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The Heart-Art of Conferencing: Latino Adolescent Students and the Co-construction of Transformative Writing Conferences

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The Heart-Art of Conferencing:

Latino Adolescent Students and

the Co-construction of Transformative Writing Conferences

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction

of the requirements for the degree

Doctor of Philosophy in Education

by

Gloria D. Rodriguez

2019

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

The Heart-Art of Conferencing:

Latino Adolescent Students and

the Co-construction of Transformative Writing Conferences

by

Gloria D. Rodriguez

Doctor of Philosophy in Education

University of California, Los Angeles, 2019

Professor Marjorie E. Orellana, Chair

This is a study of adolescent Latino students as writers, grappling with the complexities of memoir writing alongside their writing partners. The context is a middle school writers workshop classroom where I simultaneously taught as I conducted research on these new peer and student-teacher writing conferences.

Sociocultural theory provides a framework for understanding how writing conferences are spaces where students and teacher co-construct social and cultural models for writing in a writers workshop. This study is also informed by an interdisciplinary exploration into the significance of relationships in classroom settings. It examines adolescents' need for belonging and explores the naming and reframing of emergent bilinguals, who are the subjects of this

study. In addition, it includes autoethnographic reflections on pedagogical shifts in my teaching, which emerge as I push myself to take risks, allow myself to make mistakes, and in the process, grow to trust my students in writing partnerships and myself as a writing teacher.

Data include verbatim transcriptions of peer and student-teacher writing conferences, corresponding student writing samples, and field notes, all stemming from a memoir writers workshop unit. Following the interpretivist qualitative research model, analytic inductive reasoning yields findings that reflect how Latino adolescents and their teacher authentically engage with each other to shape the conferences over time, transforming both writing processes and writing products.

The dissertation of Gloria D. Rodriguez is approved.

Megan Loef Franke

Karen Quartz

Jamie Marsh

Marjorie E. Orellana, Committee Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2019

DEDICATION & INTENTION

I dedicate this dissertation and my research to my brother, Gabriel. A study that aims to understand ways that oral discourse and writing practices impact middle school students' development of literacy and agency is befitting my brother, who stopped attending school in eighth grade. This pivotal decision at the tender age of fourteen set him on a life's journey wrought with the harshest sort of realities.

Gabriel transitioned two years ago. He was just shy of fifty. The year after he passed, I returned to teaching middle schoolers and returned to UCLA to complete this dissertation.

I see Gabriel in some of my students, who daily navigate challenging home lives, while at the same time, work with all sincerity to meet the demands of middle school academics amidst the growing pains of adolescence.

I feel Gabriel's support of my research, of me as a graduate student and a teacher. His life cut short inspires me to live mine with intention towards contribution. This is the purpose of my dissertation—my intention towards contribution.

Thank you, Gabriel, for being my brother. I hope to be a sister you are proud of.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

With tremendous gratitude, I acknowledge the many people who have supported me during my research and the writing of this dissertation.

I thank my committee, women distinguished in the academy, grounded in the everyday schooling and learning experiences not only of university students on the west-side, but also of k-12 students across town, in the heart of Los Angeles. *Mil gracías a* Marjorie E. Orellana, my advisor, for giving me the freedom to find my way, to go where my curiosity and the data led. Her questions and nudgings were equal parts profound and substantive. Megan Loef Franke, Karen Quartz and Jamie Marsh generously offered feedback that was insightful, critical, positive, and to-the-point. I especially appreciate Jamie Marsh for her guidance throughout the course of my study, and for her expertise in the field of research around young students as legitimate writers.

As I analyzed the data, student-participants made me laugh and made me cry. As I collected the data, they were open and obliging. I am touched that, given the competing interests of eighth graders, they consented to participate in my study. I sorely miss the every-dayness of our learning together. *De mi corazón a sus corazones*—Alina, Chris, Jessica, Naomi, Ramon, and William.

Leah Raphael and the teachers at "The Workshop School" set the instructional and curricular bar high for all students at this unique pilot school. This study would not have been possible without their conviction in powerful literacy for each-and-every-one, which they coupled with the socioemotional supports that are needed when schooling traditionally underserved student populations.

Family and friends encouraged me, listened to me as my dissertation unfolded, and saw in me a Latina with a PhD. *Por siempre estoy agradecida a* Mary Ann Ramirez, my sister; Irene Mack, my bestie since seventh grade; Naomi Quiñones, my fearless mentor; and Karina Corral-Rodriguez, my inspiration, my daughter. Bookclub *compañera*s—Benin Lemus, Lara Goldstone and Kate McFadden—have been fabulous cheerleaders during my doctoral undertaking. My dog, Nana, provided adorable affection, as needed, whenever I hunkered down to work on my research, whatever crazy hour it might have been.

Sonia Sotomayor inspires me to let go of limiting self-perceptions. Donna Tucker is a writing teacher extraordinaire, someone I aspire to be like. Dana Bowden says yes to every one of my requests for help as I maneuver my way around the workshop units of study. All three, through their open-hearted kindness, have shed light for me on my next steps whilst completing my research.

For spiritual guidance and support, I am indebted to Tonya Corona. She has helped me remove the cobwebs around my heart-body-mind connections.

In the Afterword, I share a little about the soul journey that I forged during the course of my study. In that final section and at the conclusion of this one, I restate both my request and my gratitude to the Divine: *Please* and *Thank you* for showing me the way to be a contribution in my endeavors as a student, a teacher, a researcher, and a writer.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

I graduated from Stanford University (1986) with a Bachelor of Arts, majoring in history. I hold two Master of Education degrees from UCLA: firstly with a teaching credential from the Teacher Education Program (1988), and secondly from the Principal Leadership Institute (2004) with a preliminary administrative services credential.

Throughout my career in public schools—elementary school teacher, middle school social studies, ESL and English teacher, a literacy coach, an English Learner designee, and a school site assistant principal—I have been dedicated to understanding and diminishing the disparities between the schooling experiences of my collegiate peers and those of the low-income urban students I serve. For me, the first and last questions educators must ask when students fail to meet our high expectations is what might *we* do differently in support of students reaching their true potential.

CHAPTER 1—INTRODUCTION

Narrative: Personal and Universal

Ten years ago I completed coursework and qualifying exams towards a doctorate degree. But family took priority over higher learning for a period of time. Then weeks slipped into months and months into years, that is, until March of 2017, when my younger brother passed away. It seems his liver could no longer sustain the abuse of drugs and alcohol. His death jolted me, and I emerged on the other side of my grief with a new-found respect for the preciousness and brevity of life. I now find myself compelled to use my time and my talents to speak about some truths that I know, to explore some ponderings that entice me, and to make a contribution to the field of urban schooling, a field that grounds my life-long commitment to urban students and the belongingness needed for them in their schools and in their classrooms to grow towards their calling, their own unique way they might choose to be a contribution themselves.

This desire to actively engage in explorations around urban schools can be traced to my family tree. From my younger brother, who dropped-out in eighth grade and lived his later years homeless far away from family, to other family members who did not complete high school, my clan is brimming with people for whom schools simply have not worked. By contrast, I thrived in school, finding comfort amidst the structure and predictability of high school and later amidst the rigorous new surroundings of Palo Alto and Westwood. Being a first-generation college student who has spent thirty years working in public schools, I find myself reflecting on the difference my degrees have made for myself and for my daughter, and what lacking such degrees has meant for the rest of my family.

Firstly, I do not believe that I was somehow more qualified for higher education than my siblings. Nor do I now believe that my college education has left me a better person, smarter, more highly elevated than they. I simply believe that my life has been easier, and my college education has afforded me an opportunity to contribute to others in a way that pleases me, that fulfills me. Some of my siblings have gone on to higher education, years after their children were grown, and they too now appear content and fulfilled in their careers. Beyond the scope of this research is an exploration into the extent that college degrees result in personally meaningful careers. Still, I know first-hand the very hard life of working class people with no post-secondary education living on the edges of poverty. I speak of my own childhood and of my extended family. First my siblings in the eighties, then their children in the decades that followed, and now my grand nephews and nieces, most[1] spent their twenties typically: losing jobs, holding down more than one job at a time, staying with family until a new job could be found, relocating their own young families due to financial constraints, and for a few, extended periods of substance abuse to dull the hopelessness of life without economic stability. Atypical of them during the decade post high school has been any relishing of their work life.

By contrast, my own daughter in her early twenties now attends a four-year university, and I reflect on the generational shifts afforded college-degree holders like her father and myself. In short, we support her while she finishes school. We can afford this "luxury." She in turn can explore options towards a career that reflects her interests, her skills, and her talents. Whereas for my siblings, and for their children, high school was a box to check upon completion, a drudgery, not a pathway toward continued learning.

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[1] The exception here is for those in my family who joined the armed services.

I would argue that schools have fallen short of their role in the lives of my siblings and their descendants. It is not for students to measure up to the expectations of schools as institutions. It is for public schools to provide youth with a foundation that they may grow to know and heed their calling, to learn their unique way that they are meant to contribute to society (Robinson, 2006; Dintersmith, 2018). Instead, for my family, school was often an alienating place where their own special talents remained untapped. Whether due to insidious tracking practices, or high stakes testing with algebra as a gatekeeper, for generations schools have failed, as Valdés (2001) asserts, to help students, not dissimilar to my family, "develop their own voices . . . voices that are tied to a vision of possibilities" (p. 158). My family has not failed at schooling; schooling has failed them. And I see the loss, feel the loss, deeply.

This foray provides backdrop for my research: an exploration into the possibilities Valdés describes, where my own students represent for me in a very real way my own family. I am a teacher who is researching in my own writers workshop classroom; and I am a researcher who is studying my own eighth grade students. For *them* I see the possibilities of a strong education, of schools and classrooms where students' sense of belonging furthers their participation and their development of language and literacy. Such an education can impact lives in profoundly positive ways for students today and perhaps for future generations. I ground my work in this conviction and have done so for the past thirty years as a public school educator. I have been an elementary school teacher, a middle school social studies, ESL and English teacher, a literacy coach, an English Learner coordinator and designee, and a school site assistant principal. Throughout the years, nothing has excited me more, shown more promise to provide struggling students the tools needed of critical thinkers, readers and writers than Teachers College Reading and Writing

Project's (TCRWP) *Units of Study in Narrative, Information and Argument Writing* (*Units of Study*), a rigorous approach to the writers workshop.

I first adopted a workshop approach (Atwell, 1987) when teaching a self-contained class of fifth graders in 1990. I maintained several aspects of the workshop as I taught middle school English Language Arts and English as a Second Language. In 2015, as assistant principal responsible for curriculum and instruction, I led my high school's adoption of the *Units of Study* and attended a coaching institute at Teachers College to support teachers in this transition. Now as an eighth-grade English teacher, I adapt the *Units of Study* to fit the context of my classroom, and I have witnessed first-hand the powerful writing that results when students are consistently provided *time*, *choice* and *response* as writers. While each of these three aspects of the workshop seek to cultivate students' capacities as writers, the focus of this study is on the *response* workshop writers receive about their writing while in the midst of working on a piece. This response is in the form of oral feedback during peer and student-teacher conferences. Furthermore, of the three tenets *time, choice* and *response,* it is that latter that speaks to the relational underpinnings of the workshop classroom, and consequently the one that I am most interested in exploring.[2]

This research is personal—personal for me as a sister, as an aunt, as a mother--and personal for me as a teacher who strives to create and sustain relationships with her students. I am a teacher who often stumbles and falters in her efforts to build community with students. I can be prone to a stern demeanor, a businesslike facade, a we-haven't-time-to-waste so hurry-up-and-get-busy persona. Furthermore, while I genuinely believe that students can and do learn

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[2] I will manage this dual role of teacher and researcher by clearly distinguishing ways that each role impacts the other and diligently attending to possible biases, conflicts and limitations of this approach (see *Chapter 3, Methodology and Research Design*).

from one another, perhaps more readily than they might learn from me, my everyday practice reveals my mistaken tendency to view myself as, if not the sole holder, the main holder of the vast majority of knowledge in the classroom. With adolescents, this does not sit well. As a result, the authentic caring community that I yearn for in my classroom has remained thus far elusive.

Nonetheless, to sustain these efforts, I turn inward. For the past ten years, I have had a spiritual practice that includes a daily meditative prayer. Recently I have begun to expand this practice to include mindfulness habits as outlined in Thich Nhat Hanh and Katherine Weare's (2017) *Happy Teachers Change the World: A Guide for Cultivating Mindfulness in Education.* These practices are new but a natural extension of my own spiritual practice. Pertinent to this study is that I will share them with students in my classroom, who themselves also have a practice that can serve as a foundation for mindfulness habits. For two years prior, they have engaged weekly or bi-weekly in Council (Zimmerman and Coyle, 2009). Seated in a circle with their classmates and a teacher, they use structured protocols, such as a talking piece and sentence frames, to discuss personal topics unrelated to academics, ranging from the highlights of their summer, to the role of fatherhood, to the impact of immigration laws on their families. Familiar with a common shared practice aimed at building community, I foresee that a classroom mindfulness practice will be a natural addition to my students' repertoires of socioemotional learning. More importantly, I adopt and share this mindfulness practice with the intent that it will allow me to be more fully present and accepting (Hanh & Weare, 2017) during the workshop and especially, for the purposes of this study, during the writing conferences. By being present and accepting during one-to-one interactions with students about their writing, an exchange that can leave even the most practiced writers feeling vulnerable, I intend that students in this exchange

would instead feel a sense of belongingness (Brown, 2017), or mutual respect (Anderman, 2003), enabling them to be open to an exchange of ideas that would further their writing.

By developing my own mindfulness practices first, I will then be able to adopt such practices as befitting both my students and myself in a classroom setting. In short, during the course of this research study, and for several weeks prior, my students and I will engage in a mindfulness practice prior to our writers workshop session. This is not a study about mindfulness in the classroom. Nonetheless, adopting a sociocultural perspective, while I introduce the parameters of my research, I outline the learning environment, the backdrop of the writers workshop conferences, because it plays a pivotal role in the co-construction of writing conferences for both the students and myself as the teacher. And it describes my effort at laying the groundwork for a classroom foundation of being present and of belongingness as relational parameters for the writers workshop.

This study is a convergence of what both excites and challenges me as a teacher of writing: writing conferences and mindfulness practices. I must admit a strong appeal to explore areas of true uncertainty for me, to research what I truly want to learn more about. I as learner, as teacher, as researcher aim to shed light on the developing writing practices of Reclassified Fluent English Proficient (RFEP) students who engage regularly in a mindfulness practice and in academic discourse around a very specific complex text, their own writing. Note that from here on, in lieu of the term "RFEP," I will adopt the term emergent bilinguals (García, 2009; Flores & Schissel, 2014), which more accurately reflects their language capacities and does not reduce them solely to their facility of English.

Ultimately, as I define the parameters for my research, I wonder about the *what if*'s. What if my own siblings would have experienced schools as will the students of my research, with

community practices for mindfulness coupled with academically rigorous discourse about their writing? I wonder if that would have made a difference for them, for their post-secondary education, and for that of their children and grandchildren. And when I allow myself to delve into the deepest sort of regrets, I wonder about my genius brother who dropped out of school in eighth grade and who died of liver failure at the age of forty-nine. What if he had felt a sense of belongingness at school during his pivotal adolescent years?

Building Bridges

As I reflect upon my brother and others of my family who have found schools to be alienating and disempowering, I make the connection to my own students, who are the subjects of my research. One student in the class is Caucasian, and the rest are Latino, whose families hail mostly from Mexico, and a few from El Salvador. Based on students' self-identification, roughly one-fourth are first-generation immigrants; the rest are second-generation immigrants. Our collective shades of brownness, my family's and my students', add another personal layer to my research. And as with many explorations of the human experience, a paradox emerges: what is personal, is also universal. At the core of my research is a conviction about the universal human need to relate to one another, to talk with each other, to learn together. I aspire to the co-construction of a classroom where . . .

> *We will work to be an example of how we as brothers and sisters on this earth should treat each other. Now more than ever the illusions of division threaten our very existence. We all know the truth: more connects us than separates us. But in times of crisis, the wise build bridges while the foolish build barriers.*
> *-The Black Panther*
> *("Black Panther | Netflix," 2018, 2:05)*

That these profound words spew from the highest grossing movie of 2018 ("2018 Yearly Box Office Results - Box Office Mojo," n.d.) reflects our Dickensian society today. It would appear that we face the best of times, with so many finding alignment to the universal brother- and

sisterhood sentiments of the *Black Panther*. Simultaneously we face the worst of times, with a president whose top national priority is to build a wall, a barrier, between the United States and Mexico.[3] A human response for me, my family, and my students to the fear-mongering of our president targeted at our ethnic populations might be to resort to feelings of victimization, despair, retaliation, disgrace, or perhaps even righteous indignation. Instead, I dig deep and choose love. I choose to build bridges.

During the course of this study, I aim to bridge the academic rigor of the writers workshop with mindfulness, a socioemotional classroom practice. I aim to bridge the learnings of a small pilot urban school with implications for larger urban schools. I aim to bridge my role as a teacher in front of the classroom with my role as a learner alongside my students. Lastly, I aim to bridge the often times incongruent foci of the teacher practitioner and university researcher as I merge the two towards a qualitative study grounded in the real everyday experiences of writing and academic discourse of middle school Latino students.

Purpose and Description of the Study

In autoethnographic fashion, I outline the many ways in which this research is personal. It stems from personal ponderings about the role of schools in the lives of urban students, situated within the personal context of my own classroom where I am personally challenged to reframe my role as a teacher learning alongside my students. But while personal, it is not self-indulgent. I heed Atkinson's (2005) caution against qualitative research that is weakened when "the social and the political are translated into the personal" (par. 25), and when researchers fail to conduct

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[3] At the writing (01.13.19), President Donald Trump has instigated the longest government shutdown in history. He refuses to sign-off on a federal budget, effectively shutting down nine out of fifteen federally funded departments and impacting 800,000 workers, who now have gone twenty-three days without pay (Javier Zarracina, 2019). On January 12, 2019, President Trump walked out of a budget meeting with House Democrat leaders because they would not confirm to him that they would support his legislation to build a border wall between the United States and Mexico (Costa, Dawsey, Rucker, & Kim, 2019).

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systematic social research, research which recognizes that "social life has its principles of order, and that those orders can be examined in principled ways" (par. 24). Erickson (1986) likewise calls for qualitative research in classroom settings to focus on social organizations that are:

> radically local--little differences in everyday classroom life that make a big difference for student learning, subtly different meaning-perspectives in which it makes sense for students to learn in one classroom and does not make sense to learn in another classroom, from a student's point of view (pg. 129).

In other words, while grounded in the personal, I will nonetheless work to ensure that I attend closely to the cultural and the environmental aspects of this study as it falls within the sociocultural tradition of qualitative research, (see *Chapter 3, Methodology and Research Design)*.

The overall purpose of this interpretivist qualitative study is to answer the following questions regarding four early adolescent emergent bilingual students, and their teacher, in a writers workshop classroom:

1. How do these students, and their teacher, new to writing conferences, shape the conferences over time?
2. How do these new writing conference participants, students and their teacher, engage with one another?
   > Sub-question 2A: For a teacher whose role is primarily authoritative in the classroom, how does she grow to allow students to take the lead role in their learning?
3. How do writing conferences transform writing processes and writing products?

By focusing on four emergent bilingual students as a subset of the larger English Learner population, this study bridges the English Learner literacy development heralded in this school district's *Master Plan for English Learners and Standard English Learners* (*2018 Master Plan*) with the TCRWP *Units of Study*. The guiding principles of the *2018 Master Plan* set a high standard for literacy learning by advocating for increased academic rigor, as well as an assets-

based mindset and sociocultural competence on the part of educators towards English Learners. In outlining "Essential Components of a Comprehensive ELD (English Language Development) Program," the *2018 Master Plan* reads that, "ELs extend both their language and knowledge of the world . . . when teachers establish routines and expectations for equitable and accountable conversations . . . (and for) deep interactions with complex and informational texts" (pg. 82). Herein lies TCRWP's writers workshop units, in that the curriculum outlines these established routines for deep interactions--conferences where students' own writing is the complex text that grounds academic discourse.

Fig. 1.1 ELD Frame of Practice

Source: *LA Unified 2018 Master Plan for English Learners and Standard English Learners,* 2018, p. 87

I adopt Erickson's (1986) analytic induction model to arrive at findings that answer my research questions. These findings add to the field of research that propones the necessity of academic interactions as a means of developing writing processes for English Learners, and contribute to the teaching and learning approach for English Language Development (ELD) depicted in Figure 1.1 (Zwiers, O'Hara & Pritchard, 2014 in *LA Unified 2018 Master Plan for English Learners and Standard English Learners,* 2018).

Implications of Research

Others before me have explored topics central to my study: the role of student interactions in developing their writing processes, and redirection of missteps in the teaching and learning of Latinos in the United States. One pivotal work speaking to the latter is *Learning and Not Learning English: Latino Students in American Schools* by Guadalupe Valdés (2004). Valdés' initial study that led to the findings detailed in this book focused on how four middle

school students, new immigrants, would learn to write in English. However, studying them over a two-year period exposed the cruel realities of tracking that kept them stuck in classes designed to teach them English but instead yielded ESL ghettos, classrooms and schools where some of them developed habits of "not learning, shortcutting the business of failure altogether" by "plac(ing) themselves outside the entire system that was trying to coerce or seduce them into learning" (Kohl, 1991, in Valdés, 2004, p. 3).

Against Valdés' study, I juxtapose my own. My students are not new immigrants, and they are not tracked into ESL courses that isolate them and inhibit their use of English. Indeed, their middle school, functioning as a pilot school, requires adoption of the writers workshop for all students, including new immigrant emergent bilinguals, whereby students are able to build on their existing strengths as emergent writers. In other areas too, their middle school reflects the recommendations outlined at the conclusion of *Learning and Not Learning English* (2004): teaching and learning of immigrant students are school-wide initiatives for which all teachers are responsible, and immigrant students learn alongside native-English and emergent bilinguals in core subject area classes. In short, this study contributes to the field on the teaching and learning of Latinos by exploring the possibilities created by a school unflinching in its offering of academic rigor, the writers workshop, coupled with embedded sociomotional supports, bi-weekly Council sessions and, in this particular classroom, a daily mindfulness practice.

The student-participants are emergent bilingual writers in middle school, eighth graders. As their teacher, I rarely consider the various lenses through which I might view them, their written work, their oral use of language, or even myself as their teacher. Through the course of this study, and through analysis of ways they interact with one another and with me around their writing, like Bailey and Orellana (2015), I look to better understand what is happening within the

context of their exchanges that might reflect the "academic literacy at the intersection of adolescent development and the oral language and literate lives of these adolescent multilingual students" (p. 72).

An area of this study more familiar to me as a practitioner, one the I have spent much time navigating and manipulating, is the writers workshop. I expect that this study will add to the many others that have responded to the call of Donald Graves, Nancie Atwell and Lucy Calkins to reposition writing as integral to the language arts, and the student writer as front and center in a workshop classroom. With a more narrow focus on adolescents' peer conferencing within the workshop, I add to a less full but expanding body of research (Calkins, Hartman & White, 2005). The narrowing trend continues when considering emergent bilinguals and peer conferencing, where much of the literature focuses primarily on university students (Edwards & Liu, 2018; Yu & Li, 2016), but not exclusively (Ferlazzo, 2016).

Finally, as I am simultaneously researcher and teacher in my study, this is an autoethnography. As such, I am committed to veracity in the unfolding of my data and analysis during the course of this study. In 1986, Erickson wrote, "the low school achievement of social and cultural minority students is better explained by considering the character of the classroom learning environment than by attributing the typical pattern of school failure of those children to deficiencies in individual intelligence and motivation" (p. 134). Likewise in 2017, García and Otheguy propose that we "locate the (word / academic) gap in social, educational, and academic practices rather than in the raciolinguistically minoritized students and their families" (p. 52). Aware that the social classroom environment is co-constructed by the practices of my students and myself, I am also aware that as teacher, my role is integral in saying how things go within those four walls. This is especially true when deciding whether to tighten or loosen my

authoritative reins. But the aim of my research is bigger than the practice of my classroom: to contribute to a body of work that recognizes the belongingness needed for students to thrive in a rigorous writers workshop setting. Given the larger goal of sharing knowledge gleaned through intense study, I allow for the vulnerability needed to open my teaching practice, while acknowledging that I may need some self-compassion for my own missteps. Therefore, in autoethnographic fashion (Denzin, 2006; Anderson, 2006; Ellis, Adams, Bochner, 2011), I also aim to shed light through my research on how one teacher loosened her authoritative reins, allowing students to pick-up the slack. Here-in sits my sub-question on engagement: for a teacher whose role is primarily authoritative in the classroom, how does she grow to allow students to take the leading role in their learning?

CHAPTER 2—RELEVANT LITERATURE

Urban Schools: A Brief Broad Brushstroke

This study as my contribution to the field of urban schooling is rooted in my deep commitment to the creation and sustainment of public schools that work for each and every one of our youth. This commitment to public schools is not unique in our nation's history. Horace Mann (1848), considered the father of American education (Spring, 1991), posited that the "Common School" in this country would be the "great equalizer" and "the most effective and benignant of all the forces of civilization" (p. 2). Over the centuries, public schools are held increasingly responsible for addressing social and economic problems, from juvenile criminology to the training of our labor force (Spring, 1991). While I caution against a view of public education as the panacea for all of society's problems, acknowledging the vast populations which go underserved by schools, American sentiment nonetheless holds public education as "the very foundation of our democracy and the public institution that defines the people's concept of public" (Darling-Hammond, 2004, p. 32).

A foray into modern urban schools, which are a reflection of society, leaves us once again (see Chapter 1) with the Dickensian sentiment of *the best of times* and *the worst of times*. Literally anything we might want to know is at our fingertips within an instrument that fits into the palm of our hand. This applies not merely to surface-level knowledge, but includes explorations into the how-to's, where-to's, and what-for's. It would seem that if information is knowledge and knowledge is power, the world wide web would have begun the class revolution to end all revolutions. Instead, what we realize one-fifth of our way into the 21st century, is that schools are challenged to strengthen students' capacities to search for, make sense of, and apply the countless bits of information that are so readily available. In addition, as the world becomes

smaller and the local becomes more relevant, students as emerging citizens need choose whether they themselves will be wall or bridge builders (see Chapter 1). Ultimately, it is the role of schools within this complex paradigm to enable students to secure their own unique contribution as they forage into society as critical citizens, in a manner that both fulfills and sustains them.

Some taking an academic excursion into how public schools should evolve alongside these shifting times place the k-12 public education system within a political context. They write about the power relationships that exist at schools and in school systems. Within an historical context, they explore questions about power, such as, who has the power, at whose expense do they attain the power, and how is it held onto. Answering these questions provides an economic context where power is often measured in terms of monetary resources, knowledge or social capital. In this way, schools are contextualized and analyzed. The goal is that better understanding of schools' political, historical and economical contexts lead to a shake-up of systems that if go unquestioned would go unchanged.

My research does not contradict these assertions, but I take a different approach. I find that relationships are at the crux of the social, cultural, political, and even spiritual dynamics that play out in the classroom. Urban students lacking in social capital need strong positive relationships with teachers and amongst each other (Osterman, 2000; Newberg, 1995; Noddings, 1984, 2005a & b; Valenzuela, 1999) not only to thrive, but to survive in schools. As suggested above, our twenty-first century requires of students and teachers a paradigm shift to accompany the demands of technological advances that reframe the kind of learning essential for critical citizenship. This study contributes to our understanding of the various moving parts of this new paradigm: the kind of curriculum needed (*Units of Study in Narrative, Information and Argument Writing*), the kind of learning environment needed (a writers workshop), and the shifting role of

the teacher and student. As regards the latter, youth who take ownership of their learning (Anderman, 2003) require that teachers need to relinquish it. This necessary transferring of control, from the perspective of this veteran teacher, is an important aspect of this shifting practice. And it requires a belief, a conviction, that students are worthy of this shared role as co-constructors of knowledge within the classroom. Even allowing that students are capable of learning from one another and are knowledgeable enough to learn from, the practice of allowing these exchanges can be challenging for teachers working with populations of students who are deemed "behind," "below grade level," or "not meeting standards." Often everyday schooling experiences reduce the intellect of many urban youth to a measurement, one that finds them lacking (Valenzuela, 1999). My study counters this discourse of deficiency, from word gap to achievement gap to learning gap, where a fixation on what is lacking often results in blaming of the various players, most regrettably students themselves (García & Otheguy, 2017; Erickson, 1986).

In the remainder of this chapter, I lay out the literature around the theoretical lenses through which I position three key aspects of my research. I begin with an overview of sociocultural theory and delineate ways that writing conferences within a workshop model might be viewed through this lens. I build on this foundation with an interdisciplinary exploration into the significance of relationships in classroom settings, and adolescents' need for belonging. After outlining the theoretical framework and related lenses for my study, I then consider the literature around the naming and reframing of emergent bilinguals, around the writers workshop, and finally around writing conferences. My research questions conclude the chapter and serve as a transition to the next chapter where I detail the methodological parameters for my study.

Sociocultural Theory on Learning, Juxtaposed against Cognitive Science,
as Backdrop for the Writers Workshop

Packer and Goicoechea (2000) explain that the differences between cognitive and sociocultural theories trace back to their ontological roots, as established by Kant and Hegel respectively. In the late 18th century, Kant employs a dualistic ontology, meaning that the individual subject and the world in which he lives are two separate entities. Two hundred years later, Piaget adds a developmental dimension to the categories that Kant asserts are innate to the mind (space, time, causality and object). The resulting cognitive theory thereby frames the learner as someone who interacts with the environment either alone or with others to further her knowing of that environment. By contrast, Hegel, a contemporary of Kant who influences Marx, Vygotsky, Bourdieu and Dewey, argues that Kant underestimates the human knowing character. The resulting nondualist ontology of socioculturalism is based on the view that persons are internally related to, and mutually constituted by, their social world. Packer and Goicoechea (2000) add that epistemological ways of knowing are always an aspect of ontological ways of being. While cognitive theory defines learning through epistemology, it is really only a part of the larger transformative process that sociocultural theory defines as learning.

With roots tied to Hegel, modern sociocultural theory on learning is based on Vygotsky's assertion that supports my exploration into writing conference exchanges: "the intellectual development of the individual cannot be understood without taking into account his interactions with other people in his social environment" (in Wells 1994, p. 74). Learning is the process whereby learners absorb and become absorbed in a specific culture of practice (Lave & Wegner, 1995), like writing conferences where learners acquire a *social* language that frames their understanding of ways to engage with each other in review of their writing. At the same time,

they acquire a *cultural* model around the rigors of academic writing. Sociocultural theory argues that what is being learned, what is being acquired, and what is of greatest import, is the social context in which the learner is situated. Furthermore, thinking and acting are the result of interacting with culturally shaped tools within this social context, such as writing conference guidelines or a hammer. Vygotsky, considered the father of sociocultural theory, frames language as the most important tool for learning (Wells, 1994).

Knowledge from this perspective is determined by one's participation within a community of practice (Lave & Wegner, 1991; Gee, 2001). To arrive at this understanding, early sociocultural research explores the socially distributed nature of knowledge work in apprentice-master settings (Hutchins, 1995 and Hughes et al, 1988, both as cited in Sawyer, 2006). My study builds on this research and demonstrates the role that an expert teacher plays as an "old timer" with a writing conference who allows peripheral participation from newcomer students (Lave & Wegner, 1991, p. 95). Students move through centripetal participation from a student/teacher writing conference toward full participation with peer writing conferences. This process involves not just intensified effort or more responsibilities within the community, but more importantly, an increasing sense of identity as a master practitioner (Lave & Wegner, 1991). For the novice-apprentice then in sociocultural theory, knowledge is not gained by moving linearly along a trajectory from novice to expertise as it is for cognitive scientists. Instead, it is related to the apprentice's access to various kinds of learning activities that require a range of ways of participating and using language to achieve competence (Gutiérez et al., 1997). In short, a sociocultural approach highlights the inherently context-dependent, situated, and enculturating nature of learning and expert knowledge (Brown & Duguid, 1989).

Furthermore, rather than focusing on the dichotomy between the schools and homes of

underachieving students, socioculturalists view classrooms as third spaces in which the ways of

schools and the ways of homes contend with one another in order for real learning to occur

(Gutierrez et al., 1997; Moje et al., 2004; Barton et al., 2008). The writers workshop reflects

these affective and social dimensions of learning (Hodson, 1999). In order for students to

navigate authentic learning activities, the workshop classroom must be a supportive and

emotionally safe place. The workshop teacher who co-constructs third space and preserves the

community of practice, is not the sole possessor or authority on legitimate knowledge. In fact,

when the community of writers is engaged in inquiry around authentic questions about their

writing, the teacher does not already know the answers in a socioculturally framed classroom

(Hodson, 1999). This is especially true within a writers workshop because writing as a creative

endeavor lends itself to multiple approaches. The workshop teacher's role is to model the

practice of inquiry in the teacher-student writing conference where she guides students to more

expert practice, but eventually allows students to construct their own investigative exercises

through peer writing conferences. Scaffolding in the zone of proximal development (Vygotsky,

1978, in Hodson, 1999) holds the task constant and adjusts the nature of the learner's

participation through the guided assistance of the teacher. When the teacher in a workshop

provides students time and space to learn from each other, after appropriate scaffolding, she

allows their full participation into expert writing practices. In doing so, she expands the resources

for the entire community and expands on students' legitimate knowledge and identities as

writers.

Sociocultural theory provides a framework for understanding how students and teacher in

writing conferences co-construct learning in a workshop classroom. While analyzing the

happenings in a classroom against a theory may shed light on the underpinnings of class

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practices, it is important to realize that theories emerge in response to previous theories and transform continuously. Sfard (1998) recommends that theories are intended for local-sense making and suggests that our work around schooling and classroom practices "is bound to produce a patchwork of metaphors rather than a unified, homogeneous theory of learning" (p. 12). In the section below, I detail how interdisciplinary relationship science provides "a patchwork of metaphors" that further our understanding of the significance of relationships, zooming out from the workshop classroom to a wider view on urban youth in classroom settings.

An Interdisciplinary Approach to the Understanding of Relationships at Schools

The relatively new science of relationships draws on empirical and theoretical work from sociology, anthropology, psychology, education, communication studies, and the health and medical sciences in efforts to bear light on the complexities of relationships within these fields of study. Relationship Science (RS) does not lend itself to one overarching theory, but instead encompasses seminal theoretical pieces from various disciplines. At the same time, contemporary RS research aims to amass large amounts of empirical research to describe relationship phenomena, answering questions such as: What types of relationships do people have? What is the course of relationships? How does the quality of relationships influence factors such as health and well-being (Kenny, 1995)? My own inquiry within this field explores another dimension, namely how are student classroom experiences and academic outcomes shaped by their relationships with their peers and with their teachers? With this approach, under this umbrella of relationship science, those serviced by our public schools take center stage: our students.

In this section of my literature review, I bring together three distinct theories that fall under the umbrella of relationship science: social capital theory from the discipline of sociology,

Deweyan political philosophy theory on democracy,[4] and care theory from educational

philosophy. In the analysis of these multidisciplinary theoretical frameworks, I explore ways that

urban classrooms can be transformed through a deeper understanding of the importance of

relationships amongst students and between students and teachers. I weave into the theoretical

discussions practical aspects of the co-construction of knowledge amongst writing conference

participants. I conclude this section by taking a deeper dive into our universal interconnectedness

and the more particular need of urban adolescents to experience a sense of belonging in

classrooms.

Social Capital Theory and Deweyan Democracy
        The concept of social capital is one of the most successful exports from the field of

sociology into the other social sciences (Portes, 2000, as cited in Dika & Sing, 2002). While

Bourdieu views social capital as a tool of reproduction for the dominant class (Dika & Sing,

2002), it is Coleman's (1988) view of social capital that is more frequently adopted by

educational researchers, myself included. Human capital is the skills and knowledge acquired by

an individual. Social capital that creates human capital exists in the network of relations amongst

people where there is extensive trustworthiness (Coleman, 1988). In order for there to be trust,

however, there must be a closure between people's relational structures so that obligations and

expectations of one another may be furthered. In a workshop classroom, the trusting networks

and effective norms are needed to build and sustain social capital for teachers and students as the

latter acquire the cultural practice of academic writing.

        Social capital theory exists in a prior version, a more skeletal version than Coleman's

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[4] Dewey's writings and influence are vast, covering 20th century psychology, philosophy, aesthetics, education, legal and political theory, and the social sciences (Radical Academy, website). In this paper, I reference how his political and philosophical excursions into *democracy* relate to schools.

surmised above. Prior to Coleman and Bourdieu is Hanifan, a rural educator from West Virginia,

who is now credited with being the first to invoke the term social capital. Hanifan (1916) writes:

> In the use of the phrase social capital, I make no reference to the usual acceptation
> of the term capital, . . . I do not refer to real estate, or to personal property or to
> cold cash, but rather to that in life which tends to make these tangible substances
> count for most in the daily lives of a people, namely, goodwill, fellowship, mutual
> sympathy and social intercourse among a group of individuals and families who
> make up a social unity . . . (as cited in Farr, 2004, p. 11).

Hanifan provides us profound insight into what it is that sustains social existence—*good will,*

fellowship and *mutual sympathy*. Yet Farr (2004), in his paper "Social Capital: A Conceptual

History," speculates that the obscure Hanifan may have adopted these concepts from the more

renowned Dewey, whom the former cites frequently, although never in reference to the term

social capital. Similarities between the two abound. While never using the term *social capital* as

does Hanifan, Dewey (1920) writes about the aims of society: "'society means association;

coming together in joint intercourse and action for the better realization of any form of

experience which is augmented and confirmed by being shared'" (in Farr, 2004, p. 16). And the

ultimate expression of a society for Dewey is democracy. Democracy is in fact another mode of

associated living experienced by citizens through their communication with each other (Dewey,

1916 in Farr, 2004). West (1998) too advocates for a democratic society where nurturing respect

thrives through dialogue. Clearly, he would agree with Dewey (1919) that democracy is not

concerned with "heroes or divine leaders but with associated individuals in which each by

intercourse with others somehow makes the life of each more distinctive" (p. 53).

Interconnected. Interrelated. These are concepts that many of us struggle to comprehend.

Ours is a culture that sets people apart in contrast to one another and at times at odds, in conflict,

or in competition with one another: the haves and have-nots, high school dropout and college

graduate, of European dissent and of indigenous American or African descent, non-dominant and dominant, English Learner and English only. In *Life Out of Context,* Walter Mosley (2006) typifies the conundrum that many ponder: "That's the only reason I'm writing this piece: to try and figure out how we get together and work as One" (p. 65). To do so, to get together and work as one, to comprehend and act from our interrelatedness, these are the goals of a democracy. For Dewey (1916) education is key in this democracy because it leads us to "see across and through the walls which separate" (p. 139).

When writing in critique of traditional schools at the turn of the 20th century, Dewey is aware of the paradox that while education is held as a democratic ideal, schools themselves are not democratic. The same is true for urban schools today. Often lacking at these schools past and present is what Dewey (1916) calls *sympathy* — "more than mere feeling; it is a cultivated imagination for what men have in common and a rebellion at whatever unnecessarily divides them" (in Farr, 2004, p. 16). While Coleman emphasizes *trust*, it is Dewey's *sympathy* that Farr (2004) underscores as central to the moral psychology of social capital. It is sympathy that allows each to imagine oneself in the place of others and to consider their welfare in one's own (Farr, 2004). In short, a discussion of social capital theory focuses on the concepts of networks, norms, trust and sympathy.

Theoretically speaking, classrooms where Deweyan democracy is more than an ideal may be viewed as classrooms where Colemanisque social capital abounds amongst students and between them and their teachers. Furthermore, networks between students and teachers founded on trusting caring relationships create another form of social capital. While trust itself *is* social capital (Coleman, 1988), the extent to which students can build on this trust to form human capital for themselves is what gives value to that social capital (Coleman, 1988). This is the role

of the writers in relationship with each other in a writing conference. With Dewey's *sympathy*

and with Coleman's *trust*, each contributes to the other's acquisition of the social and cultural

models of writing. Consequently, students' skills and knowledge, students' human capital, are

amassed as perceptions of themselves as intellectuals and social beings of value and worth result

from the social capital that exists when in relation with their teacher and with each other.

Educational Philosophy and Care Theory

Social capital theory with Deweyan democracy influence focuses on the positive results

attained by engaging in social networks where norms of trust and sympathy abound. Above, I

discuss briefly how these networks established in a writers workshop classroom might lead to the

creation of human capital for students, and thereby the transformation of their schooling

experiences. Educational philosophy provides us with another approach for examining these

interrelationships in classrooms. With a focus not on trust or sympathy, Noddings (2005b)

asserts that a theory of care defines genuine education. It is not care as a virtue that she refers to,

where we might care *about* others less fortunate and perhaps safely distant from ourselves

(1999). Instead, an ethic of care, or caring *for*, holds a thoroughly relational approach (1999),

where both carer and cared-for contribute to the relation and both benefit from the relation

(2005b). On one level, Noddings' care theory is similar to social capital theory where teachers

contribute to students' human capital. One distinction is that within a theory of care, the teacher

benefits as well as the student during a caring relational exchange. Nonetheless, like Dewey,

Noddings is aware of the paradox that exists at schools. For Dewey, the challenge is to create

democracy within the traditional school structure. For Noddings, the challenge is to *care* within

the traditional school structure.

An illustration of the particular challenge that exists in typical teacher-student relations

further clarifies the dissimilarity between caring *for* with its relational sense and caring *about* with its sense of virtue. While urban students' greatest complaint about their schools is, "They don't care!" (Comer, 1988, in Noddings, 2005b, p. 2), teachers insist that they care deeply *about* their students. But, Noddings (1999) argues, teachers' care resides within the virtue sense, not the relational sense, of the word:

> [S]omething has gone badly wrong. People who are trying to care [teachers] and people who want care [students] have been unable to form caring relations. We cannot just say, "Well, we cared." We have to admit a failure . . . and analyze the situation that makes caring so difficult, (p. 3)

In *Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics & Moral Education*[5] (1984) and *The Challenge to Care in Schools: An Alternative Approach to Education* (2005b), Noddings does just that. She analyzes why schools fall short as caring places and provides a philosophical lens through which to view the possibilities that exist when schools act from an ideology not of control, but "one in favor of shared living and responsibility" (2005b, p. 62), with an "emphasis on creating, maintaining, and enhancing positive relations" (2005b, p. 21).

To better understand how care theory relates to the schooling experiences of youth, Noddings details the conscious experience of the carer and the one being cared for; both teacher and student are integral in relational caring encounters. For the teacher, a full receptivity and awareness of her students leads to displacement of personal motivation during a caring encounter, such as a writing conference. This engrossment and displacement result in a focus of energy on the student's goals, wants, and desires, as typified when the workshop teacher asks open-ended questions during a conference: "What are you working on? . . . What are your goals

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[5] Much research focuses on the "feminist ethic of care." While acknowledging that mostly women have written about an alternative vision with regards to schooling, where of primary concern is "the kinds of relations we should establish," Noddings writes that "men, too, often initiate and share in an alternative vision" (2005b, p. 44). Also, much of the feminist literature addresses care settings outside of the classroom, such as hospitals and nursing homes. For these reasons, I choose to use the non-gender biased term "care ethic," which is used by Noddings in her later writings about education.

for writing today?" The student receives her teacher's caring, recognizes it as such, and responds accordingly. The caring encounter is complete. And built one on another, caring encounters both create and sustain caring relations. Finally, it is not suggested that caring relationships are *all* that are needed for students to succeed in schools (Noddings, 2005a). However, "these relations provide the foundation for successful pedagogical activity" (Noddings, 2005a, p. 4) and bring "integrity . . . [to] everything teacher and student do together" (Noddings, 2005a, p. 3).

Nodding's philosophical portrayal of caring relationships at schools is vivified by Valenzuela's detailings of real-life examples of these relationships at one urban school in Houston, Texas. Valenzuela (1999), who adopts care theory as a conceptual framework in *Subtractive Schooling,* takes the theory of care to another level. What Noddings labels caring *for*, Valenzuela likens to *authentic* caring, which describes the reciprocal relationships students long to have with their teachers. Yet Valenzuela makes an important distinction. For her, teachers who authentically care have a profound political awareness of the "socioeconomic, linguistic, sociocultural, and structural barriers that obstruct the mobility of Mexican youth" (1999, p. 109). Caring is political, and it is, " . . . a dearth of authentic relations with teachers [that] subtracts, or minimizes, opportunities youth have to develop and enjoy a sense of competence and mastery of the curriculum" (1999, p. 71). In short, the underachievement of Mexican-heritage youth at Seguín High (pseudonym), and one might argue at similar urban schools, is a factor of continuous subtractive experiences. Valenzuela's qualitative analysis reveals students' academic achievement is affected by their investment in school, which is in turn affected by whether they feel teachers are invested in them. This leads Valenzuela to conclude that the poor relationships characterizing daily life at the school exact high academic, social, and motivational costs.

Uniting the Three: Trust, Sympathy and Care

Coleman, Dewey, Noddings and Valenzuela draw on various aspects of relationships in the classroom. The common threads that run throughout their work on relationships, when woven together, strengthen our understanding of the importance of peer and student/teacher relationships within classroom settings. I frame this analysis of school-based relationships within the field called Relationship Science. I explore how closed networks lead to norms of trust in classrooms (Coleman), how sympathy and association are democratic ideals attributed to schools (Dewey), and how students thrive when in authentic (Valenzuela) caring (Noddings) relationships with teachers. These theories are more than complimentary: Noddings cites Dewey frequently; Valenzuela cites Noddings, adding her own contribution to care theory; and aspects of Coleman's social capital theory may have originated from Dewey himself.

A focus on student achievement drives some educators who may give little consideration to Dewey's "associated living" and Noddings' "caring relations" at schools. With tunnel vision toward students' academic measures of success, perhaps these educators cannot recall with affection as does Noddings (1984, 2005b) close relationships with teachers who taught them for several years of their secondary schooling experiences. Nor may they be familiar with *educacíon*, as are youth who attended schools in Mexico at the turn of the century, accustomed to caring relationships with teachers and to schools that were viewed as extensions of the home (Valenzuela, 1999). These academic-motivated educators may be surprised to learn that students at Holweide School in Cologne, Germany were grouped in clusters of 120 and remained with the same teachers from grades five to ten[6] (Newberg, 1995, p. 716). Nor may they relish how these various schooling experiences conjure the one room schoolhouse, our own American tradition of

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[6] Prior to these clustering efforts, in and around 1975, 30% of Holweide students attended college. After the school was restructured as described above, with students remaining with the same teacher for six years, 50-60% qualify for college in 1991 (Newberg, 1995, p. 716

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intimate student - teacher relations.

A detour down memory lane is not intended toward nostalgia, but to heighten the fact that all of these examples are a far cry from today's urban schooling experiences in the U.S. where primary teachers associate themselves with a particular grade level and secondary teachers with a particular subject matter. This structural, technical aspect of modern-day schools hinders the development of caring relations between teachers and students (Osterman, 2000; Newberg, 1995; Noddings, 1984, 2005a & b; Valenzuela, 1999), relationships that require Colemanesque trust and Deweyan sympathy, and that require longevity, or what Noddings calls continuity.

One needn't choose between social capital, democratic schools, or caring as a framework for approaching relationships in classrooms and their impact on student achievement. One might simply recognize that caring, trust and sympathy amongst urban youth and with their teachers might create *additive* as opposed to *subtractive* schooling experiences. Finally, I would argue, these strengthened relationships might contribute to more than a classroom's culture. They might contribute to a society where relatedness and connectedness overshadow separation and despair. Ultimately, they might shed light on Mosley's (2006) ponderings of how we get together and work as One.

