teacher-writers, through the phases of self-authorship.

#### *Penny Kittle (2017)*

In the mid-1990's, Penny Kittle, an eighth grade language arts teacher, in the White Mountains of New Hampshire, was handed the second edition of Nancie Atwell's, *In the Middle*, from her principal. Atwell's words urged her to share her writing process with her students, in front of them, to write with them. The eighth grade teacher resisted Atwell's message, quite satisfied with her own method of *telling* her students what to do, rather than *showing* them. Several years of floundering in the teaching of writing and the intersection of a triggering moment, prompted her to one day write an authentic, difficult, and emotional story of her lost nephew in order to defend the family who raised him. She fearfully shared it with her students and they applauded her. A teacher-writer was born (Kittle, 2017).

#### *Nancie Atwell (2015)*

Flashback to 1975, Nancie Atwell, a middle school English teacher in Maine, after several years teaching, grappled with a persistent angst that she did not know enough to teach her students how to write. The reading of Donald Grave's research and her study during a graduate program prompted her to examine her beliefs as a teacher of writing. Reluctant to give up control and defending her practice of giving her students "exercises", the scary truth broke through: She liked the authority of giving out the ideas, setting the deadlines and sitting behind her big desk. She was "the teacher" after all. She read and reread Grave's research, finally breaking down. She told her students the story of the students in Grave's research and asked her adolescent writers if they would like to try choosing their own topics, work at their own pace and write for real audiences, while she wrote beside them. They did. And, she began to write as well.

*Donald Graves*

An English major whose writing dreams were shattered by the red marks, Donald Graves received poor grades given by his professors. Yet, he persisted, and as a doctoral student, he struggled to write clear and finished his “doctoral studies with very jaundiced views about ever writing again,” (Graves, 1984, p. 3). Grappling to find his voice, it was Donald Murray, a colleague at the University of New Hampshire, who helped the doctoral student shift from a doctoral voice by listening and asking him tough questions about his writing. Murray’s mentoring and a regular schedule to write helped Donald to find his true voice as a writer and human being, transforming his beliefs about himself as a writer.

### **Relationship of Teacher-Writer Narratives to Self-Authorship Phases**

In the narratives of three well-known teacher-writers who have pioneered the path for teacher-writers and authored a plethora of books in the area of teaching writing. Their own personal dissonance about themselves as writers and as teachers demonstrates that no teacher is exempt from these common beliefs of self-doubt. Secondly, these accounts capture the journey of how through the act of writing, one constructs an internal sense of identity that transforms their beliefs and understandings about what is true and possible. In an interview, Stephen Greenblatt (2016), Harvard Professor and Pulitzer Prize winner, is quoted saying in an interview, “Stories about our origin are important to recount in order to understand the way we are. Humans seem to be the only species that ask themselves how they came to be. It may be a sign that we are lost, uncomfortable in our own skin”. The authors of these three stories actively constructed, evaluated and interpreted their judgments to develop their own internal belief systems (Baxter Magolda, 2004; Kegan, 2002). Robert Kegan (2002) defined this concept as self-authorship, a theoretical framework for examining the understanding of developmental transformations.

For Kittle and Atwell (2015), though reluctant to admit it, a teacher centered traditional method of teaching writing enabled them not only to maintain control of their classroom (and their writing), but also established a persona of the role they believed a teacher played, a role of authority. Kittle and Atwell resided in a position of “dualism/received knowledge, where authorities have the knowledge and students must learn the answers” (Meszaros, 2007, p. 9). Their methods went unquestioned by themselves or others. Whether through the curriculum of textbooks or the apprenticeship of former models, they were *following external formulas* and attained an *absolute model of thinking* as they accepted their methods as effective and argued against other methods that differed from theirs (Baxter Magolda, 2009).