Urban Adolescents' Need for Belonging, and our Universal Interconnectedness
Theories under the arch of Relationship Science provide a multidimensional framework that supports the importance of students' needs for relatedness in the classroom, mostly focusing on the relationships between teachers and students. In contrast, Osterman's (2000) *Students'*
Need for Belonging in the School Community, a review of the educational research on this topic, focuses on students' relationships with one another. Her findings reveal that students who experience such relatedness are more motivated, engaged and committed to their studies than

students who have no established sense of community at school. This supports the National Middle School Association's (NMSA) (2010) call for "structures that foster powerful learning and meaningful relationships" for young adolescents (p. 3). Anderman's (2003) study, *Academic and social perceptions as predictors of change in middle school students' sense of school belonging* further details parameters that promote adolescents' self-reported experiences of belonging:

- students' sense of school belonging is enhanced when teachers promote adaptive academic and interpersonal contexts in their classrooms (p. 5)
- adolescents feel less alienated from educational settings that emphasize personal effort, improvement, and mastery (p. 18)
- students reported a greater sense of school belonging when they perceived their academic tasks as interesting, important, and useful (p. 18)

In other words, the experience of belonging is tied not only to the relational aspects of adolescent students' schooling experiences, but also to their perception that their work relies on personal effort and that it is deemed interesting and useful. This is important for the purposes of my research because it supports the idea that a rigorous approach to writing does not undermine students' sense of belonging. Yeager (2017) likewise finds that adolescents benefit from approaches to social emotional learning, one aspect of which is relationship building (Collaborative for Academic and Social Emotional Learning, n.d.) that are not prescriptive in approach, but that instead foster teacher respect of students by allowing them more autonomy and engagement in higher-order thinking, both aspects of a writing conferences. In short, "Teachers didn't have to choose between rigor and emotions," (Yeager, 2017, p. 85).

This balance between rigor and belonging is especially important for young urban adolescents because, "During middle grades, students in high-poverty environments are either launched on the path to high school graduation or knocked off-track" (Balanz, 2009, p. 7). Adolescence, an age of increased focus on peers, often to the exclusion of adults (Yeager, 2017),

is for many urban youth a turning point in their schooling. Balanz (2009) explains that displays towards complete disengagement from school can be found in middle schooler's "basic human reactions to uncomfortable environments" (p. 5): fleeing (poor attendance), withdrawing (low course grades), and pushing back or acting out (confrontational behaviors). Brown (2017) likewise explicates that urban youth living with the trauma associated with societal racism and classism have tendency to armor up when they enter classrooms. Their armor takes one of three forms, intensified when experiencing shame or embarrassment in the classroom: they hide, or they move in (seeking to appease), or they move against the person or persons responsible for the painful experience. Brown (2017) appeals to teachers to ensure that their students experience classrooms where they are able to: "Be here. Be you. Belong," (see Fig. 2.1). She argues that young urban adolescents, like the subjects of my study, can ill afford a classroom that focuses solely on academics. And because this time is pivotal (Balanz, 2009; Yeager, 2017), they can ill afford a classroom that focuses solely on relationships and belonging. They need both. The

Fig. 2.1, Brown's (2017) Call to Teachers

research detailed above (NMSA, 2010; Anderman, 2003; Yeager, 2017) confirms that middle grades classroom relationships are enhanced when accompanied with critical thinking and rigor.

In the second section of this chapter, *Sociocultural Theory on Learning, Juxtaposed against Cognitive Science,* I lay out writing conferences against the backdrop of sociocultural theory. In this, the third section, I detail the importance of relationships and belonging for

students, especially young urban adolescents. Now, bringing this section full circle I reunite the cognitive and sociocultural. Brown (2010), a social science researcher, writes that, "the need for connection is more than a feeling or a hunch. It's hard science. Neuroscience, to be exact" (p. 19). She cites Daniel Goleman (2006) whose "findings in biology and neuroscience confirm that we are hardwired for connection and that our relationships shape our biology as well as our experiences" (in Brown, 2010, p. 19). Beyond the scope of this paper is an understanding of how it is that our relationships shape our biology. Nonetheless, continuing to confound, a slight diversion into the anatomy of the brain requires that we further suspend a dichotomy of ourselves as either primarily social or cognitive beings. It would seem that it is actually the two hemispheres of the brain that are responsible for these two opposing perceptions.

When Jill Bolte Taylor experienced a stroke and a brain hemorrhage that affected her corpus callosum in 1996, she newly experienced the two sides of her brain as unique entities. For periods of time she was wholly immersed in either one of the hemispheres. When the right side took over, Bolte Taylor (2008) realized that, "We are energy beings connected to one another through the consciousness of our right hemispheres, as one human family. And right here right now, we are brothers and sisters on this planet here to make the world a better place" (13:50). But, she explains in an interview (Bolte Taylor, 2015), "There's a group of cells in our left hemisphere that tells us that I'm a solid, a separate single solid and this is where I begin and you begin, and we're separate. But we're not. And if you lose that group of cells (in the left hemisphere of your brain), you lose that perception that we're separate" (12:30). She expands on this theme of universality by explaining that humans share all but 1/100th of 1% of the same genetic sequences (Bolte Taylor, 2015). When the Black Panther asks us to recognize that more connects us than separates us (see Chapter 1), and Mosley asks how do we come together as

One, it seems that the answers to their questions lie in Bolte Taylor's epiphany that resulted from her stroke.

It is my intent that my research will also contribute to ways that we understand ourselves to be interconnected and to ways that we in a classroom might contribute to each other's sense of worth and value. Furthermore, as I seek to understand how students' relationships with each other and with me their teacher support the social and cultural models of learning in writers workshop conferences, I am answering Anderman's (2003) call. She explains that a limit to her study is that it is based on students' self-reported experiences of belonging. "Additional research is needed to understand how some teachers manage to create an environment that serves both the academic and social needs of middle school students" (Anderman, 2003, p. 20). Forming an initial response to Anderman's call in the following sections of this chapter, I expand on the literature around three key aspects of my research: emergent bilingual students, the writers workshop, and finally writing conferences. I explore where these three areas overlap and continue to name at their intersection *belonging* as a relational aspect of my research. In the penultimate section on student interactions around writing, I resurface the theme of interconnectedness that concludes this section and couple it with an exploration into Freirian love.

An Historical and Sociopolitical Perspective on English Learners in the U.S.: From Deficit Theories to Deepened Understanding of Language and Languaging

In *The "Problem" of English Learners: Constructing Genres of Difference,* Gutiérrez and Orellana (2006) request that researchers be more respectful when studying English Learner (EL) populations. They caution against framing ELs in ways that oversimplify their experiences, stereotypically or romantically, and against using deficiency or mismatch models that seek solely

to dichotomize. They argue that such portrayals of ELs are, "often flawed, incomplete, or one-dimensional, making it harder to challenge static, problematic, and racialized views of the practices and promise of English Learners" (p. 504). I ground my representation of the subjects of my research in their advice. This is not a study about gangster youth, nor about students entering school already behind English only counterparts, nor about students who cannot master academic writing. Instead, I intend that my research adds to our understanding of the complex processes that middle school English Learner students engage in when in conversation about their writing, and of the ways that peer writing partner relationships support these exchanges.

I begin this section with an historical overview that provides context about ways that English Learners have been problematized in this country over the centuries. Next I detail ways that research has moved away from deficit theories towards a deeper understanding of bilingualism and languaging (García, 2009). I leave a discussion of the instructional and curricular implications for English Learners for the next section where I parallel classroom implications alongside research on the writers workshop.

While my undergraduate major was history, I often find myself avoiding it, especially when it comes to a study of immigrant populations in this country. I either have to laugh at the absurdity or want to cry at the inhumanity. Nonetheless, our history frames our understanding of policies, laws and social structures that serve as backdrop for schooling and classroom practices impacting English Learners today.

Ironically, the first European effort to standardize language was enacted just days after Columbus sailed for Spain. Elio Antonio de Nebrija's *Gramatica Castellana*, Illich (1981, in Scollon, 2003) explains, presented a grammar of Castilian Spanish to Queen Isabella, which served as, "a tool for conquest abroad . . . and a tool to colonize the language spoken by her own

subjects" (p. viii). De Nebrija took offense to the varied dialects emerging in his Spanish

homeland, studied Latin abroad in Italy, and returned with the "correct" ways of speaking,

reading and writing Castilian Spanish. His *Gramatica Castellana* would be one of the many tools

that Spanish "immigrants" would enact upon the colonized peoples in the Americas.

Some two hundred and fifty years later, one of this country's founding fathers expressed

outrage that the very structures of governance were threatened by people speaking a different

language. In 1753, Benjamin Franklin wrote of German immigrants,

> Not being used to Liberty, they know not how to make modest use of it . . .
> Advertisements, intended to be general are now printed in Dutch and English, . . .
> they will soon outnumber us, that all the advantages we have will not, in My
> Opinion, be able to preserve our language, and even our government will become
> precarious (in Crawford, 1992; in Lippi-Green, 2012, p. 218).

And one hundred years later, not too dissimilar from De Nebrija, the Federal Commission of

Indian Affairs sought to squash the native language of indigenous people in favor of their own

preferred language:

> . . . by educating the children of these tribes in the English language these
> differences would have disappeared . . . in the difference of language to-day lies
> two-thirds of our trouble . . . schools should be established, which children should
> be required to attend; their barbarous dialects should be blotted out and the English
> language substituted . . . the language of the greatest, most powerful and
> enterprising nationalities beneath the sun. (Atkins, 1887; in Crawford, 1992; in
> Lippi-Green, 2012, p. 116).

Alongside these anti-immigrant, anti-indigenous, xenophobic displays are federal and

state laws that mandate how immigrant populations are to be instructed (see Fig 2.2 below).

Twenty years ago, the 1998 California Proposition 227 held similar English-only sentiments to

those of Atkins and Franklin. The proposition banned bilingual education and, "Require(d) all

public school instruction be conducted in English" (California Proposition 227). In 2016,

Proposition 58 overturned Proposition 227, and ushered in the ▮▮▮▮▮▮ Unified School

District's *2018 Master Plan for English Learners and Standard English Learners* (*2018 Master Plan*). This new plan, in alignment with the California School Board Governance Brief, *English Learners in Focus* (Olsen and Mawell-Jolly, 2018):

- Focuses on assets-based education;
- Includes a goal of bilingualism and biliteracy for all; and
- Calls for expansion of dual language education programs, (p. vii).

In short, it is markedly different in both sentiment and letter from what previously defined California's approaches to the home languages and instruction of its language-diverse student populations.

Fig. 2.2: Timeline of Provisions Affecting English Learner Education

Source: 2018 Master Plan, p. 148
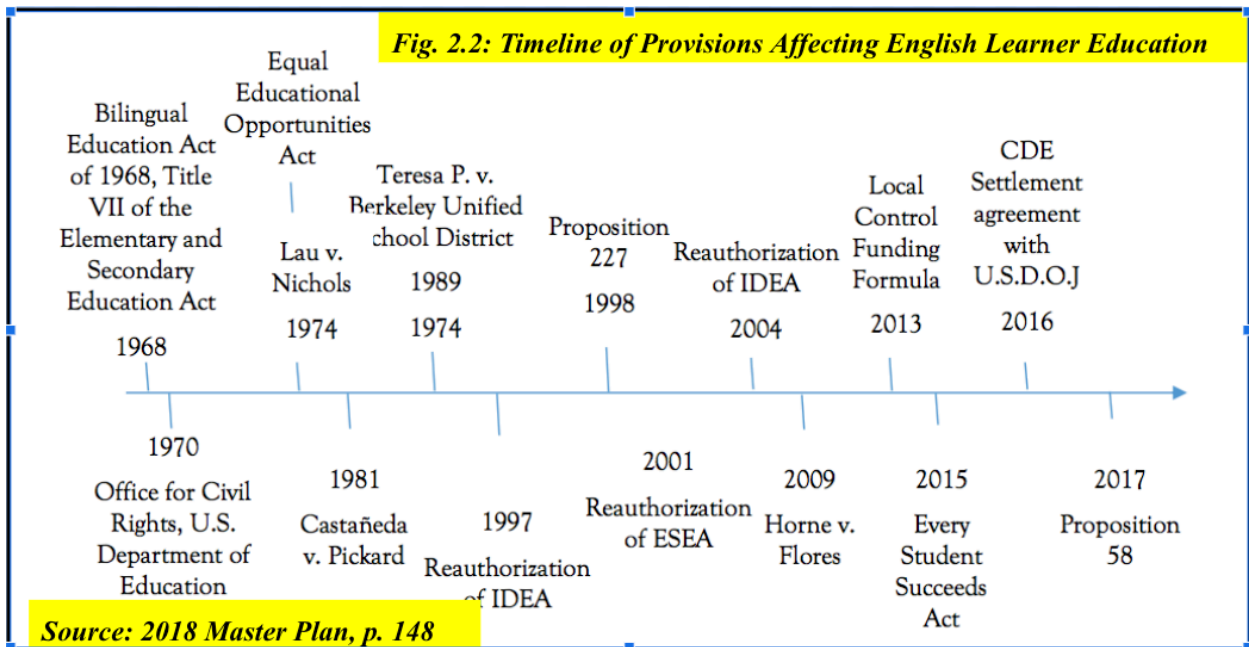
With these shifts in law and policy are shifts in research around language and English Learners. Researchers today (Miller & Sperry, 2012; Adair, Colegrove, & McManus, 2017) counter the positioning of English Learners against, "The early catastrophe: The 30 million word gap by age 3" (Hart & Risley, 2003). The "word gap" refers to Hart and Risley's 1995 study of the amount of words spoken between infant and toddlerhood of forty-two families from various socio-economic backgrounds. Miller and Sperry (2012) argue that Language Socialization

explains the mismatch between schools and homes in the word gap study because the competence of toddlers in the low socio-economic households was not perceived by the researchers as legitimate. They call instead for studies that show the strength of narrative, story-telling practices amongst low-income children. Furthermore, Adair, Colegrove and McManus (2017) detail the repercussions of Hart and Risley's "findings" on the perceived inabilities of Latinx students, by both their teachers and themselves, recounting, "the harm that can come from . . . institutionally and publicly justified . . . deficit-oriented research and thinking" (p. 309). They argue for shifts in both the deficit-attitudes and pedagogical practices of educators who focus on decontextualized vocabulary development as a form of literacy education. Similarly, García and Otheguy (2017) argue that we should, "locate the gap in social processes of racism and discrimination, rather than in the minoritized students and their families" (p. 53).

García (2009) repositions the study of English Learners by calling-out the complexities of what it means to be bilingual. She argues in lieu of monoglossic and monolingual definitions of bilingualism where the ways and languages of schools are preferred to the ways and languages of home. Even an additive monoglossic lens that acknowledges acquiring a second language in fact reflects a distinct separation between two languages, one that she finds incommensurate with the true bilingual experience. For García language is not a direct object (*I have / speak / read / write X language)*, but a verb, something we do to negotiate situations, in special social contexts, done over a course of a lifetime. She coins the term *emergent bilinguals* because bilingualism occurs along a continuum, and is not a category. In addition, the term *English Learner* reduces students to their fluency with English. In Chapter 1 above, I explain that I will also use the term emergent bilinguals to refer to the subjects of my study. In this section, however, I frequently reference the more common term English Learner as a reflection of the ways that our understanding about

these students have shifted over time. García (2009) and Flores and Schissel (2014) allow for the more nuanced, complex and diverse representation of emergent bilinguals, building on what Gutiérrez and Orellana advocated for in 2006.

In the section below I position language researchers like Gibbons and Mercer alongside the writers workshop, the classroom structure that is the context for this study.

Emergent Bilinguals and the Writers Workshop

Having been around schools and in classrooms, grades two through twelve, for the past thirty years, I attest to the 2003 findings of the National Committee on Writing in America's Schools and Colleges. In *The neglected "R": The need for a Writing Revolution,* the committee called for a revolution to address the dearth of writing instruction in schools and colleges. In countless classrooms and teacher meetings, as a teacher, peer coach and school site administrator, when the topic turns to student writing, frustration takes over. Often students and teachers are in a vicious cycle around writing: teachers unsure how to respond to students' written assignments, unsure even how to teach writing (Myers, Scales & Grisham, 2016); students with years of little to no writing instruction produce writing when asked that bears little semblance to what teachers would hope. Perhaps because writing is both a creative endeavor and an academic endeavor, its complexity lends itself to being the "neglected 'R.'"

It would seem, however, that the call for the revolution was heeded. With the Common Core State Standards, adopted by forty-one states since 2010 (Common Core Standards Initiative), writing is placed alongside reading, providing opportunity to change writing instruction on a national scale (Mo, Kopke, Hawkins, Troia, & Olinghouse, 2014). Yet state adoption of standards does not immediately translate to change in classroom practices. Calkins, Ehrenworth and Lehman (2012) aptly point out, "As challenging as it must have been to write

and finesse the adoption of the Common Core State Standards, that accomplishment is nothing

compared to the work of teaching in ways that bring all students to these ambitious expectations.

The goal is clear. The pathway is not" (p. 27). In the section above, I detail how the writers

workshop framed against sociocultural theory provides one such pathway for students and

teachers to co-construct social and cultural models for writing in the classroom. In this section, I

provide a brief historical background on the writers workshop approach, discuss how the

workshop approach aligns with the needs of emergent bilingual students, and detail the specific

approach to the workshop referenced for this study, namely Teachers College Reading and

Writing Project's (TCRWP) *Units of Study in Narrative, Information and Argument Writing*

(*Units of Study*).

Process Writing, the Writers Workshop and Emergent Bilingual Students
        In the mid-1970s, Donald Graves (1975) pioneers research on the study of elementary

school children's writing by observing them as they write. In his analysis, he compares formal

and informal classroom environments (in the latter, students function with little teacher direction

and have choice in determining learning activities), and assigned and unassigned writing tasks.

Some of his findings from this first case study of young writers bare out in what comes to be

known as process-writing:

1. Informal environments give greater choice to children. When children are given
   choice as to what to write, they write more and in greater length than when
   specific writing assignments are given.
2. Results of writing done in the informal environments demonstrate that children
   do not need motivation or supervision in order to write.
3. In either environment, formal or informal, unassigned writing is longer than
   assigned writing.
4. An environment that requires large amounts of assigned writing inhibits the
   range, content, and amount of writing done by children. (p. 235)

Graves' work is steeped in sociocultural theory: his attention to the cultural learning

environments of his subjects and his use of case study methodology to forge into unchartered research. After Graves has studied young student writers for over a decade, Giroux (1987) writes, "Graves sees knowledge as something to be understood and analyzed within the forms of experience that students bring to schools" (p. 175).

Two of Graves' students, Lucy Calkins and Nancie Atwell (1987) continue the exploration as teacher-researchers of their students' writing processes. Their findings contribute to the field of process writing, which is now referred to more commonly as writers workshop (Graham & Kandmel, 2011). Atwell's *In the Middle* (1987) was worn through as a result of my own endeavors to first teach, really teach, writing in the early 1990s. In providing students freedom of choice in their writing topics, one of the key aspects of the workshop, I soon came to learn that student freedom actually requires more, not less, in the way of classroom structures. Atwell (Digital Editor, 2014) fondly retells how she nervously awaited her mentor Graves' feedback after he first observed her workshop class. His compliment was that she was a great teacher of writing because she was so . . . not "so compassionate" or "so insightful," but . . . so organized. In her books for teachers (Atwell, 1987 / 2002) she details the myriad ways that she tends to the different aspects of the workshop classroom, from lists for scheduling writing conferences to mini-lesson topics.

In *Lessons that Change Writers* (2002), Atwell extolls that, "Teachers push for a variety and teach about, show, and demonstrate memoirs, poetry, short fiction, essays, book reviews, parodies, a variety of business and friendly letters, and plays, plus other genres as a (student) need or interest emerges" (p. xix). Herein, that last phrase, "as a (student) need or interest emerges," is a key distinction between Nancie Atwell's approach to workshop writing in 2002 and Lucy Calkins' approach in the decade following. Calkins and colleagues out of TCRWP

respond to the Common Core in 2012 with *Pathways to the Common Core*, and shortly thereafter with *Units of Study* for elementary and later middle school grades. The *Units of Study* are genre-specific units aligned to the Common Core standards: narrative, information, argument (opinion in elementary grades), and literary response. Lessons sequentially lead students through different phases, or bends, of writing around a particular genre. In the first phase, the entire class produces a piece of writing about the same topic. In the second phase, students work in small groups to select their topic and produce a second attempt at this same genre. And in the third phase for the final piece of this genre, students write independently either continuing on the topic from the second phase, or selecting a topic of their own. In this way, the *Units of Study* guide students along the writing of various genres in a highly formalized manner, where "student choice" happens in the selection of topics and in daily decisions made about writing.

The growth of the TCRWP workshop approach is evidenced through dozens of published materials and worldwide trainings and conferences, now (March, 2019) targeting large school districts for a "multi-tiered, multi-year package of supports designed to bring Best Literacy Practices to scale across selected large districts" (Teachers College Reading & Writing Project, 2015a). On the TCRWP website, under the *Research Base* tab, they explain their core beliefs and values:

> Our work aims to prepare kids for any reading and writing task they will face or set themselves, to turn them into life-long, confident readers and writers who display agency and independence in their future endeavors. That is, our aims reach beyond state testing and fulfillment of tasks for schools. We aim to strengthen a generation of readers and writers (Teachers College Reading & Writing Project, 2015b).

Calkins and Ehrenworth (2016) argue that, "The writers' workshop approach that was popularized 30 years ago is still relevant" (p. 7). Like Hsu (2009) and Smith (2017), they outline the following as characteristics of this approach:

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- Time: students have protected time to write, ideally 30 minutes a day.
- Choice: students address topics that matter to them.
- Response: while in the midst of draft writing, students are provided feedback from the teacher during one-to-one writing conferences and from their writing partner during peer conferences.

A typical 60 minute lesson breaks down as follows: 15-minute whole group mini-lesson, 30-minute independent writing, and 15-minute pair-share and whole-class share-out. The relevance of the timing of the workshop lessons is that only for one-fourth of the time is the teacher in the role of *sage on the stage*. Nonetheless, this sage has much to accomplish in this brief amount of time. The highly structured format for a mini-lesson includes a hook to attend to prior understandings, a teaching point that targets one aspect of writing in that genre, teacher modeling with her own writing use of the teaching point, student active engagement to practice the teaching point, and a link to prepare students with a plan for their independent writing time. The format of the mini-lesson attends to how teacher and students co-construct writing models: "by a combination of observing experts at work, receiving some guidance from them and trying out the tools for themselves" (Mercer, 2000a, p.14).

After the mini-lesson, and what distinguishes a workshop from other approaches to writing instruction, is that daily students are given large chunks of time to write (Atwell, 1987 / 2002; Graham & Sandmel, 2011; Smith, 2017), to make choices as writers along each stage of the writing process. As the students write independently, the teacher conferences with students individually and/or works to differentiate instruction for small groups of students. Afterwards, students confer with one another about their writing, making revisions as they do so. The workshop concludes with the whole class attending to a few students who share-out snippets of writing accomplished that day. In addition to providing daily lessons that follow these standard workshop parameters of time and structure, The TCRWP *Units of Study* include progression

charts for each genre along a continuum across the grades K-8, as well as checklists, rubrics, textsets, and student exemplars (Calkins, Boland Hohne, Kirshbaum Robb,2015).

The connection between TCRWP's *Units of Study* and the teaching and learning of emergent bilingual students surfaces in a synthesis of research around academic literacy for secondary English Language Learners.[7] Maxwell-Jolly, Gándara & Méndez Benavídez, (2007) report that "ELD classes can be boring and frustrating for students . . . We must also avoid setting our standards lower for these students" (p. 23). Similarly, Gibbons (2009b) calls for classroom approaches that provide

Fig. 2.3, Workshop and EL Instructional Approaches

Workshop Teaching Supports ELLs
- Predictable, consistent structure
- Connection to students' background knowledge
- Explicit teaching points
- Visual supports
- Repetition of teaching point throughout the lesson
- Oral rehearsal for writing
- Gradual release of responsibility / teaching towards independence
- Demonstration
- Collaborative Processing
- Choice
- Differentiation

Source: Powerful Choices Educational Consulting

"high challenge" and "high support" for English Learners. A professional development provider for the workshop *Units of Study* provides this summary (Fig. 2.3 above) of the ways that workshop teaching supports ELs, attending to student interest (connecting to students' background knowledge; choice), high standards (explicit teaching points; gradual release of responsibility / teaching towards independence), and high supports (demonstration; differentiation; visual supports).

While the workshop approach is strongly in alignment with needs of mergent bilingual students, nonetheless, in order for the *Units of Study* to be adopted for use in English Language Development Classes serving English Learners in the state of California (Calkins, personal

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[7] While I elect the term of emergent bilingual students over English Language Learners, when I reference other research, I will use the terms that were adopted during that research.

communication, January 2017), TCRWP published for each grade level a volume titled, *Supports*

for English Learners in Units of Study: Lucy Calkins with Colleagues from the Teachers College

Reading Writing Project and Educators from Across the State of California. This resource lays

out for every lesson in the three units how the information can be scaffolded for ELs. It also

frontloads the lessons with topics such as, comprehensible input, building on students' prior

knowledge, providing access to complex concepts, and important to this research, giving

opportunities for structured oral language practice.

Writing Conferences and Emergent Bilinguals
        In the last section of my review on the research literature, I detail the aspect of the writers

workshop most relevant to my study, exploring pedagogical and philosophical approaches to

writing conferences between students and their teacher, and between student peer writing

partners. I begin with an overview of the research on dialogical practices for emergent bilingual

students. I then detail the literature around peer writing conferences. I conclude with a deep, but

brief, dive into the philosophical and spiritual underpinnings that support the topic of writing

conferences for emergent bilingual young adolescent students.

        Mercer (2000b) writes, "For a teacher to teach and a learner to learn, they must use talk

and joint activity to create a shared communicative space, an 'intermental development zone'"

(p. 141). Adair, Colegrove, and McManus (2017) agree. But Latinx children in their study

interject that learning means that (you) need to "'Keep your mouth zipped, eyes watching . . .

and . . . and . . . and ears listening!'" (p. 311). The students in their study are unaccustomed to the

exploratory talk that Mercer (200b) describes where both participants, "Engage critically but

constructively with each other's ideas. Relevant information is offered for joint consideration.

Proposals may be challenged and counter-challenged, . . . Knowledge is made publicly

accountable and reasoning is visible in the talk" (p. 153). Likewise, in a study of middle and high school English courses, "students whose classroom literacy experiences emphasize discussion based approaches in the context of high academic demands internalize the knowledge and skills necessary to engage in challenging literacy tasks on their own" (Applebee, Langer, Nystrand & Gamoran 2003, p. 675). In other words, through talk, learners internalize newly encountered information and processes.

In *Exploring Vygotskian perspectives in education: The cognitive value of peer interaction*, Forman and Cazden (1994) write that there are two benefits for the writer of a peer's presence. The first is the questions that the peer raises about the writing, and the second is the mere presence of the peer as an audience, a visible attentive audience. Gibbons (2009b) confirms that when "given opportunities to use knowledge in meaningful ways with others, EL learners not only achieve at higher levels, but also expand their academic and personal identities, and their own beliefs about what is possible" (p. 167). Likewise, Maxwell-Jolly, Gándara and Méndez Benavídez (2007) affirm the importance of peer relations for adolescent English Language Learners, as well as relationships of trust with their teachers.

In addition to the pedagogy that supports the practice of conferencing for emergent bilingual student writers, the literature is thick on implementation approaches. Much of it focuses on college students (Edwards & Liu, 2018; Yu & Li, 2016), and much of it is prescriptive in nature: Steps 1, 2 and 3 on training students before, during and after peer review (Kim, 2015); or, be kind, be specific, be helpful (Berger, 2012). Regarding studies of conferences within writing workshop approaches, the literature rings less prescriptive. Lain (2007) writes that if the mini-lesson is the mind of the writers workshop, then conferencing is the heart. Similarly to Atwell (1987), she begins each student / teacher conference by approaching the student, and sitting next

to her. Typical frames for beginning the conference are, "What are you working on?" and "Read

it to me" (p.26), ensuring to ask questions that stem from genuine curiosity as a listener-audience

(Atwell, 1987; Kissel, 2017).

Speaking to peer writing partners, Hsu (2009) finds that, "Partnerships linked writers and

built bonds" (p. 151). She explains the transformation of her workshop classroom for three years

without writing partnerships and for two years with writing partners.

> First, the independent writing segment stabilizes as the students are reoriented, no
> longer flocking to the teacher as the sole source of support but significantly
> supporting one another. Second, writing partnerships foster frequent student-to-
> student conferencing, substantially increasing students' practice with critiquing
> writing and with recommending actions. In a nutshell, it is flow and feedback.
> Traffic is redirected, and students' experience responding to text multiplies (p.
> 153).

In *The power of partners: a qualitative study on the effects of long-term partnerships during*

Writing Workshop, Smith (2017) builds on Guthrie and Klauda's 2014 findings, that peers

engage authentically around reading when they have established partners, by studying whether

the same would hold true of writing partnerships. After studying a classroom of second grade

writing partners, she concludes that, "Students not only felt pride in their writing but because of

the ongoing nature of their collaboration they also felt pride in the work of their partners" (p. 67).

To conclude this section on the dialogic practice of writing conferences, I turn to Freire,

who writes of the importance of dialogical practices for the marginalized whereby, "(we) engage

in dialogue because (we) recognize the social and not merely the individualistic character of the

process of knowing. In this sense, dialogue presents itself as an indispensable component of the

process of both learning and knowing" (Freire & Macedo, 1995, p. 379). Orellana (2015) writes

that for Freire, "teaching was an act of love, aimed at helping people to become fully conscious,

develop their full capacities, and fulfill their own needs, in communion with the needs and

aspirations of others" (pre-publication, n.p.). In these words, Orellana captures the intent I have written on the whiteboard that sits at the back of the classroom: to build a learning community. However, she recognizes the challenge to love in schools where non-dialogic power roles of teacher and student lead to discordant relationships. "But," she writes, "if we can move past our own fears and reactions, we may find our way back to a loving stance that reminds us to see *potential*. Love can help us to see the flower even when the bud is shriveled up and dry" (pre-publication, n.p.).

In detail above, I too discuss ways that relationships at schools might allow students and teacher to co-construct classroom culture in affirming manner. Even while relationships are complex and multi-faceted, they may also be seen as the combined result of everyday interactions between people. These interactions, the moment-to-moment exchanges between people, are where we develop our listening of one another. And based on our listening, we place each other in particular contexts, assigning the other with positive powerful traits or negative limiting traits. As these contexts are either empowering or disempowering of the other person, they consequently leave the other either empowered or disempowered, either with a knowing of his true self or with a sense of frustration and alienation because his true self has been overlooked.

The former context, the empowering context, where we see what Orellana (2015) names *potential*, I contend, is founded in love. When love provides the context with which we relate to one another, the result is an empowering interaction. Who I am, who we are, in the context of love is limitless. It is an understanding, even if for a moment, of our true selves--the God within us at one with our human form. All the stories we have created over our lifetime that force an understanding of ourselves as separate from God, all of these stories melt away. And when we

consider the source, the person who has inspired our realization of connection, who has provided us this context, made it available, we know at a soul-memory level that just as we are not separate from God, we are not separate from one another. *I and thou,* writes Martin Buber (2012). You and me as one.

One might assert that it is not realistic to expect that dialogic practices yield loving relationships in an urban classroom. I assert that it is possible to love just as not to love, to provide an empowering context as a disempowering one. But while the disempowering thoughts that guide our actions might be about the other person, they might also be about ourselves and our feelings of inadequacy. A difficult exchange between me and a student is one where I feel my value as a person is minimized. In those moments, I might turn to the words of Thich Nhat Hanh and stay fully present as I manage my suffering: "First thing for a teacher to do is to go home to him or herself. The way out is in. Go back to oneself and take care of oneself. Learning . . . how to handle painfulness, learning how to be around pain, with compassion and understanding. This is the first step" (Plumvillageonline, 2015, 22:00). I take this first step with my students, for my students, and for myself. The mindfulness practice that begins each class period, with the intent of instilling presence and calmness, is as much for me as it is for them. Probably more so.

It is my intent that the transformation of our classroom, where we become a community of learners, lies within the transformation of my relationships with my students, and they with each other. With dialogical exchanges and mindfulness practices, writing conference interactions provide the context for this transformation for the emergent bilingual students who are the subjects of my research, for the other students in the classroom, and for me as well. At the heart of these interactions, at the heart of this transformation, is love.

Research Questions

While addressing many of the unique needs of emergent bilingual students (see section above, "Process Writing, the Writers Workshop and Emergent bilingual Students"), one critique of the workshop approach has been that teachers of ELs "often find that the realities of their teaching situation do not match their original vision of what writing workshop could or should be" (Peyton, Jones, Vincent & Greenblatt, 1994, p. 469). My own experience confirms this critique, especially as relates to the pacing of the lessons in the units. In a typical lesson, for example, students are assigned to complete research at home. And the next lesson continues as if students spent one or two hours researching their topic. Because many of my students would not have, I fall behind on the pacing and then am challenged with loss of momentum and student interest as units that were designed to take three to four weeks can easily take five to six to eight weeks. Another challenge relates to the teacher lessons in the *Units of Study*, where the classroom script offered as a suggestion of how to approach the mini-lesson as developed by East Coast TCRWP practitioners, is often devoid of cultural semblance to my own students and our learning context in California.

Furthermore, while *Units of Study* resources abound to support classrooms with emergent bilingual students, there is little research on this topic to guide and inform practice. A search on JSTOR, ERIC, Proquest and Google Scholar for "writers workshop" AND "English Learners," or variations of these two topic names yielded four relevant results. In one, Serna (2004) writes, "While most studies have examined Writer's Workshop in monolingual English-speaking classrooms, this study explores the potential and the challenges associated with this format in a bilingual setting" (p. 1). She studies fourth grade students in a bilingual English / Spanish

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classroom within a writers workshop model in Northern California, and finds that, "Permitting students to draw upon their dual linguistic and dual cultural repertoires enables them to include a wider range of ideas, words, and experiences in their writing than a monolingual, monocultural approach would" (p. 150). Other studies include one focusing on English Learners in Lebanon (Al-Hroub,Shami & Evans, 2016) and another on Asian English Learners in U.S. schools (Kim, 2015). The fourth study, titled, *Writer's workshop: a (re)constructive pedagogy for English learners and their teachers* follows two teachers over a three year period in a Southeastern U.S. elementary school. Fisher-Ari and Flint (2018) find that the two experienced teachers who newly adopt a writers workshop approach experience a shift in their perceptions of their EL students, from a deficit-lens to an acknowledgment, "that students have much to bring to the writing experience and have stories to tell that are deep and passionate" (p.366).

A search with terms like translingual and multilingual *and* writers workshop results in a handful of studies. Zapata and Laman (2016) write that a translanguaging orientation "recognizes the multidi- rectional influences of the language resources in one's linguistic repertoire and how those resources are, thus, always in contact" (p. 367). In *Making sense of "The Boy Who Died": Tales of a struggling successful writer,* Dutro, Kazemi and Balf (2006) detail the "importance of considering issues of identity in the writing classroom to help students build on the successes that often hide behind the surface struggles of their writing" (p. 325). The students in both of these studies are elementary school aged.

While more literature exists on peer conferencing and English Learners, the research conducted around the workshop model focuses primarily on elementary school aged children (Smith, 2017; Hsu, 2009). And when the research subjects around writers workshop conferencing are middle school students (Atwell, 1987, 2002), Riddle Buly's (2011) *English*

Language Learners in Literacy Workshops is geared for grades K-8, meaning largely focusing on the primary grades. Marsh's (2009) study of 6th graders in the writers workshop is of students from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds. In other words, the subjects of my study, middle school emergent bilingual Latino students, are not represented in the literature on workshop conferencing.

My research builds on others who have studied students as legitimate writers: from pioneers like Graves (1975) and Atwell (1987) to the more recent explorations of Fisher-Ari and Flint (2018), Smith (2017), and Kissel (2017). It uniquely positions emergent bilingual middle school students in an urban California school within a writers workshop classroom, asking this overarching question:

- **Question 1:** How do these students and their teacher, new to writing conferences, shape the conferences over time?

- **Question 2:** How do these new writing conference participants, students and their teacher, engage with one another?
  - **Subquestion 2A:** For a teacher whose role is primarily authoritative in the classroom, how does she grow to allow students to take the lead role in their learning?

- **Question 3:** How do writing conferences transform writing processes and writing products?

CHAPTER 3--METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN

A Qualitative Interpretivist Research Design, a Phenomenological Paradigm employing Discourse and Text Analysis, and an Analytical Autoethnography

In *Designing a Qualitative Study*, Maxwell (2009) calls on the researcher to explicate on personal, practical and intellectual goals for her research. In the Introduction chapter, I detail personal goals for my research, namely to contribute to the field of study on urban schooling, countering social justice inequities that leave urban public school students disconnected in their classroom environment and ultimately inhibit their potential. Towards the practical and intellectual goals of my research, I turn to the qualitative interpretivist research model because according to Bolster, a junior high social studies teacher who worked simultaneously as a professor of education at Harvard in the 1980s, "of all the models of research (that he) knew, this model has the greatest potential for generating knowledge that is both useful and interesting to teachers . . . (because it) focuses on situated meanings which incorporate the various reactions and perspectives of students" (Bolster, 1983, as cited in Erickson, 1986, p. 156). In other words, it was important to me to conduct research that was not prescriptive in its approach towards teachers, but that sought to capture the learning environment so as to enlighten teachers to the complex practices of student writers. It also enables me to draw on the unique insights that I can offer as a teacher-researcher. Intellectually, I looked forward to intense reflection as an interpretivist researcher on the everyday practices of student discourse about their writing, in order that the invisible (*how do participants engage with one another to shape conferences, and how does this result in the transformation of writing processes and writing products)* may be made visible (Erickson, 1986).

In addition to clarifying one's goals, Maxwell (2009) calls on the researcher to make explicit the paradigms or traditions under which her study falls. This study sits within the phenomenological paradigm, centered on the lived experiences detailing a particular shared phenomena (Creswell, 2009), that of writing conferences. The goal was to draw from our shared experiences with conferencing an understanding of the essence behind conferencing as an academic discourse focused on the multiple complexities of students' own writing, as it related to their writing processes and writing products. To garner insight into this complexity, I employed both discourse analysis of writing conferences, and textual analysis of students' memoir writing samples (Rex et al. 2010).

Furthermore, under the umbrella of Relationship Science, this study explored ways that relational aspects of these conference interactions played out in the construction of the conferences and in the transformation of students' writing. In order to shed light on how writing partners engaged with one another and how they shaped the conferences over time, I dissected writing conferences, analyzing relational interactions between writers and their partners, be they a student peer or myself as the teacher. I explored ways that relationships, viewed as the combined result of everyday moment-to-moment exchanges between people, shaped the writing conferences over time.

Finally, and perhaps most uniquely, as an active participant in this research (see the section below, *Methods: Role of the Researcher*), I incorporated tenets of autobiography into my ethnographic study of my students in writing conferences, at times with me their teacher. Doing so, mixing the artistry of the narrative autobiography with the science of qualitative research, frames my study as an autoethnography (Ellis, Adams & Bochner, 2011). Within this method, there are two distinct schools, and here too, my research reflects aspects of both. In writing-up

my findings, I am in alignment with the more evocative autoethnographer Denzin (Anderson, 2006), who asserts that, "In writing from the heart, we learn to love, to forgive, to heal, and to move forward" (Denzin, 2006, p. 423). Herein, autoethnography overlaps with tenets of Relationship Science as I reflect on the transformation that I underwent as I grew to place students in contexts that furthered their learning, their understanding of themselves as critical thinkers and writers. In this way, my research takes on the form of autoethnography that Ellis, Adams and Bocher (2011) refer to as a reflexive ethnography, whereby I study myself alongside my students, and document ways that conducting research leads to professional and personal transformation.

In addition, my study parallels Anderson's (2006) more traditional approach to autoethnography, meeting all five criteria of what he calls analytic autoethnography:

1. I as researcher and teacher was a full member in the research group and setting.
2. I addressed analytic reflexivity in my research, here and in the section below titled, *Methodological Considerations and Constraints.*
3. I was visible in first person narration in the discussion of my findings. Anderson (2006) writes, "By virtue of the autoethnographer's dual role as a member in the social world under study and as a researcher of that world, autoethnography demands enhanced textual visibility[8] of the researcher's self" (p. 384).
4. I dialogued with "informants," others engaging with students in writing conferences, during bi-weekly digital conferences of our Writing Across the Curriculum research group, (see below *Methods: Data Analysis*).
5. I developed theoretical understandings of the phenomena of peer and student-teacher writing conferences, reflecting "(t)he definitive feature of analytic autoethnography (which) is this value-added quality of not only truthfully rendering the social world under investigation but also transcending that world through broader generalization" (Anderson, 2006, p. 388).

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[8] In the introduction to Chapter 4, *On Research Questions, Findings Chapters & Signposts to Indicate Autoethnography,* I lay out the various forms where autobiographical narratives dominate within the final three chapters.

For this researcher whose research interests deeply intertwined with my professional life (Anderson, 2006), autoethnography took hold naturally as I presented my findings.

Methods

Reflecting a mixed-methods approach, my research weaves data collection with data analysis, discourse analysis with text analysis, and narrative self-reflective descriptions with detailed vignettes of particular writing processes. Below I outline l the methods that I used to conduct my research, following Maxwell's (2009) suggested categories for defining methods within a qualitative research design: role of the researcher; sampling and the context of the study; data collection; and data analysis. Below this section on *Methods*, I conclude the chapter with *Methodological Considerations and Constraints*.

Methods: Role of the Researcher

Above, I discuss the forms of autoethnography that my research exemplifies, describing my role as researcher within the context of my own study. Here I detail ways that I served as a unique kind of participant observer, overlapping with my role as autoethnographer. Firstly, the researcher as participant observer is paramount to the qualitative interpretivist model of research design. Fieldwork within this model includes intensive recordings of occurrences in the setting being studied, in this case, writing conferences within a writers workshop classroom. But as the teacher of the classroom where I conducted my research, my role was "not that of the participant observer who comes from the outside world to visit, but that of an unusually observant participant who deliberates inside the scene of action" (Erickson, 1986, p. 157). Qualitative educational researchers may advocate for the inclusion of teachers within the design and development of a qualitative research study, in partnership with the researcher. Such work would allow the teacher to play an active role in the research design, perhaps by defining the questions

that intrigue her, or even stymie her. However, I was not a partner in the design of another researcher's study. For this reason, I must be explicit in the ways that my role as a teacher furthered my study and how it also limited my study. I do so by outlining the ways in which I served primarily as a participant and the ways in which I served primarily as an observer throughout the course of data collection.

To generate data that addressed questions regarding peer conferences, I acted primarily as an observant to the practices being studied. When students participated in peer conferences with their partners, which is where the bulk of my data derived, I provided students the devices to audio record these conferences. For the most part, however, I merely observed the student-participants during this time, and occasionally interacted with them, as simultaneously I was facilitating peer conferences for the entire class. However, I served as a participant when I engaged with students in student-teacher conferences. This process occurred roughly once a week with each of the four students, averaging three interactions with each participant over the course of my study. Below in *Sampling and Context of the Study,* I detail the formatting of these conferences. But it is important to note, that as regards my role as a researcher, my most active participation occurred during this time.

Above I delineate ways that my role as researcher meshed with my varying roles as a participant and as an observer during data collection. Below in the section *Methodological Considerations and Constraints,* I address in detail the possible biases I had to caution against due to my dual role as participant-observer researcher and teacher. One consideration regarded students' course grades. No grades were assigned students for any of the practices that were used for data collection. I took notes during student-teacher conferences of the writing topics

addressed, but no grade was recorded for the conference. The same was true for peer conferences.

I conclude this section on the *Role of the Researcher* by outlining the ways that my research benefited from my role as the classroom teacher. Firstly, I was keen to explore students in academic discourse with each other about their writing. While this was an integral part of the writers workshop model, it was not evident that all workshop teachers at the school site where I planned to conduct my research provided this structure for students on a regular basis. In addition, as the teacher of this autoethnographic study, I could provide insight into the shifts I went through to newly adopt writing conferences as key aspects of our workshop classroom.

Methods: Sampling and Context of the Study

In the spring of 2018, I sought a teaching position with dual intent. I wanted to work at a school that was implementing Teachers College Reading and Writing Project's (TCRWP) *Units of Study in Narrative, Information and Argument Writing (Units of Study)*, a highly structured and rigorous approach to the writers workshop. I had experienced success with this model as a school-site administrator who oversaw its school-wide implementation for two years, and I wanted continued experience with the approach as a literacy coach or a teacher. Secondly, I wanted to conduct research around the writers workshop to further my understanding of its effectiveness in providing struggling readers and writers with tools to produce quality writing products. A consultant who provides writers workshop professional development to schools and school districts connected me to one of the schools that frequently hosts educators-in-training into their workshop classes. After introducing myself to the principal of The Workshop[9] School,

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[9] pseudonym

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I interviewed, presented a demonstration lesson and was hired in July, 2018, with the principal aware of my research interests.

I then narrowed my research topic to focus on emergent bilingual students as part of a purposive sampling process because as with interpretivist studies, these participants are an underrepresented, marginalized group in research (Creswell, 2009; Erickson, 1986). Finally, the four emergent bilingual students who were the subjects of this study were chosen based on student amenability and family consent, from the fourteen emergent bilingual students in my English 8 class. In Chapter Four, I discuss these student-participants at length, explaining how they were a good representation of the group, overall.

Local Context: One Pilot School

The Workshop School was unique. It was a small pilot middle school, with twelve teachers, four itinerant arts instructors (strings, drama, visual art, and dance), two counselors, one coordinator and one principal, that served 232 students in a low-income Latino community in a large urban city in California. See Fig. 3.1 below for demographic data on the school, based on

Fig. 3.1, Table: "Workshop School" Demographic Data

Enrollment

School Demographics

Student Group	Total	Percentage
English Learners	38	13.5%
Foster Youth	1	0.4%
Socioeconomically Disadvantaged	270	95.7%
Students with Disabilities	32	11.3%

Race/Ethnicity	Total	Percentage
African American	1	0.4%
Asian	2	0.7%
Filipino	3	1.1%
Hispanic	268	95%
White	8	2.8%

Source: California School Dashboard, 2018

end of year, 2017-18 information (California School Dashboard, n.d.), that outlines: 95.7% of the students were "Socioeconomically Disadvantaged," and 95% of the students were "Hispanic" / Latino. While the percentage of Latino students remained consistently over 95% the past three years, the percentage of English Learners has declined: 15.9% end of 2017; 13.5% end of 2018 (California School Dashboard, n.d.); and 10.5% currently (███████ Unified School District, 2019). The reason for the decline in percentages of English Learners was because The Workshop School had a high reclassification rate, meaning students who were English Learners met the criteria to reclassify as fluent English proficient. In the 2017-2018 year, 65% of English Learners (ELs) reclassified at The Workshop School; the school with the second highest rate of reclassification in this district was at 43%.

The school's principal attributed its success with transitioning English Learners to become fluent in English, (Reclassified Fluent English Proficient) to the school's adoption since its inception in 2013 of TCRWP's *Units of Study* for all English courses, including courses for English Learners that are titled English Language Development. In addition, all students with Individualized Educational Plans were mainstreamed into regular English classes implementing the *Units of Study*. It was particularly challenging to maintain school-wide focus on a rigorous curriculum such as the *Units of Study*, with the many ways it calls for teachers to alter their role from the *sage on the stage* to the *guide on the side*. The Workshop School had one principal since its inception, and to support teachers with the *Units of Study,* she taught the course alongside her teachers. In this way, collective learning around the instructional and curricular challenges of the workshop model served to sustain its implementation at the school.

Results from the Smarter Balanced Assessment Collaborative summative assessments reflected the progress of this small school on students' demonstrated mastery of English

Language Arts (ELA) standards. Looking at growth over a three year period for last year's eighth

graders revealed steady continuous progress: as sixth graders, 33% met or exceeded proficiency

on ELA standards; as seventh graders, 43.9% met or exceeded proficiency; and as eighth

graders, 55% met or exceeded proficiency on ELA standards (Smarter Balanced Results--

CAASPP Reporting, n.d.).