The *external formulas* began to fall apart when both teachers recognized they were struggling to effectively teach their students to write. Both teachers recognized conflicting answers and knowledge in the area of teaching writing to be subjective (Meszaros, 2009). At the *crossroads*, it was the voices of teachers before them that triggered their initial resistance yet also began the journey of questioning their practices into this next phase. This “disorienting dilemma” caused them to critically analyze their own beliefs and recognize other ways of knowing how to teach writing, the largest realization, to write themselves (Mezirow, 1978). Beliefs about themselves as writers, Donald Graves included, were addressed, and through the partnership of a mentor, in which each writer was able to risk vulnerability through the sharing of their own personal writing with their class in order to be a model and a member of the “literacy club” (Smith, 1988). Through writing, these teachers were able to achieve *self-authorship* and enter an *independent way of knowing* as they not only experienced these discrepancies of authorities in the teaching of writing, but through their own personal experience as a writer themselves, realizing the empowerment in teaching writing.

*Self-authorship* requires a triggering moment or series of moments in order to activate the journey to an *independent way of knowing*. For many teachers who teach writing, this is the angst they feel when they recognize they don’t know enough about teaching writing. There is a cognitive dissonance as they realize they are teaching in a way that is inconsistent to their beliefs about teaching and about the students they teach (Festinger, 1985). For Atwell (2015), she was aware of her state of despair when her weekly writing assignments caused her dread as she avoided the stack of papers she needed to correct and grade each week. Kittle (2001) had a nagging voice that taunted her as her students wrote paper after paper littered with the same kinds of errors. While some teachers ignore this internal voice, holding true to their assumptions that this is what teachers do (correct papers) and what writers do (make mistakes), others at this transition stage of self-authorship, seek guidance. This frustration drives them to further study, either through reading, following a mentor, or participating in a writing institute like the National Writing Project.

### **National Writing Project**

The National Writing project is a five-week institute in which teachers engage in daily personal and professional writing, reshaping frames of making meaning, examining and revising old beliefs and experiences as a writer and a writing teacher (Whitney, 2008). Several research studies show that teachers who participate in the NWP undergo transformations in their beliefs about writing, the teaching of writing, teaching and learning pedagogies, and their own identity (Lieberman & Wood, 2003). The power of the NWP lies in its perspective in meaning making. “Normally,

when we learn something, we attribute an old meaning to a new experience. . . In transformative learning, however, we reinterpret an old experience (or a new one) from a new set of expectations” (Mezirow, 1991, p.11). While Kittle, Atwell and Graves did not attend National Writing Projects, they did participate in similar experiences: Atwell attended Bread Loaf’s School of English Program in Writing, led by Dixie Goswami, a key learning partner in Atwell’s transformation (Atwell, 2015). Kittle devoured the works of Calkins, Graves, Murray and others (Kittle, 2001). Donald Graves had the learning partnership of Donald Murray, a master teacher of writing at the University of New Hampshire (Graves, 1984). All were transformed in their identities as writers, teacher of writing and as teachers. Atwell (2015) writes, “I gained courage to change my mind and the humility to revise my practice when experience showed me there’s something else I can do to help students grow” (p. 13). *A cultivation of internal voice* begins to take root.

Teacher-writers at this position “take on the role of inquirers; they are agents involved in constructing knowledge. They realize that inquiry is ongoing and that conclusions are open to reevaluation based on further inquiry” (Baxter Magolda, 2004, p. 17). At this stage of *self-authorship*, teacher-writers begin to trust in their decisions of what to believe, establish priorities and follow their vision in how to succeed. As they continue to seek more ways to grow and learn about themselves as writers, teacher-writers and teachers, internal commitments are strengthened and a stronger foundation is developed. Kittle, Atwell and Graves continued their own growth through sharing their story, writing books and teaching other teachers through professional development, conferences and coaching. All have been recognized highly in their field.

“Writing, in itself, has been thought to possess transformative power” (Whitney, 2008). Teachers who write have also shown a shift in their cognitive, physiological and spiritual lives, in and out of the classroom (Whitney, 2008; Schneider, 2013). It is suggested that writing promotes a present mindset in which one is awakened to a more observant state enabling one to take note of what is, rather than what they think (Graves, 1990; Elbow, 1998). This actually helps teachers to shift out of cognitive narratives that may be self-sabotaging their own growth as a person and a teacher. Teachers move from awareness of, to confidence in, their internal voices multiple times as they work to trust their internal voices” (Baxter Magolda, 2009, p. 325-26). Through writing, these internal voices are made visible, “leaving a trace” of our learning as it emerges (Whitney, 2008).