In addition to providing a rigorous English Language Arts curriculum for all students,

The Workshop School reflected the three dimensions of culturally responsive pedagogy as

outlined by Richards, Brown and Forde (2007): institutional, personal and instructional aspects

of schooling that allow "the strengths students bring to school (to be) identified, nurtured, and

utilized to promote student achievement" (p. 64). One way that this school attended to the social

emotional learning of its students is through Council. All students participated bi-weekly during

this communal time provided them to sit in a circle, and speak and listen to each other share

openly about topics that relate to their lived experiences. Metrics around social emotional

learning may seem as unobtainable as their goals are lofty. Nonetheless, in the 2017-2018

Student Experiences Survey, the Workshop School students, of whom 95% responded, reported

overall very favorably in terms of their experiences of "Connectedness" at the school. As

evidenced in Fig. 3.2 below, 93% of the students were happy to be at school, 90% felt like they

were a part of the school, and 93% felt accepted at school (Research and Reporting Branch, n.d.).

Fig. 3.2, Table: 2017-2018 Student Experiences Survey Results, "Workshop School"

Content	Survey Item		Total Responses	School % Top Two	LAUSD % Top Two
	No, Never / Strongly Disagree ... Yes, Always / Strongly Agree				
Connectedne..	A. I am happy to be at my school.	20% 40% 33%	263	72%	74%
	B. I feel like I am part of my school.	16% 55% 18%	262	74%	67%
	C. Teachers care if I'm absent from school.	21% 42% 32%	262	74%	59%
	D. I feel accepted for who I am at my school.	17% 49% 27%	261	76%	72%
	E. Adults at my school treat students with respect.	16% 41% 37%	262	78%	68%
	F. LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and/or queer) students at my school are accepted.	52% 42%	260	94%	81%

Source: Research and Reporting Branch (n.d.)

In short, The Workshop School provided good context for a qualitative study that seeks to understand beyond survey and test result data, the processes of students as they co-constructed academic discourse practices around their writing. Furthermore participating in whole-class mindfulness practices built on these students' repertoire of communal sharing and listening, given their experience since sixth grade with Council.

The Classroom, Teacher, Curriculum and Student Subjects

The classroom sat on the second floor of a newly constructed complex that houses three other schools. While the newness of the complex had many advantages, one drawback in the opinion of this educator was that its drab colors and architectural design were reminiscent of a prison. To counter this depressive ambience, I worked to create a classroom environment (Fig. 3.3 below) that was bright, colorful and welcoming for students. Decorating the ceiling light

Fig. 3.3 Pictures of Classroom, Room 204, Fall 2018 (c/o G. Rodriguez)

fixtures were crocheted squares of brightly colored flowers. Various paintings were displayed on

walls and at floors. Rugs, pillows and cushions sat around the periphery of the large room.

Students used these spaces during independent reading and writing time. During particularly dry

days, an aromatherapy diffuser ran with peppermint and eucalyptus essential oils. The tables

were arranged in seven groups that seat four to six students. My desk was at the front of the room

to facilitate use of the projector and document camera. Walls at the front of the room typically

housed charts that highlight the teaching points of the current writing or reading workshop unit.

The wall at the back of the room was devoted to a display of all the students' most recently

published writing. The wall with windows above housed bookshelves below, filled with books that reflected the varying reading and interest levels of the students in the classroom.

On the back whiteboard, I daily wrote the learning targets for the courses that I taught; in addition to one course of English 8, I taught two sections of Social Studies 7. Above these ever changing learning targets, I had written, "Intention: Build a learning community." In the *Introduction* chapter, I write about how this was a challenge for me personally: "I am a teacher who falters in her efforts to build community with students. I can be prone to a stern demeanor, a businesslike facade, a we-haven't-time-to-waste so hurry-up-and-get-busy persona" (p. 5). To counter my natural tendency towards wall-building, I greeted students each period at the door with a fist-bump of some sort as I called out their name or made a comment, such as, "I like that hoodie," or, "I like your hair that color" or, "We missed you yesterday." I also made use of the time allotted during the workshop for student-teacher conferencing as opportunities to relate with students individually, and perhaps a little more personally, about their reading or their writing. While the practice waivered, I tried to allot time each Friday for one or two student volunteers to share a few pictures from home so that we may know each other's stories.

Teaching this past fall, after having been a school site administrator for six years prior, was more challenging than I had expected it would be. This was due to the complexities of teaching with the TCRWP *Units of Study.* I had adopted the workshop model before, for years using like a bible Nancie Atwell's (1987) *In the Middle: Writing, Reading and Learning with Adolescents.* But I found it a challenge to maintain the quick pace of the *Units of Study* daily workshop lessons and unit plans. The workshop was a unique approach to the teaching of ELA namely because it allowed students time, response and choice in their writing (see the *Relevant Literature* chapter). Time was provided students to write independently, thirty minutes a day,

because the lesson for instruction was to be kept to fifteen minutes.[10] The remaining ten to fifteen minutes of the lesson was for students to share their writing with their writing partner and/or a whole-class share-out known as the Author's Chair. As a first year teacher with the *Units of Study,* I regularly allowed students time and choice in their writing topic, but had not consistently provided them response. In other words, I had not managed the workshop time to allow them to share with their writing partners, but on a few occasions. And during their independent writing time, I often worked with small groups, and had not developed the regular practice of providing individual student's a response to their writing via a student-teacher conference. All of this is to say that, for this class, the practices of peer conferences and student-teacher conferences were new for this teacher with these students.

The particular *Unit of Study* during which I conducted my research was on memoir writing. This unit allowed students to build on various aspects of the previously covered writing genres, which included realistic fiction, information, and research argument writing. Writing a memoir required students to engage the reader at times with an informational tone, to further their narrative voice and descriptive writing. The personal nature of this genre allowed students a wealth of material to draw upon for writing conferences.

The student-participants for my research were emergent bilinguals, known commonly as Reclassified Fluent English Proficient. This means that when they first enrolled in school, their parents indicated that another language other than English was spoken at home. Afterwards, initial assessment on the California English Language Development (CELDT) test indicated that they were not on target with English language reading, writing, speaking and listening skills. But

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[10] As stated in Chapter 2,the suggested timing for a workshop lesson is as follows: 15 minutes for a mini-lesson; 30 minutes independent writing time, during which the teacher conducts individual student-conferences and/or small group instruction with students in need of the same lesson; 10 minutes for peer conferences; 5 minutes for Author's Chair.

these eighth grade students have since met criteria for reclassification, demonstrating proficiency

on the CELDT, on another standardized reading assessment (Scholastic Reading Inventory), and

in their English course. While they have met this hurdle of reclassification, 84% of the emergent

bilingual students in my class, who continued to be monitored as a subset population of English

Learners, were not making "adequate progress" as defined by the district's Master Plan. The

criteria referenced to make this determination are course grades in the four core subjects (grade

of C or better) as well as SBAC scores assessing ELA and mathematics standards (meeting or

exceeding proficiency).[11]

As eighth graders at the Workshop School, these students were immersed for two and a

half years within the writers workshop. Overall, they were skilled writers who were accustomed

to producing multi-paragraph pieces several times a year for on-demand assessments. They

worked independently on their writing every day, often for thirty minutes without interruption.

When a group of high school English teachers and coordinators visited this class in December to

observe them within the context of the writers workshop, they marveled at how much writing the

students produced during independent writing time and at how individual students articulated

their writing-process thinking when prompted by a visitor. While the students in this class were

accustomed to visitors and accustomed to writing within the workshop model, there remained a

few students whom I would describe as reluctant writers. They produced little writing during

independent writing time, and they would literally groan at the beginning of a workshop mini-

lesson. At the same time, I was often on the lookout for literary magazines that published

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[11]Of the 31 students in this English 8 classroom: 30 are "Hispanic," and 1 is "White;" 15 are girls and 16 are boys; 16 are classified as RFEP, 11 as English Only, 2 as Initially Fluent English Proficient, and 2 as English Learners; 3 are in a Gifted Program; 4 have an IEP; 4 have a Cumulative GPA of 1.5-1.9, 7 have a CGPA of 2.0-2.5, 4 have a CGPA of 2.6-3.0, 9 have a CGPA of 3.1-3.5, and 2 have a CGPA of 3.6-3.9 ███████ Unified School District, 2019).

adolescent pieces because some of their writing was fit for a wider audience. As an avid reader, I was most impressed by the degree to which many of these student writers maintained a unique voice that rings through their narratives and by how many had the facility to read complex texts independently, comprehend and write a cohesive response to the texts.

As mentioned above, these students had little practice this year with peer conferencing and student-teacher conferencing about their writing. Nonetheless, when time was provided them to do so, they willingly engaged with their writing partner about their writing.

Methods: Data Collection

Erickson (1986) contends: *"In fieldwork one never considers a single system level in isolation from other levels; that is a basic feature of the sociocultural theory from which participant observational methods derive" (p. 143).* In this section on data collection, I outline the various system levels that I considered for this study which spanned spring semester of 2019. As detailed above in the section *Methods: Role of the Researcher,* I conducted research in the classroom where I taught, with a focus on the writers workshop lesson that occurred four times each week, Monday-Thursday, for sixty minutes each day. The data collected pertained to four emergent bilingual students, two sets of partners, in the classroom: fieldnotes and audio recordings of their writing conferences, and copies of their writing samples.

The bulk of data collection derived from the four students' peer conferences, which they had with each other as two sets of writing partners. Erickson (1986) asserts that peer interactions make for culturally congruent modes for learning. As opposed to interactions between students and the teacher, where the cultural differences between ways of the home and ways of school may be discordant, peer exchanges, "when their social organization dimension is clear and familiar," allow for students to tend more readily to the subject matter (p. 136). My research, by

focusing on peer interactions, explored this concept of students learning more readily from each other than from the teacher. As concerns academic discourse as an avenue to further one's learning (Rex et al. 2010), a matter of basic mathematics allowed that students had more opportunities for discourse with a peer than they had with a teacher. In other words, my research brings to the foreground the impact of student peer interactions on their writing processes, considering both the quality of the discourse, absent from cultural incongruities, and the quantity of the discourse, occurring more frequently and for greater duration than discourse with the teacher.

The peer conferences occurred daily, immediately after independent writing time, and lasted approximately two-to-five minutes per student. While some students were partnered with a friend, this was not the norm as I assigned writing partners based primarily on students' writing proficiencies and homogeneous pairings that allowed for the students to learn from one another. However, if a partnership was not working because two students were hesitant to share their writing practice with each other, I adjusted the pairings. During these conferences, each student had an opportunity to share with the other what they worked on that day. Feedback between the two, while informal, often began with students telling about progress they made on one or two of the goals they had set for themselves for the independent writing part of the workshop lesson. To guide their conversations, students may have referenced conference script-guidelines that I shared with students after the first week of the memoir unit. The overall purpose of the peer sessions was for students to give and receive feedback on the areas of their writing where they were struggling, or perhaps where they were celebrating, as students simultaneously revised their work.

The second type of writing conference was between the student-participant and myself, called a student-teacher conference, a type of interview with the student about their writing. Given the ratio of teacher to students, 1:31 for this group of students, these conference occurred less frequently, during the independent writing part of the workshop lesson. Initially I referred to a formalized script for these conferences, which typically took four-to-seven minutes, but during the course of the unit, my approach became less rigid (see Chapter 4, Using a Script-Guideline for Conferencing). For the purpose of this research, I paid particular heed to the ways that we engaged with one another and the impact our conference had on their writing and on their peer conferences.

To capture the two types of writing conferences, students and I used my personal ipod and iphones as recording devices. As a form of data collection, audio devices allowed for more detailed analysis than field notes because recorded exchanges could be replayed multiple times (Erickson, 1986). Erickson (1986) does caution that machine recordings may serve as a limitation to the analyst because they may not include the information needed to provide context to the recording. However, I adjusted for this limitation by also copying all of the writing samples that corresponded to the audio-recorded conferences.

Audio recordings of peer and student-teacher conferences were transcribed verbatim. On July 4, 2019, I wrote in my methodological reflective journal (revised here for clarity),

> Initially I thought that I would paraphrase instead of transcribe directly from all of these conferences. But I decided to transcribe as thoroughly as possible instead. My thinking was that I would lose something if I paraphrased. I might lose what ended up being significant, after all. Because my thinking when I am transcribing is different than my thinking when I am analyzing. I found it difficult to try to be analyzing while I was transcribing. So to be able to reflect on the conferences as they actually occurred, I transcribed as best as I could.
> Also, I found myself wanting to honor the actual words that were spoken and trying to capture those exchanges with as much integrity as possible. I felt

like any sort of paraphrasing is me saying what was meaningful because I am deleting what is "unmeaningful." I know that eventually I will be choosing to highlight what makes meaning for me during analysis writing. But I do not want to say what is not meaningful. Because everything that they said to each other meant something to them. My job is to say what it might mean for me and for others like me, later on.

In short, the transcriptions of the conferences made for another form of data that I collected and analyzed.

Other data that I collected were copies of writing pieces that corresponded to the student-participants' peer conferences and student-teacher conferences. For the latter, I maintained a log where I recorded the date and topic of each conference. I also wrote field notes on a notepad during and after a student-teacher conference with one of the four emergent bilingual students.

In conclusion, the data generated from my study were in the form of field notes, audio recordings of the peer conferences, audio recordings of the student-teacher conferences, and copies of students' writing samples. The varied types of data (observations, interviews [in the form of conferences], and student writing samples) ensured that I had adequate amounts of evidence to warrant key assertions, to explore disconfirming evidence, and to validate my findings (Erickson, 1986).

Methods: Data Analysis

Analysis of the data detailed above shed light on the myriad ways that participants, students and teacher, shaped the writing conference and enabled the writing processes of four particular emergent bilingual students as evidenced by their work with a very specific complex text—their own writing. Below I describe the differing forms of analysis compositions, methods for housing data, as well as the strategies that I used to ensure that analysis informed assertions towards my research questions.

Firstly, in discourse analysis, the construct of discourse is central to the theoretical framing and the logic of inquirey (Bloome et al., as cited in Rex et al. 2019). Herein, with a focus on emergent bilingual student subjects, my research reflects the "prevailing theme (that has) dominated the purpose of discourse analytic approaches to literacy and education over the last decade—equitable access" (Rex et al. 2010, p. 95). In addition to discourse analysis, I also employed textual analysis of students' writing samples along two variables: the memoir genre as it impacted both the content of the students' writing and thereby their conferences as well; and alongside the conference discourse to better understand the impact of discourse on draft writing products and processes. With a multi-modality approach, my study provides understanding of the affordances and demands that spoken and written language may put on second-language learners in classrooms (Poole, as cited in Rex et al. 2010).

Text and discourse analyses made-up my Reflective Analytical Memos (RAMemos). Periodically I referenced my field notes, verbatim transcriptions of conferences, student writing samples, alongside my methodological reflective journal, (see immediately below) to write a one-to-two page analytic memo that took the form of a narrative essay. These RAMemos included one piece of student writing as a reference point for the analysis. The practice of writing thick-descriptions grounded my analytic work in the students' writing products, as dictated by my third research question. On a bi-weekly basis, I shared one of these memos with a *Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC)* research group of two other researchers who were conducting their own studies about ways that writing processes enabled content knowledge. The *WAC* group was a friendly but formal setting that allowed this researcher a space to be vulnerable, to share the messiness of analytical posterings, and to share challenges and celebrations during the course of my research. More than a mere sounding board, the WAC group's response to my RAMemos

served to check ways that my analysis of the data may be biased by my own experiences and perceptions, thereby strengthening the validity of my study (Anderson, 2006; Erickson, 1986).

While the RAMemos housed analytical excursions, an electronic file titled Methodology-Personal Highs, Mediums and Lows, stored "a first-person account of the evolution of inquiry before, during and after fieldwork" (Erickson, 1986, p. 152). Here, I wrote weekly, or an as-needed basis, diary-type reflections on the processes of my research methodology and methods, on the challenges and successes that I encountered during the course of data collection and analysis. I toyed with the idea of writing these reflections onto a hard-copy journal, a practice that I have for spiritual and personal growth musings because I find that the slow process of cursive handwriting brings a sort of calmness to thought processing. But for quick, lengthy reflections, where I grappled with finding alignment between my suppositions and the complexities of my reality as a researcher, I grew accustomed to typing.

Other than my field note notepad, electronic files and folders housed all forms of data collection (audio recordings and transcriptions and student writing samples), data analysis in the form of Reflective Analytical Memos, and saved work from the data coded with data analysis software. I also maintained hard copies of student writing samples. When I prewrote for memos, I wrote longhand onto a spiral notebook in free-flowing style as I generated and then organized my thoughts. After prewriting, I typed an extended outline, printed out my outline, and added handwritten notes, which I used to produce the final memos. I maintained all prewriting work, organized by dated RAMemos in file folders. While my student-teacher conferencing records were not generated for the purpose of this research, I frequently referenced them during analysis and so include it as well in the data corpus. In *Methodological Considerations and Constraints* below, I detail storage of work generated from my research.

For data analysis, I employed Erickson's (1986) model of analytic induction. Inductive reasoning was necessary within a sociocultural framework because, as in the case of this research, students' discourse exchanges during writing conferences and their related writing processes and products were too complex to make an absolute determination based on facts, as might be done with deductive reasoning. Instead, as a qualitative interpretivist researcher, I employed means for inducing, or knowledge-extending, by making a generalized assertion based on specific evidence. But because the task was too complex to comprehend fully and to make generalized assertions based on evidence from one observation, it was necessary to operationalize multiple opportunities to interpret the task.

The coding of descriptive data was a complex process of suspending everything I thought I already knew about student conferencing and developing writing processes in order to be able to identify what emerged from students' actual experiences, based on my interpretations. As the open coding of data reveals themes and categories, Maxwell (2009) advises the qualitative researcher to tend to the various types of categories to ensure a full bodied analysis. Therefore, in my analysis at times I adopted organizational categories, which were broad topics that served as sorting bins for sections of my findings chapters. In addition, substantive categories focused on emic concepts that were descriptions of the students' perspectives. Theoretical categories reflected my own etic concepts as I sought to place coded data into more general or abstract frames.

Multiple approaches of categorizing coded data allowed for the emergence of patterns in words and phrases, meanings, actions, approaches, and processes that related to my research questions. To ensure that my findings were not merely anecdotal, I continuously searched for evidence that warranted my assertions. If an assertion was warranted by multiple linked pieces of

evidence from across the body of data, it contributed toward one of my three findings. (Erickson, 1986; Maxwell, 2009). I did not ignore disconfirming evidence and instead worked to either explain its uniqueness or acknowledge how it lessened the strength of an assertion.

In addition to coding transcriptions of writing conferences, I also summarized each of the peer and student-teacher conferences along a timeline. This allowed me to look holistically at trends and themes, which then strengthened my axial coding of the data.

The process of summarizing conference transcriptions, conducting open and axial coding of data, adopting multiple types of categories, identifying themes, developing assertions, writing analytical memos, and establishing confirming and disconfirming evidence was recursive. In my final written report, Chapters 4, 5 and 6 below, assertions are written as findings that respond to my research questions, extending our knowledge about ways that emergent bilingual students in writing conferences with their peer and their teacher:

1. shape the conferences over time;

2. participate in the conferences with each other; and

3. transform writing processes and writing products.

This work contributes to the field of research that propones the necessity of oral discourse as a means of developing literacy for English Learners (Zwiers, O'hara & Pritchard, 2014).

Methodological Considerations and Constraints
Qualitative research does not aspire to the display of undeniable factual conclusions. Because it deals with the human story, it makes-do with presenting of evidence that supports findings, in hope that the evidence is sufficient and compelling to the reader. The complexity of data collection and analysis, in addition to other features of participant observer research,

required special attention to methodological considerations as well as some of the constraints of this approach.

Ethical Considerations

Research on human subjects is a heavy responsibility. I worked to ensure that potential student participants had a proper understanding of the terms of the study. They met with their counselor so that they would not be unduly influenced by me their teacher to be a participant. Their counselor met with them in a small group to explain the study, providing them time to ask any clarifying questions about their participation.

Other regulations and ethical codes governing this research related to protecting the privacy of the student subjects, which is why I used pseudonyms for the students. I maintained codes linking pseudonyms to true identities on a flash drive. For added security, and because of the ease with which data can be shared electronically via Google apps, I used Microsoft Office throughout data collection, analysis and write-up of findings. I maintained electronic files of audio recordings and related transcriptions, fieldnotes, analytical memos, and copies of students' written work on two flash drives that I keep in a locked file cabinet in my home when not in use. This is also where I maintain my folder and notepads that housed hard copies of the data generated from this study.

Another ethical area requiring attention is ensuring nothing in the way of power dynamics occurred between myself as a university researcher and the students and/or their parent guardians. I made evident that students were not obligated to participate in a process with which they felt more than minimal discomfort. I explained that initial minimal discomfort for students might result from being audiotaped, or having their writing scanned. But beyond this initial awkwardness, as human subjects participating in this study, they had no negative repercussions

in the way of diminished grades. I reminded students that I was not grading them based on any of the data that I collected. In addition, if particularly sensitive topics arose in the students' writing, I did not include them in my research.

Validity: Guarding Against Overt Missteps in Qualitative Research

Maxwell (2009) outlines two types of threats to validity for the qualitative researcher to guard against: researcher bias, and reactivity, that is the effect of the researcher on the setting or the subjects being studied. In this section, I address both as well as plans for addressing some of the pitfalls that he and Erickson (1986) caution might lead to readily questionable findings.

As I worked to interpret the data, I continued to be challenged by ways that my own biases influenced my retelling of the phenomena. To address this problem, I employed what is described as bracketing (Creswell, 2009), meaning that I laid out my experiences at the beginnings of each analytical write-up, with the intent that doing so allowed me to set them aside as I explored emerging themes and the various categories for analysis. In addition, I regularly shared my analysis, and supporting evidence, with the Writing Across the Curriculum Research Group (see section immediately above). This process helped ensure that I did not jump hastily to the development of assertions, and provided me with other viewpoints to balance any tendency to oversimplify or to overlook other possible interpretations of the data.

Another form of bias that warrants caution is the degree to which student subjects might be treated differently because of their participation in my study. As mentioned above, students were not graded on any process or exercise that resulted in data collection. I had intended to meet with all students, participants and non-participants, the same number of times during the course of the unit. But, perhaps because I was new to conferencing, I found that I met with student-participants more often in order to generate data for my research. At the time, in the midst of the

dozens of considerations that are weighed when classroom teaching, it did not occur to me that this might have unfairly provided student-participants an advantage because more time conferencing with the teacher may have improved their final memoir piece, which I did grade. That being acknowledged, I did not find that student-participants' final pieces were uncharacteristically stronger than their previous writing pieces.

I was vigilant about the ways that I as a researcher affected the classroom and/or the students by virtue of studying them. Maxwell (2009) writes that, "the goal in a qualitative study is not to eliminate the influence (of the researcher) but to understand it and to use it productively." In the detailed section of this chapter titled *Role of the Researcher*, I reviewed the myriad roles I played during data collection, altering between participant and observer. I also wrote about the autoethnographical ways that I was affected as a participant in my study. As the teacher in the classroom, it was impossible not to have an impact on the setting and the students. Nonetheless, by being explicit about my role as a researcher, I worked to ensure that I remained steadfast in regards to my sole role for my students—that of teacher.

To conclude this chapter on methodology, I briefly speak to the cautions of Maxwell (2009) and Erickson (1986) about poorly conducted qualitative research. I do not take these cautions lightly, but I have worked diligently to address them when designing my research study. I reiterate my assertion at the conclusion of the section *Methods: Data Collection*, paraphrasing and adding considerations pertinent to other sections of this chapter. In addition to the varied types of data (observations, interviews [student-teacher conferences], audio recordings, student writing samples), are the varied types (discourse and textual) and structures for analyses (Reflective Analytical Memos; open and axial coding; assertions and confirming and disconfirming evidence; and methodological reflections), and the varied ways that I categorized

data (organizational, substantive, and theoretical), and the varied ways that I guarded against

bias, addressed reactivity and other hindrances to validity.

CHAPTER 4—WRITING PARTNERSHIPS AND THE
CO-CONSTRUCTION OF WRITING CONFERENCES

On Research Questions, Findings Chapters, & Signposts to Indicate Autoethnography

The research questions which my study aims to answer are:

- **Question 1:** How do these students and their teacher, new to writing conferences, shape the conferences over time?
- **Question 2:** How do these new writing conference participants, students and their teacher, engage with one another?
  - o **Subquestion 2A:** For a teacher whose role is primarily authoritative in the classroom, how does she grow to allow students to take the lead role in their learning?
- **Question 3:** How do writing conferences transform writing processes and writing products?

In this chapter and the next, I lay out analysis of the data in response to these questions. I begin Chapter 4 by looking at the ways that conferencing took shape in our classroom before my study. Then I describe the student participants and the beginnings of the memoir unit. The second section of Chapter 4 speaks to Question #1 and my findings regarding the ways that writing conference participants shaped writing conferences over time. Chapter 5 begins with a discussion of the memoir genre as a backdrop for adopting a relational lens to explore the data around Question #2, how participants engage in conferences with one another. Next I explore common writer moves and partner moves before detailing two vignettes that reflect the data around my third research question, how writing conferences transform writing processes and writing products, continuing to analyze the data around the interrelationships between the conference participants. I conclude chapter 5 with analysis of the various teaching tips that partners offered to their writers, and the degrees to which writers took-up these teaching tips to transform their writing.

Uniquely my research includes myself as a subject of study. In parts, it reads like an auto-ethnography. I provide the reader with signposts to make clear the distinctive voice of a teacher as-a-researcher from that of a more detached participant observer.

- ❖ **Autoethnography Lays the Groundwork—Chapter 4 (First Section)**
  Autoethnography runs throughout the first half of this chapter. This is when I rely heavily on narrative to describe the shifts in my pedagogy and classroom practices that make way for the writing conferences which began to occur during the second semester.
- ❖ *Reflective Analytical Memos*—**Chapter 4 (First Section)**
  I include only in the first half of Chapter 4 some of the *Reflective Analytical Memos* that I wrote during the course of my study. These provide insight into specific parameters surrounding my research. They too read heavily with personal perspective, as opposed to that of a detached researcher.
- ❖ *Teacher-as-Researcher* **Inserts—Chapter 4 (Second Section) & Chapter 5**
  In the second half of Chapter Four and throughout Chapter Five, I weave hard data with analyses of conferencing and student writing. In these sections, I elect to separate my teacher reflections around my research from the general presentation of my findings. I separate them with inserts titled *Teacher-as-Researcher*, each with a distinct subtitle. In the general presentation of the chapter, I indicate when the reader might reference a particular insert. I include these reflections because they provide the reader with insight into this study. As mentioned in Chapter 3, when composing these reflections, I write about what I find intriguing, insights about my students, sharing of a significant lesson, or ponderings about my role. I aim to be transparent, understanding that it is uncommon for the researcher also to be a subject of their study. Lastly, I choose to include these inserts because they are part of my story. A running theme for this unit with my students was that they own and tell their stories. I modeled that for them during the course of the unit, I included narrative in the Introduction Chapter, and I am compelled to do so as I present my findings. I separate the inserts so as not to disrupt the flow of the presentation around my data and analysis. The reader is free to overlook the inserts. Doing so will not detract from the data, analysis, or findings that I present.

Laying the Groundwork, Fall 2018 – Winter 2019

In June of 2019, as I wrapped up the school year and packed up my classroom, I was experiencing a range of emotions, mostly grief and sadness. I was going to miss my students, and had not realized how much until our last days together. I was also going to miss the school.

While I would still be teaching next year, the school itself would no longer exist, going the way of many small pilot schools in this large urban school district. We would merge with a high school and become a larger grade six-twelve magnet school. The reasons for the closing of the school are beyond the scope of my research. Nonetheless, I felt like I was at the whim of big decision-makers who little understood the complexities of strong literacy instruction for middle school emergent bilingual students (NMSA, 2010; Anderman, 2003; Yeager, 2017).

Amidst feelings of sadness and grief, as I packed up my classroom for summer cleaning, I stumbled upon a red spiral notebook with "Student Conferences" written across it in big black marker. In the notebook, I had begun to keep track of the conferences I had with students about their writing. I had to laugh a little at myself upon the discovery because the notebook was mostly empty. I had written students' names on the top of pages, allotting each student several pages, imagining that I would fill them with conference notes. As I flipped through the empty pages, I had to shake my head and simply acknowledge the very human way that I can tend to get caught up in what needs to be done, set up intricate structures to ensure that these things get done, and then get so busy with the very life of teaching that I forget about the structures, and in so doing, forget about the important thing itself. The empty notebook revealed more than a mere oversight, however. It reminded me of the strength of my determination and intent represented by the big bold Sharpie marker specifically selected to title this particular notebook back in September.[12] I had intended to make conferencing a part of our regular writers workshop practice. I had envisioned conferencing with four or five students during independent writing

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[12] I used one or two spiral notebooks for each period I taught to keep track of lessons. Ink was sufficient for titling the other notebooks. Also, this notebook remained empty because I ended-up using a much more simplified structure to track conferencing—a page with multiple boxes in grid-like fashion. In each box, I jotted down the date, the student's name, and the teaching point. Initially, I also wrote the "Compliment" and "Next Steps," but with time, I stopped jotting down those comments.

time, keeping track of the topics that we conferenced about, and ensuring that students did the same. Months later, flipping through the mostly empty pages of the red notebook, I noticed that my initial conferences were with students who struggled the most with syntax, neglecting periods, commas, indentation, and capitalization in their writing. I had met with them in small groups a few different times, and the resource teacher conferenced with them individually as most were on her caseload.

Beginnings of Change in Pedagogical Practice

In retrospect, I understood that neglecting one-to-one conferencing mainly had to do with the fact that it required me to give all of my attention to one student. Doing so meant to me that I could not be fully aware of what the other students were doing, and I was challenged by this feeling that I would not be fully in control of the classroom, making ours what Graves (19750) would describe as a formal classroom environment. I had yet to understand that, as Minor (2019) asserts, "Creating a space where kids feel safe means that we must create a space where we share power. One can let go of power without letting go of control" (p. 75). In addition to my struggles with control and power, it also seemed to me that sitting with one student was simply an ill use of precious teaching time. I recall several occasions during the first semester, at the conclusion of a mini lesson when *all* students were intent on their writing, that I was provided the perfect opportunity to conference with a student. But, as reflected in the red conference notebook, I would instead elect to teach a small group lesson, thinking to myself that killing five birds with one stone was better than killing one bird with one stone. In other words, it made more sense to me to teach the same point once to five students than to teach it five times, one student at a time.

However, I cannot say that these small group lessons were effective. The same students remained on the lists in need of the same syntax lessons throughout much of the year.[13]

Throughout the first semester, I found myself experiencing frustrations around conferencing similar to the English teachers whom I had supervised when I was an assistant principal and we were adopting the Units of Study. In addition, it had taken me much of that first semester simply to get my head around being a workshop teacher, honing mini-lessons, managing charts of teaching points, and creating a conducive classroom environment, not to mention mastering rubrics, prompts, and progression charts that revolved around the genre studies (Calkins et al., 2015). All of this is to say that before the memoir unit where I gathered the data for this study, I probably had worked with a total of six or seven students, each maybe once or twice, in small group mini-lessons. In short, our work in the spring around conferencing was new for me and for my students.

Similar to my challenges with student-teacher conferences in the workshop, I only semi implemented peer conferencing during the fall semester. During a mini lesson, it was very common for students to share their thinking and share their work with their peer. But during a mini lesson their thinking and their work were about a piece of text that the whole class was working on, specifically for the purpose of having a common text to reference for instructional purposes. The mini lesson would not revolve about students' current writing because the students would be writing about a variety of topics within a particular genre study. In other words, while it was common practice for students to talk with their peer about the writing generated for a mini lesson, it was not very common that students would talk with their peer about their own writing that was unfolding during the course of the unit.

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[13] In Chapter 6, one of the implications of my research addresses this dilemma—the need for a structure around the teaching and learning of grammar and syntax, especially for students of diverse language backgrounds.

Nonetheless, I remained committed both to peer conferencing on a regular basis, with students discussing their draft work with one another, and to student-teacher conferencing on a regular basis, with the teacher providing a listening ear and a suggestion (or two) for improving writing. Three particular incidents, captured in Reflective Analytic Memos (RAMemos), revealed my struggle to align my practice with my beliefs, providing backdrop for the presentation of my research findings which I lay out in this chapter and the next.

RAMemo #1, "She Explained It Better Than You"

> *"Why haven't you gotten started?" my question hangs in the air, directed above a cluster of tables where several students sit, one boy laughing a little too loudly, and another just barely. At tables that are closely grouped towards the front of the room sit half of the students, one student per table that seats two. Around the room are the other fourteen eighth grade boys and girls sitting at different pillows, benches and rugs on the floor. In this way, I have explained to them, there is room to spread out.*
>
> *I stand just behind my chair, hands on its back, with an eagle eye scanning the room to locate the chatter. Landing on one culprit, "Walter[14], is there a problem?"*
>
> *"What does it mean, analysis?"*
>
> *I sigh quietly, thinking to myself, "Doesn't he remember how we learned about writing an analysis just two weeks ago with the class essay on zoos?" But I patiently direct him to look through his folder to review the prewriting work from that essay, where they paired evidence with analysis, the template I'd worked so hard on, the one that each had completed. He sighs loudly and plops first his arm onto the desk, then his head onto his arm. I stand firm, refusing to spoon feed him, "He's got to figure some of this out on his own," I think to myself.*
>
> *As the independent writing time drags on, I continue to put out little talking disruptions. About ten minutes later, out of the blue, Walter, the same student who appeared to have given up on analysis, and on me the teacher, accusingly blurts out, "She explained it better than you?!"*
>
> *"Who did?" I ask, my curiosity piqued more than my pride wounded, which for a split second, I realize was his aim. He points to Jessica, sitting across at another group of tables, meaning a student he wasn't supposed to be talking to. I let that slide. "What did she explain?"*
>
> *"Analysis!" Walter informs me.*

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[14] Pseudonyms are used for all students. In selecting pseudonyms, I aimed at names that were similar in their Spanish or English attributes as the students' actual names.

I ask Jessica, "How did you do that?" Jessica shrugs, as though everyone has her innate ability of making the abstract concrete.

"Well, thank you for doing that. I am wanting us to be resources for each other," I admit, but don't go on to say that I'm fumbling through the ways to do so.

About five minutes later, Abel calls out, "What's a claim?" I think to myself, "Are you serious?" But I respond patiently, "A claim is the argument (pause) you're making (pause) about your topic (pause), drug addiction."

Abel, "What? What's a claim again?" This time it's Yesenia who turns around to Abel and utters something that the teacher can't quite make-out. "Thank you, Yesenia. I appreciate how you guys are patient and help each other out." In this acknowledgement, I shed light on my own impatience.

Later that same day, after school. *The English department, many relating to my own challenges with conferencing, agree to make it our PD goal for the second semester. During the meeting, I confess to my small group of peers that I feel incompetent because I can't manage the students who demand so much of my attention during independent writing time, leaving me unavailable to the other twenty-five students, with whom I never talk with about their writing.*

I feel a failure that over the course of the past four months, my students and I have rarely had reading and writing conferences, even though it is the focus of my research. The few times have been when . . .
* I met with about half of the students one-to-one during their independent reading time for roughly three-four minutes each time.
* I met three times with the group of students who are reading at grade level, as a large group, about continuing to set goals for themselves as readers.
* One-to-one writing "conferences" have in reality been quick check-ins to answer students' questions if they are unsure how to proceed.
* I have met with small groups about writing skills, or about their small group writing topics, an estimated five times.
*I Students have conferred with each other about their writing that is generated during a mini-lesson, during approximately 40% of the writers workshop lessons.

In short, conferencing one-to-one about their writing with their teacher has not occurred at all this year unless solicited to answer a quick question. Students are more accustomed to conferencing with each other, but that occurs irregularly, and only about the whole-class text during the mini-lesson.

During the department PD, the principal shares a mini-lesson idea, to have students outline the resources available to them during independent writing time. The idea is that students wouldn't rely solely on their teacher when they get stuck. For my class, I have the additional goal of strengthening structures around

peer conferencing, whereby they might also rely on one another when they get stuck.

The following Monday, I try out the principal's mini-lesson idea. The class reviews the writing resources in their folder. They make a list of each one, noting how each might be helpful as they complete their argument essay. At the top of their list is, "My writing partner." That same day, I pair students with writing partners before they go off to write, so that they can talk with their partner as the need arises. But not yet, I tell them, "Today, let's have ten minutes of uninterrupted quiet writing time first. Tomorrow after we get into a groove, you'll be able to talk with your writing partner as you need to. As long as the talking is about your writing." As the time nears the end of 10 minutes, I extend it to 20 minutes because they're so focused. Then, at the sound of my phone timer, I announce, "Decide which of you will share first, and share one thing that you worked on today. Use a green pen if you make any revisions to your writing based on your partner's feedback."

I recognize it's a sloppy beginning, but it is a beginning nonetheless, of a structure to support peer writing partnerships. It seems by how focused the class is on this Monday that I will also be able to hold one-to-one student-teacher conferences during independent writing time, the other focus area for my research. Finally. Fingers crossed.

RAMemo #1 reflected my very real classroom struggle at the beginning of the spring semester to provide students with structure for peer conferencing. Yet I held firmly to the research that I had already analyzed for Chapter Two of my research proposal (Erickson, 1986; Hsu, 2009; Atwell, 1987; Mercer, 200b), which detailed the reasons that students are readily adept at learning from one another. At this time, my pedagogy was in disarray, with dissonance between my practice and my beliefs about learning and teaching. I was in a quagmire, immersed in the messiness of a change process, as Minor (2019) describes: "Working toward change almost always means that we must abandon ways of doing things and thinking things that are not working. One cannot change outcomes for a student, (or) a classroom, . . . without changing one's own behavior and thinking" (p. 4).

RAMemo #1 also reflected that even veteran workshop teachers such as my peers found themselves in need of support as concerns student-teacher conferencing. During that time, I had a sense that, like me, they were not conferencing with their students during writers workshop. This particular PD meeting confirmed my suspicions as all but one empathized with the struggles that I had shared. Their expressed frustrations helped alleviate some of my guilt and feelings of incompetence. I also felt reaffirmed in my conviction that conferencing was a topic that required in-depth study to fully comprehend the challenges and complexity surrounding its implementation, not only for novice workshop teachers like myself, but also for those well-versed in the Units of Study.

Beginnings of Conferencing

After the professional development meeting with my peers, I became reenergized and recommitted to overcoming the obstacles that stood in the way of making conferencing a regular occurrence in our writers workshop sessions. Because I had been accustomed to small group lessons with students around syntax, these were the first one-to-one conferences that I had. I met first with Brenda and then David, and worked with both of them on sounding out where to put periods and capital letters to indicate sentences. During the first conference (FN.PS2), [15] I explained to Brenda that, when we read a piece of text that does not have periods, it is confusing for the reader. I demonstrated how a writer could figure out where the periods belong by reading the text aloud. Then to begin the next sentence, the writer should use a capital letter as a second sign for the reader that this is the next sentence. After modeling this process of reading aloud her paragraph and putting in periods and capital letters where I figured there should be a new sentence, I asked Brenda to continue the process. She read aloud from the essay she was writing,

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15 In this section, because it was prior to the audio-recording of conferences, I detail the conversations with Brenda, Jason and Diedra based on my field notes. FN=Field note PS=Pre-study #-order of occurrence. This exchange emanates from my second field note, prior to the study.

and when she paused but didn't insert a period, I stopped her, "Stop. Right there. Do you hear that pause? That's where you need a period." She nodded and inserted the period. "And that next sentence needs a capital letter now," I reminded her. After she made that correction, I asked her to continue with the rest of the paragraph. She was able to put periods and capital letters in the remaining part of the paragraph. I then asked her to do the same throughout the rest of her essay at her table. Before she returned to her seat, we took out the checklist for the argument writing essay, and I added to the bottom of the list for her to add periods and capital letters to indicate sentences. In doing so, I hoped to ensure that she would remember this as an editing skill that she would need to add to future checklists.[16]

After the conference with Brenda, I held a similar conference with David.

For these two initial conferences, I was able to draw on my prior experiences with conferencing from having taught at the elementary school level, as these were some of my initial teaching points with students at that time. Now, holding my first "official" conferences with my eighth graders, I felt at ease being able to draw on successes that I had had teaching years ago. It was like riding a bike. But not many students needed these basic skills conferences. I would have to move beyond my comfort zone (Minor, 2019; Hammond, 2015), and meet students where they were at, not really knowing where that would be until we sat together in a conference.

In addition to feeling unsure about my ability to identify and to provide students whatever support they may need in their writing, I also felt awkward asking students to conference with me. I did not want them to feel like they had to conference with me if it was something that they did not want to do. Perhaps my lack of confidence around my capacity to support them as writers individually attributed to my feeling insecure about "forcing" them to conference. So instead

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[16] Much like the red student-teacher conference notebook, I forgot about my plan to have students transfer personal editing skills from one checklist (argument essay) to the next (memoir).

of calling out students to conference with me, the next conferences resulted from me announcing to the students during independent writing time, "Who could use some help right now with their writing?" I was relieved when Jason was the first to raise his hand.

Jason and I did not have the smoothest relationship. He took personal offense during the few times that I made criticism of his minimal effort. This led to more than one conversation, and apology, where I had to cushion my critique with sincere compliment of his intellectual capacity. As are many students who dare to set the teacher straight when she has crossed a line, Jason was well-liked by the other students. I felt that a conference (FN.PS3) with him gave me some cachet, some social capital with the other students. As he sat next to me, his writing dilemma unfolded. Jason had decided to switch topics for his argument essay. When he had done so a few days prior, I told him I thought that would be okay as long as he caught up on the reading and the annotating of text for the articles that he was going to reference for his new topic. But he had not. And now in the last days of the unit, he was struggling to find any evidence to support his arguments.

With Jason sitting next to me, and together in conversation, it became clear that his problem was not minor. As I grew to understand what he needed to do, I was able to speak to him not as a teacher saying, "I told you so," but more as a fellow writer, one more experienced (Hodson, 1999), who understood the challenges that he was facing.

"So Jason, you're having a hard time finding evidence, huh? Have you read any of those articles around depression?"

"Uh uh," meaning he had not.

"Well, that's where the evidence is. I thought you were going to read over those articles at home."

"I didn't want to," his honesty apparent as always.

"Jason, this writing is different than the narrative writing we were doing earlier. When you were writing a narrative and you wanted to switch up a topic, you are a strong enough writer that you could do that pretty easily, and come up with a good story off the top of your head. And you could write well with the on-demand prompts for our information unit. But this kind of writing is different. You can't just wing it."

Jason sat and listened, taking in what I had said.

"What do you think you want to do now?"

"I don't know."

"I think you can either write about the articles that you did read and annotate, or read the articles about depression. Which sounds good to you?"

Not interested in writing about the pros or cons of homework, Jason's previous topic, he asked, "Do I have to read all the articles?"

"Well, you need to cite two different sources in your essay. So, you need to read at least two of them."

He weighed his options and elected to read the articles on depression.

Jason was truly stuck with his writing. And he needed a reality check. After our conference together, I felt strengthened by my capacity to help a student with what they were struggling with in their writing. In addition, I felt that this was a good lesson for Jason, more of what Minor (2019) might refer to as a life lesson than a mere writing lesson. He was a student who often looked for shortcuts because he was so quick to catch on. I also appreciated that this truth came-up for him within the relatively safe context of our conference (Hodson, 1999), and that I played a role in it. I could see that without the conference, if he simply sat and stewed

during that workshop session and maybe the one after that, that he might not have produced as strong an essay as he did.

After the conference with Jason, I again asked who could use help with their writing. This time it was Walter who raised his hand. Walter (FN.PS3) wanted me to read over his writing and reaffirm that he was on the right track, which he was. This short conference was followed by one with Chris (FN.PS3) who needed help with the distinction between a claim and reasons. The next day, I conferenced with two students who responded to my well-rehearsed sing-song question to the class during independent writing time, asking who could use some help with their writing.

The following day, I conferenced (FN.PS4) with three more students. These were stronger writers, all who said they were finished with their essays. Other than Brenda and David, whom I had asked to conference with me about syntax, the other students I had conferenced with all had volunteered. But with Yesenia, Pedro and Ramon, I felt comfortable asking them to conference. I felt certain that when asked, these three polite writers would not refuse me. It may sound unusual that a teacher experienced as myself would worry so much about whether students would refuse a request to conference. Nonetheless, this was true for me.

During these three conferences, the students and I reviewed their essays via Google classroom. I simply was checking to see if they had balanced the evidence that they cited with analysis. To help the class recognize the distinction, I had a mini lesson where each student highlighted in green the analysis section and in blue the evidence section in the body paragraphs of their respective argument essays. Pedro's and Yesenia's essays met this criteria, with even parts green and blue scattered across the page. But reading over Ramon's essay, it became clear that he needed two distinct claims in his argument essay. His two claims were redundant because

he wanted to write exclusively about football injuries whereas the articles in his packet were also about other extreme sports. Together, Ramon and I worked out a way to restructure his essay, enabling him to still focus on football by separating a claim about young football players and professional athletes.

Thus far, and throughout the rest of the year, student-teacher conferences were held at my desk, and for the most part, at my request. Sometimes students would ask to conference with me, and those conferences were held in the order as requested. On a few occasions, I would go to where the students were writing at their desks. But I found it too difficult to keep an eye on the other students if, for example, I wanted to conference with a student who was sitting in the middle of the room. During workshop time, about half of the students were sitting at tables, and half of the students were sitting around the periphery of the room on various rugs, pillows, benches and chairs. When I was sitting at my desk, I could not actually see the students sitting on the floor at the back of the room. But when I stood, I could. For this reason, so that I could easily assess the goings-on around the room, I preferred to hold conferences at my desk. Students would sit on a stool beside me as I sat at my chair. This placed them above me, with their head above mine, which I enjoyed because it was one step towards undoing the traditional top-down of teacher-student relationships. While just about every article and book on workshop conferencing propones the importance of the teacher conferencing with the students where they are sitting so as not to disrupt their writing (Graves, 1975; Atwell, 1987/2002; Calkins et al., 2005; Lain, 20017), I was not able to make that leap with student-teacher conferences. At some point, I gave myself permission to do conferences "wrong," just so that I get started doing them.

Within a two-week period, student-teacher conferencing had become a norm during the independent writing time of our writers workshop: starting with students working on basic

syntax, continuing with students who accepted my invitation to help with their writing, and

concluding with me calling on students who had finished with their essays. By the time that I had

written the memo below (RAMemo #2), the practice grew. I was calling on students randomly

for conferencing, working to ensure that I conferenced with all students. At times the

conferences were short, as with Yesenia and Pedro, and at other times they were lengthier,

tending to problems of organization and the intricacies of argument essay writing. Occasionally,

if the student was already sitting by me, they would ask me to look at some aspect of their

Google classroom essay. I would open their document, see where their cursor was, review it, and

give them feedback without their coming to sit at the stool at my desk. Other times, I would

peruse the students' essays on Google classroom, and when I noticed something amiss in one of

them, if it were minor, I would call on the student and point it out to them by highlighting it or

adding a comment to it. If the issue were more complex, I would ask them to conference with

me. RAMemo #2 details one such conference. (Please see Footnote #5 about the dialogue

below).

RAMemo #2 "Beginnings of Student-Teacher Conferences. FINALLY."

> *Today students are working on an argument essay, topic of their choice.*
> *They work off an assignment from Google classroom, which allows me access to*
> *their current draft, as well as past versions, making it easy for them and for me to*
> *monitor their progress.*
>
> *This is the eleventh conference I've had during these past few weeks, this*
> *one with Diedra about her first body paragraph, cautioning against drug use. I*
> *begin by asking her after the mini-lesson if she would like to talk with me about*
> *her essay. She says yes. I pull-up her essay on my laptop as she meanders over to*
> *my desk, looking not-too-enthusiastic. Her draft writing below is an excerpt, cut*
> *and pasted from her Google Doc, reflecting her writing before our conference.*
> *We used highlighted color coding during this unit to demonstrate the distinction*
> *between evidence and analysis: yellow is for the introduction and concluding*
> *sentences; green for evidence; and blue for analysis. Also evident is where she*
> *has revised the paragraph, with the words typed in green to indicate the changes*
> *made on this same day. This green typeface is how Google Docs presents*

revisions in the history viewing tab. This explains why the sentences at the bottom appear highlighted in gray, but are actually highlighted in bright blue; the altered color offset the green typeface better than the bright blue would.