Awareness prompts more exploration and a more curious state of mind develops as one seeks to learn more not only about writing, but in other areas of teaching and in personal growth. As teachers use writing as a continued practice, exploration can sometimes lead to “shadow lands” in which one enters times of confusion, ambiguity, fear, and even despair as individuals struggle to analyze and reconstruct some aspects of their beliefs, identity, or relationships in various

contexts” (Baxter Magolda, 2009, p. 326). These life-changing points either broaden, deepen or cause one to reevaluate ones beliefs, practices and identity in various contexts, “promoting a stance of inquiry, guiding reflection on teaching through reflection on learning and encouraging a reconceptualization of professional identity” (Lieberman & Wood, 2003, p. 22).

From this analysis, the interconnectedness between the development of a teacher-writer and the phases of self-authorship is made evident. There are many reasons for teachers to write and most research supports this practice as a means to effective modeling and teaching in the area of writing. However, the path to self-authorship is overlooked as possibly, a more important goal for pre-service teachers. While the obvious goal of being an effective teacher-writer addresses professional aspects of teaching writing, self-authorship encompasses a teacher’s development of self and confidence in the decisions she makes throughout all areas of her life, not just teaching. It is worth investing the time to explore ways to integrate writing into pre-service coursework for this benefit.

### **Possibilities for Developing Teacher-Writers as Pre-service Teachers**

How do we design opportunities for self-development growth in pre-service teachers using the lens of self-authorship and writing? “Given the complexity and difficulty of the journey toward self-authorship and the need for it during and (after college), weaning students away from authority dependence must begin at the outset of college,” (Baxter Magolda & King, 2004, p. 29). Meszaros’s research suggests Baxter Magolda and King’s Learning Partnership Model is effective in accelerating undergraduates down the road to *independent thinking* by walking alongside students as a mentor and as “good company” (Baxter Magolda, 2009, p. xvii). The Learning Partnership Model “supports self-authorship via *three principles*: validating learners’ capacity as knowledge constructors, situating learning in learners’ experience, and defining learning as mutually constructing meaning” (p. xix). Each teacher-writer in the introduction stories were fortunate to have such a guide alongside of them. This mentor “challenged learners to see the composing of reality in complex terms and supported them in coordinating their beliefs, values and interpersonal loyalties” (Baxter Magolda & King, 2004, p. xix). Three avenues will be described to promote the conditions for pre-service teachers to begin to transition through the phases of self-authorship, all through the act of writing. These three avenues include faculty through Language Arts courses, faculty advising, and by creating pre-service teacher-writing groups.

#### *Literacy Courses*

Despite the National Commission on Writing’s (2003) call for better teacher preparation in writing instruction, our current pre-service teacher literacy courses

focus on reading and lack the teaching of writing with writing instruction embedded into reading courses (Morgan, 2010). There is a need to expand beyond the teaching of reading and writing and first create conditions for pre-service teachers to be readers and writers themselves to develop their own reading and writing identities (Morgan & Pytash, 2014; Miller, 2009). Dewey (1933) reminds us, “We never educate directly, but indirectly by means of the environment. Whether we permit chance environments to do the work, or whether we design environments for the purpose makes a great difference” (p. 22).