> The first reason why I believe drugs are bad for people is because they are affecting the brain. When taking too much drugs it can cause many effects such as it can lead to concentration problems,learning problems but most importantly it can cause memory loss. According to the article "What happens to your brain when you use marijuana" when doing to much marijuana the THC attaches to a site called "cannabinoid receptors" ~~on~~ the nerve cells which causes the cells not to work correctly. ~~The cells aren't working correctly which obviously causes memory loss. Memory loss isn't something anyone would want due to doing drugs or in general.~~ This tells that when doing to much drugs or taking to many pills can lead to losing your memory. Nobody should be loosing their memory because they did too many drugs.

"So, which paragraph would you like us to look at?" I begin, sharing my laptop screen with her and increasing the size of the font so that we can both see her essay.

"This one," pointing to the paragraph that is pasted above.

After I read it, I say, "I can see that you're clear on which part of your paragraph includes evidence and which part is the analysis (based on the way she's highlighted them). *And you cite the article. But I can see that you haven't balanced evidence with analysis—way more green than blue (at the bottom of the paragraph), right?"*

"Umhm."

"So, Diedra, you know how we've done Say/Mean/Matter with our independent reading homework? That thinking will help you with your analysis. If you tell me that marijuana impacts memory, and I said, 'So what? What does that matter?' what would you say?"

A grunted phrase to indicate, "I don't know."

"Well, you could maybe give a personal anecdote, like in the student exemplar. Me, speaking personally, when somebody I know does a lot of marijuana, I can see how it affects him. Like maybe he can still function and go to work, but it's hard to be in a relationship with him. Can you speak to that at all?"

She shrugs.

"What might you say?"

"That they're kinda not focused."

"Yes, so you can add that to your analysis section, right?"

This is what she writes, below, changes in green typeface, highlighted in gray at the bottom.

> The first reason why I believe drugs are bad for people is because they are affecting the brain. When taking too much drugs it can cause many effects such as it can lead to concentration problems,learning problems but most importantly it can cause memory loss. According to the article "What happens to your brain when you use marijuana" when doing to much marijuana the THC attaches to a site called "cannabinoid receptors" the nerve cells which causes the cells not to work correctly. This ~~tells that when doing to much drugs or taking to many pills can lead to losing your memory. Nobody should be loosing their memory because they did too many drugs.~~ shows that people can lose their memory for doing to much. I can relate to this because I know someone who smokes almost everyday and they're memory is not good. At times they'll forget what we're talking about.This can shows that when someone does too many drugs it doesn't just affect them it can affect you as well. That can affect you because you'll probably feel like you can't even talk to them because they're just gonna be forgetting all the time.

> *Reviewing her writing, I really like that she strengthened her body paragraph with further analysis to support her evidence, expanding on the little that she had shared during our conference. A personal aside, I like being honest with the students who chose this topic about my own experiences with people who've been addicted to drugs. I don't want to come off too preachy, and lose them completely. And I don't want to ignore some of the real impact of drug use and addiction on families and friends. I think here I struck a decent balance with Diedra.*
>
> *. . . . .*
>
> *Phew! My job as a conferencing teacher is coming along. On this day, I conference not only with Diedra, but also with Jessica, Naomi and Ramon. FOUR students—hurray!! It has been a bit of a bumpy ride, but after today's class, it would seem that we are well on our way.*

This student-teacher conference between Diedra and myself was not included here as an exemplar of such conferencing. Now, after having had dozens of conferences with students, I could easily call out six things that I would do differently. But at that time, I was pleased. I was pleased that we had talked, even if it was mostly me who talked, pleased that we had talked around her draft writing, pleased that we had talked honestly about a somewhat sensitive subject (Hammond, 2015), and pleased that our conversation had yielded a stronger piece of writing.

While RAMemo #2 detailed beginnings of student-teacher conferencing, this next descriptive narrative (RAMemo #4, below) detailed beginnings of peer conferencing. Weeks prior, I had told students that I wanted them to be resources for each other. I had assigned them

writing partners, based largely on their requests. On a regular basis, I had provided them time at the end of independent writing to work with their writing partner. And they had begun to use green pens to show the revised writing in their notebooks that resulted from their peer conferences.

Toward the end of the argument unit, an unlikely partnership formed between one of the strongest writers and one of the less developed writers. I would not typically pair students with such varying capacities for written expression. But Yesenia had finished her argument essay and Mariah had asked for her help. The two agreed to their conferences being audio recorded, and the memo below detailed a part of one such conference.

RAMemo #4, "Beginnings of Peer Conferencing"

> *Last week, I explained to students my research study, that I wanted to understand how conferencing helped students with their writing. I explained that the focus of the study would be on RFEP students, just because that's what I had been studying, even though only half the students in the room were RFEP students. While waiting for signed forms to be returned, I asked Yesenia and Mariah (two non-RFEP students) if I could audio record their conferences so that I could iron out any technical glitches that might occur.*
>
> *Yesenia and Mariah have been working together for about two class lessons. We are at the publishing stage of their argument essay, and this is a time when more advanced students typically finish early and so make themselves available to "help" those who are a bit behind.*
>
> *What I appreciate about Google Docs and Google Classroom is that it is easy to tell, by day and time, the edits that students make to their writing. So, I was able to track Yesenia's suggestions from the audio recordings to the edits that Mariah made in her writing. See below where I indicate the conversation from their peer conference in bold, and then cut and paste the editing page from Mariah's Google Doc, with revisions in green typeface, a color designated by the Google history-revision tab.*
>
> *-----*
>
> **Yesenia: Don't start your second sentence with "Like." Just take it out**
> **Mariah: So like . . . (she types to delete like).**

You should consider the effects of playing football. ~~Like~~ i~~I~~f you hit your head too many times you could get a concussion. Or you could get a disease known as CTE or "chronic traumatic encephalopathy." Symptoms of CTE is problems with thinking, it also messes with your memory. It also affects behavior and personality. CTE also causes aggression and depression. You could only be diagnosed with CTE when you're dead. When football players die, they donate their brains to scien~~tistsce~~.. . .

Yesenia: Change scientists to science.
Mariah types changes.
Yesenia: Take out the sentence (the scientists then run tests) cause
        you . . . (inaudible).
Mariah deletes the sentence.

~~The scientists then run tests on the brain to check for CTE.~~ You could get this disease by playing football for a couple of years but more likely, the person that has played football more will have this disease. Especially if you're in the NFL. People who love sports don't think that sports are all that dangerous until one of their family members gets affected by CTE and their opinions change. For instance, in the article "Heads Up!" It said when a kid in New York was playing football and got hit extremely hard, he had gotten knocked off of his feet and hit his head on the ground during practice. This is one of the many examples.

Yesenia: Where you said that he had gotten knocked off of his feet and hit his head on the ground during practice. You could say, "This is one of the many examples."
Mariah: (Says, as she types) "This is one . . . of the . . . many examples."

What strikes me is that Yesenia doesn't explain to Mariah why she should make the revisions that she suggests; nor does Mariah inquire as to why she should make the revisions. This makes me wonder if there is any long-term benefit to Mariah by having Yesenia "help" her. It reminds me of the marked-up essay, with red jottings scribbled across the page, that traditional English teachers would return to students to correct. Even if the students made the corrections, you couldn't really tell if they learned anything by doing so.
Another insight I have is that I haven't really given much in the way of instruction or modelling to students on HOW to be a writing partner. Furthermore, this isn't really the draft writing stage of the process, but the final editing stage. So maybe it makes sense that Mariah is simply making the changes suggested to her by the more respected writer that she sees in Yesenia. And

without further analysis into follow-up writing samples, it is not possible to determine whether Mariah isn't picking-up something about the way that a critical writer reads over and revises her work, with Yesenia modelling this process for her.

> *Instructional implications:*
>
> *1.   I need a system for students to jot down the kinds of changes they're making based on peer AND teacher responses to their writing. They have a handout in their folder for tracking this information, but I need to allow them time at the end of the workshop to complete it.*
>
> *2.   While it was a bit of a let-down to see that Mariah was simply making changes as directed by Yesenia, I'm glad of the audio recording, the Google Doc, and this analysis that unveiled their peer editing practice.*
>
> *3.   Finally, there may have been deeper substantive revisions made than revealed by this data. It is after all one small glimpse into the many minutes that Yesenia and Mariah worked together. Overall, Mariah's essay does read much more fluently than others she's written in the past.*

Together, RAMemos #1, #2 and #3 demonstrated the shifts in our writers workshop practices during the Unit of Study leading up to our memoir unit, shifts to include both peer conferencing and student-teacher conferencing. As with the latter, the descriptive narrative of the former (RAMemo #3) was not intended to serve as a model of peer conferencing. If anything, it helped me realize that I could not presume that simply sitting students together, and giving them time to conference (Guthrie & Klauda; 2014; Smith, 2017), would result in the deep kinds of exchanges that I wanted writers in my classroom to experience around their draft writing. Indeed, instruction around peer conferencing would prove to be on-going throughout the memoir unit, as would my own learning about how best to support students while conferencing with them.

Student-Participants and Beginnings of the Memoir Unit

During the final weeks of the argument writing unit, we began our memoir unit by immersing ourselves in memoirs. While this was the first time during the school year that I called out the memoir as of particular form of nonfiction narrative, it is not the first time that we

had practiced the art of storytelling. During the first semester students wrote realistic fiction pieces, and we had, for a while, a classroom practice of bringing photos from home to share more about our home life. See insert *Teacher-as-Researcher: The Beginnings of Storytelling in Room 204,* this page and the next.

We read, discussed and analyzed a dozen different memoirs, many authored by youth and published in *YCTeen Magazine*, and many authored by more renowned writers like Sandra Cisneros (excerpts from *House on Mango Street* and *Woman Hollering Creek and other stories*) and Francisco Jimenez (excerpt from *The Circuit*), whose fiction reads in many ways like a memoir. We also read the first chapter of *The Beloved World of Sonia Sotomayor*, her memoir written for adolescents. We analyzed and adapted an excerpt of *Becoming-Michelle Obama,* and engaged with a video clip of an Oprah interview with our former first lady about her memoir. In Chapter Five, I write in detail about connections between the writing genre and writing conferences, speaking at length about how the former

Teacher-as-Researcher:
The Beginnings of Storytelling in Room 204
(excerpt from Teacher Reflective Journal)
9/15/2018

Yesterday I told a story to my 8th graders. I showed an old family photo to them and told a story to go with the picture. Before I started to speak, I didn't know that I would divulge all that I did. I didn't intend to talk about my brother who had dropped out of school in 8th grade. I didn't intend to delve into why I thought 8th grade was a pivotal year. I actually hadn't even intended to teach 8th grade again, to have this audience of 8th graders captivated as I fumbled through my story.

I showed them a picture with the intent of being a little vulnerable, a picture of when I was about four years old, standing with my older brothers and sister. I wanted to model what I was going to ask another student to do the next class session, and all of them to do at some point during the course of the year. I said that I wanted us to be a community of learners, to care about each other so that we could grow together as speakers, readers and writers. And for this to happen, we would bring pictures that would help us tell a little about who we are.

So I had this picture, intending to show it because I think I look kinda funny in it. I expounded that since I was holding a bottle of Coke, I knew that we had to be at my tia's house. We never had individual bottle sized Coke at my house; too expensive. Instead we drank Kool-Aid; packets cost 12 cents, and with a cup of sugar, we had the delight of flavored colored sugar water, red, purple, orange and sometimes even green. That's where my sharing started, but maybe it went elsewhere because my heart was wanting to create a safe space for students to likewise be vulnerable when they shared their own stories, certainly not because I had thought it through, because, again, I hadn't. But my story after the Kool-Aid tangent, went something like . . .
(cont. on next page)

impacts the latter. Here, as I lay the groundwork for the data analysis on conferencing that follows, it is important to note that these varied readings allowed students opportunities to experience how they might broach topics related to their own lives in their memoir writing, topics both intensely personal and widely universal.

While the class was wrapping-up its argument writing unit and reading mentor texts for the memoir unit, the process of student-participant selection for my research was underway. The district required that I not be the person to present my research proposal to potential student-participants directly, concerned that students would feel obligated or pressured to participate because I was their teacher. Therefore, the fourteen RFEP students who were potential participants met with their counselor, and she went over the research assent forms with them (see Appendix A). It had not occurred to me until that day that perhaps no students would return the forms. I

continued . . .

So this is a picture of me and my brothers and sister, but I have another brother who isn't in this picture. He actually died a few years ago, and it's really hard when one of your own siblings dies. (I touch my hand to my heart and try not to choke on my next words, try not to let the water that's starting to collect in my eyes burst through and make a wet mess. I manage to power through . . .)

And I know James thinks that eighth grade isn't important, that he can start thinking about college when he's in high school. (James nods*). But my brother dropped out of school in eighth grade. So to me, this is why it's important that you as eighth graders really learn to speak, to read and to write. So that you can have a lot of options at a life that you really want* (I open my arms wide to indicate plenty of options), *not one where things are just decided for you* (I bring my hands together to indicate one lone pathway). *This is why I'm here teaching. And that teddy bear over there* (pointing to the teddy bear on the ledge under the window), *it represents my brother for me. Maybe one day I'll tell you a story about the teddy bear, but for me it's like he's here in the class with us.*

I stop, not having made eye contact with any of them, except for James when I mention him, not really at all aware of them as students, as listeners, as an audience. And then I hear a singular loud clap from the back of the room where Santana sits, and then another clap from the front of the room where Felipe sits, and I kinda think they're being sarcastic with their clapping. But then like popcorn, there's a bit more clapping, and then even more, and then they're all clapping, each and every one of my 8th graders. My first time in 20 years teaching that I actually *(cont. on next page)*

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became anxious that after all of this work, I might have no students willing to allow me to analyze their peer and their teacher conferences.[17]

     I was tremendously relieved the next day when the counselor handed me completed assent forms from four students; three more would return their forms over the next several days. Of the seven students, six were selected to participate. The one student who did not participate, Abel, initially had participated. But on the first day of data collection, he played with the recording device, intentionally deleting the recorded conference (FN.PS5). Also, since he had not written anything on that day, his partner Ramon "fake conferenced" with Abel about Ramon's own writing. For these reasons, and because time was a key factor and I could ill afford loss of data, I decided that Abel would not be a participant. The majority of the data from the peer conferences and all of the data from the student-teacher conferences were ascribed to four of the remaining six students. One of the students, Alina, joined the study at a later date, returning her assent form weeks after the others. And of the three boys, William said he was okay not

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continued . . .

get an ovation from students.

    The bell doesn't ring because this school has no bells. But it is dismissal time, and I call on tables, one group at a time, to put up their chairs before they leave. It's Friday, and the custodian will sweep later that afternoon. As they walk out, I'm the recipient of more than usual, "Have a good weekend, Miss," "Bye, Miss," "Bye, Miss."

    These past few months since I've returned to teaching, I've been struggling how to bring more of myself into the classroom, how to create that safe space that Brené Brown calls BELONGing. I grasp at ways to have students feel comfortable enough to take risks, safe to drop their armors at the door, to be interested in one another, to care about each other. I read about these kinds of things as necessary for students, and I've seen classrooms where this kind of culture exists, and I wonder how do they do that? How do teachers create that space? I wanna do that. I wanna be in a classroom alive with inter-connectedness, where we aren't all trying to fit in because we simply belong.

    In her book *The Storying Teacher*, Raj (2018) writes, "When there is emotional truth in a story, there forms a tangible connection between the teller and the audience that makes the experience authentic and believable" (p. 3). With the slight unhinging of my own armor, I think my blurting out this far-from-perfect personal narrative yesterday may prove to be a turning point for me, for us in room 204.

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17 This was one of many times during this research process where I had to practice letting go and trusting that things would unfold in the best way possible.

participating since I needed an even number of students. He would later join Alina, recording a handful of peer conferences. [18] Despite the hiccup with Abel that resulted in the loss of one day of data collection,[19] I felt honored that these students trusted me and respected me enough to agree to participate in my research.

Initially, I paired the four students, two girls together and two boys together; later, I changed the partnerships to allow for varied experiences The girls, as it turned out, were friends, but I did not know that at the time. The boys were both amenable to working together, although they were not necessarily friends. I was pleased that the four students reflected a good cross-section of the class (Atkinson, 2005), based on their demeanor and their overall levels of academic achievement. In order that the reader may have some context for my data analysis around relationships and conferencing, I provide brief descriptions of the students, of course from my perspective, and *Fig. 4.1, Table: Student-Participant Academic Achievement Data* provides some statistical academic-related information.

- Jessica was brutally honest, no-nonsense, extremely direct, and very funny. She was the student who had explained to Walter about analysis (see RAMemo #1 above). I was thrilled to have her as a research participant because I wanted to capture her way-with-words, especially as it related to hers and her peer's memoir writing. Her grade in English at the time of this study was a B, which she had brought up from a C the previous semester.

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[18] William and Alina's conferences will be used exclusively when discussing translanguaging in the next chapter. There were only three recorded conferences between the two of them, skewing the data around partnerships and conferencing. For this reason, throughout the analysis portion of this chapter, I solely reference the four student-participants: Chris, Jessica, Naomi and Ramon.
[19] When I displaced Abel, I decided to discard that first day of recorded conferences from the other students as well, since none of the initial partnerships remained intact.

- What I recall most about Naomi are the occasional times when the class would be extremely loud, and I would count down for their attention, to no avail, and I would simply stand in resigned dismay, looking across the class until my eyes met with the only pair of eyes looking back at me—Naomi's. I would smile and acknowledge her, saying with my words, "Thank you, Naomi, for your attention," and with my eyes, "Is there anything we can do to stop the madness?" She was an avid reader, mostly quiet in class. Her bad-ass boyfriend second semester might explain the drop in her grades, which was a C in English, having dropped from a B the first semester.

- Chris came late into my class during the year, specifically because he was not passing his English8 class. In his memoir, he wrote about how he turned around his grades during eighth grade, and I can attest to the real challenges he had to overcome to give attention to things that did not matter in his world of soccer and friends. Knowing Chris from the arts elective class that I supervised, when nine times out of ten he would not listen to the drama teacher or to me, I initially resisted him being placed in my class, feeling like I was barely able to manage the students I did have. But eventually, I came to enjoy his sense of humor and even warmed a little to his frequent calls-for-attention.

- Ramon was a leader at the school, a basketball hero and at the same time, a straight-A student. He was a favorite go-to for other boy students when they were struggling with their writing—he had the unique ability to push them to do better, without making them feel stupid. I do not think that it is common that the top academic achievers are the popular kids in middle school, but at the Workshop School, that

was the case. Because of this, coupled with his talents on the court, Ramon was widely admired by students and beloved by teachers.

- Alina had a challenging year with the worst kind of problems at home. She started the year reading at tenth grade level, and knowing more about life than you might want for a fourteen-year-old. I was touched when she invited me to her confirmation, and deeply worried about her when she ran away from home. Twice. Her grades dropped drastically second semester, going from an A in English to a D at the time of this study.

- William, who was partnered with Alina, was in many ways her opposite. On the small side, puberty had yet to set-in for him. In class, he joked around incessantly with his friend Santana, whom I had to sit on the opposite side of the room, far from wherever William was sitting. His writing was often hard to follow and make sense of, but he read at grade level, earning a C in English at the time of this study.

Please see Appendix B for the final versions of these student-participants' memoirs, which provide further context for many of the conferences that are discussed in detail throughout these next two chapters.

Fig. 4.1, Table: Student-Participant Academic Achievement Data

Student Name	GPA (marking period of this study)	Reading Level** (growth during school year)	SBAC ELA performance band (2018, scale score)	Attendance
Alina	3.4 first semester, to 1.8	Z+ (high school /adult)	Standards "Met" (2626)	91% first semester; 68% at the time of this study
Chris*	All B's, except for F in English (the reason he was placed into my English section)	From N (Grade 3) to U (Grade 4)	Standards "Not Met" (2420)	89%

Jessica*	2.1	From U (gr. 5) to X (gr. 6)	Standards "Nearly Met" (2498)	96%
Naomi*	3.1 first semester, to 1.8	Z (gr. 7-8)	Standards "Met" (2585)	94%
Ramon*	3.6	From V (gr. 5) to Z (gr. 7-8)	Standards "Exceeded" (2697)	92%
William	2.6	Z (gr 7-8)	Standards "Nearly Met" (2545)	97%

* *key participant*

** *based on Fountas & Pinnell Levels and Running Reading Record Assessments, conducted throughout the year*

In the remainder of this chapter and in the next, I layout findings based on analysis of the audio recording transcriptions from the forty-five peer conferences and the fourteen student-teacher conferences of the four key participants (see Footnote 7 above) that were conducted over the course of our memoir writing unit. Chapter 4 focuses analysis around my first research question: (Q1) How do conference participants shape writing conferences over time? In exploring the complexities of what it means to learn within the sociocultural framework (Gutierrez et al., 1997; Moje et al., 2004; Barton et al., 2008; Brown & Duguid, 1989; Lave & Wegner, 1991; Wells, 1994), analysis here shifts between a micro view at the goings-on of conferences and a wide-angled view of varying aspects and structures of the conference.

Finding #1:
Co-construction of the Writing Conference as a Sociocultural Model of Learning

As I examined the data (see insert, *Teacher-as-Researcher: Falling in Love with my Data),* patterns emerged shedding light on my research

> **Teacher-as-Researcher:**
> **Falling in Love with my Data**
>
> While transcribing audio recordings of writing conferences for this study, there were many times when I found myself laughing out loud. Other times, I was filled with love at the kindness in the exchanges between the students, or with awe at the students' insights about writing and about life, or with dismay at the minimalist approach to peer conferencing that characterized the very first conferences and those towards the end of my study, when spring and eighth graders' version of senioritis had set in for at least one student-participant. Then as I coded transcriptions, I was struck by the awesomeness of the task, wanting to do justice to all that the data provided. And the more that I saw as I coded, the more that I saw what else there was to be seen, more that needed to be coded (Maxwell, 2009). The result was that transcriptions went through numerous versions of coding for each of my research questions.

questions (Erickson, 1986). I began to see how it was that writers and their writing partners, peer and teacher, together co-constructed writing conferences as models of sociocultural learning. First and foremost, writing conferences, for the purpose of this study, always happened between two people. And while the relational aspect of conferencing, how conferencing shaped the relationships, is discussed in the next chapter, I find it important to begin by acknowledging some of the common ways that these interactions occurred because without two people in relationship with one another, there would be no conference.

The writing conference might be viewed metaphorically like a dance. Writers for a brief time took lead of the dance by sharing their writing. But then conference partners took over, asking questions, giving feedback and suggestions. Writers responded by answering questions, explaining their thinking, revealing their struggle, and either heeding or ignoring their partner's suggestions. Sometimes they asserted themselves, reminding their partners what they needed and expected of them during the conference exchange, reflecting their co-construction of the conference process (Mercer, 2000a; Hodson, 1999). At the end, writers emerged altered by the experience, as evidenced in the changes to their writing products, and evidenced by the times that they repeated what they had learned as a writer when they took on the role of the conference partner who gives feedback.[20] Conference partners too emerged altered from the conference dance. They used new muscles in their role as an audience for the writer--listening, assessing, critiquing. And they grew as humans in relation to one another (Dewey, 1920; Coleman, 1998; Farr, 2004), figuring-out how to convey their confusion and how to provide support and encouragement to the writers.

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[20] This evidence is analyzed in Chapter 5.

The artistry of the dance, even with its awkward moves and miscues, should not be forgotten when the dance is picked apart and analyzed, step by step. It is my hope that as I present findings on the patterns that turned into categories that frame the next two chapters, that the reader continues to view with respect both the dancers and the dance itself.

Upon close analysis of this dance, this writing conference as a sociocultural model for learning, my research brings to light the ways that conferences play on the nature of writing as a multi-dimensional art form (Fig. 4.2 below).

Fig. 4.2, Findings #1 and #2

Finding #1
These emergent adolescent student writers and partners co-construct the writing conference as they grapple with the complexities of writing.

Writing is complex.

Finding #2
Writing conferences are interpersonal exchanges where these adolescent student-participants in this writers workshop class relate with one another and their teacher authentically around their writing. (2A) Engagement in conferences leads this teacher to grow in trust of her students as writing partners and in herself as a writers workshop teacher.

Writing as a creative process, is both a solitary and a relational endeavor.

The data that support these findings are analyzed in this and the next chapter. Firstly, to detail ways that, "writers and their partners co-construct the writing conference" (Finding #1), in the remainder of this chapter, I speak to the necessity of structures (Atwell, 1987/2002; Minor, 2019) that allow for the messiness of writing as an art form, where complexity reigns. In Chapter 5: "The Writing Conference Tango," the dance metaphor prevails, and I explore the key writer

and partner moves used to maneuver through this complexity, focusing on exchanges that detail ways that participants "relate with one another and the teacher authentically around their writing" (Finding #2). While the focus on this section is around Finding #1, I include Finding #2 about how participants engage with each other because there is overlap with Finding #2 and my other two findings (Finding #3 is discussed in the second half of Chapter 5). As mentioned above, there are no conferences without interpersonal exchanges. In examination of the exchanges that detail the co-construction of the conference, analysis also reflects relational aspects of the data.

Throughout both chapters, I examine ways that students' interactions with peer writing partners compares to their interactions with their teacher as a writing partner. Finally, where appropriate, I present how learning within the construct of writing conferences shifted over time, revealing trends that occurred over the course of the study.

Writing Conferences Structures: Starting the Conference, Ending It, and Daily Writing Goals

Writing conferences did not all go the same way, but there were some commonalities, and some distinct ways that peers conferenced with one another, as compared to the ways that student writers conferenced with the teacher. Nonetheless, most conferences followed the basic format (Atwell, 1987; Hsu, 2009; Calkins et al., 2005; Lain,

> *Teacher-as-Researcher:*
> *On Colorful Language*
> *and the First Day of Conferencing*
>
> *Excerpt from Field note (FN.CD1)*
> Today with Ramon and Chris working together, it went much more smoothly, compared to the disaster with Abel and Ramon yesterday. Chris tells me as I'm collecting the recording device, "Miss, I think you might hear a word or two that you shouldn't. It just slipped out."
> "That's ok. Don't worry about it."
> Then Jessica chimes in, "Us too. We were trying to delete that part."
> For all four of them to hear, I respond, "Really, I don't want you to worry about that. Believe me, I've heard all the words that are out there. That doesn't mean you should go overboard, but I really don't want you to be worried about that, or trying to delete it."
> I think they kinda like that they have cart blanche to use language that they knew if I heard in the middle of class would result in a consequence of some sort. Honestly though, I pretend not to hear most of that—not worth the hassle. Sometimes wish I could cuss myself!

2007) whereby the writer shared their work, the partner gave feedback, and the conference came to an end. Through exploration into the ins and outs of these conferences, I shed light on the ways that writers and their partners furthered their capacity both to engage with each other, with text, and with the demands of the writing process. See insert, *Teacher-as-Researcher: On Colorful Language and the First Day of Conferencing.* In this subsection, I describe firstly how writing conferences would typically begin and end. Next I detail ways that writers would share with their partner their daily writing goal. The various writer and partner moves that made up the bulk of the conference are detailed in Chapter 5, while this chapter continues with an examination into the use of scripted structures for conferencing. Lastly, I layout the various ways that the structure of writing conferences shifted over the course of this unit.

Students began peer conferences typically by reading aloud their writing. Interestingly, during the first weeks of data collection, three of the students would begin the conference by reading the entire piece that they had worked on that day. As of yet they had not grown accustomed to honing in on the part of their writing that they wanted feedback on. One student in particular, however, did not want to read aloud everything that she had written. Naomi tended to summarize her work instead, or read just a few sentences, but this left her partners unsure of how to support her writing. [21] Eventually, her partners let her know that they needed her to share more of her actual writing. Below (Figs. 4.3 and 4.4) I include excerpts of these two conferences to demonstrate the ways that partners might push the writer to give them (Forman, E. & Cazden, C, 1994; Mercer, 2000b) more of what they needed so that they as partners could make sense of the work and be able to provide feedback.

---

[21] With a few weeks remaining in the unit, I switched partners so that Naomi, who had partnered initially with Jessica, became Ramon's partner. I made this change because I wanted to give Naomi an opportunity to work with a writing partner who was more invested in the unit than Jessica had been.

Fig. 4.3, Conference Excerpt #1: PC13.N4[22]

Naomi/ Okay, I'm going first right now *(laughs a little)*. Okay. So I'm going to
   read to you like a little part

Jessica/*(interrupting)* No, you're going to read me everything, girl.

Naomi/ Girl, it's like two whole pages.

Jessica/ Then you're going to read me one page.

Naomi/ Girl, I'm going to read you half. Okay mine is. So before I will tell you
   like the main point. . . .

Fig. 4.4, Conference Excerpt #2: PC37.N9

Naomi/ This is why I said I need help on my introduction. Okay, *so (awkward
   laughing, maybe because this is the first time that she is sharing with
   Ramon).* Okay, so to begin . . . *(reads one short paragraph)*

Naomi/ I am going to stop there. It sounds awkward.

Ramon/ No, keep reading.

Naomi/ That's not really what really happened.

Ramon/ Keep reading, keep reading *(encouraging, nudging)*.

Naomi continues reading from Google Doc, ND16.

Naomi/ Okay, so response?

As I transcribed these exchanges, I experienced some of the personal reactions that I described

above. I laughed (with Jessica and Naomi's conference), and I smiled at the sweetness of the

exchange (with Naomi's and Ramon's conference). Words may not capture the friendship

between Naomi and Jessica, or the sincerity of Ramon's gentle nudging, but knowing these

students and having transcribed their words with more attention than I have paid to anything in a

very long time, I can attest to how both, in their own way, let Naomi know that they were there

for her, ready to fully engage themselves in her writing, whether she wanted to share large parts

of her memoir, or not.

---

22 I labeled transcriptions of audio recordings as follows: PC (peer conference) # (tells the order of the conference).First Initial (C=Chris, J=Jessica, N=Naomi, R=Ramon, A=Alina and W=William) # (tells which conference this was for the student). PC13.N4 means that this was the thirteenth peer conference, and Naomi's fourth. For student-teacher conferences, I used the same format, substituting STC (student-teacher conference) for PC (peer conference).

While peer conferencing began with the writers taking the first move by sharing their writing, even if it was a summary of the writing, student-teacher conferences most always began with the teacher asking the writer either one of two questions (Atwell, 1987; Lain, 2007). I either would ask how it was going with their writing, or I would ask them to tell me the last thing they were working on. When Chris asked me to read his entire paper, perhaps because he was proud of the work that he had done and wanted to show me, I resisted and instead asked him to let me know where specifically he wanted feedback. It may seem that writers took the lead during peer conferences and that the teacher partner took the lead during student-teacher conferences. However, after the writer read their piece to their peer, they tended to turn over the conference completely to their partner, who would either give a compliment, ask a question, or give some sort of feedback. In contrast, since student-teacher conferences began with a question to the writer, the onus was placed on the writer to consider what they needed. Putting the responsibility on the writer to be critical of their learning in the conference became a goal of mine when I realized that too easily the writer sat like a receptacle awaiting their partner's input (Anderman, 2003; Hammond, 2015; Yeager, 2017). Over the course of the unit, I provided students with different structures to ensure that the writers were active participants as they reflected on their work at the commencement of the conference (see subsection, "Use of a Script-Guideline" below).

After various lessons on how to begin conferencing, the most common way that students began to conference was with writers saying what they needed help with. Of note in these excerpts (Fig. 4.5) are the critical ways that writers reflected on their work (Hodson, 1999). They tended not simply to say what they needed, what they were struggling with, but also to say why they needed this help.

Fig. 4.5, Conference Excerpts #3: Starting the Conference

Naomi/ So what I think I need help in is the introduction because I do not want
     to start with. So I just said I have his cousin named Ashley. Me and her
     used to be inseparable. So I need help with that cause it's just plain, and it
     doesn't capture people's attention.
-PC17.N5_____

Ramon/ One thing I need help in is finding a theme for my writing. Because
     these past writing classes, I've been writing *(inaudible)* stories. I don't
     have a clear theme yet.
Chris/ So right now your stories are all over the place?
Ramon/ Yeah. I don't know what to write about, what my main story is going to
     be.
-PC19.R_____

Chris/ One thing I need help in is writing a bit stronger. I've been writing this,
     but adding to it, adding more details. But I don't know how to make them
     stronger you, know?
Ramon/ What do you mean by that?
Chris/ Make them *(the stories)* longer.
-PC20.C5_____

Naomi/ Okay so what I'm trying to work on is the thoughts and the speech. So
     far all I have is feelings and everything . . .
- *PC27.N7*

Ramon needed a theme because his micro-stories were disconnected. Naomi needed help with

the introduction because it was plain, and would not pique the reader's interest. And Chris

wanted to add details to make his writing stronger, longer. Writers would say what they were

struggling with, not only at the start of the conference, but during other parts of the conference as

well. When they shared their needs as writers at the beginning of conferencing, they took

ownership of the conference and of their writing process (Anderman, 2003; Hammond, 2015;

Yeager, 2017).

By analyzing the ways that conferences started, it becomes clear that these emergent

bilingual students are much like any competent writer, who when engaged in a piece of writing is

in reality juggling with so many different balls in the air. These four students openly shared their

writing and their struggles with their peer and their teacher. Later during the unit, Jessica in particular began to share frustrations that were not so much about her writing, but more so her frustration with having to write at all (eighth-grade senioritis struck her hard). Nonetheless, throughout the unit, students as writers were present and open, and as partners, they showed-up for one another.

While data was rich around ways that conferences began, it was less so on ways they ended. For the peer conferences, Naomi and Jessica often ended by calling into the iPod recording device, in abrupt yet celebratory fashion, "We're done!" Initially, Ramon and Chris would not even present that minimal warning that their conference was at an end; an end of the audio recording signified the end of the conference. But towards the latter part of the unit, I was touched to hear them both thank each other for the conference. In this way, I saw that students adopted some of my own conference moves that they garnered from their conferences with me, reflecting learning dynamics within a sociocultural framework (Gutierrez et al., 1997; Moje et al., 2004; Barton et al., 2008; Brown & Duguid, 1989; Lave & Wegner, 1991; Wells, 1994). I always ended the student-teacher conference by thanking the writer. And prior to thanking them, I would wrap-up the conference by asking what they were going to do next, meaning when they returned to their seat and continued writing. This last step of the conference never occurred between the students themselves, that is until I provided them with a guideline that included this step (see the next subsection, "Use of a Script-Guideline for Conferencing"). But to me, it was important to help the writer make a connection between what we had talked about in the conference and their next moves as a writer.

To help writers make these sorts of connections, one week into the unit, I asked students to share with their partners their goal for their writing at the beginning of independent writing

time. Prior to this, I would ask students to write their daily goal at the top of their notebook entry. This is what Naomi referenced (see top entry, middle column) when she told Jessica that she should write more to reach her goal. It was the next day that I asked students not only to write down their goal, but to share it with their partners. While this was not a writing conference per se, student-participants often recorded these brief exchanges, sharing what they were going to work on in their writing. There was not any feedback, nor questions, nor a review of any writing. Still, much like them sharing what they were struggling with, a review of their daily goal or writing plan revealed the moves that they were making as writers (see Fig. 4.6 below).

Fig. 4.6, Table: Writers' Goals for Their Writing (at the onset of Independent Writing Time)

CHRIS	JESSICA / NAOMI (+w/ Ramon)	RAMON
Ramon/ What's going to be the theme, the goal for your writing today? Chris/ The theme from my overall writing it's going to be for people to not give up and to keep their heads up. Ramon/ Okay. Sounds good. PC16.C4	Naomi/ My feedback is to write more cause you didn't do your goal. Wasn't your goal like, to write a page? Jessica/ Yeah. PC10.J3	Chris/ what's going to be your overall theme *(for your writing today)?* Ramon/ I'm not sure. I feel like exploring a new story because the first one, basketball one, it was alright. I liked that one. But the one from yesterday, I didn't like it that good. I couldn't write that much. So, I'm gonna to try to write one about friendships, that friendships are important, or something like that. -PC15.R4
Chris (to Ramon)/ my goal today is to write a page one more . . . Teacher/ do you know your theme *(listening-in on his peer conference)* Chris/ . . . about my theme, never give up PC20.C5	Naomi/ What do you think you're going to write about, in your seed story? Jessica/*(looking through her notebook)* I want to change this . . . . . Jessica/ . . . What are you gonna write about? Naomi/ Uhhhh. The first one I wrote about middle school, then I wrote about middle school.	Ramon (to Chris)/ My plan for my writing today is to try to write more than one page PC23.R6

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	Jessica/ You're just writing about your middle school moments? Naomi/ Yeah. And then I wrote about my name. Then I wrote about my cousin and that's it. ==But I want to write about something more because it was a boring.== PC13.N4A & PC14.J4A	
Chris (to Ramon)/ My plan for my writing today is ==to try to write three stories together to add up to one point== -PC24.C6	Naomi/ So what I think I need help in ==is the introduction== because I do not want to start with so I just said I have this cousin named Ashley. Me and her used to be unseparable. So I need help with that cause ==it's just plain==, and it doesn't capture people's attention. Jessica/what I need help with is. . . I don't know. I guess like ==putting the moments we== *(Jessica and her sister)* ==had together,== and like the moments where I didn't want her around. PC17.N5A & PC18.J5A	Ramon (to Chris)/ My plan for my writing is ==to add more of an essay type into my memoir.== But it is difficult for me because I don't know how to transition from essay to micro story, or the other way around. So yeah, I'm having a hard time. -PC25.R7
CHRIS	**JESSICA / NAOMI (+w/ Ramon)**	**RAMON**
C (to Jessica)/ my plan for my writing today is ==rewriting my micro story about the soccer game==. This time instead of giving out my my theme, I'm going to try to hide it and see if people can figure it out. -PC26.C7	Naomi (to Ramon)/ Probably my goal is to, mmmmmmm, ==either my lead or my organization==. Well, cause I'm okay with my organization, but it could be better. My last is kind of boring, so I need to ==like put something more into it.== You know how like, the hook and everything. I guess I could do that, but I don't know what to do with it. So yeah. PC37.N9	Ramon (to Naomi)/ Alright. One issue I'm having in my writing, or I'm struggling to add, is like ==the ending== part. Well, I haven't got there, but like, uhhh, I need to figure out like ==how to restate my idea, and stuff like that.== That's my goal for my writing, to write my ending. PC38.R10
Chris (to Jessica) /my goal for today is ==to finish up my third story,== and after I finish it up, ==reread and annotate all my work together==. -PC40.C12	Naomi (to Ramon)/ *(laughing)* Well my goal first is to ==finish my second micro story==. And type it down. And then for my conclusion, I want to end it with, just like with uh, what is that shit[23] called. What is it called? Like when they put the. ==Dialogue.== There you go. PC41.N10	Ramon (to Naomi)/ Uhhhh. My goal for today is to ==make a title== because I don't have a title yet. So after I get a title and. Just get a title. Think of a title. PC42.R11

---

[23] During one of their first peer conferences, Jessica and Naomi were fumbling with the iPod recording device. I asked them if there was a problem with it, and they confessed that one of them had used a cuss word, so they were trying to delete it. I reassured them that I did not care about that, and that they should feel free to talk with each other during peer conferencing as if they were not being recorded. I informed them that I wanted real, natural conference exchanges. I think they appreciated being able to talk freely, even if it was only during recorded conferences. Naomi, especially, used cuss words during many of her conferences, but not really as expletives.

Analysis of the table reveals that writers sometimes had heavy loads to consider as they began writing (transitioning from essay to micro-story, or imbedding the theme into the story), reflecting the rigor of the writers workshop (Gibbons, 2009b). Other times they just wanted to get words onto paper (finishing one page, finishing a micro story, or writing the ending). Also, they perhaps stumbled a bit trying to figure-out their next writing steps (PC37.N9, PC41.N10, PC38.R10). Boys shared their goals with each other differently, as compared to the girls. The latter tended to have more of a conversation back and forth about their goals, which they referred to as what they needed help with. These were extended conversations that included details about their process thinking. The boys each took turns stating their goal, and that was that. When Naomi conferenced with Ramon, she adopted that approach as well (see the last two boxes of the middle column). For these students, becoming aware of what they needed to do and voicing that to their partner provided them an opportunity once again to take ownership of their writing process (NMSA, 2010; Anderman, 2003; Yeager, 2017), and perhaps more importantly, to approach their writing with a focused objective, as experienced writers tend to do.

Use of a Script-Guideline for Conferencing

The use of a script as a guideline for conferencing was a practice that varied during the course of the unit. From the beginning, I used a script-guideline to help me recall and manage the different parts of the conference. There is some debate in the research about the use of such guidelines for conferencing. Kissel (2019) argues that the reliance on these guidelines creates distance between the teacher and the student, where the former should more naturally position herself as an interested listener. But resources abound from many of the workshop approaches (Graves, 1975; Atwell, 1987/2002; Calkins et al., 2005; Lain, 20017) detailing the proper ways for a teacher to conduct a writing conference. I began the unit conferencing with students relying

heavily on one such structure (see Appendix D), much like a novice cook relies on a recipe. But really wanting to connect with students during the conference, I also saw the importance of trying to be more present with the student, which meant relying less on the formatted conference guidelines (Kissel, 2019). Towards the end of the unit, the student teacher-conference would typically begin by me asking what they were working on, then I would review a part of their writing, question them to understand what they were trying to do, offer some suggestion that I thought would help them on their way, and ask them what they thought about my suggestion. If they liked the idea, then I would wrap-up the conference as mentioned above, by asking what they were going to do next and thanking them. But if they did not like the idea, then we would talk some more. By asking the student their opinion of my suggestion, I again put the writer back in the lead role, and in this way veered off the scripted-guideline that I first used, which detailed that after "Step 4, Teach" was "Step 5, Coach," then "Step 6, Link the conference to independent work" (see Appendix D).

While I began the unit relying heavily on a script and ended the unit not referencing it at all, students' use of a script-guideline for conducting writing conferences was in the reverse. Early during the unit, I observed that sometimes a conference would simply be a student reading their paper and their partner giving them a compliment, or asking a surface-level question. For this reason, I began to teach whole-class lessons on writing conferences, and provided students with a script-guideline that they could use with each other, to help push and support their writing. The script-guideline (Fig. 4.10 below) was useful to the partner as it provided them with a scaffolding tool (Hodson, 1999; Wells, 1994) in the form of question frames to help them in their role. Likewise, the script-guideline also supported the work of the writer, who was able to reflect and think more deeply on their work after being prompted by their partner to do so. In comparing

the first conferences between Ramon and Chris (Figs. 4.7 and 4.8 below), with Ramon as the

writer, and their first conference using the script, we can see how these students benefited from

this scaffold.

Fig. 4.7, Conference Excerpt #4: PC3.R1

> Ramon/ *(Reads his draft writing aloud from his notebook, RD2[24]).* . . That's all I
>   wrote.
> Chris/ Why did your dad take you out *(of the basketball game)* ?
> Ramon/ Because we had another, we have another appointment with other people.
> Chris/ I remember. That was when you left the game, right?
> Ramon/ Uhum.
> *(Chris starts to work on his writing in his notebook, signifying the end of the
>   conference).*

Of the four student-participants, Chris had the least experience with writers workshop. He was

new to my class, transferring weeks into the second semester from another English teacher. And

he was also new to the writers workshop. Whereas other students in my class had been engaged

in the workshop since sixth grade, he transferred to the school at the end of seventh grade. A bit

like a fish out of water, during the first conference (above), he gave Ramon no feedback. And in

the second conference (Fig. 4.8 below) the next day, when Ramon asked for feedback, Chris

asked him a surface level question. The same one, repeatedly.

Fig. 4.8, Conference Excerpt #5: PC7.R2

> Ramon/ *(Reads from notebook, RD2 plus what he wrote on RD3)*
> Chris/ *(Starts to read his paper, again not giving Ramon any feedback)*
> Ramon/ Give me some advice.
> Chris/ (pause) Uhm. Is that the only reason why you left the game, to go to the
>   birthday party?
> Ramon/ Uhum
> Chris/ Are you sure?

---

[24]In the coding of student papers, the first letter represents the first initial of the student-participant, followed by D, meaning "Day" and the number to indicate the sequence in the unit plan. RD2 references Ramon's writing that he wrote on the second day of the unit.

> Ramon/ Yes *(slightly irritated)*.
> Chris/ Are you sure you didn't have any other important things to do?
> Ramon/ Uh huh. It was just I had a party to go to and . . . I didn't get why I had to leave because my theme, my message is going to be me becoming independent. I should be able to have my own voice and I should have been able to stay for that big game, instead of going to a little birthday party
> Chris/ Are you sure it was a birthday party? Are you sure it wasn't a soccer game?
> Ramon/ Read yours *(signifying the end of this conference around Ramon's paper)*

Obvious in his tone, if not in his actual words, Ramon was irritated by the lack of support. Perhaps another reason that Chris did not provide Ramon any feedback was because he might have been at a loss as to how to respond to the writing that to his ears was perfect and in no need of improvement.[25] Also, I had not as of yet provided students any instruction on how to conference with each other. Still, upon close review of the second conference exchange, responding to the questions from Chris, Ramon did delve deeper into his thinking about the theme that he was going for in his writing (Forman & Cazden, 1994). But unwilling to entertain any longer Chris' prodding about where he and his dad went to when they left the game, Ramon directed Chris to read his paper, calling an end to the conference.

Towards the end of the unit, after instruction on conferencing and with the use of a class resource that served as a script-guideline (see Fig. 4.9 below), there is tremendous difference in their exchange.

Fig. 4.9, Conference Excerpt #6: PC30.R8

> Ramon/ *(Reads his paper from Google Doc, RD18).* And that's all I've got.
> Chris/ What is the last thing that you decided to work towards in your writing?
> Ramon/ I tried expanding my work, changing my words, expressing myself more so it could be more appealing to the reader.

---

[25] This speaks to the importance of partnering students with like ability peers for conferencing, a need that I saw and addressed when I switched Ramon to partner with Naomi.

Chris/ How did it turn out?

Ramon/ I think it worked out good cause you looked really interested when I was reading.

Chris/ *(laughs)* Obviously, I was reading along with you. Can you show me in your writing where you did that?

Ramon/ Yeah sure. Uhhhhmmmm. Right here, where it says, "Ramon. . . . I put what I was thinking" Instead of saying I was confused, I expanded it.

Chris/ *(Reads where Ramon indicates in his paper).* What are your plans for what you will do next in your writing?

Ramon/ I will add another micro story to complete my memoir.

Chris/ Oh, the one you already started?

Ramon/ Yup, but I couldn't finish.

Chris/ What is that story going to be about?

Ramon/ The story is going to be about when I was sick, right, my dad forced me to go to this game but I told him I couldn't go, I'm not good right now, I couldn't play. And I was playing bad, and my coach screamed at me and It was a whole scene, and we lost the game by a lot.

Chris/ And was it your fault?

Ramon/ Yes.

Chris/ Thank you.

Ramon/ Thank you.

This later conference began with Chris clearly reading off the script-guideline. Initially, twice after Ramon's responses, Chris might have had a more natural reaction other than reading the next question. Even so, his questions encouraged Ramon to reflect on the effects of his writing on his audience. In addition, Chris did not stick with the script-guideline throughout the conference, but towards the end asked questions that got Ramon to share more about the story that he was going to write next. This shows that even the student who had the least experience with conferencing, by the end of the unit, had become more skilled at listening to the writer and responding with authentic interest. Furthermore, reviewing the way that these three conferences ended shows the growth of Chris in particular as a writing partner over the course of the unit, and with the use of a script-guideline: the first conference ended with Chris making no comment on Ramon's paper and turning to work on his writing in his notebook; the second with Ramon

cutting off Chris who kept asking him the same question; and the third with the two of them thanking one another, a step that was not included in the class resource (see Figure 7 below), but perhaps should have been.

Fig. 4.10, Class Resource: "Suggested Steps for Conferencing with Your Writing Partner"

Suggested Steps for Conferencing with your Writing Partner

Ask them these questions, and LISTEN as they answer.

1. What is the last thing you decided to do / to try / to work toward . . . in your writing?
2. How did it turn out?
3. Can you show me in your writing where you did that?
   a. Read over their writing.
   b. Give your honest response to your partner's work.
4. What are your plans for what you will do next in your writing?

Consideration of how much a writing partner relies on a script-guideline is a key factor in analysis of the co-construction of writing conferences. Sometimes the writer stepped-in to tell their partner *how* to use the script, much the same way Ramon told Chris, "Hey, do your job *this* way," ((Fig. 4.8), my interpretation of when Ramon said, "Give me some advice."). Jessica and Naomi had such an exchange (Fig. 4.11 below) when Jessica, the writer in this instance, communicated to Naomi what she thought was the proper way to use the "Suggested Steps for Conferencing with your Writing Partner" (Fig. 4.10 above).

Fig. 4.11, Conference Excerpt #7: PC29.J7

Naomi/ So, what did you do today?
Jessica/ You have to ask the questions *(that are on the handout).*
Naomi/ That's why. Ok, *(reading from script-guideline)* What is the last thing you decided to work on in your writing?
Jessica/ *(Reading, verbatim from the script-guideline, to demonstrate how Naomi should read the question)* What is the last thing you decided to try to work towards

> Naomi/ (*interrupting*) You could choose whichever one *(question-stem on the handout)*. I'm choosing, "to work toward in your writing."
>
> Jessica/ *(under her breath)* Ok, girl. Uhm. *(Pauses, flipping through her notebook pages)*. To put dialogue on it. Lah, blah, lah *(exercising her mouth, to say the right word)* To put dialogue *in* it.
>
> Naomi/ And did you do it?
>
> Jessica/ Uh, yeah. I did it like once.
>
> Naomi/ Does it like bring the story together? Or does it like not make sense?
>
> Jessica/ I don't know. I mean, I feel like it does.
>
> Naomi/ Can you show me in your writing where you did that?
>
> Jessica/ *(Pause, to find the place in her writing. Reading from JD17)* **My mood would change when they would talk about where they went and how much they had fun. I would sometimes wish I could tell them, "Ok, we get it. You're allowed to go out. Yeppie." But I knew that would start problems.**
>
> Naomi/ *(reads along)*. Ok, I like that it went with what you're writing about, and it explains your feelings towards it. Because when you like said it, you could tell that they there's saracastic, sarcasm in your voice. So, like I could understand it. What are your plans for what you will do next in your writing, like what you want to do?
>
> Jessica/ I'm gonna start my next paragraph with another micro story. Which one was it, *(flipping through her notebook)?* I'm gonna start, I'm gonna finish my other paragraph of meeting B---- and J---- in dance class.

Naomi, who viewed the script-guideline more as a guideline than a script, shared her take on the matter and pushed back when Jessica told her to use the resource more stringently. In doing so, the two, "Engage(d) critically but constructively with each other's ideas. Relevant information (wa)s offered for joint consideration. Proposals (were) challenged and counter-challenged, . . ." (Mercer, 200b, p. 153) as they co constructed the use of the script-guideline in service of the conference. Then Naomi responded to Jessica with her own questions after Jessica's first answer. Instead of using the script, and asking "How did it turn out?" Naomi instead asked, "Does it (the dialogue) like bring the story together? Or does it like not make sense?" This question caused Jessica to reflect on the effectiveness of her use of dialogue. Naomi then, as suggested by the

script-guideline, gave her "honest response to (her) partner's work," and complimented Jessica on the authenticity of the quote.

My intent when I designed this class resource (Fig. 4.13 above) was to encourage partners to listen and engage with the writer more as a curious audience (Atwell, 1987; Minor, 2019; Hammond, 2015; Kissel, 2017), than as someone ready with a quick compliment or a suggestion. I also wanted to discourage the writer from reading their entire text and leaving it up to their partner to make sense of it. During a later lesson, I provided students an addendum to the class resource, "Suggested Steps for Conferencing with Your Partner," whereby I asked writers to consider the kind of feedback that they wanted from their partner. With this second resource (Figure 4.12 below), again more onus for the conference was placed on the writer to drive the writing conference to suit their needs.

Fig. 4.12, Class Resource: Responsible Talk, adapted from Kissel (2017), p. 124
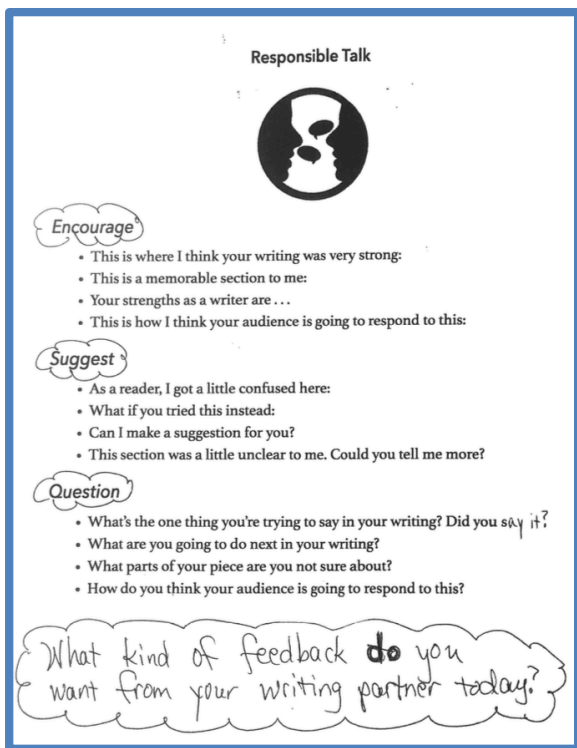
As evidenced in the conference excerpt below (Fig. 4.13), sometimes the writer chose not to take on the responsibility of driving the conference by stating the kind of feedback they wanted. But sometimes they did, as in this student-teacher conference with Naomi.

Fig. 4.13, Conference Excerpt #8: STC7.N2 & Writing Excerpt #1: ND14 (Google Doc)

Teacher/ Okay. So, let me read this. *(As I read, I laugh.)*

> All that pressure into acting perfect around people had me always on the lookout if I did anything wrong which led to me being nervous whenever I felt someone was gonna come to talk me. I wouldn't get up from my seat afraid that I would bump into someone or have an awkward conversation.
> "Hi, how are you?" I would softly murmur.
> "Do i know you?" they would say with a confused face.
> And then comes the awkward silence that makes me nervous and want to run out of the situation like a marathon runner. But after that thought of having an awkward confrontation with anyone i head to the living room the house where the party is at. I hope to have a little peace and quiet and I thought this was my best option since everyone was outside enjoying the party. I felt left out of all the fun so as usual i put my head down and look at my phone just so they think that im doing something.

Teacher/ I really like that.

Naomi/ I also tried to do like, I don't know, simile.

Teacher/ A simile? Like a marathon runner (repeating her simile).

Naomi / Yeah

Teacher/ *(Continues reading)* Oh my God, I can so relate to this! Is this specifically about parties?

Naomi/ Yeah. Well, this last story.

Teacher/ Just this one? I feel super awkward a lot of times at parties, too. *(Continues reading, and laughing).* I really like the way in your writing... I guess I should ask you what kind of feedback you want. What kind of feedback *do* you want? I'm gonna try to do the conferencing the way that you guys do it, too *(referencing handouts "Suggested Steps" and "Responsible Talk")*. Do you know what kind of feedback that you want?

Naomi/ I guess, suggestions.

Teacher/ Okay, okay.

As her partner, my first reactions to her writing were laughing at her realistic description of feeling awkward and empathizing with her experience. Then I stopped myself from giving her feedback. Realizing that I was asking students to tailor their feedback to the writer, I decided to model that process for her (Jennings, 2019; Lave & Wegner, 1991). In doing so, I let her know

that I, too, was grappling with conferencing, confirming for her that we were in alliance (Hammond, 2015). Nonetheless, I did give her a compliment, in addition to the suggestion that she requested. I acknowledged that her voice came through in her writing, and I explained what that meant, legitimizing her way of speaking (Hammond, 2015). I also referenced the Memoir Checklist where item two read, "I wrote in such a way that the reader can experience my strong emotions," commenting to her, "So that part about emotions, I can get the emotions. So, great. I really like the way that you do that." I offered a few editing suggestions, and she made some of the corrections onto her Google Doc before we concluded our conference.

While Naomi asked for a suggestion when prompted by her partner, Ramon said he did not care what kind of response he received from his. By the time of this conference (Fig. 4.14 below), Naomi, his partner, had become adept at referencing the script-guideline as a resource, but not overly so.

Fig. 4.14, Conference Excerpt #9: PC34.R9 & Writing Excerpt #2: RD15 (Google Doc)

Naomi/ Ok, so. . . You're going to read your thing *(paper)* first?
Ramon/ I'll just read it.
Naomi/ Suggestions, or encouragement? *(Asking him which he'd prefer,*
      referencing resource, "Responsible Talk.")
Ramon/ It doesn't matter, whatever you want.
Naomi/ Okay.
Ramon reads his draft memoir.

There's a lot I still don't know about what my life may hold, how my future is going to turn out. But I do know that i'm really talented in sports, specifically basketball.

My father has taught me to never give up. "Don't ever let someone tell you something you can't do." He's always reminding me, even though there isn't mexicans in the NBA, why can't you be the first? Even though he supports me and all, I doubted that 1 time. I doubted him this one time because I had this tournament going on for my school's basketball team, and we had reached all the way to the championship game. As soon as our semifinals game, all I can remember was my dad slowly coming down from the bleachers, towards the court. I was confused, why is he moving from his seat knowing we have an upcoming game. "Ehhh.. maybe he's just going to buy soda, or use the restroom, or something like that," I thought to myself. I heard a whistle, and it sounded like my dad's so I looked towards that direction. I wish I had not looked…

"Javier, vamanos, we have to go." Did I just hear what I think he said? This could not be happening, I thought it might have been a dream. I pinched myself, but nothing good came out of that. It stung for a bit and it meant that I was wide awake. I ignored my dad, I couldn't imagine having to leave one of the biggest games my teammates and I worked so hard for. He whistled again, but I kept looking the other way. My dad got closer and closer and he had a face that I haven't seen in a while. As if he was mad or determined to get something done. He pulled me into him, "I said lets go!" As he said those words, I knew I wouldn't be able to change his mind. My teammates and friends watched what was happening. I was so embarrassed that I turned into a big-o-tomato. I stalled for a bit longer, hoping our next game would start so maybe it would change my dad's mind. Unfortunately, that did not happen.

My dad went up to my coach and broke the news to him. My coach's face expression said it all. He tried changing my dad's mind too, but that was a fail.

I said my goodbyes, and wished everyone goodluck. As I exited the gym, my dad was all ahead in the parking lot while I was behind, walking slowly, hunched back, looking at the floor. When I reached the car, I broke down into tears. It meant so much to me.

~~All though all this happened, I know deep down he really does support me. Not only does he support me, but he supports our whole family. My dad works hard non stop, making money so I can have all these things that I have gotten.~~

~~One~~Another time I recall was when my coach held a meeting with all the parents from our basketball team so they can discuss about going out to Las Vegas for a big basketball tournament. My emotions were all over the place when I heard that we might be going over there. It felt like those times when I was little and I would hear the ice cream truck passing by my driveway, pleading my parents for money as soon as possible before it leaves because I really wanted the delicious ice cream. But With it being at Las Vegas and it being a big tournament, the trip would obviously be really expensive. I didn't want to get my hopes all up because I knew there would be a huge possibility of us not being able to go.

Ramon/ (*When he gets to the part,* "I broke down into tears*," he pauses reading to let her know*) True story, true story.

Naomi/ Really?

Ramon finishes reading.

Naomi/ Did you end up going?

Ramon/ Im'na keep writing *(and finish that story)*.

Naomi/ So. What I liked about it was. Well, what I think that it was strong was when you put like the dialogue and like your feelings. Like right here when you said that, he said to go, and then like you put, "Did I really just hear that," and then that you pinched yourself and everything. I like that because I could tell that it happened. It was like, what is that word?

Ramon/ You felt like you were in the moment.

Naomi/ Yes, exactly. And another thing, your strengths are, like I saw that you put like a lot of your feelings into it. Which I need to do, too, put more of my feelings. So, I like that you did that. And . . . A question is, what is one thing that you're trying to say in your writing?

Ramon/ One thing I'm trying to do in my writing is I'm trying to add more of an essay type cause like my stor-, my memoir is micro-story. The two, the two micro-stories. So after I finish this micro story, this other one, Im'na likr type the rest like an essay type. And yeah, that's what I'm trying to add.

Naomi/ Also, one thing I noticed, like when you're reading, you changed a few words when you're reading. So you should change it. Like say it out loud.

Ramon / Uh hum.

Naomi/ Like since you're saying, just like put it down and change it or something.

> Ramon/ Okay.
> Naomi/ Cause it seems like. It seems easier for you to say it, the way that you said it.
> Good. Okay. Good. Good.
> Naomi/ That's it.
> Ramon/ Thank you.
> Naomi/ *(giggles)* You're welcome.

In one of the last conferences of the unit, Naomi:

- Asked Ramon the kind of feedback he wanted.
- Listened and responded with authentic interest.
- Asked clarifying questions.
- Complimented two aspects of Ramon's writing: she referenced the text in her first compliment and reflected on her writing in the second compliment.
- Offered an editing tip—that Ramon make the changes in his text that he made when he corrected himself as he read aloud.

Ramon:

- Said he was open to any of her feedback.
- Read his memoir aloud, pausing at the emotional part.
- Answered questions.
- Helped her with the phrasing she was searching for, "You felt like you were in the moment."
- Told her his plans for what he would do next with his writing.
- Complimented *her* on her suggestion.
- Thanked her.

In many ways, conferencing was like my newborn baby during this memoir unit. I nurtured it, continuously examining it closely for signs of good or poor health. I made changes in the environment to support its maturation. For months, I slept, ate and breathed writing conferences. This last conference between Ramon and Naomi was for me a proud conference-mommy moment. It is also a good example of the ways that the conference is a dance, the backdrop metaphor that I detail in Chapter 5, focusing on the relational aspects of the conference (Anderman, 2003; Gibbons, 2009b; Maxwell-Jolly, Gándara & Méndez Benavídez (2007).

Detailed in the various conference interactions above, writers and their partners together grappled with the role of the partner in prompting the writer and the role of the writer in advocating for the kind of feedback they preferred. In doing so, we were co-constructing the writing conference, making sense of how to conference with and without the use of a script-guideline, and whether to adhere to it verbatim, or use it as a suggestion. This process unfolded during the course of the unit for the students, as it did for me their teacher. Initially, I relied heavily on a script-guideline, then I decided not to use one at all. Later I decided to use it again as a model for students, as depicted in my conference with Naomi, so that they would become accustomed to it as a resource.

Conclusion & Other Changes to Conference Structures Over Time

In addition to the use of a script-guideline, there were other changes in the formatting of the conferences that occurred during the course of the memoir unit, demonstrating how participants shaped the conference over time (Finding #1). These shifts in practice reflected my own learning about writing conferences. Perhaps one of the more significant shifts, in addition to providing students with guidelines for conferencing, was that I moved the writing conference from the end of independent writing time to the middle of independent writing time, a change in the format proposed by the *Units of Study* (Calkins & Teachers College Reading and Writing Project (Columbia University), 2013). The reason for this shift was because I realized that even if a partner were to help the writer gain some great insight about their writing, if that occurred during the last part of the writing lesson for the day, it was unlikely that that insight would transfer to a shift in the work the writer would do the next day. For this reason, I placed writing conferences in the middle of independent writing time. Ideally I wanted students to be able to engage with their partner at any point during independent writing time, as needed, to be a more

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informal learning environment that bent more naturally to students' needs (Graves, 1975).

However, I simply was not comfortable with management of the noise level to allow for ongoing

talking throughout workshop writing time.

Another variance in the structure of the writing conferences was asking students to share

their goal for the writing at the beginning of the writing, as described above. This shift served to

create real partnerships for student writers, with a peer who knew what they were up to, what

they were attempting to accomplish, and who checked in with them to see how it was going.

Like Chris in a conference referenced above (PC30.R8), he knew what Ramon was talking about

when the latter said he was going to work on his next micro story. Knowing this, being familiar

with the content of his peer's writing (Formam & Cazden, 1994), allowed Chris to remain

engaged in Ramon's work as he progressed through the unit.

In conclusion of this section, and the chapter, in-depth reflection on the structures of

writing conferences entailed consideration of how conferences began and ended. When students

began independent writing time by sharing their writing goals with their partner, and when they

used a script-guideline to further the conference exchange, conference structures and routines

shifted during the co-construction of the conference as a model for learning within the writers

workshop, allowing students to deepen the work of their writing partnerships. In the next

chapter, I adopt a relational lens (Noddings, 1994/1999/2005; Valenzuela, 1999; Maxwell-Jolly,

Gándara & Méndez Benavídez, 2007) and explore the data that speak to my second and third

research questions: (Q2) How do students engage in writing conferences with one another and

with their teacher? (Q3) How do writing conferences transform writing processes and writing

products? Here, the connection between the writing genre and the writing conference provide the

setting for exploration of the writer as a creative artist, whose artistry is personal, relational, and

interconnected to others in the workshop classroom.

CHAPTER 5—THE WRITING CONFERENCE TANGO

Introduction to the Chapter:
On Vulnerability and Learning, and On Urban Adolescent Students

When she was a graduate student, Brené Brown recognized that, "it's one thing to be force-fed information about math and science, but when the subject is social justice, empowerment, or advocacy, it somehow tastes much worse" (Brown, 1999, p. 360). To process the disequilibrium, Brown (1999) devoured the works of Freire, Marx and hooks. Although a researcher in the field of social work, her teachings are relevant for urban school educators both in schools and in the academy. Initially studying shame as a graduate student, her units of study now encompass deeply complex concepts such as vulnerability, resilience and belonging. Perhaps her greatest contribution is the working definitions that yield deepened understandings of these concepts. Having coded now (2017) over 200,000 pieces of data from the past 15 years (Brown/SXSW, 2017, 1:00), using grounded theory as her qualitative method, her findings shed new light on the significance of these concepts.

A teacher as well as a researcher, Brown makes a compelling argument of the importance of fully grasping these concepts for educators who also grapple with "social justice, empowerment, or advocacy." In essence, the trauma that defines the lives of urban students living in poverty compounded by racism and bigotry results in many youth showing-up at schools armored up. Encounters with unsympathetic or inattentive adults may result in shaming experiences, furthering students' reluctance to be vulnerable in the classroom. Herein lies the crux. According to Brown (2017), while students may seek to avoid vulnerability because it ignites feelings of uncertainty and emotional exposure, vulnerability is also at the center of belonging and creativity. No vulnerability, no learning. She advocates the need, "to create spaces in schools where people can take their armor off, even if (they're) going to pick it up off the coat

rack on (the) way out because of the world that we live in right now" ("We're not going anywhere | Crooked Media," 2017). Brown's summation of the challenges of urban youth to be themselves in the classroom frames my own work as a middle school teacher and as a doctoral candidate. I draw much on Brown's (2017) work for my research as I explore ways that students' sense of belonging (Anderman, 2003) relates to their work in writing conferences, spaces where they might take their armor off.

In the next section, *Setting the Stage for the Dance: The Memoir Unit and Interpersonal Conference Exchanges,* I detail ways that the class' engagement with the memoir genre and with writing conferences serve to create these safe spaces where they can be authentic (Valenzuela, 1999) and vulnerable (Zimmerman & Coyle, 2009;

Teacher-as-Researcher:
Memoirs to Transform Lives

Perhaps one of the quietest times in our English 8 classroom this year was during a lesson at the beginning of the memoir unit when we watched a real person share openly and honestly about a break down she had when she was a tenth grader. Students were mesmerized by Maria, one of the freedom writers,[1] describing what it was like for her when she was reading *The Diary of Anne Frank* (1947). Maria had formed an affiliation with Anne, a character whose struggles to survive in war-torn Amsterdam in the 1940s paralleled her own experiences of self-preservation growing-up in the high poverty, gang-ridden streets of Long Beach in the 1990s. Maria become invested in Anne's story, in her survival. Unaware of the fate of Anne, she explains in the documentary, Maria was shocked when her reading led her to the realization of Anne's death. Braving the tears that well up upon her recollection, Maria recounts that the feelings that came up for her at that moment were the despair and disappointment she felt, "every other time in my life when I really believed in something. It was that feeling of going to the window, and waiting, hoping that my father was going to come home, and he didn't. Every feeling of disappointment all of a sudden came crashing in together at that moment because I so desperately wanted her (Anne) to make it. Because if she didn't make it, then what were the chances of somebody like me, who was a bad person, actually making it out" (Excerpt from Voices Unbound, 2010). Erin Gruwell, in the documentary, recalls how one of the other students, Darius consoled Maria when she shared these feelings during an outburst in the classroom. He corrected her, "She did make it. She did make it, Maria, because she wrote about it. How many of our friends have died, and we've never even read an obituary? But because Anne Frank wrote about it, she's gonna go on living even after her death."

Writing about their lives was a turning point for the students in Gruwell's English sections. They wrote in anonymity about race riots on
(cont. next page)

Hammond, 2015) with one another.

Having set the stage for the dance, I then describe how relationships play out in the co-construction of writing processes[26] as evidenced in writing conferences and in the students' writing products.

Setting the Stage for the Dance: On the Memoir Unit and Interpersonal Conference Exchanges

The Memoir:
A Genre that Defines Personalization and Vulnerability

It is not my intent to intimate that writing conferences only deliver during a memoir writing unit. Doing so would minimize the significance of my research and findings that pertain to the important role of partnerships in students' writing processes. Nonetheless, the memoir is a unique genre, one that calls on students to reflect on what makes them who they are, and to write about what they have

(continued)

campus, tagging, dyslexia, teenage love, running away, and dozens of other topics about their personal lives. Their stories are captured in their book, *The Freedom Writers Diary: How a Teacher and 150 Teens Used Writing to Change Themselves and the World Around Them*. As I planned the memoir unit, I confess that I aspired to having a similar impact on my own students as of the more challenging aspects of growing up in Central ▮▮▮▮.

While we began the unit with this theme, the importance of writing to transform our lives, it was not a recurring theme during the unit, only surfacing at the beginning of the unit and at the end.[1] But reflecting on what makes them who they are, what is important to them, what they want to remember about middle school, these were the running threads that tied together the various parts of this unit, from reading and analyzing mentor texts, to class mini lessons, to conferencing, and to writing their own middle school memoirs. I hoped to convey to them what Michelle Obama (2018) says her parents conveyed to her growing up. She writes, "together, in our cramped apartment in the Southside of Chicago, they helped me see the value in our story, in my story, … Even when it's not pretty or perfect. Even when it's more real than you want it to be. Your story is what you have, you will always have. It is something to own" (p. xi).

For me, in the planning and unfolding of this unit, it was important that my students realized this truth that had escaped me much of my life. During the course of the unit, I came to the opinion that students should be writing a memoir every year, in addition to the other genres outlined in the common core standards for writing (narrative, information, argument, and response to literature). When I shared my realization with a friend, she remarked that writing memoirs was all she did when she attended Exeter (Bowden, personal communication, June 11, 2019). I was dumbfounded by what she shared and felt reaffirmed in my conviction: if memoir writing was good for students at Exeter, then it was good for my students in Central ▮▮▮▮.
(From FN.CD7)

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[26] Writing processes are generally defined as: prewriting, writing (first draft), revising, editing-proofreading, and publishing.

unearthed. As such, it allows for the personal to come through in both writing conferences and writing products. The focus of this section is on the writing pieces that students created during the course of this unit. Understanding of the themes that emerged in their memoirs provides context for analysis of their writing conferences in the remainder of this chapter. See insert abvoe, *Teacher-as-Researcher: Memoirs to Transform Lives*, that details one of the pivotal lessons when introducing the genre to the class.

In short, delving into the significance of the memoir genre is relevant to my first two findings (see Fig. 5.1 below). For the first, the complexities of writing that students grapple with during this study relate directly to the memoir: telling personal stories around a central theme. Regarding the second finding, the backdrop for writing conference exchanges are students' personal lives, as defined by the memoir genre. In other words, students' capacity to be authentic in their writing, and with one another when conferencing, relates to the degree to which they are true to the genre. Lastly, the genre plays on the multi-dimensionality

Fig. 5.1: Findings 1 and 2

Finding #1
These emergent adolescent student writers and partners co-construct the writing conference as they grapple with the complexities of writing.

Finding #2
Writing conferences are interpersonal exchanges where these adolescent student-participants in this writers workshop class relate with one another and their teacher authentically around their writing. (2A) Engagement in conferences leads this teacher to grow in trust of her students as writing partners and in herself as a writers workshop teacher.

of writing as an art form. In this case, by shedding light on the ways that writing is personal, memoir writing encourages the introspective nature of the artist.

As mentioned in Chapter 4 above, we spent many weeks immersing ourselves in memoirs. After we read and analyzed a memoir, we discussed whether the related themes were reflected in students' own personal experiences. Fig. 5.2 (below) is the class resource that we used to facilitate these discussions, with its differing colored ink reflecting the different times that we referenced it, adding to it, throughout the unit. Students' study of memoir mentor texts was balanced by their own stories that were discussed during mini lessons and shared during conferences.

Fig. 5.2, Class Resource: Finding Personal Relevance in Memoir Model Texts

One chart that remained posted in the class was a list of topics and themes that students wrote about. The list grew with new additions as students' writing progressed throughout the unit.

In compiling the class memoir text sets (the packets of memoirs and excerpts for the unit), I aimed to strike a balance between the challenging, inspiring, and even humorous aspects of lives as revealed through personal stories. More than a few of the dozen memoirs reflected the multicultural and multilingual lives of my students, and many of these mentor texts more written by Latino youth. For example, "Saying 'I love you' in Spanglish" (Natalie Castelan, *YC **Teen Magazin**e,* March 2019) is about one teen's efforts to overcome the language barrier that has arisen in her household after years of schooling have left her distanced from Spanish, and as a result from her parents as well. In another, titled, "I'm White, Latina, and Proud to be Both: I Don't Have to Choose" (Gabby Telitto, *YC **Teen Magazine**,* January 2019) and another titled, "Caught in a Tug-of-war" (David Miranda, in *Growing Up Latino: Teens Write about Hispanic-American Identity*, 2009), adolescent Latinos write about having parents of different

> **Teacher-as-Researcher**
> **Bringing Back the Home Language**
> I asked students to try-out translanguaging in their own writing. This may have been the first time that students were ever encouraged to include the language of their home into the work being done in the classroom. Many of them took-to the idea. Nine of thirty-three students included Spanish in their final memoirs, including five of the six student-participants.

ethnic and/or racial backgrounds. In addition, excerpts from Sotomayor (*The Beloved World of Sonia Sotomayor*, 2018) and Cisneros (*House on Mango Street,* 1984; and *Woman Hollering Creek,* 1991) provide examples of ways that different languages can play together within the memoir. I named for students this approach to memoir writing as translanguaging, a way for the languages that they knew to come through in the writing about their lives.

Interestingly, in part of an interview clip with Oprah that I shared with students, Michelle Obama likewise discusses having and speaking two languages, the formal, "correct" one that was insisted upon by her grandfather, and the one needed to get her from school safely to home (Michelle Obama and Oprah SuperSoul Conversation, 2018). Not wanting to impose similar

distinctions for students between the languages of home and friends and school, I simply encouraged students to bring forth into their memoir writing the real ways that language, English and Spanish, formal and informal, revealed itself in their memoir stories. See insert above, *Teacher-as-Researcher*, *Bringing Back the Home Language*. As we analyzed different memoirs, I would call attention to ways that authors positioned language in their writing, blending and mixing, shedding light on the multilingual nature of many Latinos. Translanguaging resurfaces in my research in the section below around conferencing, not only where first languages comes into play, but also where students begin to adopt a comfortable informal language between each other during writing conferences. In that section, I explore translanguaging as a natural mode of self-expression for multilingual students when engaging with their peers.

There was overlap between the themes from the mentor texts and the themes found in students' writing. One of the common themes that emerged for the student-participants of my study was around families, as evidenced by their final pieces (see Appendix B). Naomi wrote about how family can come from new connections to strangers. Chris detailed how he learned from his parents ways to overcome obstacles. Alina explored the close ties between herself, her brother, her parents, and her grandmother as well. And Ramon shared both a frustrating experience and a joyous occasion involving his relationship with his father. Topics included in these pieces ranged from loving a pet, getting busted with weed, trying to culminate, meaningful friendships, and the highs and lows of being on a sports team.

Another common theme for these student-participants in their memoirs was self-exploration. During unit lessons, students were often asked to try a writing approach exemplified in a memoir we had read. We explored the multi-faceted languages we use, as mentioned above.

We tried-on memoir topics, such as describing our houses and neighborhoods, or reflecting on our names (a la Cisneros' *House on Mango Street*,1984, excerpts). And we adopted text structures, such as mixing micro stories with essay writing ("Quietly Struggling" and "Last Kiss"). After trying-out an approach, students would decide

Fig. 5.3, Class Resource:*Write-off—Excerpt from* Becoming Michelle Obama (2018)
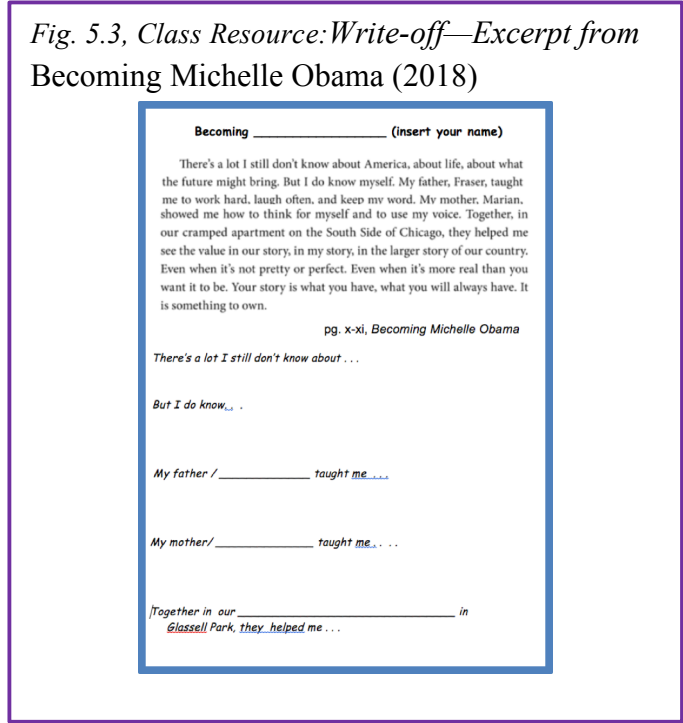
whether or not to include it in their final piece. One exemplar that three of the six student-participants included in their memoir was an excerpt of Obama's (*Becoming-Michelle Obama,* 2018) that I used to develop a writing activity (Fig. 5.3., above). Alina's version (Fig. 5.4, below) reads much like Obama's. She liked it so much that she used it as the introduction for the final version of her memoir.

Fig. 5.4, Writing Excerpt #3: Alina, Final Memoir

> *There's still a lot I don't know about life and what my future holds for me. But I do know myself, how I am, and how I act. My father, Jaime, taught me how to stand up for myself, work hard in school, and know how to value things. My mother, Claudia, showed me how to appreciate the value of something that I have, how to control myself, and how to respect myself and others. I used to live with both my parents, grandparents, aunt, and two brothers in a 3-bedroom house.*

> *Together in our old, yet beautiful, house in Elysian Valley (Frog Town), they helped me see how important it is to appreciate what I have.*

In contrast, Chris decided to intersperse the various sentence-starters from this exercise throughout his memoir, telling a micro-story about each one (see Appendix B). Lastly, Ramon's adaptation reads more like Alina's where he used the writing that was generated from this lesson as the introductory paragraphs to his memoir, as evidenced in the draft paragraphs below (Fig. 5.5).

Fig. 5.5, Draft-Writing Excerpt #4, RD16

A Supportive Apa (Dad)

There's a lot I still don't know about what my life may hold, how my future is going to turn out. But I do know that i'm really talented in sports, specifically basketball.

My father has taught me to never give up. "Don't ever let someone tell you something you can't do." He's always reminding me, even though there isn't mexicans in the NBA, why can't you be the first? Even though he supports me and all, I doubted that 1 time. I doubted him

The three students, Alina, Chris and Ramon approached the exemplar text critically, choosing their own unique ways to include it in their memoirs, all the while, reflecting on where they came from, what mattered to them, and what their parents had taught them about life.

Themes for students' writing often times changed over the course of the unit. Initially Ramon was going to write about becoming independent, as part of a theme discussed during class that we called "growing pains." After writing about how his father embarrassed him and took him out of an important basketball game, Ramon wrote about how his dad forced him to play in a game even when he was sick. But a common push around student narrative writing was to include varying sides of a character. In doing so, Ramon decided to share his father in both a negative and a positive light. The final title for his piece was, "A Supportive Apa (Dad)." Like Ramon, themes in Naomi's writing changed over time. At first, she wrote about trying new

things, a theme that revealed itself in her first micro story about trying-out for a dance class. Then, she was going to write about separation, a theme that surfaced when she wrote about a cousin she used to be closed to and about living with her mom when her parents had separated. But the theme of her final piece was around the different ways that people can be family.

Students' writing, a mixture of differing themes and topics, also included personal insights and self-revelations. In this excerpt from Chris' draft-writing (Fig. 5.6 below), he shared feelings of being left out from his soccer team.

Figure 5.6, Draft-Writing Excerpt #5:CD14

> In my soccer team i feel like i am just a player with a number and position. For example when i was in a tournament called state cup, I was just left on the bench as if i did not belong on the team. This was when i began to notice that i was just a kid on the soccer team to the coaches and a number, the number 16.
>
> This was a really big issue for me because all my coaches would want to put me in but they just could not. One conversation i remember i had with my coaches was " if you really want more playing time then you should at least try to lose weight". Every time i would have this conversation with my coaches i would always say "ok'" or "i will try my best" but deep down inside i knew i did not actually want to put in the effort.

At the same time that Chris lamented feeling displaced, he recognized that he does not put in the effort that his coaches ask of him. In presenting this dichotomy about himself within the workshop setting, the teaching and learning of literacy, as Minor (2019) suggests, becomes a space to help students navigate something tricky, something real about themselves and their lives.

Naomi and Jessica also reflected on aspects of themselves in their draft writing. Jessica wrote about what she calls a "Growing Pain," (Fig.5.7).

Fig. 5.7, Draft-Writing Excerpt #6: JD2

Growing pain.

I'm really short and don't grow that much as my sibling or friends. I get called short on a daily or someone makes fun of my height. I want to be tall like my dad and not short. I've been the same height since 6th grade and I'm an 8th grader going into 9th in a couple of weeks. I struggle with being short. I feel like I'm going to be like this for the rest of my life. I don't like that I'm taking my time to grow at least half an inch. Most of my friend are 5'2 and higher while I'm still 5'1. For being short I get called last for teams that include height. My height gets me feeling like I ain't good for things that have to do with reaching. If I was taller I would be more athlect and do more sports that will help me get taller. But till then I'm 5'1 waiting to be 5'2.

In this excerpt, she shared the irony that she does not participate in sports because of her short height. But if she were taller, she would be more athletic, play more sports, and *that* would help her grow more. Below (Fig. 5.8), Naomi revealed her struggles with shyness, especially when at a party.

Fig. 5.8, Draft-Writing Excerpt #7: ND17

All that pressure into acting perfect around people had me always on the lookout if I did anything wrong which led to me being nervous whenever I felt someone was gonna come to talk me. I wouldn't get up from my seat afraid that I would bump into someone or have an awkward conversation.

"Hi, how are you?" I would softly murmur.

"Do i know you?" they would say with a confused face.

> And then comes the awkward silence that makes me nervous and want to run out of the situation like a marathon runner. But after that thought of having an awkward confrontation with anyone i head to the living room the house where the party is at. I hope to have a little peace and quiet and I thought this was my best option since everyone was outside enjoying the party. I felt left out of all the fun so as usual i put my head down and looked at my phone just so they could think that i'm doing something.

Here Naomi wrote about needing to act perfect, about avoiding at all costs awkward conversations, and about the feelings of isolation that drive her to pretense around busyness with her phone. Both girls allowed the very human feelings around body image and attempts at fitting-in to come through in their writing.

William's memoir uniquely reads in the third person. He wrote about how he overcame his fear of dogs and fell-in love with his dog Blackie (Fig. 5.9 below), a gift he received from his dad when he was a kid.

Fig. 5.9, Draft-Writing Excerpt #8: WD18

> As the night passed, the dog howled, and Will[27] said, "Come here, Blackie," because it was the color of his fur. Blackie cuddled with him and looked at him and William's mind instantly thought, if this is a dog, then I will love every dog there is. . . . .
>
> Now this story ends with a night under the stars both William and Blackie were staring at. William was petting Blackie while purring greedily. William saw a shooting star and said to Blackie, "Blackie my wish is for you and me to be inseparable and live our lives together to the day we die."

---

[27] The only changes made to students' writing excerpts were minor editing and spelling corrections, only to facilitate the reader's understanding, not to alter the writer's message. I also changed names that appeared in their writing, matching them to the pseudonyms as appropriate.

Unlike the other students whose writings often reflected the challenges and struggles they face as adolescents, or considerations about what makes them uniquely who they are, William wrote about the simple, yet very real, love of a boy for his dog.

The final writing excerpt for this section (Fig. 5.10 below) is one that brings together much of what is discussed about the memoir genre. Alongside vast portions of Alina's memoir (in its entirety, see Appendix B), I outline the personalizations and vulnerabilities revealed in her writing, as well as some of the themes that unfolded during the unit, either through the study of model texts, or through student and teacher story-sharing.

Fig. 5.10, Writing Excerpt #9: Alina's Final Memoir[28]

Always There	
There's still a lot I don't know about life and what my future holds for me. But I do know myself, how I am, and how I act. My father, Jaime, taught me how to stand up for myself, work hard in school, and know how to value things. My mother, Claudia, showed me how to appreciate the value of something that I have, how to control myself, and how to respect myself/others. I used to live with both my parents, grandparents, aunt, and two brothers in a 3-bedroom house. Together in our old, yet beautiful house in Elysian Valley (FrogTown), they helped me see how important it is to appreciate what i have.	Patterned from excerpt, *Becoming Michelle Obama* (2018)
I shared a bedroom with my brothers and aunt while my parents and grandparents and their rooms. I remember my room being the biggest because it was for the four of us. I also had three doors in my room. One lead to the kitchen, the other to my grandparents' room, and the third would lead you outside to the backyard. I don't remember much about what I would do in that room, but what I do remember is that I would watch a lot of movies like Nacho Libre, Jennifer's Body, Selena, Bad Teacher, and a lot more, but those are at the top of my head. I would also listen to music on the T.V like Spanish rock and the latest hip-hop music.	Patterned from *House on Mango Street,* Cisneros (1984) Family as a recurring theme Short micro story

[28] See Appendix C (Item 1) for English translations of Spanish in students' texts and dialogue.

. . . .

 If I'm being completely honest, my grandma was my best friend and still is to this day (other than my mom). When Jaime and I would go to the river she would take us. She would always spoil me with rings, earrings, and other little things. When she would go to Mexico, she would always bring me back a little gift, whether it was candy, little toys, jewelry, or little purses.

 My grandma is always giving me advice. Anytime that I have a problem, I can always go to her to talk about it and she'll give me advice about what to do in that situation. I remember when I was in 6th grade a girl snitched on me for having a switchblade and I ended up getting suspended. I got suspended for one day, and I spent that day with my grandma because nobody was able to take care of me at my house. So my mom just dropped me off at her house. I remember telling her what had happened and she got pissed off.

 "?! Qué estabas pensando?! ?! Qué estabas haciendo con una navaja ?!"

 "Edmond me lo dio."

 "?Por que te lo dio ?"

 "Porque ere de su amigo y me dijo que se lo dia."

 "?Y porque no se lo pudo dar Edmond ?"

 "Porque yo lo miro más que Edmond lo mira. El va a la escuela que está al lado de mia."

 "?No es la que a donde va Edmond ?"

 "No es la escuela del otro lado, no es la escuela a donde va Edmond."

 After I had said that, nothing was said. We just both sat there, on her front porch, quiet as the night. I honestly thought that she was going to be mad at me for as long as I lived. But in reality, she was just disappointed because of what I had done.

. . . .

 My mom has always been there for me. Through the good and the bad, well obviously, she has to, she's my mom. But not all moms would care like mine. For example, when I started school she was there every step of the way. I used to speak Spanish because that was my first language. I would have conversations with my mom when we would spend time together. Everybody in my family spoke Spanish and only Spanish. Not one single English word was spoken.

Longer micro story, revealing a time she was suspended from school

Translanguaging, writing in Spanish

Being accepted and loved

Closeness to her mom

Spanish as first language

> I started school late so when I was in pre-k, I was the oldest in the class because I was 5 or 6. I remember my mom taking me to my classroom and filling out paperwork while I sat at her side. I remember seeing my cousin Gael dancing with all the other kids. When my mom was done, she said, "Me tengo que ir. Te voy a ver en la casa al rato ok? Te quiero, gorda." And once she started walking away, I went after her crying, begging her to take me with her because I didn't want to be there. But the teacher got me and told me that I had to stay, but that my mom will be back soon. I didn't understand anything the teacher told me because I didn't speak English. So when they told my mom that I had to learn, she would teach me when I got home--read me books in English, speak more English around the house. She was there every step of the way until I finally got it down.

Struggles with a language disconnect when starting school

Translanguaging

Mother's support as she learns English

In this section on the memoir unit, I detail the personal nature of the genre, much of which is evidenced in Alina's memoir. At times mirroring model texts, students wrote about what mattered to them, their families, their friends, their struggles and their joys. In addition, excerpts from their writing reflect that they wrote unabashedly, honestly, revealing vulnerabilities as they reflected on themselves and on their lives. As the teacher, I wrote a middle school memoir alongside my students (see Appendix B), sharing it during mini lessons and conferences. In my own memoir writing, I made effort to be as personal and vulnerable as they were in theirs.

Finding #2: Relationships and Interpersonal Conference Exchanges

Memoir writing as a genre serves as the music for the writing conference dance where co-construction of writing processes is so fluid that it is hard to follow, hard to tell who is leading whom. In this the midsection of the chapter, I detail the dance. I describe some of the preliminary moves and steps of the dancers: being their authentic selves (demonstrating honesty, vulnerability and freely expressed emotions), and being in relation with their partner (demonstrating curiosity and genuine emotional responses). In so doing, I present data in answer

to my second research question: How do students engage in writing conferences with one another and with their teacher?

Throughout this section that speaks to being one's self and simultaneously to being in relationship (Maxwell-Jolly, Gándara & Méndez Benavídez, 2007; Guthrie & Klauda, 2014; Zimmerman & Coyle, 2009; Hammond, 2015; Osterman, 2000) with another within the construct of a writing conference, I provide the data that supports my second finding (Fig. 5.11 below). Again, juxtaposed against the many aspects of writing, here the data reflects that while solitary, writing is also relational, debunking the myth of writers as lone artists. In the first examples below, writers take the lead by sharing personal or technical aspects of their writing. The later examples reveal partners initiating connections by questioning the writer and by complimenting their work.

Fig. 5.11, Finding #2

Finding #2
Writing conferences are interpersonal exchanges where these adolescent student-participants in this writers workshop class relate with one another and their teacher authentically around their writing.
(2A) Engagement in conferences leads this teacher to grow in trust of her students as writing partners and in herself as a writers workshop teacher.

Writing as a creative process, is both a solitary and a relational endeavor.

Typifying the memoir genre, often times conference exchanges revealed personal aspects of students' lives. When this occurred, students were honest and vulnerable with each other. In one of their early conferences (PC13.N4), Naomi considered writing about her parents' separation when she was younger. She recollected that they separated because of her dad's drinking and

they got back together because her mother needed the money. After this personal revelation, Jessica responded, by saying, "Oooh, a gold digger." While Naomi could have reacted in a variety of different ways to Jessica's ribbing of her mother, Naomi laughed. And the two concluded the conference as they typically did at the beginning of the unit by signing off.

During Ramon's first conference with Chris, after the latter shared his writing, the two had this exchange (Fig. 5.12 below).

Fig. 5.12, Conference Excerpt # 10: PC4.C1

> Chris/ . . . And all of this was about never giving up on your dreams.
> Ramon/ Can you tell me a little more about your coaching? I mean, your coaching and your teammates.
> Chris/ One of the reasons I left was because my teammates would always make rude comments about my weight, and I was fat.
> Ramon/ Chubby.
> Chris/ Yeah. And the coaches they would never put me in.

Here we see Chris being vulnerable by referring to himself as "fat." His partner responded supportively, gently correcting the term "fat" with a softer term "chubby." While Ramon's response matched his partner's emotional sharing, Jessica's response (calling Naomi's mother a "gold digger") did not match the seriousness of what Naomi had shared. Nonetheless, both partnership exchanges were honest, real and emotional, even if that emotion was awkward humor.

Interpersonal exchanges revolving around the writer sometimes related to the structure of the writing, and not to its content. In one conference (PC32.C9), Ramon told Chris, "So, I have a suggestion for you. Maybe you can add a couple of paragraphs, you can add paragraphs throughout your writing. Because this is one big paragraph, and I see in your writing there were spaces where you could add a paragraph." Ramon went on to demonstrate for Chris on his

Chromebook where he might separate the long text into paragraphs. Chris' first indentation was not where Ramon had intended, so he gently corrected, "No, right here, dude." Chris caught on and their conference concluded with him saying, "What? Now it looks professional?" To which Ramon responded, "Uh hum." On the surface, this exchange is about how Chris' writing is transformed by Ramon's feedback and input. But I include it in this section more as a study of the interpersonal exchange itself. When nudging Chris, Ramon used a term of endearment, "dude," and he started with a "suggestion," meaning this was advice that "maybe" Chris would follow, if he chose to. In so doing, he allowed Chris the space to consider the suggestion. Chris was open, even admiring how his work now looked more "professional." This interaction exemplifies Coleman's (1988) closed network, where reciprocation of relational exchanges furthers trust.

In a conference between Jessica and Naomi (Fig. 5.13 below), Naomi tried to help Jessica who was struggling to figure out how to start one of her micro stories.

Fig. 5.13, Conference Excerpt #11: PC22.J6

Naomi/ It *(the beginning for Jessica's story)* could be like, one really fun day with
      my friends was, la la la la.
Jessica/ That sounds boring.
Naomi/ Ok, then, what's exciting?
Jessica/ I don't know. I go to the same place every day.
(Pause)
Naomi/ Write about how much you don't like school. Like the reasons why you
      don't like it.
(Pause)
Naomi/ And write about the things you like about school.
Jessica/ No, I'm gonna just stick with friends. That's the easiest topic. And I don't
      even feel like writing this anymore, so I'm trying to like, write short. Just,
      how am I gonna start it? Once upon a time, I went to the movies.
Naomi/ *(laughing)* That's interesting.

> Jessica/ Or, one day we went to the movies. Next paragraph. One day I went to the movies again. Girl, that's all we do, is go to the movies. How do I start that, though?
>
> Naomi/ Give a hook or something, something that will catch them, like a quote that your friend said.
>
> Jessica/ *(affected voice)* "We were waiting in line, waiting for our movie tickets."
>
> Naomi/ Yeah. Just write that *(laughing)*. That could be interesting, you never know.