A teacher’s practices are a result of the beliefs of which she holds about herself and about how students learn (Palmer, 2004; Cremlin & Baker, 2010). Restructuring literacy courses to include the act of writing should include: 1) reflective writing to examine these past writing histories and explore experiences in order to learn new things from it (Boud, 2001); 2) crafting personal narratives (through the writing workshop model) to write stories of significant moments in their lives that influence who they are (DeSalvo, 1999; Graves, 1984; Schneider, 2013); and 3) introduce and model the power of using a writers notebook in their everyday teaching, learning and living to develop the habit of awareness and creativity (Hunt, 2013). Each of these practices hold promise for pre-service teachers in not only developing a stronger sense of writing identity, but also in creating conditions for digging deeper into past experiences, examining them as “objects” and redesigning possible options for their future (Collier, Scheld, Barnard & Stallcup, 2015). As these practices become habits of mind, a shift into a present state of being, heightened awareness and personal joy can be developed from the act of writing (Andrews, 2008) all of which lead to the opportunity creating an ongoing internal foundation to keep them grounded (Baxter Magolda, 2004). Kegan states that self-authorship is not a skill to be acquired, but instead a new frame of mind (1994).

### *Advising*

The influence an adviser has on the growth of undergraduate student advisees has been researched heavily, both intellectually and personally. Richard Light (2001) and his colleagues interviewed over sixteen hundred undergrads seeking answers to the question, “What contributes to a quality undergraduate experience?” (p. 1). “Students pointed out repeatedly that receiving constructive, somewhat personalized advice may be the single most underestimated feature of a great college experience (Light, 2001, p. 4). Through these learning partnerships, Baxter Magolda and King (2004) recognize the influence advisers have on students in promoting the shift from depending on authority to self-authorship by “challenging learners to see the composing of reality in complex terms and supporting them in coordinating their beliefs, values, and interpersonal loyalties” (p. xix).

Advisers can ask thought provoking questions to their advisees at crucial points in their undergraduate careers in a sensitive balance of guidance and empowerment to enable advisees to be responsible (Baxter Magolda & King, 2004). Questions are “raised about student interests, strengths, goals, motivation level, obstacles to reaching goals and how they all relate” (Meszaros, 2007, p. 75). By posing challenges to students in response to the answers of these key questions, advisees were forced to “think about the relationship of their academic work to their personal lives” (Meszaros, 2007, p. 88), choose paths to resolve issues and reach new goals. These challenges can be met through encouraging advisees to listen to their internal voice within the context of writing.

An adviser may recommend for advisees to create a journaling practice in which they work to create habits of mind that center around an awareness of the complexities in their courses, relationships and the world and document these curiosities in writing to see what underlying ideas or realizations may surface. William Zinsser (1988) in his book, *Writing to Learn*, teaches us that “learning takes a multitude of forms – expect to find learning in the places where you least expect it” (p. 10). Learning does not only come from coursework, but from experiences with friends, adults, coaches and in world events. In taking time to reflect on these surprises or disorienting dilemmas that do not fit into existing schemas, advisees learn to listen to their inner voices and new cognitive worlds are shaped, while beliefs about their own self, relationships and the world are examined. Advisers can help pre-service teachers to focus on the kinds of writing, which self-authored, in-service teachers use in reflection. When pre-service teachers learn to use writing to make sense of uncertain or conflicting situations, then they learn to understand that professional knowledge does not fit every case and there is not a right answer to every problem (Schon, 1987). These are self-authorship pillars that can be fostered as pre-service teachers begin to develop these habits of mind.

This becomes transformative in how pre-service teachers begin to think, shifting from an acceptance of knowledge without critical consideration to a change in “ones’ assumptions about the certainty, sources and limits of knowledge” (Baxter Magolda, 2006, p. 50). Darling-Hammond and Bransford (2005) have found that teachers with these high levels of metacognitive and self-awareness “have developed habits of mind that continually self-assess their performances and modify their assumptions and actions while those who are less metacognitive rely on external feedback from others to tell them what to do and how to change” (p. 376).

While Franz Kafka (1904) is once quoted that, “A book should serve as a ice-axe to break the frozen sea within us” as does writing if used in this way. Virginia Woolf agrees, as she writes that writing can “force us into an awareness about ourselves and our place in the world that we wouldn’t otherwise have had;

we are realigned to our essential nature of our being” (DeSalvo, 1999, p. 5). Writing becomes a tool for discovery, used to journey us into a tremendous adventure into the unknown (Schnieder, 2003). Zinsser (1988) argues, “Writing is not just for writers. It’s a basic skill for getting through life” (p. 11).