Jessica considered Naomi's suggestions, but perhaps was not as amenable to them as was Chris to Ramon's (Fig. 5.12 above). During this conference, Jessica as the writer was honest, openly sharing her frustrations. Naomi as her partner listened, sympathized, and responded with similar emotion, using humor to move the conference forward, while still attempting to support Jessica's struggles with some suggestions.

> *Teacher-as-Researcher:*
> *Working to Stay Present for the Writer*
>   I share the conference (Fig. 5.14) in its entirety partly because it was one of the more challenging conferences for me as a teacher. I struggled to relate to what Jessica was going through, but I stayed as present with her as I could. In the end, I provided her the guidance she was needing at that moment, not only as a writer, but perhaps more importantly, for her anyway, as an 8th grader who just wanted to make it through to the end of the year. I had prepared for this conference because I knew that Jessica had been spinning her wheels, unable to land on a theme, a unifying message, for her memoir. Instead of starting the conference with my usual, "How's it going with your writing?" I began with a suggestion that I thought would help her get unstuck.

In this last example below (Fig. 5.14 below) where the exchange is centered around the writer's work, the teacher as the partner worked to support Jessica, much like Naomi had the week prior, who was still struggling with how to bring various micro stories together. See insert above, *Teacher-as Researcher: Working to Stay Present for the Writer.*

Fig. 5.14, Conference Excerpt #12: STC6.J3

STUDENT . . . **TEACHER**

Teacher/ So, this is what I was think--. This is what I'm thinking about. For each. It could be either each of

answer   question
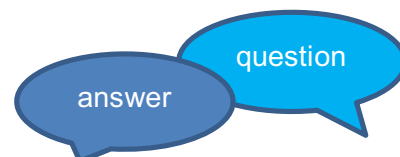
your friends. Cause I think right now you have one *(micro story)* for each friend, right?

Jessica/ Uh hum.

Teacher/ Ok. So for each friend, if you can remember a small moment that that friendship was solid for you. And it might be in the setting that you already described cause you already described your settings. But it's just putting this in that setting with the small moment. It could be some of the dialogue that we looked at fr-

Jessica/ Do I have to put dialogue cause I don't wanna put dialogue?

Teacher/ *(pause)* If you don't include dialogue. I guess I'm just. What do you mean when you say you don't wanna include dialogue?

Jessica/ I don't want there to be dialogue.

Teacher/ Why?

Jessica/ I just want it to be without dialogue.

Teacher/ What about dialogue is it that you don't like?

Jessica/ Not that I don't like it. Just that I don't want it cause it's gonna take forever to write the story.

Teacher/ Really?

Jessica/ Yeah.

Teacher/ I feel like I'm. I mean. I feel like you have the time to write it. It's not a race.

Jessica/ I don't wanna like. Like, how do I say it?

Teacher/ Is it that you don't want to put the effort into it?

Jessica/ Yeah.

Teacher/ Well. *(pause).* I feel like this is the time of the year as an 8th grader where people kinda wanna check out and don't wanna do anything anymore. Is that kind of what's going on?

Jessica/ Yes.

Teacher/ So. I understand that, and I think that's pretty common. At the same time, I really want you to finish strong.

Jessica/ But why make us do all of this hard work at the very end? Why just not at the beginning and the easy stuff at the end of the school year?

suggestion

question

question

answer

question

answer

question

answer

statement

question

answer

question

answer

question

statement

questions

Teacher/ I feel like a memoir is a nice way to round out the
school year.

Jessica/ I don't. I don't like writing memoirs. I find it
boring.

Teacher/ Is there something that you would rather be
writing?

Jessica/ No.

Teacher/ The other English classes right now, they're
writing response to literature, where you take
literature and you pull out the themes. Which is what
we've been doing *(with the memoir packets),* but all
they're doing is writing about *(teacher shshsh's
Table 7).* They're just writing about the themes in
literature. And that's it. So, I'm trying to at least have
it relate to your life. As I see you starting high
school, finishing middle school, like you're at an
important crossroads. So, I think it's a good time to
do that *(write a reflective memoir). (Pause; no
response from Jessica).* So, back to the question
about dialogue, and if you're just wanting to do
something halfway. I can't. I can't go into you and
make you want to do something. You know, I can
only ask you to try to do your best, to try to give it
your best, try to finish strong. And try to support you
to do that, as much as I can. Is there anything that I
could do to support you more?

Jessica/ Explain.

Teacher/ Okay. So, explain about dialogue?

Jessica/ About the whole thing.

Teacher/ Okay.

Jessica/ Like why do we have to have a lead? Why do we
have to have a conclusion? Shouldn't it just be
moments?

Teacher/ You could. You could start a moment witho[ut a]
lead, and just start with the moment.

Jessica/ Do I have to add a lead to it?

Teacher/ No. You could just start. You could just say. You
could just decide that you're not gonna start with the
lead, you're gonna start with a small moment. But
then, I think you will definitely need to some how. If

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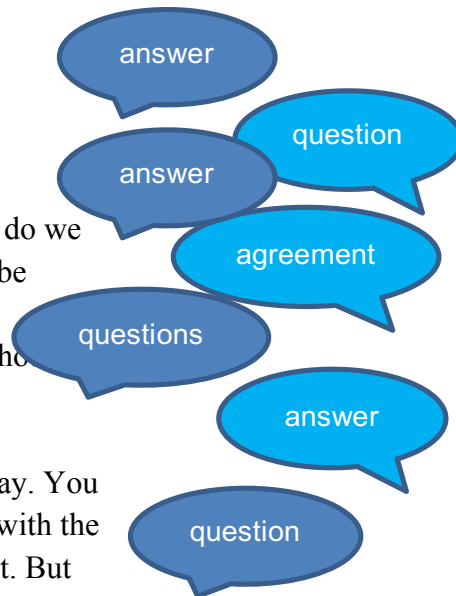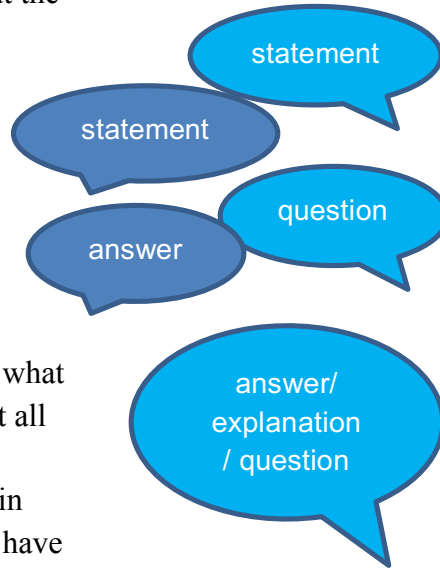
in the essay parts, we understand everything, then that's fine. You don't need to call it out. Does that make sense? *(no response from Jessica).* Like, you don't need to say this is how I'm beginning, this is how I'm ending. You could just put us right in the moment and start that way. Okay?

Jessica/ Could it be small? Like just three stories?
Teacher/ It could be. Okay?
Jessica/ Uh humm.
Teacher/ Okay.
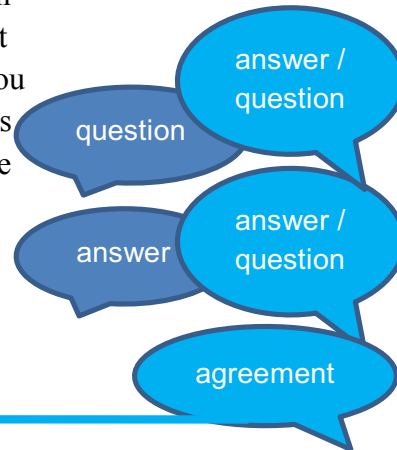
This exchange between Jessica addresses Sub-question 2A, For a teacher whose role is primarily authoritative in the classroom, how does she grow to allow students to take the lead role in their learning? During this conference, again the writer felt safe to be honest about her frustrations, even with the teacher. As the partner, I continued to dig deeper with questions, wanting to understand what was truly impeding Jessica with her writing. I also asked her how I could support her as a writer. It seemed that this was the turning point in the conference. Afterwards, she asked more of the questions, and I answered them. In this way, we worked together to clarify an area where she was stuck, which was about whether she had to make each micro story into a full narrative with a lead and a conclusion. My initial suggestion to her was not what she was really struggling with, and in the end, she included a few very short quotes, not dialogue at all.

If this had been my first student-teacher conference, instead of the sixth one being recorded, I do not know if I would have continued to meet Jessica where she was at. I can envision an earlier version of me asking fewer questions, making more assumptions, and taking offense at her dislike of the unit. Fortunately, as with the other conference exchanges above, the partner in this last conference was accepting of the writer, who shared openly about her struggles. And the two, in relationship with one another, helped the writer move forward with her memoir. These examples demonstrate the importance of listening, not merely to hear, but to

understand, which is key for adolescents' sense of belonging in the classroom (Minor, 2019; Hammond, 2015; Kissel, 2017; Zimmerman & Coyle, 2009)

Unlike the examples above, in other conference exchanges, partners took center stage in the relational interaction. Firstly, partners were an audience for the writer. This allowed the writer to consider the effects of their work on a real person, someone sitting right next to them. Secondly, partners took lead through the questions that they asked of the writer, and the compliments that they gave to the writer.

Peers' compliments to one another ran the gamut, from, "Good job on writing a whole page," to, "Wow, you transitioned between micro stories really smoothly," to, "Plenty of details." Note that many of the compliments in Fig. 5.15 (below) are from initial conferences.

Fig. 5.15, Examples of Compliments, Peer Conferences

I like the way you transition, where you changed it from one story to the next. You did it so smoothly. (PC23.R6, Chris to Ramon)

You did good. You explained it and you wrote a lot. Yeah that was good. I liked it. (PC6.J2, Naomi to Jessica)

What I like about it is that you include your family, and like what they say to you. And you gave backstory that you're the same height since six grade. And you said what you feel. (PC2.J1, Naomi to Jessica)

I like how you met your goal, you wrote a whole page. (PC9.N3, Jessica to Naomi)

There's a lot of colorful language there . . . Plenty of details. . . . . Yeah. It's good. (PCX44.A2, William to Alina)

> Your introduction, your lead is strong. It caught my attention. . . . . *(later in the conference)* I also like how you said, like family isn't just family. It could be anybody. That one, I felt it. (PC37.N9, Ramon to Naomi)

Later in the unit, students' compliments changed, as they began conferences using the script-guide and listening to the writers talk about what they were working on. Afterward, they might respond with a more genuine compliment. This is evident from Ramon's compliment to Naomi towards the end of the unit (see above, Fig. 5.15, PC37.N9), which was specific to her writing and how it impacted him as a reader, as compared say to Naomi's compliments to Jessica during her second conference, that were vague and nondescript (see above, Fig. 5.15, PC6.J2).

> *Teacher-as-Researcher:*
> *Teacher Compliments for Student Writers*
> During my initial conferences with students, I sometimes felt, perhaps like them, obligated to start with a compliment. I acknowledged students for reflecting on an experience, for their word choice, or for having a voice that shone through their writing. At that time, I thought that the compliment would help the writer be more receptive of the suggestion that was to follow. Not having been a writer myself during any of these conferences, I am not sure if that was an accurate assumption. Perhaps at the crux of this consideration regarding compliments in conferences is the same question about whether or not to use a script as a guideline for conferencing. As discussed in chapter 4, I found a script-guideline to be helpful for students, if it encouraged the partner to stay present and be authentic in their response to the writer. Given that these students were developing writers, and given that their relationship with me was only recently beginning to be built during conferences, I found that a compliment from me meant something to them. I also noticed them perking up or loosening up after a compliment.

When coding the data, I found that there were several times when I complimented students more indirectly by calling out their efforts as writers (see Fig 5.16 below; also see insert on left, *Teacher-as-Researcher: Teacher Compliments for Student Writers)*.

Fig. 5.16, Examples of Compliments, Student-Teacher Conferences

So, it's your choice *as a writer* whether the game is going to be a key point or not, or if you just want to use it as a micro story (STC4.C1, to Chris)

. . . .

And that happens *sometimes with writers where we start off* with something *(a topic)*, and then we drop it. It's not interesting enough to sustain us (STC5.J2, to Jessica)

. . . .

What I'm seeing that you're doing is you're reflecting on the moment . . . . And like I said, *writers don't just write about stuff.* They reflect on it. And I see you doing that (STC2.N1, to Naomi)

I am unsure if students warmed to these compliments, but I found it helpful to name the work that they were doing as typical of writers. Referring to them as writers (Calkins et al., 2015), which they were, seemed to legitimize their efforts, or as Chris might say, make them "professional."

Another way that partners took primary ownership of conference exchanges was through questioning (Forman & Cazden, 1994). Sometimes they asked clarifying questions; other times they asked questions to push the writers' thinking. Both types of questions reflected that partners were attuned to the writers, curious about their work. In the table below (figure 5.17) is a comparison between two conferences where partners questioned the writer. The first exchange between Jessica and Naomi was during Naomi's first conference. Jessica asked her a clarifying question and then a question about what her theme was in her writing. The later exchange between Ramon and Chris reveals that Ramon used the script-guideline to get started with the conference. But then he went off the script, continuing to question Chris about why he was making the changes that he was making to his writing.

Fig. 5.17, Conference Excerpts #13: Questioning in Peer Conferences

Questioning (without a script-guideline) (PC1.N1)	Questioning (with a script-guideline) (PC32.C9)
Jessica/ Let me see *(looking at Naomi's notebook)*. . . .Put like if you ever got tried. Did you ever think of quitting? Naomi/ Yeah. That shit was hard. I mean *(correcting for curse word)* it was hard. *(laughing)*. Okay what was yours *(story)* about? Jessica/ Wait, what was the theme? Naomi/ Oh, just to try new things.	Ramon/ What is the last thing you decided to try in your work? Chris/ The last thing I tried was, this is the beginning of my whole story. . . *(Reads from his story, CD14)* Ramon/ So you're going to add that to the top? Chris/ Yes. Ramon/ Well, why are you considering to put that at the top? Chris/ Because there's. My story is about how my parents have taught me to never give up and how I have been able to get to where I am now. Ramon/ So you're going to put that as your intro, basically? Chris/ Yes.

During both interactions, the questions pushed peers to reflect on the choices they were making as writers. And while I only cite two conference exchanges for this section on questioning, the data reflected questioning as the third highest occurrence of coded incidents, just after laughter and suggestions. But much like complimenting, analysis of the data around questioning reveals that there is a nuance to questioning. For the most part, it seems that while writers responded to questions, they did not typically view this exchange as something that would impact their writing. For that to occur, partners offered suggestions or advice. In the last section of this chapter, I detail examples of how students' writing was transformed due to these suggestions. Here, in detailing the relational aspect of conferencing, partners questioning writers indicates that they were listening to the writers in the first place. In this way, questioning was key for relationships, and by extension for writing conferences.

In the examples above, I describe how writers showed-up to conferences being authentic, honest, and vulnerable. Partners accepted the writers where they were at, nudging them forward, and showing up as curious and complimentary. I conclude this section on the relational aspect of conferencing by exploring moves that writers and partners made together, continuing to shed light on ways that they engaged with one another in writing conferences (Research Question #2).

When reviewing students' conferences at the beginning of the unit and towards the end, there are some notable distinctions. Firstly, their conferences became longer. Fig.5.18 represents Naomi's second conference, in its entirety.

Fig. 5.18, Conference #14: PC5.N2

> Naomi/ Okay, so what I wrote about is the one time where I had to speak in front
> of everyone. I was nervous. I thought I was going to mess up my lines.
> And I didn't end up missing up my lines. And it was fun, actually, in the
> end. And after, some girl was talking bad about me, saying that I messed
> up. That was it. What did you write about?
> Jessica/ I didn't give you your feedback. So your feedback is, ummm, to explain
> how you felt before and after, and how you felt when you found out that
> girl was saying you did bad in your performance.

As evident in this excerpt, the writer might quickly tell what they wrote, and the partner might quickly give some "feedback." In Ramon's first conferences, Chris gave absolutely no feedback, leaving Ramon to express his frustration by cutting short Chris' redundant questions (Fig. 5.19 below).

Fig. 5.19, Conference #15: PC7.R2

> Ramon/ *(Reads from notebook, RD2 plus what he wrote on RD3)*
> Chris/ *(Starts to read his paper, again not giving Ramon any feedback)*
> Ramon/ Give me some advice.
> Chris/ (pause) Uhm. Is that the only reason why you left the game, to go to the
> birthday party?

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> Ramon/ Uhum
> Chris/ Are you sure?
> Ramon/ Yes *(slightly irritated).*
> Chris/ Are you sure you didn't have any other important things to do?
> Ramon/ Uh huh. It was just I had a party to go to and . . . I didn't get why I had to
> leave because my theme, my message is going to be me becoming
> independent. I should be able to have my own voice and I should have
> been able to stay for that big game, instead of going to a little birthday
> party
> Chris/ Are you sure it was a birthday party? Are you sure it wasn't a soccer game?
> Ramon/ Read yours *(signifying the end of this conference around Ramon's paper)*

With lessons, script-guidelines and practice, partners became more versed in writing

conferences. And the participants became more comfortable with one another, as evidenced by

the informal language that they used less so in their initial conferences together (e.g., Fig. 5.18

above) as compared to their final conferences together (e.g., Fig. 5.20 below).

Fig. 5.20, Conference Excerpt #17: PC21.N6

> Naomi/ I'm gonna write about my friends.
> Jessica/ How are you gonna start that?
> Naomi/ Bitch, I don't know.
> Jessica/ *(not seeming to take offense)* Girl, I don't even know how to start my
> own.

I refer to this informal language that pervaded the girls' later conferences as a way of

translanguaging, of talking across their different spaces, where the language of friendships

becomes the language in the classroom. I recognize that translanguaging in the literature (García,

2009/2011; García & Otheguy, 2017; García & Lin, 2017; Lewis, Jones & Barker, 2012) is used

to distinguish ways that multilingual people use languages in complex ways, at times intermixing

them as they draw on their rich repertoire for communication. Researchers cited above apply

translanguaging to younger children, or people newly acquiring an additional language, or students in dual language settings. My students, however, are accustomed to separating Spanish and English, at least in the classroom. For them, I find that translanguaging surfaces when the language that they use with friends, informal language where humor mixes with gentle ribbing and the vernacular, intermingles with the more formal language of the classroom: "both languages are used in a dynamic and functionally integrated manner to organize and mediate mental processes in understanding, speaking, literacy, and, not least, learning" (Lewis, Jones, & Baker, 2012, p. 641). The space that they create with the use of their full repertoire of language is full of energy and relatedness. This is not to say that it is unproductive, because it is not. Even during one of the more informal exchanges, between Jessica and Chris (see Fig. 5.21 below), with all of the ribbing back and forth, Jessica managed to give Chris an authentic compliment about his use of dialogue and shared with him how she could relate to the personal experience that he had written about in his memoir. I include this conference because it exemplifies what I refer to as a form of translanguaging for emergent bilingual adolescent students who are fully accustomed to separating English and Spanish, but who, when given the freedom, mix the sociocultural language of friends with that of the writers workshop, making full use of their multilingual tool kit (Orellana, Martínez, Lee, & Montaño, 2012).

Fig. 5.21, Conference Excerpt #17: PC36.11

Chris reads part of his paper from the Chromebook.
Jessica/ What parts of your piece are you not sure about?
Chris/ I'm not sure about the part that I am writing which is right here. "In my
      school . . ." (CD16)
Jessica/ Let me read it because you read too slow. "In my school . . . " *(reads last*
      paragraph out loud). And then, what is that talking about?
Chris/ About how I gave up in the middle of the year and Miss, Miss, *(doesn't*
      want to say his counselor's name into the recording, wanting to honor her

anonymity), the lady in the office helped me bring up my confidence again. But that's like towards the moral of the story.

Jessica/ But what is like your whole thing about?

Chris/ C'mon, dude. About not giving up. Damn. I can't work with her.

Jessica/ Girl, you think I can work with you?

Chris/ Yes.

Jessica/ Not even.

Chris/ What's up *(laughing)*?

Jessica/ What's up? How do you think your audience is going to respond to this?

Chris/ Ummmm. My audience, I'm not sure about this part yet. I think this will get more into people's heads when I talk more about the dialogue that I'm putting right here, that I added.

Jessica/ This is where I think your writing was very strong. With the dialogue.

Chris/ Obviously. My dialogue IS STRONG.

Jessica/ Girl, your breath went all over the phone *(when he emphasized the word, strong)*. That's gross. Let me talk. Let me talk for once.

Chris/ No.

Jessica/ Say that one more time.

Chris/ No *(laughing)*.

Jessica/ Something that I could relate to is that one *(micro story)* that you're not sure about cause I was almost not going to culminate, too. But a girl had to bring up her grades because her mom was going to

Chris/ *(finishing her sentence)* whoop her AS. . whoop her butt *(laughing)*.

Jessica/ *(laughing; speaking directly into the phone-recording device)* Sorry for the foul language. Chris just can't control himself.

In this exchange, the participants kidded with each other as the partner went through the steps of asking the questions on the script-guideline. Still, the writer reflected on the impact of his piece to his audience, admitting that he was still working to strengthen his writing with more dialogue. At which point, his partner complimented his use of dialogue. They ended the conference by Jessica, as an audience of his writing, letting him know where she could personally relate to one of his micro stories, working to ensure that she culminates. By mixing informal and formal languages to engage around Chris' writing, I assert that the two are translanguaging, "perform(ing) bilingually in the myriad ways of classrooms—reading, writing, taking notes, discussing, . . . (using) part of the metadiscursive regimes that students in the

twenty-first century must perform, part of a broad linguistic repertoire that includes, at times, the ability to function in the standardized academic English language required in US schools" (García, 2011, p. 147). García speaks here to bilingual students' translanguaging through and across two languages, say for example Spanish and English. But I see in this exchange that the two students make, "full use of their linguistic repertoire – their ability to express complex thoughts effectively, to explain things, to persuade, to argue . . .)" (García & Lin, 217 p. 127).

In contrast, Alina and William, who do go back and forth between Spanish and English, only do so when reading excerpts of their memoirs. Their conferencing at the end of the unit reflects the importance of time as a factor when considering how participants engage with each other. Only conferencing three times, each exchange sounds much the same as Chris and Ramon's first few conferences. Alina would try to push William to engage more actively, but he would not. In Fig. 5.22 below, the disconnect between the two of them is evident. When she asked for his suggestions, his response was that she finish it.

Fig. 5.22, Conference Excerpt #18: PCX44.A2

> Alina/ All right. It's recording. You're supposed to read it.
> William/ From where?
> Alina/ The parts with the Spanish.
> *William reads aloud from the bottom part of AD15:[29]*

      "?!Que ~~estavas~~estabas pensando quando lo esiste?!"

      "No se, yo no estaba pensando. No más lo ise porque lo quiera probar."

      "Eso no importa gorda. Lo que importa es que tu esiste, y fue mal."

      "Yo ya se abuelita, pero solamente fue un poquito. No fume el gallo entero, solamente un poco."

      "Mira, mas alrato te vas a poner marijuana como tu hermano. El siempre esta fumando y está haciendo mal en la escuela."

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[29] See Appendix C (Item 2) for English Translation of Spanish text.

"!Eso no es cierto! Nunca voy hacer como el! No tiene dinero, siempre está fuera de la casa. Voy acer mejor de el. No mas mira. El también es un pendejo que no hace caso y el no es cholo, yo soy la chola porque yo siempre estoy con todos los cholos."

"?! Tu eres una pinche chola?!"

"Si, mi mama nunca te dijo?"

William/ There's a lot of colorful language there.
Alina/ *(laughing)*
William/ Plenty of details. Uhmmm. Yeah. It's good.
Alina/ That's all? No suggestions?
William/ I suggest finishing it and censoring everything.
Alina/ Okay.
William/ Uhmmm. That's all I have.
Alina/ Good to know.

William's feedback was minimal around the intense subject matter, "I suggest finishing it and censoring everything." Alina nonetheless did listen to it. This excerpt above is not included in her final memoir (Appendix B, and Fig. 5.22 above), substituted for an exchange with her grandmother about bringing a knife to school, a conversation with less "colorful language."

While Alina and William were never in sync during their conferences, Chris and Jessica who also began to conference together late in the unit, were. Perhaps the latter pair did not need time to develop a relationship in order to engage authentically with one another because they were already friends, able to access their full repertoires of language, where meaning is exchanged about what makes for good memoir writing (dialogue and relatability). Alina and William did of course use language to communicate—he communicated that the language in her memoir was too strong, perhaps for the classroom or for the teacher. And she listened to him, and changed her work. But there is no evidence of the free-flow of languaging, to kid around, mess with each other, and at the same time, talk the business of writing a memoir.

In addition to the disconnect between Alina and William, there were a few other times when partners missed writers' cues. In a conference with Naomi (STC12.N3), she asked me to read a part she had worked on, "to see if it was good." But I got distracted asking other students to focus on their writing that I never answered her question, instead giving her feedback on how to space paragraphs for dialogue. In a conference between Chris and Ramon (PC20.C5), the former confessed that he did not know how to make his writing stronger, and said he needed help. But Ramon simply started reading his own paper. Lastly, in a conference around William's writing (PCX45.W1), after she read his entire paper on the Chromebook, Alina's only comment was for him to work on his spelling. After which, William abruptly ended the conference.

Despite the occasional hiccups, (I coded only 6 "disconnects" out of a total of 59 conferences and countless exchanges), participants' engaged with each other informally, mixing the language of the school yard with the language of the classroom. But the translanguaging that occurred in peer conferences, the use of cuss words and joking around and common vernacular, was never evidenced in the student-teacher conferences. If the informal is a sign of strengthened relationships, which it appears to be here, then time might be a factor in considering the continued formality in the student-teacher exchanges. I conferenced with each student three times (Jessica, five times), once every two-to-three weeks. Nonetheless, my engagement with students during conferences strengthened my relationship to them[30] (Minor, 2019; Hammond, 2015). Firstly, conferences provided me with opportunities to connect with students on a regular basis, where connecting did not used to happen. I freely expressed my emotional responses to their writing—surprise at Ramon's basketball story (STC1.R1), perking-up at how I could relate to Naomi because I too was in a dance team in elementary (STC2.N1), and laughing at Jessica's

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[30] One way to know if the reverse were true, if students felt a stronger relationship with me, would be through surveys or interviews, neither of which were within the scope of this research.

suggestion that she should conclude her memoir with, "So don't be a loner. Period" (STC6.J3). Conferences also gave me an opportunity to be honest and vulnerable about my own middle school memories, like sharing with Jessica about how I used to be afraid to have a boyfriend because my older sister was pregnant at such a young age (STC5.J2). In other words, conferencing with students allowed me to be more of myself with them, in much the same way that they were themselves with each other during peer conferences. See insert on the right, *Teacher-as-Researcher: On Love & Writing Conferences*.

To conclude this section on relationships and interpersonal conference exchanges, I return to a theme of my research that emanated from Chapters 1 and 2. In laying out the research that supports my study, I presented the works of Dewey (1916), Mosley (2006), Bolte Taylor (2015), Buber (2012) and Brown (2010/2017), all of whom write about the interconnectedness which underlies the human experience. I aspired to some insight into this

Teacher-as-Researcher:
On Love & Writing Conferences

In an exchange between Jack Kornfield and Oprah Winfrey (2017) during Super Soul Conversations, the two discussed the power and the beauty of the interpersonal con-nection, even in a classroom.

Jack: If you're a schoolteacher, and you see the beauty in those kids, they love you as a teacher, and it gets reflected, and they feel, "I want to do my best because this teacher sees me and gets me." And so you can choose. You can actually turn toward your innate goodness./

Oprah: . . . in all of my talks and understandings over the years, doing thousands and thousands of shows, I came away with the understanding that the thread that runs through all of our human experience is that we all want to be validated. We all want to be seen, we all want to know that we matter. The most you can ever do for somebody is to show up and allow them to know that they have been seen and heard by you.

Jack: that's music to my ears. When somebody says, I'd like a little attention, it's not a little thing they're asking. I like to think of it as loving awareness – that when you give someone attention, it's somehow a marrying of your presence with their presence and also within that presence, there's love. That you really see the beauty that's behind the eyes of that person (pp. 23-24).

I cannot speak for the students (see Footnote, page prior), but for me, this is what I experienced with them. And it went both ways. I saw them during a conference, and they saw me, too. This is why I was torn-up that last day of the school year. We were listening to Rod Stewart's *Forever Young*. At the line, "And when you fin'lly fly away, I'll be hoping that I served you well," tears and emotions poured out my eyes. No use trying to feign composure. I lost it.

Sadly, I don't think many of them knew till that moment how much I cared.

interconnectedness and pondered whether it might be arguably evident in the midst of writing conferences between emergent bilingual students and with me, their teacher. Would we be building bridges, showing the world how to be with one another? In short, yes, we would. Besides the few missed cues, and the under-developed partnership between William and Alina, writers and their partners were present with each other, vulnerable, honest, responsive, supportive, and increasingly informal and at ease with one other.

Let the Dance Begin!
Finding #3: On the Transformation of Writing Processes and on Relationships
       In this section of Chapter 5, all of the varied pieces come together. The writing genre is the background music. Writers and partners have rehearsed their steps, practicing honesty, vulnerability and curiosity. They are ready to dance!

       Through two vignettes, I provide data and analysis that speak to my third finding, showing how conferences are spaces where students co-construct two writing processes: pre-writing (extended vignette, *Tell Both Sides*) and revision (vignette, *Don't Tell the Theme).* At the same time, I continue to draw on the authentic moves of the partnerships, adding to work in support of my second finding (Fig. 5.23 below). Finally, a close examination of students' writing alongside their conferencing further addresses my first finding, whereby partners grapple with the complexities of writing.

Fig. 5.23, Findings 1, 2 and 3

Finding #1
These adolescent student writers and partners co-construct the writing conference as they grapple with the complexities of writing.

Writing is complex.

Finding #2
Writing conferences are interpersonal exchanges where these adolescent student-participants in this writers workshop class relate with one another and their teacher authentically around their writing.
(2A) Engagement in conferences leads this teacher to grow in trust of her students as writing partners and in herself as a writers workshop teacher.

Writing as a creative process, is both a solitary and a relational endeavor.

Finding #3
Writing conferences are spaces where these adolescent student participants and their teacher co-construct writing processes, transforming writing products.

Writing is a process. Writing is a product.

Tell Both Sides: An Overview

The first extended vignette takes place over three days in the writers workshop. It involves eight different pieces of data, four writing excerpts and four writing conferences, three of the conferences between peers and one with the teacher. I first give an overview of how the data relates to the unfolding of one of Jessica's micro stories, explaining how she came to write about her sister in a way that captured the good, the bad, and the ugly. Then I analyze the data, displaying each piece in the order that it occurred, detailing its significance to my research. In so doing, I continue to present conferences as spaces where writers in relationship with a partner grapple with ideas that contribute to their work, focusing here on the exchanges that help further

ideas before writers write: prewriting. Figure 5.24 (below) is a table that displays the data being

referenced throughout this section.

Fig. 5.24, Table: Data Accompanying "Tell Both Sides"

Day/ Figure	Data File Name	Data Form	Title (Researcher-assigned)
1 / Fig. 5.25	PC14.J4A	Peer Conference, goal setting / before writing	"Deciding on a Writing Topic: Either Siblings or Food"
1 / Fig. 5.26	JD6A	Writing Excerpt	"*About my Siblings*"
1 / Fig. 5.27	STC3.J1	Student-Teacher Conference	"Teacher Tips—Focus on One & Tell the Bad with the Good"
1 / Fig. 5.28	JD6B	Writing Excerpt	"*A Little About my Little Sister*"
1 / Fig. 5.29	PC14.J4B	Peer Conference, end of workshop	"Naomi's Tip #1—Tell Both Sides"
2 / Fig. 5.30	JD6.5	Writing Excerpt	"*Fun with Sister*"
3 / Fig. 5.31	JD7A	Writing Excerpt	"*Fights with Sister*"
3 / Fig. 5.32	PC14.J5	Peer Conference, mid-workshop	"Naomi's Tip#2—Tell One Time She Got You Mad"
3 / Fig. 5.33	JD7B	Writing Excerpt	"*My Sister, The Snitch*"

Well into the first week of the unit, students by now were accustomed to sharing their

writing plan at the beginning of independent writing time. Jessica and Naomi were discussing

what they were each going to write about. They flipped through their notebooks at the various

writing pieces they had already produced during the course of the unit, looking for one to focus

on and build upon. Naomi suggested to Jessica that she write about her family, and Jessica took

to that idea. She decided that she would write about all of her siblings, telling little stories about

each one, even about the siblings that she did not talk to.

After that conference, Jessica wrote a paragraph about all of her different siblings. During

independent writing time on that same day, Jessica had her first student-teacher conference (Fig.

5.27) with me about her memoir writing. During that conference, she said that she was writing

about her siblings, and she shared with me more about her younger sister. I gave her two tips: write about the hard times as well as the good times with her sister, and focus on writing about just one sibling. After the writing session on that same day, Jessica and Naomi conferenced for a second time. Jessica shared that her topic was going to be about her siblings, and she was going to write about her sister. Naomi's tip to Jessica at that time was to write about the best moment that she had had with her sister, and about the times when she did not want her sister to tagalong.

The next day was a short day for writing, and there was no conferencing. Jessica's writing excerpt on that day was about a time that she and her sister went to the Queen Mary with two friends and had a blast. The piece ends with a foreshadowing, "even though me and T----- get along sometimes, we get in fights."

The third day began with Jessica writing about the fights that she gets into with her sister. During a conference with Naomi that was midway through the workshop, Jessica explained how in one paragraph she was writing about how they get along, and another paragraph she was writing about how they get into fights. Naomi's tip was to tell about one time that she got real mad. In the final segment of her piece, Jessica revealed in detail how her sister, whom sometimes could be trusted, also snitched and blackmailed Jessica into taking her everywhere that Jessica went.

Tell Both Sides: Analysis of the Data

In analysis of the data around Jessica' piece about her sister, I detail ways that she engages with Naomi and with me during writing conferences (Question #2), and the resulting impact of these conferences on her prewriting process (Question #3), by exploring the writing product (Question #3) that she generates alongside the conference exchanges.

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"Deciding on a Writing Topic: Either Siblings or Food"

In this first conference (Fig. 5.25 below) where Jessica and Naomi discussed their writing plan for the day, they approached the goal-setting conference differently than would Ramon and Chris. The two boys would take turns telling their writing plan for the day, but the girls would have more of a conversation, together exploring their options, freely alternating between the questioner and responder (e.g., see highlighted text in Fig. 5.25).

Fig. 5.25, Conference #19: PC14.J4A / "Deciding on a Writing Topic: Either Siblings or Food"

Naomi/ What do you think you're going to write about, in your seed story?
Jessica/ *(looking through her notebook)* I want to change this.
Naomi/ Which one do you like of all the ones that you've written? Look through your notebook.
Jessica/ I don't know. I don't like none of the ones I've written. I have a hard time finding what to write.
(They look through her notebook together)
Naomi/ *(sighs)* Which one's this one?
Jessica/ Here I wrote about a middle school memory, and here
Naomi/ Which one did you write the most about?
Jessica/ I think the growing pains.
Naomi/ Write about a time that you got like
Jessica/ No, no, no, no. My favorite moment, that I had with the group of friends.
Naomi/ Read another moment.
Jessica keeps looking through her notebook.
Naomi/ Do you have a story about your family?
Jessica/ No. What are you gonna write about?
Naomi/ Uhhhh. The first one I wrote about middle school, then I wrote about middle school again.
Jessica/ You're just writing about your middle school moments?
Naomi/ Yeah. And then I wrote about my name. Then I wrote about my cousin, and that's it. But I want to write about something more because it was a boring.
Jessica/ I could find an interesting topic, but I won't have
Naomi/ a story to write about it *(finishing Jessica's sentence)*
Jessica/ Yeah.
Naomi/ Like I don't have a good immigration story, or like becoming independent.
Jessica/ My parents told me how they got here, but they didn't tell me exactly.

> Naomi/ I'm gonna rewrite this.
> Jessica/ I think I am going to write about. . . .either siblings or food.
> Naomi/ Oooohh, food. But I feel like you would get only like a paragraph done
> and then you're like, what else am I gonna write?
> Jessica/ My next paragraphs are going to be about like, facts about my siblings
> and my relationship with them.
> Naomi/ Yeah, you could put like little stories.
> Jessica/ How we connect.
> Naomi/ Yeah, you should do that.
> Jessica/ Immna even add my other siblings I don't really talk to.
> Naomi/ Or talk about your relationships between you guys.

While they alternated asking questions, overall, this conference (Fig. 5.25 above) is about Naomi helping Jessica find a topic to write about. First, Naomi asked if she had a story about her family in her compilation of writing thus far in the unit. Later in the conference, Jessica pondered and decided that she was going to write either about siblings or food. Naomi was excited about the idea of writing about food ("Ooooh, food"), but shared that then she would be stuck with what to write about beyond one paragraph. Afterwards, Jessica discarded the idea of writing about food and announced her decision to write about, "facts about my siblings and my relationship with them." Naomi encouraged this idea by giving her some suggestions, like writing "little stories" about each, or talking about the "relationships between you guys."

Evidenced in this exchange is that the two students through their conversation with each other contributed to Jessica's pre-writing process decision to write about her siblings. It is in fact Naomi who first gave the idea to Jessica to write about her family by asking if she had a story about them. Both engaged with full participation throughout the exchange (Guthrie & Klauda,

2014; Hsu, 2009; Mercer, 2000a), which yielded a topic for Jessica to write about for the next

three class sessions, something she had not done up to that point in the unit.[31]

"About My Siblings"

      After this goal setting conference with Naomi, Jessica wrote the excerpt below into her

notebook. I title it, "About my Siblings" (Fig. 5.26 below).

Fig. 5.26, Writing Excerpt #10: JD6A—same day as Fig.5.25 / "About My Siblings"
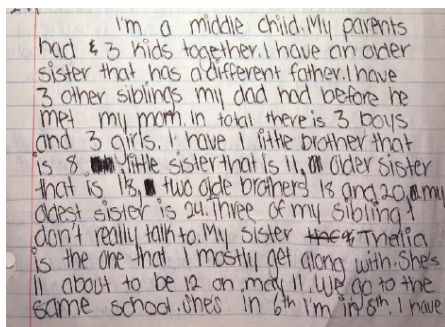
>   I'm a middle child. My parents had 3 kids together. I have an older sister that has a different father. I have 3 other siblings my dad had before he met my mom. In total there is 3 boys and 3 girls. I have 1 little brother that is 8, little sister that is 11, older sister that is 18, two older brothers 18 and 20, my oldest sister is 24. Three of my sibling I don't really talk to. My sister -------- is the one that I mostly get along with. She's 11 about to be 12 on May 11. We go to the same school. She's in 6th I'm in 8th. I have

As discussed with Naomi, Jessica decided to write about her brothers and her sisters. She wrote

which parents they have in common, their ages, and the fact that she doesn't talk with some of

them. As she began to write about her younger sister, she stopped because I asked her for a

conference, the first conference we would have in this unit (see Fig. 5.27 below).

Fig. 5.27, Conference #20: STC3.J1 (same day as Figs. 5.25 and 5.26)/
      "Two Tips—Focus on One & Tell The Bad with the Good"

      Teacher/ So can you tell me what you've been working on?
      Jessica/ Microstories.
      Teacher/ What are some of them about?

---

[31] Jessica's writing notebook reveals the following different topics: (day 1) leadership club, and a sixth grade field trip; (day 2) being short; (day 3) fun day with friends; (day 4) about her name; (day 5) about her house.

Jessica/ My name, my house, my favorite moment, school memory.

Teacher/ So, how's it going with you right now? How are things going with you, with the writing right now?

Jessica/ Good. I write a page.

Teacher/ You're writing a page every day. And for today how's it looking?

Jessica/ I don't know, good I guess.

Teacher/ So, what are you working on right now?

Jessica/ About my siblings.

Teacher/ Yours is gonna be about your siblings? Ok. I could see how you could include the part about the house for sure and even about your name too, it might relate, too. I'm not sure. So, what do you think the theme is going to be about your siblings?

Jessica/ I don't know. I like was going to put like some facts about each one of them and make a short story.

Teacher/ How many do you have?

Jessica/ In total, six.

Teacher/ Six? There's seven of you?

Jessica/ But like 3 like from my dad before even my mom.

Teacher/ Uh huh.

Jessica/ And then, the ones that are right now, there's like three.

Teacher/ So, altogether right now there are seven.

Jessica/ Yep.

Teacher/ So, can I see what you're writing right now? *(reads quietly Fig. 5.26, JD6)*

Teacher/ So, you basically wrote what you just told me. Do you know other than your topic, your topic is your siblings, but do you know what is the overall message that you want to say about your siblings?

Jessica/ I don't know.

Teacher/ So, if I were thinking about my siblings, I think maybe an overall topic might be just how kinda strange each and every one of us is. Because I actually have written about my siblings, so I would just kinda pull out how every one of them is bizarre. That for me was interesting. What about for you? Or do you want to write more about your relationship with each one?

Jessica/ I don't know. I think about my relationship with each one.

Teacher/ Ok? Do you think you're going to write about just what is good, or what are you thinking about, you're gonna write?

Jessica/ *(no response)*

Teacher/ Tell me about one of them.

Jessica/ Uhmmm. The one that comes here I tell her more of the stuff that happens. I tell her more about my chisme.

Teacher/ Can you speak louder cause I'm gonna have to transcribe it?

Jessica/ *(loudly)* I tell my little sister chisme.

Teacher/ *(laughing)* What's her name?

Jessica / T----.

Teacher/ And she's in sixth grade. So, if you're going to write about your relationship with T----, what's a story that you might write?

Jessica / I mean when I go out with my friends, I kinda have to take her.

Teacher/ Is she who I saw yesterday *(after school)*?

Jessica/ Yeah.

Teacher / Oh, I didn't know that was you sister. Okay sorry, keep going.

Jessica / When we go out, it's always me and her that go out together. So I'll probably write about like a moment that we went to the mall or to one of my friend's parties because she always comes with me.

Teacher/ Can I give you suggestion?

Jessica / Yeah.

Teacher/ I think what's helpful even when I was writing about my dad and I was saying it's hard to connect with him. I think it's helpful to show like both sides of a person. So, if you're going to show what you kind of like about T---, you could also show something that's a challenge for you. Does that make sense?

Jessica/ Yeah.

Teacher/ Do you have an idea what that might be?

Jessica/ Oh, Miss, that's a lot.

Teacher/ There's a lot? You see what I'm saying? It just makes it a little bit interesting if rather than all the stories being like these nice fun times, they can be about something a little bit, about what's hard. How does that sound?

Jessica/ Good.

Teacher/ So, what is your plan for the rest of the day for your writing?

Jessica/ To give a small back story on each one of them. And having like a bigger . . .

Teacher calls out students who are not writing.

Teacher/ Ok. Can I make a suggestion to try to focus on just that one sister? Rather than starting-up background on everybody, start on one and focus on one.

Jessica/ Ok.

Teacher/ Ok?

Jessica/ Ok.

"Teacher Tips—Focus on One & Tell the Bad with the Good"

The student-teacher conference began with me asking what Jessica had been working on in her writing. According to Jessica, her writing was going "good" because she was writing one page each day, which was a goal for her (written in her notebook above the excerpt in Fig. 5.26).

After she told me that she was going to write about her siblings, I asked her if she knew what her theme was going to be, making a distinction between a topic and a theme. She was unclear about a theme but shared that she wanted to write about her relationships with each one, something that she had shared with Naomi during their goal-setting conference. So, I asked Jessica to tell me about one of her siblings, and she shared about her younger sister. The tip I gave her was to write about "both sides of a person," suggesting that that would be more interesting and reminding her how I had done the same with my memoir about my dad. Jessica said that my idea sounded "good." When asked, she responded that her plan was next to tell back story about each of her siblings. This led to my second tip for her, which was to focus on one sibling at a time, to which Jessica said, "Okay."

In this exchange, the teacher's questions that aimed to push Jessica to decide upon a theme led nowhere. Instead of forcing that issue, and since Jessica said she was going to write about her relationship with her siblings, I switched gears and asked her to tell me about one of her siblings. This shows that the conference moved to serve the needs of the writer, meeting her where she was at (Kissel, 2017). The partner-teacher offered suggestions that were followed by questions to Jessica, such as, "how does that sound" and "does that make sense." By doing so, the partner signaled to the writer that the suggestions were for her consideration and not meant to be taken as directive. Of note is that sometimes the teacher explained the rationale behind her writing tip, such as telling both sides of a person ("It just makes it a little bit interesting"); and sometimes she did not, as with the tip to focus on one sibling at a time.

In the brief writing excerpt that Jessica wrote after her conference with me, she added more information about her relationship with her sister to her writing (Fig. 5.28 below),

specifically that she takes her when she goes out, and they are together in school and out of

school.

Fig. 5.28, Writing Excerpt #11: JD6B—after excerpt Fig. 5.27 /
"A Little More About My Little Sister"
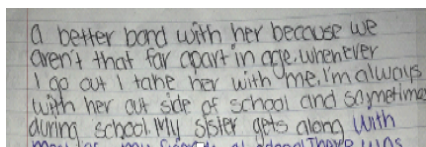
(I have) a better bond with her because we aren't that far apart in age. Whenever I go out I take her with me. I'm always with her out side of school and sometimes during school. My sister gets along with

It may be that Jessica took one of the teacher's tips by choosing to write more about just one of

her siblings, instead of giving back story on each. But this writing piece does not show whether

Jessica had decided to write about both the good and the bad sides of their relationship.

"Naomi's Tip #1—Tell Both Sides"
> The last conference (Fig. 5.29 below) for Jessica that day[32] was at the end of the writing

session.

Fig. 5.29, Conference Excerpt #21: PC14.J4B (same day as Figs. 5.25-5.28)
> *"Naomi's Tip #1—Tell Both Sides"*

Naomi/What did you write about?
Jessica/ My siblings. *(Reads above, Fig. 5.28; JD6)* Basically like, I'm writing about how like my connection with my sister, the one that comes here, because I always take her out with places like when I'm going out with you guys she's always with me. I'm never apart from her.
Naomi/ So, my feedback is, write about the best moment with her, like the time that you were like, damn, she's my sister. Write about the time, that you were like, I don't want to take her. And you were telling your mom, "Why do I have to take her?" Have you ever told her?
Jessica/ Yes.
Naomi/ Maybe you should just write about that.

---

[32] It is uncommon for student to have three conferences in one day. But on the day that they do conference with the teacher, that is what might occur

Jessica told Naomi that she was going to write about her sister who always goes with her places. Naomi's "feedback" was that Jessica should write about the time that she felt fortunate to have her sister ("the best moment . . . that you were like, damn, she's my sister"), and a time that Jessica did not want her sister to come along with her. In essence, she gave Jessica the same suggestion given by the teacher, to tell both sides of that relationship. The vernacular that she used ("damn, she's my sister") reflected the ease with which the two girls communicated. Naomi's insight into what makes for good writing about a character revealed that she is experienced in narrative writing. In addition, she is attuned to the needs of Jessica as a writer, offering a tip that provides her with a possible next step. However, like the teacher, Naomi made it clear that her suggestion was just a suggestion: "Maybe you should just write about that." This conference serves as an example of adolescent relationships in school that include affability and academic rigor, what Osterman (20000), Newberg (1995), and Hammond (2015) argue are essential for adolescent students..

"Fun with Sister" and "Fights with Sister"
The next class day allotted brief time for independent writing. There were no conferences that day, but Jessica wrote this excerpt (Fig. 5.30 below) detailing a time that she and her sister went with two friends to the Queen Mary.