Many possibilities exist in the ways advisers can incorporate writing into their work with advisees. When the adviser is also a writer, she can model and share her own practice of using writing to shift the particular to something larger, thus giving advisees an understanding of how writing can take you into the unknown. Advisers could use writing to learn more about who their advisees are, perhaps requesting autobiographical sketches that map out their dreams and passions. This can be used as a window into a student’s true identity. Nurturing the adviser/advisee relationship, in itself, has shown to increase student self-advocacy and increase academic success, however, using writing as an additional tool can help students develop their own viewpoints, worldview and in essence, a voice of their own.

#### *Pre-service Teacher-Writer Groups*

Finally, a third opportunity to empower pre-service teachers in developing self-authorship through writing might be to create and facilitate pre-service teacher-writer groups. Research by the NWP (2008) has shown that participation in writing groups has been shown to have an impact on retaining best practices in writing, progressing in intellectual writing expertise and personal development which carries over into the classroom. Through writing groups, undergraduates are able to share their writing with others and receive feedback, not only on their ideas, but in the gathering of perspectives that may conflict or challenge their own ideas. Meszaros (2007) recommends for those who are becoming authors of their own lives, interaction with others helps participants to gain perspective about themselves.

These groups become a safe community in which writers feel safe to explore thoughts and unearthing feelings while receiving the guiding support and constructive feedback of others. As future teachers of writing, these pre-service teachers experience the emotions of sharing their writing with others, learn how to create nurturing conditions for learning, how to listen carefully to others and foster dialogue that creates an understanding and respect for varied interpretations of meaning (Meszaros, 2007). Pre-service teacher-writer facilitators can provide meaningful writing prompts that nudge students to write deeply into their subconscious in an effort to analyze deeply held beliefs about themselves, their relationships and their chosen path as a teacher in order to create opportunities for reflective dialogue.

#### **Future Research**

Most teacher-writer research focuses on writer identity, self-efficacy, writing communities and application to student work. Teresa Cremin (2017) has extensive research on teacher-writers identity and Christine Dawson (2017) has written about teacher-writers' personal and professional growth in the context of communities. Their work focuses on English teachers, as opposed to elementary education teachers, yet much is applicable for future research. The National Writing Project has also compiled much research surrounding the transformation of its participants. Yet, there is little, if any, research to support how a developing a writing practice in teacher education programs, especially focusing on elementary education candidates, can propel pre-service teachers toward self-authorship. This is a fresh area for research to grow.

### Conclusion

At the heart of creating conditions for pre-service teachers to develop writing identities is also a goal to pave a path to self-authorship (Baxter Magolda, 2004). Self-authorship requires an internal foundation in which one “yields the capacity to actively listen to multiple perspectives, critically interpret those perspectives in light of relevant evidence and the internal foundation and make judgments accordingly” (p. 303). As a beginning classroom teacher, this could not be a more important goal. Multiple voices surround new teachers in role as a teacher – many of them their own. Schon (1987) questions, in his book, *The Reflective Practitioner*, “Can higher education ever create a curriculum adequate to address the complex, unstable, uncertain and conflictual world of practice?” (p. 12). He argues in favor of teaching pre-service teachers how to make self-authored decisions under these types of conditions, yet how to teach this remains a mystery.

Baxter Magolda (2004) writes in her book, *Learning Partnerships*, “If attaining this kind of internal foundation will help today’s graduates address these problems, then this will be well worth our energy and effort” (p. 304). And, the mystery Schon (1987) speaks of may not be for faculty to figure out, it may be for the pre-service teacher to discover on their own. If given the powerful tool of writing, pre-service teachers can begin to notice, recognize and honor their own voice on the pages they write. Developing writing as a practice strengthens the voice and gives confidence to have it be heard. It becomes almost impossible, if write continues long enough, to ignore a true sense of self.

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