Fig. 5.30, Writing Excerpt #12: JD6.5 (Day after Figs. 5.25-5.29) / "Fun with Sister"
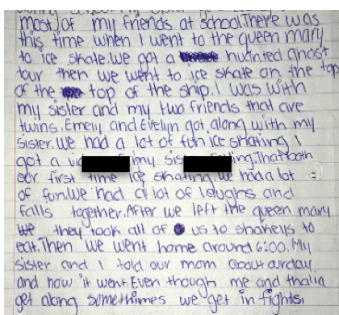
most of my friends at school. There was this time when I went to the queen mary to ice skate. We got a huanted ghost tour then we went to ice skate on the top of the top of the ship. I was with my sister and my two friends that are twins. ----- and ----- got along with my sister. We had a lot of fun ice skating I got a video of my sister falling. That both our first time ice skating. We had a lot of fun. We had a lot of laughs and falls together. After we left the queen mary they took all of us to shakeys to eat. Then we went home around 6:00. My sister and I told our mom about our day and how it went. Even though me and T----get along sometimes we get in fights.

Jessica described the day's events – – ice-skating, a haunted ghost tour, and the trip to Shakey's. The day was full with, "a lot of laughs and falls together." Her writing revealed that she was sticking with her sister as a topic. Again, prior to this excerpt, she had not stuck with one topic for more than one day. While the piece is about a fun time she had with her sister, the last sentence foreshadows that, as suggested by Naomi and the teacher, Jessica would next write about times that she and her sister do not get along. The last line written on this day is, "Sometimes we get in fights."

The following school day, during workshop time, Jessica detailed in writing (Fig. 5.31 below) how she and her sister fight. Similar to Naomi's suggestion, she wrote about a time when she did not want to take her sister when she was out with friends.

Fig. 5.31, Writing Excerpt #13: JD7A (next school day after Fig. 5.30)/ "Fights with Sister"
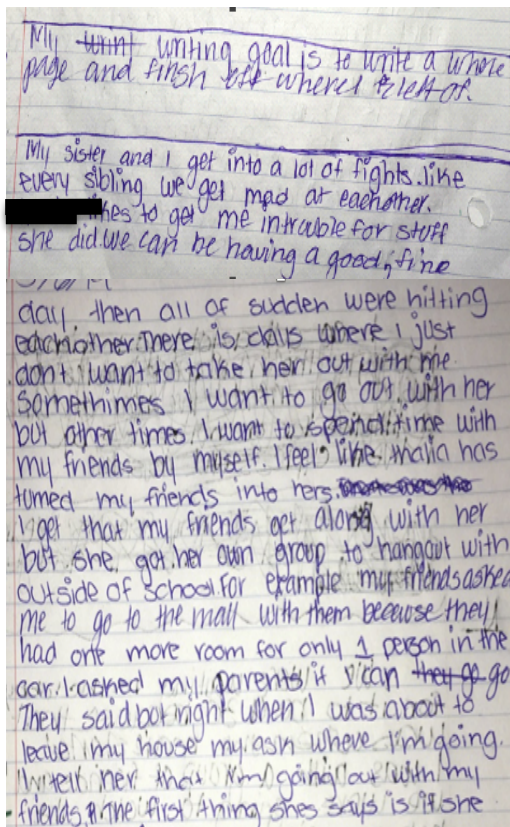
My writing goal is to write a whole page and finish where I left off.

My sister and I get into a lot of fights. Like every sibling we get mad at each other. ------ likes to get me in trouble for stuff she did. We can be having a good, fine day, then all of a sudden were hitting each other. There is days where I just don't want to take her out with me. Sometimes I want to go out with her but other times I want to spend time with my friends by myself. I feel like T--- has turned my friends into hers. I get that my friends get along with her but she got her own group to hangout with outside of school. For example my friends asked me to go to the mall with them because they had one more room for only 1 person in the car. I asked my parents if I can go. They said but right when I was about to leave my house, my ask where I'm going. I tell her that I'm going out with my friends. ¶The first thing she says is if she

She also explained how the two of them, "like every sibling," get mad at each other. She wrote that exchanges between the two of them quickly go from good to bad. In addition, she continued to write about times that she did not want to take her sister with her, this again being the tip from Naomi a few days prior. Jessica lamented that since her sister had her own group of friends, she should hang out with them. Through this writing, it appears that Jessica had much to say about the challenges of her relationship with her sister.

"Naomi's Tip #2—Tell One Time She Got You Mad"

Peer conferences on the day that Jessica wrote what I titled, "Fights with Sister," occurred during the middle of workshop independent writing time. During this exchange (Fig. 5.32 below) with Naomi, Jessica expressed her struggle to organize the different moments that she was writing about.

Fig. 5.32, Conference Excerpt #22: PC14.J5 (same day as Fig. 5.31)/

"Naomi's Tip #2—Tell One Time She Got You Mad"

Jessica / What I need help with is. . . I don't know. I guess like putting the moments we *(Jessica and her sister)* had together, and like the moments where I didn't want her around.
Naomi / Where do you think you're going to fit it, though?
Jessica / The ones where I don't want to be around her, I'm gonna put it in the paragraph where it's just like, oh, me and her don't get along as well. Like, we always get in a fight. So, like this paragraph is like we get along, we go out together. And this paragraph is, sometimes we get in fights. We're not like perfect siblings and stuff. And like when I don't want her to go, and like she tells my mom. And it's like I can't go if she doesn't go. You know the bad side and the good side.
Naomi / So, I'd just be like, for example, this one time she got me real mad.

Naomi's question, "Where do you think you're going to fit it, though?" served to further Jessica's thinking (Forman & Cazden, 1994), at the same time giving her the space to solve her own dilemma. Referring to the writing that she had completed in her notebook, Jessica explained that she would write one paragraph about how she and her sister get along, referencing the story about the Queen Mary trip, and one paragraph about how they get into fights and Jessica doesn't want her sister to go with her. This time Naomi framed her suggestion informally with, "I'd be just like, 'for example, this one time she got me real mad.'" Again, the partner shared her thinking around the writer's work. The suggestion to focus "on one time" that Jessica got angry with her sister is another indication of Naomi's familiarity with the narrative genre, with its focus on stretching small moments, sometimes referred to as seed moments. In fact, Naomi's very first question during their conference two days prior was, "What do you think you're going to write about, in your seed story?" While Naomi spoke only two statements in this conference exchange, it nonetheless demonstrates her active participation in Jessica's writing, and that she continued to shape her partner's thinking about her writing, the topic of which continued to be her sister.

"My Sister, The Snitch"
In this last writing piece about her sister (Fig. 5.33 below), Jessica wrote more in detail about ways that her sister annoys her and abuses Jessica's trust in her.

Fig. 5.33, Writing Excerpt #14: JD7B (same day as Figs. 5.30-5.32)/ "My Sister, The Snitch"
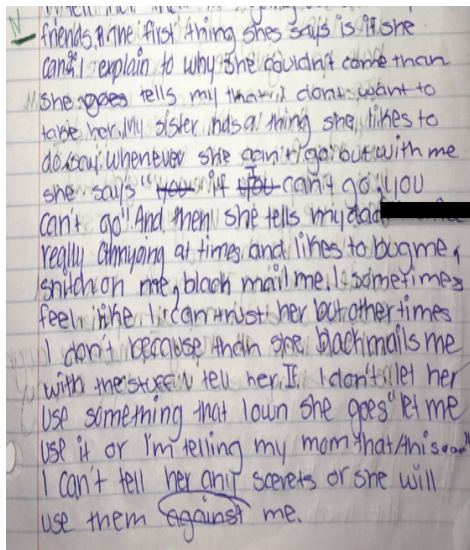
¶The first thing she says is if she can go. I explain to why she couldn't come than she tells my that I don't want to take her. My sister has a thing she likes to do/say. Whenever she can't go out with me she says "if I can't go, you can't go". And then she tells my dad. ------ really annoying at times and likes to bug me, snitch on me, black mail me. I sometimes feel like I can trust her but other times I don't because than she blackmails me with the stuff I tell her. If I don't let her use something that I own she goes "let me use it or I'm telling my mom that / this …" I can't tell her any secrets or she will use them against me.

The two quotes from her sister that she included in her piece sum up the strains in their relationship: "If I can't go, you can't go," and "let me use it or I'm telling my mom…" As a reader and a researcher who had typed all of Jessica's writing samples, it was not until I read and rewrote this piece that I laughed and reflected on my own relationship with my sister. This shows that the writer had the capacity to create memoir narratives that evoke emotional response from a reader. Prior to writing it, Naomi had suggested that Jessica tell about a time that she got real mad at her sister. It seems that this last piece captured that sentiment. Yet Jessica did not specifically focus on one particular moment, instead choosing to tell about the general times that these kinds of things would happen—when her sister would, "bug me, snitch on me, blackmail me."

Tell Both Sides: Conclusion
        Analysis of the data generated through the writing and conferences surrounding Jessica's piece about her sister reveal much about the writer, her partners, their relationships,

and the connection between conferencing and writing processes, specifically the pre-writing

process. In partnership, conference participants co-constructed the conference (Question #3) in support of the needs of the writer. Partners engaged in conversation with the writer to generate ideas for her writing. The writer shared from her personal experiences and was open to the suggestions of her partners. She made choices as a writer about which of their suggestions to take on (focusing on one sibling, telling both sides about their relationship, and telling about how she did not always want her sister to come along), and which suggestions not to pursue (telling about one time that she became really angry with her sister).

Finally, this extended vignette

> ***Teacher-as-Researcher:***
> ***Connections for One Student Between Memoir and Life***
>
> The writing move, telling both sides of a character, is one that resurfaced for another student participant during the course of the unit. Unlike Jessica who began by telling the good times she had with her sister, Ramon's first pieces (RD1-RD3) were about *one time* that his father had pulled him out of an important basketball game. He informed Chris (PC30.R8) that his second micro story was going to be, "about when I was sick, right, my dad forced me to go to this game but I told him I couldn't go. I'm not good right now I couldn't play. And I was playing bad, and my coach screamed at me and it was a whole scene, and we lost the game by a lot." At that time, Ramon's theme was going to be about becoming independent and the separation between him and his father. But Ramon decided not to write that second story about when he was sick. Instead, Ramon wrote a piece about how his father paid for him to go on a basketball trip to Las Vegas. During one of our conferences together (STC9.R2), I commended him for this choice: "You don't just wanna paint a certain picture. You wanna say, yes that's true *(my dad took me out of the game)*. But this is also true *(he sacrificed to pay for me to go to the tournament in Las Vegas)*. And I think that's a sign of just maturity on your part, not only as a writer, but as a person." Here-in the teacher communicated to the student the ways that writing relates to their personal lives (Minor, 2019): being able to see the complexity in people as a life-skill.

between Jessica and her writing partners demonstrates ways that the class is interconnected in

our work around student writing. Naomi had the same idea that I had for Jessica about how she

should approach the micro story about her sister. And Ramon of his own volition elected to

adopt this same approach in his own memoir; see insert above, *Teacher-as-Researcher:*

Connections for One Student Between Memoir and Life. Frequently, the emergent bilingual

students in this class drew on many such writer moves that they had internalized over the course of three years in a writers workshop environment, such as, "stretch a small moment," or "tell one time," and "tell both sides."

Don't Tell the Theme

In this section, I present a writer move that was actually generated by one of the student-participants and that he shared with two of his peers. I then conclude the chapter with a discussion about other writer moves that surfaced when partners offered suggestions to writers, and I reflect on the role of the partner as a suggestion-maker.

In this second vignette, Ramon and Chris co-construct Chris's understanding about developing the theme in memoir writing. The vignette above centered around generating ideas for writing during the pre-writing process; this shorter vignette centers around the revision process, leading to a marked change in the writing product. Over the course of one week, as evidenced through two distinct sets of data (each set includes a writing excerpt and a writing conference), conferencing with Ramon led to the transformation of Chris's introduction to his memoir. In analyzing the two sets of data, I detail again the relationship between the two conference participants and the exchanges that lead to this change in both the writing process and writing product for Chris.

On the eighth day of conferencing during this memoir unit, Chris wrote the following (figure 5.34 below) about giving up on something that mattered to him, which was his soccer team.

Fig. 5.34, Writing Excerpt #15: CD8
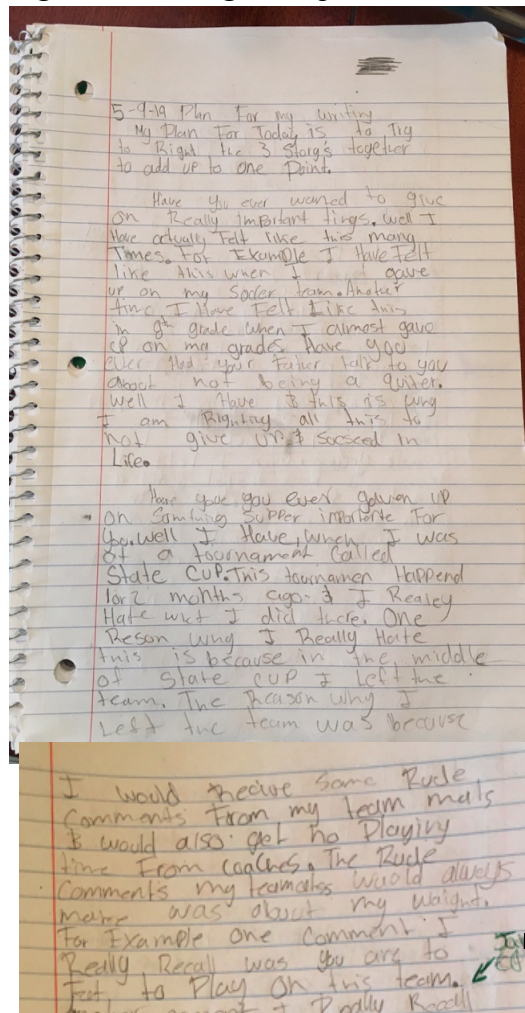
My plan for today is to try to right the 3 story's together to add up to one point.

Have you ever wanted to give on Really important things. Well I Have actuall Felt like this many Times. For Example I Hav Felt like this when I gave up on my soccer team. Another time I Have Felt like this in 8th grade when I almost gave up on my grades. Have you ever Had your Father talk to you about not being a quitter. Well I Have & this is why I am Righting all this to not give up & succeed in Life.

Have you ever given up on something supper important For You. Well I Have, when I was at a tournament called State Cup. This tournament Happened 1 or 2 months ago. & I Realey Hat what I did there. One Reason why I Really Hate this is because in the middle of state cup I Left the team. The Reason why I Left the team was because I would Recive some Rude comments from my team mats & would also get no Playing time From coaches. The Rude comments my teammates would always make was about my weight. For example one comment I Really Recall was you are

In his writing, Chris described openly his feelings about his teammates' comments regarding his weight, and his inner conflict regarding whether to stay with the team. On the one hand, his dad told him not to be a quitter, and on the other, he felt underappreciated by his teammates and his coach his coaches. Chris decided to quit.

On the same day that he wrote this excerpt he conferenced with Ramon about it (Fig. 5.35 below).

Fig. 5.35, Conference Excerpt #23: PC24.C6 (same day as Fig. 5.34)

Chris/ What I wrote today was two paragraphs. I wrote *(he reads excerpt from above, Fig. 5.32).* And I didn't get to finish, but I'm gonna keep on writing one more comment. And then, uh, how I really felt about them.

Ramon/ Maybe when you started writing about the grades, on the one *(paragraph)* where you write about your dad, you should write about how he says like not to give up, you should extend that more.

Chris/ Yeah, that's why I was gonna, I was gonna change it.

Ramon/ And like when you write, you always put your theme, you always, you always write your theme out. You should like, don't write it. Let the reader know what's the theme. Like, let them

Chris/ I know. That's why I wrote it.

Ramon/ No, but you write it there. They read your theme. They're not supposed to read it. They're supposed to just think about the theme.

Chris/ no response

Teacher / *(As she walks around the class, overhears and asks Chris)* Do you understand what he means?

Chris/ Yes.

Teacher/ You don't have to. We're gonna actually read another example where they call it *(the theme)*out. So, the writer could choose, you could try it one way and then you could try another way. And you can decide whether you want to call it out, or not. But you understand what he's saying? The reader sometimes can figure it out.

Chris nods.

Teacher/ Did you guys both already go *(conferenced around their writing)*?

Ramon & Chris/ Yeah.
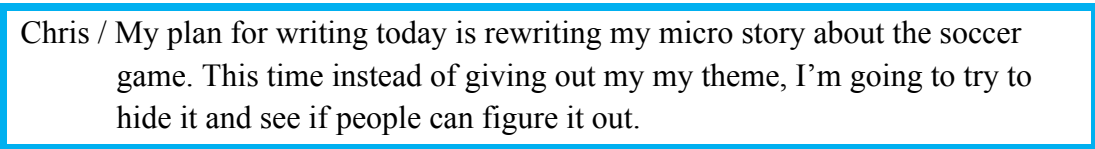
Teacher/ Yeah? Ok.

After Chris read the excerpt, he told Ramon his plan to tell more about his feelings regarding the comments from his teammates. Ramon's first feedback to Chris was that he should extend the story around his father not telling him to give up. Chris responded that he was planning to change that paragraph. Then Ramon fumbled with words trying to explain that Chris should not be explicit about his theme (where Chris writes, "Have you ever wanted to give up on

really important things?" and "Have you ever given up on something super important for you?"). Ramon explained that the reader should not be presented with the theme, but instead should reflect upon the piece in order to comprehend the theme. Chris sat without a response, and the teacher, who happened to be standing behind the two students, asked if he understood Ramon's feedback. He said that he did. I went on to explain that the writer could choose whether or not to call out the theme for the reader, based on different mentor texts that we were reading.

During this exchange, the partner told the writer what he should, or should not do. In this case, the partner had a strong opinion about how to present a theme in memoir writing. The teacher balanced the partner's opinion based on other memoirs that were in the text set where authors treated the introduction more like an essay, revealing the theme much like a thesis. A few days later, upon reflection of Ramon's feedback, Chris decided to rewrite the micro story, and "this time instead of giving out my theme, I'm going to try to hide it and see if people can figure it out" (figure 5.36 below). On the day that Chris set that goal, he and Ramon did not conference around his writing.

Fig. 5.36, Conference Excerpt #24: PC26.C7 (four days after Fig. 5.34 and 5.35)/ Goal-setting

> Chris / My plan for writing today is rewriting my micro story about the soccer game. This time instead of giving out my my theme, I'm going to try to hide it and see if people can figure it out.

A few days later, Chris wrote the excerpt below (Fig. 5.36) onto the Chromebook. He revised his writing extensively, as evidenced by a comparison of the notebook pages (Fig. 5.34 above) to his writing on Google Docs (Fig. 5.37 below). In the revised version, he began by telling how he felt that to his coaches he was just a number, the number sixteen. He continued to reveal that while he told his coaches he would work to lose weight, that he knew he did not want to put forth the effort to do so. As in the first version, Chris wrote that he quit the team.

Fig. 5.37, Writing Excerpt #17: CD11 (three days after Fig. 5.36)

> In my soccer team i feel like i am just a player with a number and position. For example when i was in a tournament called state cup, I was just left on the bench as if i did not belong on the team. This was when i began to notice that i was just a kid on the soccer team to the coaches and a number the number 16. This was a really big issue for me because all my coaches would want to put me in but they just could not. One conversation i remember i had with my coaches was " if you really want more playing time then you should at least try to lose weight". Every time i would have this conversation with my coaches i would always say "ok'" or "i will try my best" but deep down inside i knew i did not actually want to put in the effort. All the time that i spent on the time really wanted to make me quit ,as well as the conversations i would have with my coach witch i did.

This version of his writing (Fig. 5.37 above) reads more smoothly than his writing the previous week. He continued to be vulnerable about feelings of not belonging. And he discussed honestly the way that he misrepresented to his coaches the effort he was willing to put into losing weight.

After this writing, he read the introduction to Roman during their conference (Fig. 5.38 below).

Fig. 5.38, Conference Excerpt #25: PC28.C8 (same day as Fig. 5.37)

> Chris/ *(Reads from above, Fig. 5.36). . .* That's all I got to right now.
> Ramon/ What is the last thing you tried to do in your writing?
> Chris/ The last thing I tried to do was working on the sentence. *(He rereads the last sentence from above).*
> Ramon/ Uhum. I liked how you added the conversation with your coaches because it was more dialogue. And when you add dialogue, conversations with other people, it brings the story more alive and it catches the reader's attention. So, if you add more of that, with the other details, it would be good. I also noticed you changed your introduction. So why did you change it?
> Chris/ One reason I changed my introduction was because . . . When I noticed that I was writing this, I was really giving out my main points a lot and this time I change my introduction to try to hide it in the introduction. To try to hide the theme to make it a bit harder for the reader to find out what my theme was.

After asking Chris about the last thing he tried to do in his writing, a question from the script-guideline, Ramon complimented Chris on his use of dialogue. He went on to explain that including dialogue brought the story to life and caught the reader's attention. He then commented that he noticed that Chris had changed the introduction and asked him why he changed it. Chris responded that he didn't want to give out his main points, and that he wanted to, "try to hide the theme to make it a bit harder for the reader to find out."

What is most striking about this data is the degree to which Chris' writing changed within the course of one week, based largely on his partner's point that the theme should be embedded in the introduction. Both in the brief goal setting statement (figure 5.36) and at the end of this last conference (figure 5.37), Chris expressed his objective in revising his introduction, which was basically to do as Ramon had suggested. As a writer, he was open to his partner's feedback and reflective about his choices in presenting the theme in his memoir. His partner, Ramon, was a critical listener, an audience for Chris's writing. He honestly presented his suggestion (extend the story about his dad), his compliment (the use of dialogue), and his opinion that Chris was wrong to write the theme so blatantly in the introduction. Of note is that Ramon never mentioned to Chris, at least not in the recorded data, that the changes he made were based on Ramon's idea. Given what I know of him, it would be in his character *not* to make mention of this fact, *not* to throw it in Chris' face, so to speak, adding to the other characteristics he displayed as a writing partner that he was also a *caballero*.

Admittedly I am a novice teacher of the writers workshop with the *Units of Study*, but I had never heard of a teaching point or a writer move around letting the reader figure out the theme. In this way, Ramon's personal critique around what makes for good writing and good reading was behind the advice that he gave to his writing partner. This shows a sophistication on

the part of this emergent bilingual adolescent student as a critical reader, writer and conference partner.

Later during the unit, Ramon made a similar suggestion to his new writing partner Naomi (PC37.N9B). He told her, "In the introduction, when you said when you said, this memoir is about. And like there's other parts in the story where you said, the story is about, or stuff like that. . . And then you were like, 'I will be talking about how I went to the family gathering,' and stuff like that. . . . I don't think. My opinion, you shouldn't add those sentences. Like, don't say it. Like, just talk about it. Instead of saying, like make a new paragraph about the experience instead of saying, oh I'm gonna talk about it." Here Ramon again suggested to his partner that she eliminate signposts that make the theme, as well as the setting, obvious. With Naomi, he used the phrase, "my opinion" and appeared to try to couch the critique more gently than he did with Chris. Afterwards, he asked Naomi if she understood his suggestion, ("You feel me?"), and she replied that she did. But she did not make these changes in her memoir. The last sentence in her introduction paragraph reads (see Appendix B), "This memoir is about me and my family. I will show you when in situations they were there for me when I needed help." The next paragraph begins, "This first story is about the time that I found comfort in someone that was a stranger to me." In other words, she chose to leave the signposts for her reader, even given the expressed opinion from one of her readers that she not. Naomi as the writer could decide to adopt her partner's suggestion, or she could choose not to. She had proven herself capable in her conference exchanges (Figs. 5.8, 5.26, 5.29) and in her writing (Fig. 5.8, Appendix B) to signify that the signposts remained in her writing as a choice that she made, rather than an oversight. In the final section of this chapter, I explore how writers like Naomi made choices about the suggestions that partners like Ramon provided them.

Conclusion: Conference Teach Tips— On Recursive Learning within the Writers Workshop

In Chapters 4 and 5 I analyze data around writing conferences and corresponding writing products, as they relate to my research questions. I begin by detailing the beginnings of both peer and student-teacher conferences in the classroom where this research was conducted. I then present data that speaks largely to my first question, regarding ways that participants shaped the conferences over time. I consider how conferences began and ended, and how a script-guideline framed the format of the conference, presenting analysis that supports Finding #1: *These emergent bilingual adolescent student writers and partners co-construct the writing conference as they grapple with the complexities of writing.* Chapter 5 begins with a focus on data around my second research question about ways that participants relate with one another within the writing conference. I move from a view of the conference as a space that is co-constructed by participants, as presented in chapter 4, and adopt a relational lens for viewing conferencing as a space where partners move together in dance-like fashion. I present the memoir genre as the backdrop music and interpersonal conference exchanges by writers and partners as preliminary dance steps, demonstrating that, "*writing conferences are spaces where emergent bilingual adolescent student participants in this writers workshop relate with one another and the teacher authentically around their writing"* (Finding #2). Then I detail analysis around my third research question, about ways that conferences transform writing processes and writing products, still maintaining a relational focus. I present two vignettes to demonstrate ways that participants co-construct two writing processes, pre-writing and revision. I now conclude chapter 5 by focusing on one specific dance move of the conference partnership, and present data that further supports my third finding (Fig. 5.39 below).

Fig. 5.39, Finding #3

> Writing conferences are spaces where these adolescent student-participants and their teacher co-construct writing processes, transforming writing products.

Writing is a process.
Writing is a product.

The role of the partner in a writing conference is discussed throughout these two chapters. I first outline how partners co-construct the conference alongside writers, detailing how the former benefit from the use of the script–guideline to help them guide the latter in their thinking around their work. In chapter 5, in the section titled, "Relationships and Interpersonal Conference Exchanges," I discuss questioning and complimenting as two key partner moves. Here, I examine perhaps the most frequently used partner step, giving the writer a suggestion about what to do next in their work, and I detail whether the writer follows the partner's move or decides to free-style.

During conferences students use many different names for the feedback that they give to writers. They might call it advice, feedback, or a suggestion. As a researcher presenting findings, I grappled at times with how to reference the partner's suggestion as well. I now decide to reference any response from the partner with the word feedback. In other words, feedback could come in the form of a suggestion, advice, a compliment or even a question. For this last section, I elect to use the term teaching tip to describe the data on this partner move. In the writers workshop a part of the mini lesson is called the teaching point. This is where the teacher specifies the strategy or skill that she intends to make explicit to the class. When examining the pieces of data that I coded as suggestions, I found that they fit the same paradigm of a teacher sharing with the writer something the writer could consider. I choose the word tip instead of

point because often this feedback in conferences was short, not including modeling or practicing, which are aspects of the mini-lesson's teaching point.

The teaching tips the partners provided to writers, I categorized around the various writing processes (Fig. 5.40 below). As the table demonstrates, thirty-seven pieces of data were

Fig. 5.40, Table: Partner Teaching Tips and Writing Processes

Type	TOTAL	Writer applied tip	Writer did not apply tip	Peer-suggested tip	Teacher-suggested tip
Prewriting	32.7% (12)	6	6	8	4
Revision: Craft (Memoir)	43.0% (16)	11	5	11	5
Revision: non-craft	5.4% (2)	2	0	1	1
Proofreading/ Editing	16.2% (6)	6	0	3	3
Publishing	2.7% (1)	0	1	0	1
TOTAL	100% (37)	67.5 (25)	32.5% (12)	62% (23)	38% (14)

coded and analyzed. When I came across a teaching tip in a transcript, I reviewed the corresponding student's writing to see whether the writer took the tip. The data reveal that 67.5% of the time writers did take tips offered to them, 65% of the time when it came from a peer and 71% of the time when it came from the teacher (this statistic is not presented in the table above). In other words, teaching tips were offered by partners, but not always taken-up by writers. In two vignettes above, I demonstrate ways that partners typically voiced these tips as suggestions.

Ramon and Naomi did not comment when their tips were heeded by Chris and Jessica, seemingly not taking ownership of the tip. This is one way that teaching tips in these conferences may be distinguished from other workshop conferences where teachers are expected to keep track of whether students used the teaching point provided by the teacher. While the teacher in this study did keep track of conference teaching tips, I did so not to verify whether they were applied, merely to record them for my own information.[33] In a different section, I detailed how I would ask the writer their thinking or their opinion after I gave them a tip. In this way students knew that the teacher did not have all the answers (Hammond, 2015; Minor, 2019; Hsu, 2009) and that the choices were theirs to make as writers. In other words, whether provided by a peer or the teacher, writers were ever the decision-maker around revisions to their writing.

The data in the table (Fig. 5.40 above) also reveal that the majority of the tips were around revising writing to make the memoir stronger, such as in the vignette above, "Don't Tell the Theme." Peer partners gave tips such as, explain your feelings, add dialogue, extend the story, explain the importance, and explain the theme. Teacher-partner tips were mainly about adding more details to the writing, sometimes referred to as stretching the moment, or putting the reader in the moment.

The second most common tip given was around prewriting, as revealed in the vignette, "Tell Both Sides." When disaggregating the data, I made the distinction about a tip provided to the writer as a prewriting suggestion if it were regarding something that the writer had yet to try. But if it were regarding something already evident in the writing, I called this revision. The kinds of prewriting tips that were shared were around brainstorming topics or suggestions about how to get started. Editing tips were around punctuating dialogue, indenting paragraphs, and correcting

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[33] I had intended to reference conference teaching tips for follow-up lessons, but review of lesson plans does not reflect that I did so.

spelling. Only one tip was made about publishing and two around revision, not specific to memoir writing: one peer suggested censoring; and the teacher suggested rearranging parts of the memoir.

This data is significant because it demonstrates that writing conferences, with peers and with the teacher, addressed the complexity of writing, with most of their conferences focusing on ways to revise writing specific to the memoir genre. Also, all stages of the writing process were addressed during conferencing, demonstrating ways that conferences transformed writing processes. Lastly, based on the fact that writers made changes to their writing 67.5% of the time based on their partners' teaching tip, it is clear that conferencing transformed writing products for these student-participants. Understanding of how they did so is made apparent in the two vignettes above.

At times, there were overlaps in the teaching tips, demonstrating how learning became a recursive process in this workshop classroom (Hsu, 2009; Graham & Sandmel, 2011; Smith, 2017). Naomi offered to Jessica during her first conference (PC2.J1): "One thing I would say you could do is tell of one time, a specific time and just explain it in detail." Earlier that same workshop session, I had said to Naomi, "What I'm wondering about is if you could take that moment and really stretch it out." A similar example, demonstrating transference of learning from a student-teacher conference to a peer conference (Hsu, 2009), is evidenced when Ramon suggested to Chris, "Maybe you could add about what your teammates said and about your coaches. So, it makes the story, like more the reason why you left, not just cause of the minutes *(that you didn't play),* but also cause it would make your story more awake" (PC4.C1). Prior that same day, I had commented to Ramon during our first conference together, and his first conference in this unit (STC1.R1), "What would help me kinda be there in the moment is if you

told me, like, took this moment and broke it down piece by piece, like moment by moment. The actual time. How did your dad call you out of the game? I don't even know how that happened. What did he do. What DID he do?" Interestingly, around the same teaching tip, in one of their last conferences (PC34.R9), Naomi was searching for the words she wanted to use to give Ramon a compliment after he had read her his writing: "Like right here when you said that, 'Did he really just say that? And then that you pinched yourself.' I like that because I could tell that it happened. It was like, what is that word?"

Ramon answered, "You felt like you were in the moment."

"Yes. Exactly."

Other times students borrowed a teaching tip from each other. Chris suggested to Ramon that he break-up his large text with paragraphs (PC23.R6B), and later Ramon offered the same suggestion to Chris (PC32.C9). After witnessing Jessica make changes to her writing as she discovered errors while reading it aloud (PC2.J1), Naomi suggested that Ramon do the same (PC34.R9) to proofread his writing. At least on one occasion, a student and the teacher gave a writer the same suggestion, unbeknownst to either. This was revealed in the vignette, "Tell Both Sides" where both Naomi and the teacher suggested that Jessica tell not only about the good times that she had with her sister, but also about some of the challenging times.

In conclusion, I use the metaphor of dance in this chapter because it speaks to the choices that writers and partners made, the moves they practiced and performed, when conferencing together around their memoir writing. This last section of data analysis reflects the fluidity of the dance, with the conference as a space where writers practice and borrow from each other's moves, making it difficult to tell who is leading whom.

CHAPTER 6—DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

In my final chapter, I discuss my findings and their implications. I begin by addressing the limitations to my study, speaking to its purviews. Then for each finding, I first discuss the relevance of my study, then the implications related to that finding, and conclude with suggestions for further research. After addressing each finding, I present my final thoughts on my study.

Limitations of my Study

My study builds on the research of others who have studied students as legitimate writers: from pioneers like Graves (1975) and Atwell (1987) to the more recent explorations of Marsh (2009), Riddle Buly (2011), Fisher-Ari and Flint (2018), Smith (2017), and Kissel (2017). Like all research, my study has its limitations. Within the qualitative design model, I present data, analysis, and findings around one localized context, writing conferences in this eighth grade classroom. It is for the reader to determine whether the evidence that I present is sufficient and compelling in its description of writing conferences for emergent bilingual adolescents.

This study played out in my own classroom over the course of one semester teaching the writers workshop units of study. Being the teacher offered me many opportunities and insights into the research that unfolded. But it also hindered gathering of differing forms of data. Approximately 90% of the data collected is generated from audio recordings of students' conferences with each other, with me their teacher, in addition to all of the writing excerpts that they generated in their writing notebooks and on Google Docs via Google Classroom during the course of the unit. I took some field notes which I referenced when writing reflective analytical memos. But during conferencing, when student-participants were recording their conferences, I was also conferencing, either with student-participants or with other students. In other words, I

do not have copious field notes about their exchanges, which might have shed light on their facial expressions or body language, perhaps providing greater insight into their interactions. Nor do I have video recordings, which might have done the same.

Another consideration regards the student participants in the study. There were four main participants, and two students who joined late during the study. Again, it is for the reader to decide whether my analysis has enhanced understanding of the practices and processes of adolescent students new to writing conferences. We might also consider how the data is influenced by the kind of student who would return an assent form and be willing to participate in my study. In addition, it is hard to conceive of ways that the writing that they generated during the unit may have been impacted by their participation, but they were fully aware that they were being recorded, and this may have influenced the ways that they conferenced with one another. Finally, these students have participated in Council, community group circles (see Chapter 2), for over two years. This makes them a unique group of students, which the reader might find inhibits generalizations of my study for other student populations.

Also, because student-teacher conferences are part of my research, I basically am studying myself as part of the experience. I own the challenge of an autoethnographic study and have tried to be as transparent and honest as possible in presenting the data that pertained to my role during conferences and as the teacher of the classroom. I strived to maintain autoethnographic reflections in separate *Teacher-as-Researcher* inserts or *Reflective Analytical Memos* in order to separate analysis based mainly on data and reflections based mainly on perceptions. Here too, the reader must determine whether the way I present myself is believable and applicable to their experiences.

Lastly, I as the teacher am new to units of study and new to conferencing. This limits the degree to which findings may be deemed relevant to those well-versed with the writers workshop and writing conferences, and perhaps more relevant to those who are new to it. I in no way mean to represent the teacher's work here as ideal or exemplary, merely to tell one story of ways that some emergent bilingual students and their teacher in one classroom approached writing conferences during the course of writing a memoir.

Finding #3: On Writing Conferences and the Transformation of Writing

Acknowledging the limitations of my study, I am nonetheless compelled by the data that surface from the student-participants' conferencing and their writing samples. In the previous two chapters, I layout my research, making connections between my findings and the complexities of writing (Fig. 6.1 below).

Fig. 6.1, Findings

Finding #1
These adolescent student writers and partners co-construct the writing conference as they grapple with the complexities of writing.

Writing is complex.

Finding #2
Writing conferences are interpersonal exchanges where these adolescent student-participants in this writers workshop class relate with one another and their teacher authentically around their writing.
(2A) Engagement in conferences leads this teacher to grow in trust of her students as writing partners and in herself as a writers workshop teacher.

Writing as a creative process, is both a solitary and a relational endeavor.

Finding #3
Writing conferences are spaces where these adolescent student participants and their teacher co-construct writing processes, transforming writing products.

Writing is a process.
Writing is a product.

Conferences and the Transformation of Writing: Discussion

In chapters four and five, I analyze the data around the writing conference as a space where students engaged with each other (Finding #2) as they shaped the conference (Finding #1) to make meaning around their writing. Conferencing is also a verb in this study. It is what students do as they examine their writing, ask questions, and offer feedback that is then taken (or not) by the writer and used to transform their writing. In this section, I speak to the ways that conferencing led to the transformation of students' writing processes and their writing products, my third finding.

Mo (2014) points out that with the common core standards initiative, we now can change the state of writing instruction. At the same time, Latino youth in research studies are presented, "often flawed, incomplete, or one-dimensional, making it harder to challenge static, problematic, and racialized views of the practices and promise of English Learners" (Gutiérrez & Orellana, 2006, p. 504). Adair, Colegrove and McManus (2017) agree as they recount "the harm that can come from . . . institutionally and publicly justified . . . deficit-oriented research and thinking" (p. 309). They argue for shifts in both the deficit-attitudes and pedagogical practices of educators who focus on decontextualized vocabulary development as a form of literacy education. By presenting emergent bilingual students in my study as critical thinkers, reflective communicators, and competent writers, my study responds to their call to form a counter narrative around Latino youth.

To arrive at my findings around the connections between students' conferencing and their writing products, I used two methods. When students were writing in their notebooks, which was during the first half of the unit, I simply pulled out their notebook and reviewed it alongside the transcriptions of their conference. Students used green ink to indicate at which point in their

writing they conferenced with their partner. In this way, I could determine if the teaching tip given was or was not heeded by the writer. As soon as students began to work with Google Docs, I no longer needed to reference notebooks as all of their work was shared with me through Google Classroom. The facility of referencing older versions of a written assignment allowed me to again assess changes in their writing after they had conferenced on any given day.

During conferences at the beginning of the unit, as soon as writers finished sharing their piece, a partner would typically offer a compliment and/ or a suggestion. After further instruction and modeling around conferencing, writers played a more central role explaining the specific aspect of the writing that they were focusing on. Afterwards, once again, partners responded with either questions, compliments, and /or teaching tips. My study shows these young adolescent participants engaged in the exploratory talk that Mercer (200b) describes where both participants, "Engage critically but constructively with each other's ideas. Relevant information is offered for joint consideration. Proposals may be challenged and counter-challenged, . . . Knowledge is made publicly accountable and reasoning is visible in the talk" (p. 153). What Dewey (in Farr, 2004) refers to as *sympathy* is evidenced in exchanges such as when Ramon gently substituted Chris' use of the word *fat* with the less offensive word, *chubby*. Likewise, Coleman's (1988) *trust* is abundant throughout the data as students build on their human capital by furthering one another's capacity around writing.

As mentioned above, as a subject of study in my research, it is important to note that I also wrote a memoir. This is actually the first time the entire year that I wrote a full piece alongside my students. That is not to say that I wrote at the same time as they were writing, but during the course of the unit. As Kissel (2017) writes, "We teachers provide the best demonstration for writing by being writers ourselves. When we carry daybooks, write frequently,

reflect on our writing, and write for authentic audiences, we become the insiders our students need us to be" (page 127). Having written a memoir, I was able to fully comprehend the intricacies and the complexities of the genre. This enabled me to better support students in their efforts.

In conclusion, I began chapter 4 by laying out the obstacles that stood in the way of me conferencing with students on a regular basis. One hindrance was my own insecurity about being able to look at a piece of writing, or listen to a student talk about their writing, and know that I could be of any service to them. As Minor (2019) points out, "Teaching is not a monologue. It is a dialogue. After hearing what kids have to say, I've got to do something" (p. 16). With practice, I found that I was able to meet students where they were at, such as with Jessica who did not need a suggestion about adding dialogues to create a micro story, but who needed to know that the memoir was something that she could manage given her eighth grade senioritis.

Alongside the vignettes and the conference and writing excerpts throughout chapters four and five, my research demonstrates the varied and complex ways that writers and their partners were animated and engaged around their writing in our co-construction of writing conferences.

Conferences and the Transformation of Writing:
Implications & Suggestions for Further Research

My findings regarding young urban adolescents' conferencing, as it transforms their writing processes and their writing products, have implications. I align myself with Teachers College Reading & Writing Project's (2015 B) goal; I too, "aim to prepare kids for any reading and writing task they will face or set themselves, to turn them into life-long, confident readers and writers who display agency and independence in their future endeavors" (website). The implications for my study however, pertain not to all students, but specifically to emergent

bilingual students. For them, this study newly demonstrates their capacity as writing partners and as writers, bunking the "word gap" and "achievement gap," where a fixation on what is lacking results in dismissing what is present (García & Otheguy, 2017; Erickson, 1986).

This is not to say that emergent bilinguals are without special considerations as regards conferencing and the writers workshop. While not discussed in the analysis chapters, as it did not pertain directly to the writing conferences, I did note that some of the emergent bilingual student-participants continued to benefit from instruction around syntax and grammar that impeded understanding of their writing. This was especially true for Chris (see figure 5.34), but it was also true for other students in the classroom. In wanting to ensure that emergent bilingual students are given time, choice and response in their writing, as are many affluent students throughout the country who participate in the writers workshop, we can still acknowledge that more time may be needed to address additional lessons focused on language forms and functions. In *English Learners in Literacy Workshops*, Riddle Buly (2011) addresses this need by calling for a language workshop in addition to a reading and writing workshop. This instruction, as she lays out, can occur for 15 to 20 minutes a day, or periodically during the week. It is important to keep in mind, however, that these lessons are not to be in lieu of the rich lessons that the *Units of Study* have to offer emergent bilingual students.

My third finding also has implications for classroom teachers. Firstly, it provides insight into ways that peer exchanges can go beyond think-pair-share. With modelling and instruction around ways to listen and question each other, partners can be a tremendous asset to each other's academic and interpersonal growth. Secondly, this finding speaks to workshop teachers who consider and discard the idea of conferencing as integral to their students' learning (Applebee, et al., 2003), and to the teacher's learning as well. Now better versed in conferencing, I have

heightened awareness that any teaching points that I make during whole class instruction might fall on deaf ears because they do not relate to where students are in their development as writers. This is not to suggest that whole class instruction is irrelevant, only to offer that it be balanced with one-to-one exchanges where the teacher can fully understand her students' capacities and challenges as writers. In doing so, she might ensure that class instruction is relevant to more, if not all, of her students. This has implication for teachers using TCRWP's *Units of Study* with its comprehensive lesson plans that detail every aspect of every workshop lesson. As Kissel (2017) suggests in *When Writers Drive the Workshop*, these unit plans may hinder teachers in tuning lessons to their students' needs. On the other hand, I have witnessed workshop teachers discard the *Units of Study* only to inundate their "below-level" students with lengthy whole-class lessons, allowing little time for independent writing. Teachers of emergent bilingual students are challenged to strike a balance between meeting the students where they are at with their writing, and pushing them forward with the opportunities for writing that the *Units of Study* present.

In conclusion, more research is needed to study ways that adolescent students co-construct writing conferences. Questions arising from my research are:

1. How do boys and girls differ in their approach to conferencing?
2. How might students conference when writing in other genres?
3. How might students impact each other's writing when working in a small group? or sharing with the whole class?

Studies around these questions would allow for greater understanding of the ways that the workshop model meets the needs of urban adolescent students by providing them rigor and relevance. For emergent bilingual students, this is especially relevant as rigor and relevance are often lacking in English language development courses (Maxwell-Jolly, Gándara and Méndez Benavídez, 2007). Similarly, more research is needed at the secondary level around conferencing with students outside of the English classroom, perhaps when engaged around project-based

learning in any of the content area or elective courses. This research might shed light, as does my own study, on ways that these students learn from each other and with their teacher through the construct of interpersonal exchanges.

Finding #2: On Participants and our Engagement in Writing Conferences

Engaging in the Conference: Discussion

My second finding is that writing conferences are spaces where student-participants relate with one another and the teacher authentically around the writing. Research that relates to this finding centers around urban students' need for strong positive relationships amongst each other and with their teachers, not only to thrive, but to survive in schools (Osterman, 2000; Newberg, 1995; Noddings, 1984, 2005a & b; Valenzuela, 1999). My study shows how these relationships play out during writing conference exchanges. In chapters four and five, I detail the ways that these exchanges are authentic, demonstrating students' honesty, vulnerability, attentiveness, and full use of their language toolkits. My research shows that adolescents new to writing conferences in Central ██████████ may experience what Hanifan wrote about 100 years ago (". . . goodwill, fellowship, mutual sympathy and social intercourse among a group of individuals and families who make up a social unit" [as cited in Farr, 2004, p. 11]), and what Freire wrote about in the last century ("(we) engage in dialogue because (we) recognize the social and not merely the individualistic character of the process of knowing" (Freire & Macedo, 1995, p. 379). Likewise, I as their teacher experienced what Marsh (2009) wrote in the last decade when describing her own work with adolescents in a writers workshop, "At this moment, the three of us seemed interested in each other's lives—something I hadn't experienced with these sixth graders yet. In my short time in their classroom those first two days, I had only seen the students at odds with each other or simply uninterested. But, at that moment,

I experienced what I had formerly experienced when I taught; I saw how a piece of writing and the conversation that emerged from it brought us together" (p. 78). Participating in writing conferences served to loosen my own armor, and helped me become more like the "warm demander" teacher I always admired (Hammond, 2015). In other words, during the course of the unit, I began to move past an ideology of control to what Noddings (2005b) describes as pedagogy with an "emphasis on creating, maintaining, and enhancing positive relations" (p. 21). I too as the teacher experienced the benefits of being fully engaged with students around their writing.

Data that I only slightly referenced in my analysis was the amount of laughter that occurred in the conference exchanges. But it is worth mentioning here that alongside the rigor and the focused efforts around writing, there was evidence of the simple joy of being in exchange with another person. Noddings (1999, 2005b) argues that within a theory of care, the teacher benefits as well as the student during exchanges such as these. She details how carrying encounters, when built upon one another, create and sustain caring relationships. Throughout the course of this unit, I felt what she describes. I felt connected with my students as I had not felt since I taught elementary. Fig. 6.2 below demonstrates the range of my emotional response

Fig. 6.2, Photos: Student-teacher Writing Conference Interpersonal Exchanges

during one writing conference.[34] See insert below, *Teacher-as-Researcher: The Power of an Audience!*

While Noddings' research focuses on the relationships between teachers and students, my study also sheds light on the relationships between peers, demonstrating the importance of those relationships to adolescents (Osterman, 2000; NMSA, 2010; Anderman, 2003). The data around peer conferences that I describe above as evidence of authentic exchanges is further supported by the degree to which participants listened to one another. Initially, partners listened to the writers share their work knowing that they would need to offer a suggestion, and a compliment as well. For them at that stage of their development as a writing

> *Teacher-as-Researcher:*
> *The Power of an Audience!*
> This was actually my first student-teacher conference for this unit. Ramon was sharing with me his very first entry, and I was asking him questions to understand what was the most important part of his story. In his draft (RD1) he wrote about a basketball game that he would never forget. During our conference, I laughed at how he described himself in his writing, "I know I have a huge impact on my team because I'm a really great player." Then he showed me where in his writing he had talked about his feelings when his dad had pulled him out of the game: "So when he took me out I felt really angry and disappointed." I asked him to tell me what happened, and I was shocked and mortified for Ramon. See his final memoir in Appendix B to see how much he stretched what he had initially written as feeling "angry" and "disappointed." I wish I could show Ramon's facial expressions. He's a pretty mellow guy, but he thoroughly enjoyed the way his audience responded to the story that he told. I think this exchange may have motivated him to put those details into his writing. This is the power of an audience!

conference partner, this was listening. But with practice, they came to understand that listening did not mean being ready with automatic response. It could mean just listening to see what in the writing spoke to you. It could mean asking the writer first what was important for them in the way of your feedback. My research shows that with modelling and practice, then *this* became what it meant for student-participant partners to listen to writers.

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[34] My research does not include photo images of students. For this reason, I blanked-out the student's face. The conference was video-taped for an English department professional development meeting, and I created these photos from still images of the video recording.

The data in my study reflects that these student-participants engaged with each other, fully listening to one another, writers as well as their partners. While I never observed a student-participant writer taking notes during a conference, 67.5% of the time they made changes based on their partner's teaching tip. This could only have been possible if they were listening to their partner.

Engaging in the Conference: Implications & Suggestions for Further Research

My research finding relating to ways that writers engage with their peer and teacher partners during writing conferences is supported by researchers Hodson, Valenzuela, and Balanz. Hodson (1999) argues that students need to be in a supportive and emotionally safe environment for them to be able to navigate the authentic learning of a workshop setting. Valenzuela (1999) finds that high academic, social, and motivational costs result from the absence of authentic relations between students and teachers. Balanz (2009) details the results for middle schoolers who are disengaged in classrooms, ways that they either withdraw, push back, or flee. In this section, I outline the implications of my second finding as it speaks to these three researchers and students' interpersonal connections in the classroom. I present how my study has relevance for teachers in front of the classroom, for emergent bilingual adolescent students around translanguaging and the memoir genre, and for the common core genre units. I conclude with a call for further research around these areas and around classroom Council circles and mindfulness meditative practices.

Part II of Zaretta Hammond's (2015) *Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain: Promoting Authentic Engagement and Rigor Among Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students*, is titled "Building Learning Partnerships." Here, she names how partnerships between students and teachers may be formed, with the use of an equation: rapport + alliance = cognitive

insight. She calls on teachers to first build rapport with students by establishing emotional connections and building trust. She could be talking to any conferencing teacher, including myself, when she suggests that we, "create a system to help (us) look closely at and listen carefully to (our) focal student" (p. 82). She then explains the way that teachers exist along a continuum around their expectations for students and another continuum around their relatedness to students (see Fig. 6.3 below).

Fig. 6.3, Warm Demander Chart, Hammond (2015), p. 99

Figure 6.2 Warm Demander Chart

Active Demandingness

☀ THE WARM DEMANDER

- Explicit focus on building rapport and trust. Expresses warmth through non-verbal ways like smiling, touch, warm or firm tone of voice, and good natured teasing.
- Shows personal regard for students by inquiring about important people and events in their lives.
- Earns the right to demand engagement and effort.
- Very competent with the technical side of instruction.
- Holds high standards and offers emotional support and instructional scaffolding to dependent learners for reaching the standards.
- Encourages productive struggle.
- Viewed by students as caring because of personal regard and "tough love" stance.

⚙ THE TECHNOCRAT

- Has no explicit focus on building rapport. Doesn't focus on developing relationships with students, but does show enthusiasm for the subject matter.
- Holds high standards and expects students to meet them.
- Very competent with the technical side of instruction.
- Able to support independent learners better than dependent learners.
- Viewed by students as likeable even if distant because of teacher competence and enthusiasm for subject.

Personal Warmth ← → Professional Distance

❤ THE SENTIMENTALIST

- Explicit focus on building rapport and trust. Expresses warmth through verbal and nonverbal communication.
- Shows personal regard for students.
- Makes excuses for students' lack of academic performance.
- Consciously holds lower expectations out of pity because of poverty or oppression. Tries to protect students from failure.
- Either over scaffolds instruction or dumbs down the curriculum.
- Doesn't provide opportunities for students to engage in productive struggle.
- Allows students to engage in behavior that is not in their best interest.
- Liked by students but viewed as a push-over.

☆ THE ELITIST

- No explicit or implicit focus on building rapport or trust.
- Keeps professional distance from students unlike himself.
- Unconsciously holds low expectations for dependent learners.
- Organizes instruction around independent learners and provides little scaffolding.
- Mistakes cultural differences of culturally and linguistically diverse students as intellectual deficits.
- Makes certain students feel pushed out of the intellectual life of the classroom.
- Allows dependent students to disengage from learning and engage in off-task behavior as long as not disruptive.
- Viewed by students as cold and uncaring.

Passive Leniency

I found this language to be extremely helpful as I worked to grow from "the technocrat" toward "the warm demander" during the course of my study. It helped me to recognize what I saw in so many teachers whom I admired for the results that they got from their students. Not coincidentally, these teachers also had a close rapport with students, a rapport that I aspired to, as I described in *Teacher-as-Researcher: The Beginnings of Storytelling in Room 204* (Chapter 4). The language in this chart provides understanding of the learning processes for teachers wanting to begin conferencing practices, or wanting to create positive relationships with students. Much like conferencing partners who only knew to listen to writers one way (respond immediately with a compliment or suggestion) until they were shown a different way (first ask the writer questions), workshop teachers might only know how to have "high standards and expectations for students," but not necessarily how to "show personal regard for students by inquiring about important people and events in their lives" (Fig. 6.2 above). My research supports Hammond's findings that once teachers have this rapport with students, we can expect them to become, not so much independent learners as Hammond argues, but perhaps more importantly, interdependent learners as my study shows.

Socioculturalists such as Gutiérrez (1997), Moje (2004) and Barton (2008) view classrooms as third spaces in which the ways of school and the ways of home contend with one another in order for real learning to occur. At the same time, researchers (Miler & Sperry, 2012) argue that English Learners are not suffering from a 30 million-word gap, as so many have come to believe based on Hart and Risley's (2003) research. Miller and Sperry (2012) call for studies that show the strength of narrative, story-telling practices among low-income children. My study answers this call, not for toddlers, but for young adolescents engaged in a comprehensive

memoir genre study, whereby the workshop environment serves as a third space for students to bring their home language back into the classroom.

This has implications for educators, schools, and districts that promote bi-literacy. After years of focusing on English learners to reclassify and demonstrate their fluency as English proficient students, we now consider how to merge the chasm that we have created for the students. My study shows that this work entails providing students with literary texts that honor their multilingual multifaceted communities. Then we might simply ask students to try-out the style of these model texts in their own writing. What occurs might be the beginnings for students of a bridge back to what they might have lost with schools' sole focus on English language development. One student's memoir, not a participant in my research, began describing how everyone in her house used to speak Spanish, and she would always talk with her mom when she got back from school. She wrote about how, over time, she would get impatient with her mom as she struggled to express herself in English because her daughter could not understand her Spanish. This student concluded her memoir with a microstory on how the two now are both learning: "My Spanish and my translating have gotten a lot better. Even my mom's English has gotten better. . . My mom still needs help when it comes to texting her bosses in English, but I help her by correcting her. I'm proud of her because out of nowhere she talks to me in English. For example, I was in my room the other day and my mom wanted to tell me something so she called me by saying, 'daughter.' I was surprised cause she has never called me that" (Diedra, 2019).

Identity development is key for adolescents (Osterman, 2000), and educators might consider adopting practices in the classroom for adolescent emergent bilingual students who may have become distanced from their home language, to reframe it as something of value.

Fortunately, such educators need not start from scratch. Collaborative work led by García and Otheguy unites these efforts between New York city schools, city universities and state universities. They offer free resources on their website around nurturing a multilingual ecology in classrooms and in schools. The importance of my study as it relates to translanguaging for emergent bilingual adolescents is that it does not take much to enlighten and empower students and have them reconsider the worth of their home language, and include it in their classroom and in their conversations with one another.

This school district offers bi-literacy awards for students culminating from fifth grade and eighth grade, in addition to the seal of bi-literacy offered by the state for high school graduates. I contend that few teachers know about these certificates, or what is asked of students to earn them. My research shows the importance of furthering these goals, not for yet another statistic around the literacy of emergent bilingual students, but more so to celebrate ways that classrooms can truly become third spaces for learning.

My second finding also bears significance as it relates to the importance of students telling and owning their stories. During the memoir unit, students had an opportunity to explore what was important for them about their lives as they transition from middle school to high school. The memoir asks that students go beyond telling a narrative to finding themes that pull together the personal narratives that mean something to them. Above I explain the significance for emergent bilingual adolescents who may have experienced a rift between home and school languages. Here I speak to the particular need of adolescents to discover who they are. Implications for the teacher can be found in the words of Paulo Freire: "The teacher is of course an artist, but being an artist does not mean that he or she can make the profile, can shape the students. What the educator does in teaching is to make it possible for the students to become

themselves" (in Minor, 2019, p. vi). My study has reinforced the importance of students owning their stories as a step towards becoming themselves.

In *Becoming—Michelle Obama,* Obama (2018) relates the importance of story ownership as it pertains to students who may have come to find themselves invisible in school. Obama, it seems, accepts commencement speaker requests from schools that "normally didn't land high-profile(rs)" such as herself (p. 404). She uses these speeches as an opportunity to convey to students messages that she thinks would be important for them to hear. She tells how she relates to what they might experience as *invisibility*. She writes, "I knew invisibility. I'd lived invisibility. I came from the history of invisibility. I like to mention that I was the great-great granddaughter of a slave named Jim Robinson, who was probably buried in an unmarked grave somewhere on a South Carolina plantation. And in standing at a lectern in front of students who were thinking about the future, I offered testament to the idea that it was possible, at least in some ways, to overcome invisibility" (p. 405). Later in her memoir, her words struck me as they spoke not only to what I imagined might be some of my students' experiences, but also to my own experience.

> So many of us go through life with our stories hidden, feeling ashamed or afraid when our whole truth doesn't live up to some established ideal. We grew up with messages that tell us that there's only one way to be an American – that if our skin is dark or our hips are wide, if we don't experience love in a particular way, if we speak another language or come from another country, then we don't belong. That is, until someone dares to start telling that story differently./
> I grew up with a disabled dad in a too – small house with not much money in a starting-to-fail neighborhood, and I also grew up surrounded by love and music in a diverse city in a country where an education can take you far. I had nothing or I had everything. It depends on which way you want to tell it (pp. 415-16).

During the course of this memoir unit, I presented students with model texts that reflected the beauty and perhaps some not-so-beautiful truths about growing-up Latino in this country. I

did not want to define for them which way to tell their story, which lens they were experiencing at that moment in their adolescence. I merely wanted to encourage them to tell their story as they saw it. As mentioned in *Teacher-as-Researcher: Memoirs to Transform Lives* (Chapter 5), I hoped that the beginning of their storytelling might be a transformative process for them.

The implication here for educators relates to a reconceptualization of the common core, with a focus on urban students' lived experiences. The common core calls for four genre studies every year in English language arts: narrative, information, opinion/argument, and response to literature. Findings from my study suggest a reconsideration of these units that present literacy in separate silos. Instead, we can consider use of the memoir to reframe annual genre studies. We might begin the school year with a memoir, with a focus on its narratives. Within that memoir students might reflect on some aspect of their story that they want to learn more about. This can drive their writing in the information as well as the argument units. It can also drive the response to literature unit with a focus around literature that speaks to the themes they have explored in their own writing. The final unit could be a return to the memoir that now might include aspects of information writing, research, as well as literary references, yielding a rich and relevant multi-genred piece for students. In this way, urban students might give voice to their experiences, allowing them to move towards "becoming themselves" (as Freire says), instead of becoming "invisible" (as Obama laments).

I conclude this section on implications of my second finding with a call for more research around classroom structures that support healthy peer relations, structures like Council and mindful meditative practices. In chapters two and three, I describe how students in this study participate regularly in Council, and have done so since sixth grade. This year I started a mindful meditative practice at the beginning of every class. For approximately four minutes we listened

to some background alpha-wave brain music off youtube (Concentration Music with Alpha Waves, 2015) and simultaneously were guided to quietness and stillness with a meditation recording from a website called, *Mindfulness for Teens* (n.d.). On one particularly harried day, I decided we did not have time for this practice. As I went straight to the lesson, Ramon spoke up, "We aren't going to meditate today?" I started to explain how we had a lot to get through, then stopped myself and played the links as per usual. For him, this practice mattered. Beyond the scope of my study is an understanding of how this short daily meditative practice "mattered" in terms of the interactions of the student–participants. The same is true for the relevance of their Council practices. Yet when designers of the school wrote the pilot proposal, they intentionally linked the rigor of the workshop with the socioemotional supports of Council. Interesting research would shed light on the significance of this connection. Such research might contribute to Dewey's assertions in 1916, when he described education as key in this democracy because it leads us to "see across and through the walls which separate" (page 139).

Finding #1: On Participants and their Shaping of Writing Conferences

Shaping the Conference: Discussion

Sociocultural theory highlights the inherently context–dependent, situated, and enculturating nature of expert learning and knowledge (Lave & Wegner, 1995; Gee, 2001; Brown & Duguid, 1989). My third finding speaks to this research and the ways that participants of my study shaped the writing conferences over time.

In Chapter 4, I describe beginnings of student-teacher and peer conferences. I explain how it was difficult for me to conference with a student and give them my full attention. These struggles related to the control that I felt I needed to have in the classroom. I had to know what all my students were doing, that time was not being wasted. And I could not figure out how to do

this and at the same time give my undivided attention to one student. Yet Anderman (2003) writes that youth who take ownership of their learning require that teachers need first to relinquish it. I would add that any relinquishing requires a conviction on the part of the teacher that students are worthy of this shared role as co-constructors of the knowledge in the classroom. It was this conviction that empowered me to work through obstacles and create the structures in the classroom that would support conferencing: providing students tools, time and modelling.

Once conferencing got underway, participants co-constructed its development during the course of the unit. In chapter 4, I describe how participants typically began and ended conferences, and spoke at length to the role of the script–guideline as it provided a tool for student apprentices to focus their conversations around the goals of the writer. Chapter 5 shows how increased use of this tool demonstrated a process whereby they absorbed and became absorbed in the specific culture of writing conferences (Lave & Wegner, 1995).

My study also shows that there is a connection between the peer conferences and student-teacher conferences. Student-writers reshape their experience with the teacher when they are partners around their peer's writing. In Chapter 4, I shared how Ramon and Chris began to end their conferences by saying *thank you*, something that I typically did. And in Chapter 5, I detail how the teaching tip (*put the reader in the moment*) that I gave to Naomi and Ramon was repeated by them with their partners and resurfaced later with each other. In these ways, the teacher played the role of "old timer" within a writing conference, who allowed peripheral participation from newcomer students (Lave & Wegner, 1991, p. 95). In my study, student participants were not newcomers for long. They quickly became master practitioners (Lave & Wegner, 1991), as evidenced by Ramon providing feedback based on his own critical listening of his peers' writing, not related to a previous teaching point at all ("Don't tell the theme"). Their

role as master practitioner is also evident by the fact that as a partner they impacted each other's writing 67.5% of the time, and as a writer, they made changes to their writing based on their audience's feedback, again 67.5% of the time. I also frequently referred to students as *writers* during our conferences, thereby increasing their sense of identity as master practitioners.

Through our co-construction of writing conferences, I came to realize that conferences could be more impactful if they occurred during the middle of the workshop as opposed to the end of the workshop. Ideally students might conference with each other as needed throughout the workshop (Hsu, 2009). Still, TCRWP *Units of Study* call for students to share their writing with their partner at the end of independent writing time; in the middle of independent workshop, the TCRWP-minded teacher offers another teaching point. Substituting a mid-workshop teaching point with peer conferencing made a difference in students' level of focused attention during the second half of independent writing time (FN.CD14). An additional structural change that facilitated writing was having students share their writing goals with each other at the beginning of independent writing time. This is a common practice in the TCRWP *Units of Study* lessons, but one that I had not followed prior to this unit.

Shaping the Conference: Implications & Suggestions for Further Research

Implications of my research regarding my third finding point to the ways that teachers new to conferencing might approach the shifting practice and pedagogy. Then continuing to strengthen classroom practices, a teacher such as myself who has gained some facility with conferencing might consider ways to have her classroom move from a "formal environment" to reflect what Donald Graves (1975) describes as an "informal environment," where students function with little teacher direction and have choice in determining learning activities, such as peer conferencing. This is similar to how Hsu (2009) describes her class, where students are

engaged in conferencing with each other throughout the workshop, increasing their practice with listening and critiquing writing. Hsu's workshop reflects what Hodson (1999) asserts: when a community of writers is engaged in inquiry around authentic questions about their writing, the teacher is not the sole-possessor of knowledge.

Another implication that relates to my third finding is a repositioning of the role of the teacher in a writing conference from someone who has a teaching point and who tracks whether students follow it, to someone whose main objective is to assist the writer in the processing of their piece (Kisell, 2017). This speaks to the ways that overly focusing on structures, and rubrics, and progression charts can take the soul out of writing and out of relating.

One suggestion for further research regarding my third finding is a call for universities to work alongside K-12 schools to further this important work around peer relations, teacher-student relatedness, and the ways that adolescents learn from one another when conferencing. The school where this study took place is no longer. Unique to this school, in my experience, is the fact that the rigor in my classroom was expected of all students in all classrooms – including emergent bilingual students, and students with IEPs. All students were doing this work in their English classes. All teachers were grappling with it, alongside our principal. But no one was really supporting her. In six years, she had six different directors, making it impossible for any one of them in their short stint to even be aware of her challenges, much less support her through them. It seems to me that if the school were in partnership with a university, I would not be mourning its dismantling.

I wonder how the university might find schools like this one, and learn alongside them, answering questions such as:

1. How do workshop teachers grow to trust their students in peer writing conferences and trust themselves in student-teacher conferences?

2. How do school-cite principals support teachers' adoption of the writers workshop for urban young adolescent students?
3. How do directors and district administrators support principals and schools' adoption of the writers workshop?

A partnership might allow teachers to engage in critical research that will further their practice. I must confess that I cringe when I read studies conducted in classrooms where the researcher unveils that the problem has been the teacher all along. This is not to say that I do not recognize ways that teachers inhibit student potential. But it is different for me to realize that about myself, and to go through the discomfort of shifting my practice to address this disservice. Qualitative researchers in classrooms might support teachers who themselves can determine ways to share the vulnerabilities of shifting practices with one another, instead of being called out for failing to see what the university person so clearly sees. Furthermore, the academy might provide similar supports towards administrators, school-site and district, so that they may also engage in action research to further their practice in support of rigorous approaches to meet the needs of urban students. In conclusion, the university might continue to expand its presence in communities dire for voice, and at the same time strengthen its capacity to serve the hundreds of educators who flock to it every year, drawn to the social justice blood that runs through its veins.

As I wrote on the whiteboard at the beginning of the year, I write here, now, with the intent that this university become a model to be followed by others, serving the community by co-constructing learning alongside K-12 teachers and administrators around powerful liberating literacy practices for urban students. "Intention: Build learning community."

Final Thoughts
My final thoughts pertain to the relevance of writing conferences for youth today, to middle school belonging and memoirs, to teachers wavering in their commitment to conferencing.

Put simply, writing conferences are live, real-time, human exchanges around creative endeavors. With the rising use of social media as a means of relating, these types of exchanges are fading fast for students outside of the classroom. This is all the more reason for us to place priority on opportunities for meaningful interpersonal exchanges within the school setting. In addition, given the complex and creative processes of writing, it is nice to have a thought partner.

In Chapter 1, I cited Balanz's (2009) caution that, "During middle grades, students in high-poverty environments are either launched on the path to high school graduation or knocked off-track" (p. 7). I also wrote that, "it is the role of schools . . . to enable students to secure their own unique (ways to be a) contribution as they forage into society as critical citizens, in a matter that both fulfills and sustains them." Basically, we know that middle school matters for urban youth. I know that dropping out in eighth-grade was a turning point for my little brother. Of my students who barely made it through culmination, I could see how they were hanging by a thread at the end of middle school. How, I fear, will high school strengthen that thread? For them, I propose that the entire English curriculum be centered around their story, like it was at Exeter for my friend (Bowden, Personal Communication, June 11, 2019). Perhaps this way, they might, as Michelle Obama (2018) suggests—*become*. "It's not about where you get yourself in the end. There is power in allowing yourself to be known and heard, and owning your unique story, in using your authentic voice. And there's grace in being willing to know and hear others. This, for me, is how we become" (p. 421). This is what I want for my students, for all students, for all of us, really. To become. To belong. To be seen, listened to, understood. Writing conferences, I posit, are an excellent avenue towards making this a reality for our students, for those of us fortunate enough to work with adolescents around literacy.

And so it is to teachers that some of my final thoughts go towards. Similar to me prior to my study, teachers may not embrace conferencing because we are unsure what students like ours might have to offer each other in the way of "help" with their writing. We might focus on all that students CAN'T do. But in so doing, we miss out on opportunity to build on what students CAN do. I think that this is true for how we see ourselves as teachers, as well. At least it was for me. As I was conducting my research, I often chastised myself for all that I did not do, for all the ways that my conferencing with students fell short, for all the ways that I still run a teacher-centered classroom, all the ways that I do not encourage inquiry, for all the ways that I inhibit students learning from each other because I cannot handle the noise level and because I do not trust that they are talking about their writing. But when I was forced to find within my data answers to my research questions, I could be really proud of my students' work, and of my work, as well.

What we look for, we see—in our students and in ourselves. I hope that we as teachers, who are also ever learners, continue to look for ways to become that learning community with our students. It is, I believe, why we became teachers in the first place.

AFTERWORD—RESEARCHER-AS-STUDENT:
ON THE SOUL LEARNING BEHIND MY RESEARCH

Last summer, I began work that would lead to this dissertation. I cleared clutter from my garage, pulled out dusty boxes that stored my doctoral and Principal Leadership Institute coursework, and turned my dining room into a study. It is where I sit to write. A year ago, I read and wrote for countless hours about whatever interested me . . . a *lot* of Brené Brown. I worked to develop the muscles that now sustain me during these final days before I submit my dissertation to my committee. Today, I found a note I wrote dated exactly one year ago on an electronic file that I had titled, "Reflections on dissertation process."

> 8/1/2018
> What I'd like to do is outline for each week what my focus has been on.
> June 18 - July 6-- for 3 weeks, I worked on clearing out my garage and organizing a place for me to work, changing the dining room into a study. I love the space--I can see out the large living room windows, trees and sky, and a telephone pole. And out the back window, I can just make out the mountains. When it's not too hot, I open up the front door and the French doors and let in a lovely breeze. I bought a large screen to connect to my Chromebook, cushions for the desk chair, and managed to connect the Chromebook to my printer via the cloud--don't even know how I did that. I also spent a lot of time going through electronic files from my work desktop, my old laptop and two external hard drives. I organized files, keeping important ones and transferring them to the drive. I ironed-out with Harmeet from UCLA what it would take, calendar and money-wise, to complete my dissertation in a year. And during this time, till the first of July, I also finished the hiring process with █████Unified School District. I worked in some form or fashion just about every day to get myself ready.

I enjoy reading my thinking at that time. I was so ambitious.

But there were many times throughout the year, when fear and panic struck me, paralyzing me, almost immobilizing me. *I don't know enough. I haven't read enough. I can't write that way. I'm a fraud, a fake, and a phony. I don't belong here.*

Essentially, a lot of soul work has gone into my dissertation. In order to make my way through to the other side during those moments filled with self-doubt, I created what I call my

Daily Dissertation Prayer. When I sit down to work at my desk/dining room table, I ring a

meditation sound bowl that chimes like the beginning of our daily class meditation. After I hear

no more reverberations, I pull up my prayer and I read it aloud to help me get started with my

writing because getting started is the hardest part for me. In part, it reads:

> *Beloved True Source, I thank you for showing me the way to be a contribution in*
> *my work, in my creative endeavors as a student, as a teacher, as an educator, as a*
> *researcher, as a writer. May my dissertation reflect a profound commitment to all*
> *students everywhere and to the belongingness needed for us to learn who we are,*
> *to grow towards our calling, for the good of all souls involved. Please and thank*
> *you for helping me to release worries, fears and self-criticisms when I read and*
> *when I write towards my dissertation. . . . Please and thank you for providing me*
> *with direction, with clarity of thought, and with strength of conviction.*

In countless ways throughout the year, my prayer was being answered. Little miracles

showed-up all around me. Clearing out a bookshelf, I would come upon a book I didn't even

know I had, open it and read exactly what I needed to learn at that moment. An advisor,

committee members, a research group, a supportive principal, and students willing to participate

in my study—except for one, all people I either didn't know or barely knew a year ago, now

integral to my research. As I reflect on this past year, on these innumerous little miracles, I am

overwhelmed with gratitude and humility.

Yet there were still times during the course of my research, even with my *Daily*

Dissertation Prayer and all the signs pointing me to the right places, that I would freeze-up or

meltdown. I have since begun a little practice that has served me during these moments. I tap my

heart chakra as I say out loud, "I love and accept myself completely. I love and accept myself

completely. I love and accept myself completely." When I can't focus because I am cut to the

core with worries about the well-being of a loved one, I tap my heart chakra as I repeat three

times, "I love and accept _____ completely." And when I feel the most powerless and most

incensed, I tap my heart chakra as I repeat three times, "I love and accept Donald completely."

This way, I get through to the other side, and keep going. Building bridges as best I can.

Appendix A: Student Assent Forms (English & Spanish)

Dear Student:

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by Gloria Rodriguez, your teacher, as part of her dissertation as a doctoral student under Professor Marjorie Faulstich Orellana (who can be reached via email at orellana@gseis.ucla.edu) in the education department at the University of California, Los Angeles. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you are a Reclassified Fluent English Proficient student. Your participation in this research study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not adversely affect your relationship with Ms. Rodriguez or your grade in her class.

Why is this study being done?
This study is being done to understand how conferencing with your peer writing partner and with your teacher help you with your writing. Ms. Rodriguez will share what she learns from studying your peer conferences, your teacher conferences, and your writing samples with others who want to teach students like you how to work with another person to help improve their writing.

What will happen if I take part in this research study?
Please talk this over with your parents before you decide whether or not to participate. We will also ask your parents to give their permission for you to take part in this study. But even if your parents say "yes" you can still decide not to do this.

If you volunteer to participate in this study, Ms. Rodriguez will ask you to do the following:
- Audio record your peer writing conferences each day that we have a writers workshop lesson, typically Monday-Thursday for 5-10 minutes. Ms. Rodriguez will provide you with a digital audio recording device and teach you how to use it.
- Allow Ms. Rodriguez to audio record your writing conferences with her, which will occur once every two weeks.
- Allow Ms. Rodriguez to use a phone app to scan the writing pages that correspond to the writing conferences.

How long will I be in the research study?
Participation in the study will take a total of about 40 minutes each week (35 minutes of your peer writing conference and 5 minutes of your teacher writing conference) for a duration of 10 to 12 weeks.

Are there any potential risks or discomforts that I can expect from this study?
There are no potential risks, but minimal discomfort initially while you get used to audio recording your writing conferences, or to having your writing scanned.

Are there any potential benefits if I participate?
You will not directly benefit from your participation in the research.

The results of the research may help other teachers, schools or school districts who want to use the writers workshop and peer conferencing for their students to become strong writers.

Will I receive any payment if I participate in this study?
You will receive no payment for your participation.

Will information about me and my participation be kept confidential?
Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that identify you will remain confidential. It will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Confidentiality will be maintained as follows:

- Ms. Rodriguez will not use your name in any situation, and will assign pseudonyms (fake names) to students participating in the study, to herself as the teacher, and to the school.
- She will remove students' names from scanned copies of their writing.
- She will use codes to record the students' and teacher's names in her fieldnotes. She will keep the list of codes linked to the people that they represent securely stored in a password-protected folder on her personal computer.
- She will store all research documents in a separate locked location for an indefinite period of time.
- After she transcribes (writes) the audio recordings at the end of each class session, she will delete the audio files.

What are my rights if I take part in this study?
You may withdraw your assent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. Your grade will not be affected in any way, whether you participate in the study or you do not.

You can choose whether or not you want to be in this study. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may leave the study at any time without consequences of any kind. You are not waiving any of your legal rights if you choose to be in this research study. You may refuse to answer any questions that you do not want to answer and still remain in the study.

Who can answer questions I might have about this study?
If you have any questions, comments or concerns about the research, you can let Ms. Rodriguez know. She can be reached by phone at 323-788-5555 or by email at gloguez.gr@gmail.com.

If you have questions about your rights as a research subject, or you have concerns or suggestions and you want to talk to someone other than Ms. Rodriguez, you may contact the UCLA OHRPP by phone: (310) 206-2040; by email: participants@research.ucla.edu or by mail: Box 951406, Los Angeles, CA 90095-1406.

SIGNATURE OF STUDY PARTICIPANT

I understand the procedures described above. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

I _____ (first and last name), agree to participate in *What Literacy Learning Could Be*, as described above. Please initial for each item below.

- I agree to allow my writing conferences to be audio recorded: Yes____   No____

- I agree to allow scanned copies of my writing: Yes____   No____

_____   _____
 Student Signature   Date

_____   _____
 Parent/Guardian Signature   Date

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCHER OBTAINING ASSENT

 In my judgment the participant is voluntarily and knowingly agreeing to participate in this research study.

_____   _____
 Name of Person Obtaining Assent   Contact Number

_____   _____
 Signature of Person Obtaining Assent   Date

Appendix A: Student Assent Forms (English & Spanish)

Querido estudiante:

Se le pide que participe en un estudio de investigación realizado por Gloria Rodriguez, su maestra, como parte de su disertación como estudiante de doctorado con la profesora Marjorie Faulstich Orellana (se puede contactarla por correo electrónico a orellana@gseis.ucla.edu) en el departamento de educación de la Universidad de California, Los Ángeles. Fuiste seleccionado como posible participante en este estudio porque eres un estudiante reclasificado con dominio del inglés fluido. Su participación en este estudio de investigación es voluntaria. Su decisión de participar o no no afectará negativamente su relación con la Sra. Rodriguez ni tu grado en su clase.

¿Por qué se está haciendo este estudio?

Este estudio se está realizando para comprender cómo las conferencias con su compañero de redacción y con su profesor lo ayudan a escribir. La Sra. Rodriguez compartirá lo que aprende al estudiar sus conferencias de pares, sus conferencias de maestros y sus muestras de escritura con otros que quieran enseñar a estudiantes como usted cómo trabajar con otra persona para ayudar a mejorar su escritura.

¿Qué pasará si participo en este estudio de investigación?

Habla con tus padres antes de decidir si quieres participar o no. También le pediremos a sus padres que den su permiso para que usted participe en este estudio. Pero incluso si tus padres dicen "sí", puedes decidir no hacer esto.

Si se ofrece como voluntario para participar en este estudio, la Sra. Rodriguez le pedirá que haga lo siguiente:

- Grabe en audio las conferencias de escritura de sus compañeros cada día que tengamos una lección de taller de escritores, generalmente de lunes a jueves, de 5 a 10 minutos. La Sra. Rodriguez le proporcionará un dispositivo de grabación de audio digital y le enseñará cómo usarlo.
- Permita que la Sra. Rodríguez grabe en audio sus conferencias de escritura con ella, lo que ocurrirá una vez cada dos semanas.
- Permita que la Sra. Rodríguez use una aplicación de teléfono para escanear las páginas de escritura que corresponden a las conferencias de escritura.

¿Cuánto tiempo estaré en el estudio de investigación?

La participación en el estudio tomará un total de aproximadamente 40 minutos cada semana (35 minutos de la conferencia de redacción de colegas y 5 minutos de la conferencia de redacción de maestros) por un período de 10 a 12 semanas.

¿Hay algún riesgo o malestar potencial que pueda esperar de este estudi No hay riesgos potenciales, pero una molestia mínima al principio mientras te acostumbras a grabar en audio tus conferencias de redacción, o cuando la maestra escanea tu escritura.

¿Hay algún beneficio potencial si participo?
No se beneficiará directamente de su participación en la investigación.

Los resultados de la investigación pueden ayudar a otros maestros, escuelas o distritos escolares que quieran usar el taller de escritores y las conferencias de compañeros para que sus estudiantes se conviertan en escritores fuertes.

¿Recibiré algún pago si participo en este estudio?
Usted no recibirá ningún pago por su participación.

¿Se mantendrá confidencial la información sobre mí y mi participación?
Cualquier información que se obtenga en relación con este estudio y que lo identifique se mantendrá confidencial. Se divulgará solo con su permiso o según lo exija la ley. La confidencialidad se mantendrá de la siguiente manera:
- La Sra. Rodriguez no usará su nombre en ninguna situación, y asignará seudónimos (nombres falsos) a los estudiantes que participan en el estudio, a sí misma como maestra y a la escuela.
- Ella eliminará los nombres de los estudiantes de las copias escaneadas de sus escritos.
- Ella usará códigos para registrar los nombres de los estudiantes y maestros en sus notas de campo. Mantendrá la lista de códigos vinculados a las personas que representan almacenados de forma segura en una carpeta protegida por contraseña en su computadora personal.
- Ella almacenará todos los documentos de investigación en un lugar cerrado por separado por un período de tiempo indefinido.
- Después de que ella transcriba (escribe) las grabaciones de audio al final de cada sesión de clase, eliminará los archivos de audio.

¿Cuáles son mis derechos si participo en este estudio?
Puede retirar su consentimiento en cualquier momento e interrumpir la participación sin penalización. Su calificación no se verá afectada de ninguna manera, ya sea que participe en el estudio o no.

Puede elegir si desea o no participar en este estudio. Si se ofrece como voluntario para participar en este estudio, puede abandonar el estudio en cualquier momento sin consecuencias de ningún tipo. No está renunciando a ninguno de sus derechos legales si elige participar en este estudio de investigación. Puede negarse a responder cualquier pregunta que no quiera responder y aún permanecer en el estudio

¿Quién puede responder las preguntas que pueda tener sobre este estudio?
Si tiene alguna pregunta, comentario o inquietud sobre la investigación, puede informar a la Sra. Rodriguez. Puede comunicarse con ella por teléfono al 323-788-5555 o por correo electrónico a gloguez.gr@gmail.com.

Si tiene preguntas sobre sus derechos como sujeto de investigación, o si tiene inquietudes o sugerencias y desea hablar con alguien que no sea la Sra. Rodriguez, puede comunicarse con el OHRPP de UCLA por teléfono: (310) 206-2040; por correo electrónico: participantes@research.ucla.edu o por correo: Box 951406, Los Angeles, CA 90095-1406.

FIRMA DEL ESTUDIANTE PARTICIPANTE

Entiendo los procedimientos descritos anteriormente. Mis preguntas fueron respondidas satisfactoriamente y acepto participar en este estudio. Me han entregado una copia de este formulario.

Yo _____ (nombre y apellido), acepto participar en Lo que podría ser el aprendizaje de la alfabetización, como se describe anteriormente. Por favor, inicial para cada artículo abajo.

*Acepto permitir que mis conferencias de escritura sean grabadas en audio: Sí _____ No_____

*Acepto permitir copias escaneadas de mis escritos: Sí _____ No_____

_____   _____
Firma del alumno   Fecha

_____   _____
 Firma del padre / tutor   Fecha

FIRMA DEL INVESTIGADOR QUE OBTIENE EL CONSENTIMIENTO

 En mi opinión, el participante acepta voluntariamente y a sabiendas participar en este estudio de investigación.

_____   _____
Nombre de la persona que obtiene el consentimiento   Número de contacto

_____   _____
Firma de la persona que obtiene el consentimiento   Fecha

Appendix B: Student-Participants and Teacher Memoirs

Alina

Always There

There's still a lot I don't know about life and what my future holds for me. But I do know myself, how I am, and how I act. My father, Jaime, taught me how to stand up for myself, work hard in school, and know how to value things. My mother, Claudia, showed me how to appreciate the value of something that I have, how to control myself, and how to respect myself/others. I used to live with both my parents, grandparents, aunt, and two brothers in a 3-bedroom house. Together in our old, yet beautiful house in Elysian Valley (FrogTown), they helped me see how important it is to appreciate what i have.

I shared a bedroom with my brothers and aunt while my parents and grandparents and their rooms. I remember my room being the biggest because it was for the four of us. I also had three doors in my room. One lead to the kitchen, the other to my grandparents' room, and the third would lead you outside to the backyard. I don't remember much about what I would do in that room, but what I do remember is that I would watch a lot of movies like Nacho Libre, Jennifer's Body, Selena, Bad Teacher, and a lot more, but those are at the top of my head. I would also listen to music on the T.V like Spanish rock and the latest hip-hop music.

My little brother Jaime and I used to play outside more than we did inside. But I was a "traviesa[35]" and he was a "travieso" that almost every time we played, we would get in trouble. We had a garden in the back yard and what protected the garden from my dog Fiona was a brick wall around it. When we went outside to play, we would strike matches on the wall, climb over the wall and play inside the garden. We would throw all the dirt out and rip the plants out the dirt. Until my grandma would come and check on us, she would yell, "?Que están haciendo niños traviesos ?! Salte de ahi ahorita !"[36]

We would get out the garden laughing and running away from her as she tried to catch us. Some days we would go to the ███ River and walk down to the water and collect rocks, pieces of glass, and seashells. If we were lucky

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[35] naughty

[36] "What are you doing, naughty children? Jump down from there right now!"

enough to find small fish, we would scoop them up in an ice cream bucket because that's what we would take with us.

I had the closest bond with my little brother, but with my older brother it was a whole other story. My brother Edmond and I were always at each other's throats. We would argue, scream, and shove each other. He never actually really hit me because he knew that he was strong and if he hit me I would start to cry my eyes out. So instead he would just shove me and I would shove him back. My grandma would always have us apologize to each other even though she knew that we didn't mean it. But our bond wasn't all the time like that. There were sometimes that the three of us would get along and play hide-and-seek, or we would hide stuff around the house and see who could find the items the fastest. In school, his friends would bully me and he wouldn't do anything about it until I would start to cry. He would get mad at them and tell them to leave me alone, but it wouldn't really work.

In reality my aunt is my dad's cousin, but since her mom couldn't take care of her or didn't want her, she gave her to her sister, my dad's mom, so she took her in as her own and raised her as if she was her own child. She was a teenager when I was a little kid. But I considered her as my older sister instead of my aunt. I actually believed that she was my sister because my parents didn't tell me she was my aunt. She would pick my brothers and I up from school every day and she would sometimes take us to the park. I remember it was mom's birthday and she asked me if I wanted to help her bake a cake so when my mom came home, we could sing happy birthday to her. I agreed and helped her out. I was about 5 or 6 years old so when we started to decorate the cake I went WILD. I put chocolate frosting, crushed oreos, gummy worms, and a whole bunch of other things. I don't really remember much about what we would do together because she also had school, but I remember that she was my bestfriend and that she would always take care of me.

If I'm being completely honest, my grandma was my best friend and still is to this day (other than my mom). When Jaime and I would go to the river she would take us. She would always spoil me with rings, earrings, and other little things. When she would go to Mexico, she would always bring me back a little gift, whether it was candy, little toys, jewelry, or little purses.

My grandma is always giving me advice. Anytime that I have a problem, I can always go to her to talk about it and she'll give me advice about

what to do in that situation. I remember when I was in 6th grade a girl snitched on me for having a switchblade and I ended up getting suspended. I got suspended for one day, and I spent that day with my grandma because nobody was able to take care of me at my house. So my mom just dropped me off at her house. I remember telling her what had happened and she got pissed off.

"?! Qué estabas pensando?! ?! Qué estabas haciendo con una navaja ?!"[37]

"Edmond me lo dio."

"?Por que te lo dio ?"

"Porque ere de su amigo y me dijo que se lo dia."

"?Y porque no se lo pudo dar Edmond?"

"Porque yo lo miro más que Edmond lo mira. El va a la escuela que está al lado de mia."

"?No es la que a donde va Edmond ?"

"No es la escuela del otro lado, no es la escuela a donde va Edmond."

After I had said that, nothing was said. We just both sat there, on her front porch, quiet as the night. I honestly thought that she was going to be mad at me for as long as I lived. But in reality, she was just disappointed because of what I had done.

Overtime my grandma got over what I did but just because I did what I did, she still saw me as her granddaughter and didn't see me in a different way. She was still there for me when I had a problem. She would give me advice or tell me what to do. Even for the littlest thing, I would go to my grandma because she's always there to support me and is always in my corner.

My mom has always been there for me. Through the good and the bad, well obviously, she has to, she's my mom. But not all moms would care like mine. For example, when I started school she was there every step of the way. I used to speak Spanish because that was my first language. I would have conversations with my mom when we would spend time together. Everybody in my family spoke Spanish and only Spanish. Not one single English word was spoken.

I started school late so when I was in pre-k, I was the oldest in the class because I was 5 or 6. I remember my mom taking me to my classroom and filling out paperwork while I sat at her side. I remember seeing my cousin Joel

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[37] See Appendix C (Item 1) for English Translation of lengthy Spanish text.

dancing with all the other kids. When my mom was done, she said, "Me tengo que ir. Te voy a ver en la casa al rato ok? Te quiero, gorda."[38] And once she started walking away, I went after her crying, begging her to take me with her because I didn't want to be there. But the teacher got me and told me that I had to stay, but that my mom will be back soon. I didn't understand anything the teacher told me because I didn't speak English. So when they told my mom that I had to learn, she would teach me when I got home--read me books in English, speak more English around the house. She was there every step of the way until I finally got it down.

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[38] "I have to leave. I'm going to the house in a little bit, ok? I love you, *gorda*."

Appendix B: Student-Participants and Teacher Memoirs

Chris

Never Give Up

There are many things I still don't know about what there is to come from myself, and find out more about who I really am. But I do know I am an excellent, talented soccer player and will try my best to accomplish my dreams to play professional soccer and get a better life for my parents and I.

My father has taught me how to be humble and live my life in the present. This has really made an impact on me. For example, in a soccer game I even when my team is winning 5-0 or more I stay humble and act like the score is still 0-0. Doing this always reminds me to help my teammates make goals and keep my head down until the end. There is many awesome things that come out of all this. For example, in a game that I am playing losing I keep my head down and try my best to never give up.

My mother has taught me how to how to care for my kids and for them to always be my first priority. For example, my mom has taught me this many time, but this one time specifically when I saw that my mom was supper sick and she still went to work to provide for my family and I. When I saw my mom do this it really had me thinking of why I really need to succeed in life to help her and my family and go over all the pursuer and make it out without giving up.

My soccer team

In my soccer team, I feel like I am just a player with a number and position. For example, when I was in a tournament called state cup, I was just left on the bench as if I did not belong on the team. This was when I began to notice that I was just a kid on the soccer team to the coaches and a number, the number 16.

This was a really big issue for me because all my coaches would want to put me in but they just could not. One conversation I remember I had with my coaches was, "If you really want more playing time then you should at least try to lose weight." Every time I would have this conversation with my coaches, I would always say "ok'" or "I will try my best" but deep down inside I knew I did not actually want to put in the effort. All the time that I spent on the bench really wanted to make me quit, as well as the conversations I would have with my coach, then a few weeks later I did.

When I first left the team I felt like I finally had made a good call and would finally be able to spend more time with my family. I told myself I was gonna now stay in my lane and chill out from soccer for a good while. Then I heard my teammates had won the tournament without me and I started to doubt the decision I made. I started to regret my decision because this was really big tournament and this could have helped me in the future with my career. Then one night, about two weeks after they won, I got a call from my old coach and heard that the coach wanted me to come back and that there was a reason why he was being so hard on me. At that moment, my coach told me something that really helped me move on

and come back with the team. He said "I see lots of potential in the way you play and I believe you can make it but all you have to do is lose the weight and you will already have the skills." This really had me supper motivated because I knew that they had just won the tournament and now we would have more scouts on us and this really brought up my confidence. Another reason why my coach brought up my confidence was because the first day I went back to practice he said, " Chris I invited you to come back and play because you have nice style in play and you have really good attitude". I said, "thank you for giving me a second chance and this time I will really try my best." The next thing my coach told me that brought my confidence the most was, " Chris I am your number one fan and I really want you to succeed and that's why I put all this pressure on you." These words really had me speechless to the point that I actually just said, "ok".

Now I am back with my soccer team and every time I hear my partner saying something bad or when I get left in the bench I know I will just have to work twice as hard.

My 8th Grade Year

In my school I am an 8th grader that was almost not gonna culminate. In school I wanted to try my best and have good grades but in the middle of the year this was really challenging. On my 8th grade year I was really trying to keep my grades at a good consistency but then suddenly I lost all focus and did not even care about my grades.

When this started to happen I lost all hope in my grades and I knew I would not be able to culminate anymore. Then one day, I got called into the office and I had a talk with my counselor and helped my bring my grades up again. The conversation I had with my counselor was actually supper striked. I remember she told me, ¨Chris let's look at your grades from last semester and this semester." I knew that my grades were really bad this semester. I said ¨ok" with a worry on my face. When she finally found my grades, she looked at me with a serrious face and told me, "This is not good Chris. The first semester you had some of the best grades in the school and now you are just making drop". When she told me this I do not know why I got mad. But I said "ok" with some attitude. My counselor noticed that I was giving her some attitude, and I remember she said, "Even if you do not want to culminate for your own self, you can at least try for your parents." This really had me thinking and I went back to class and I told myself, "No more saying school is trash because now I really want to make my momma proud." And now next week, I will finally accomplish that goal by walking the stage.

Jessica

Friendship

My friends have stuck with me since 6th grade. Some turned fake and switched up. I got new friends as well. We became friends. I got closer to those I ever talked to before. I stated to go out more. Went to more parties. Had a lot of fun with my friends. I felt safe knowing they had my back, and helping me out with situations. The best part of my middle school year was all the memories I had. They all made me feel like I had more than one family that really loves me.

I go out a lot. In 6th grade was when I started going out. My mom didn't really like me going out that late or even going out at all. My friends would always go out because their mom let them. I felt left out knowing they were having fun. I always had a felt like I wasn't a part of things. My mood would change when they would talk about where they went and how much fun they had. I would sometimes wish I could tell them, " Okay, we get it you're allowed to go out, yeppie ". But I knew that would start problems. It's not that my mom didn't trust me, she just got scared because I'm a little kid going to a mall with random people there. The first time I went out was for my friend naomi's birthday. It was naomi, me and other friend jason. We went to go watch a movie. That was my very first time going out. We had a lot of fun. After the movie, her dad picked us up and took us to the park for a while. It was pretty late. So when I got home I was pretty scared that my mom would mad and not let me go out anymore. She didn't really mind the time I got home. I told her everything that we did and where we went and what we watched. That was a day I felt not left out. I was happy and glad I went. My mom started to let me go out more often after that day.

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Once I started going out more, I got invited to a lot of places. I felt more free and able to do things I want to do. I would go the mall a lot on Saturdays. My mom felt more safe letting me go out and be a teen even though I was still 12. I was starting to get invited to parties. For example, I went to a friend's surprise party. She was turning 13, and her parents threw her a party. I got invited to it. I didn't really know what to get a teen for a gift, so I gave her money. That was my first actual party that went without my mom. A lot of my friends were there. Some got in trouble for doing something. But other than

Appendix B: Student-Participants and Teacher Memoirs

that, the party was really fun. I got picked up at 10:00. Once I got home my mom asked, "como fue el party." I sat next to her and started to tell her what we did and what they were giving out to eat. We spent like a few minutes talking about it. My mom was happy to see that I was having fun and enjoying going out. I didn't think I was gonna be able to go out till I was like 15, but my mom really trusts me enough to let me go out.

A lot of friends switched up. I didn't think they were ever gonna stop being my friend, they all turned fake. I've known some of them for a really long time. Since I was like in kinder or when I barely moved to ███████. They were not only my friends but like family to me. But things happen for a reason. I just didn't expect things to happen that way. Not only did I lose friends, I gained new bonds, trust, friendship, etc… I met new people, stop talking to old friends. Things really do change for the good and bad. I felt really lonely when my close friends stopped hanging out with me, talking to me, being my friend. It felt like everything was going to change. For example, some one that I had known for like 10 years, I trusted with anything, her grandma is dating my uncle, we are almost family, I loved her so much had stopped being friends with me. Well I kinda cut her off in 2018 because she was starting a lot of problems and changed a lot once she went to Nightingale. We were really close. We would go to each other's houses. Our parents were also close, they were the reason why we became friends. She came to my Hawaii theme party. We had a water jumper and everything. We were both kids at that time. And we had barely moved out to ███████ so I didn't really have any school friends besides my neighbors and kids that lived up the street. Once we both said hi to each other we clicked. Ever since we became besties. She was my r.o.d (ride or die). But I guess not no more.

The reason we stopped talking to each other was because she was starting beef with everyone. People didn't want to talk to me no more because of her. Like, girl, what you think I belong to only you and I'm only your friend? The day I had enough was when she started talking about my best friend when I had never talked about hers. A lot of people wanted to fight her for always talking mad poop. One day I was in my bed chilling watching Jake Paul then I go on Instagram, seeing all this tea. I was entertained for a sec until I went on melina's live and saw all this chisme[39] happening. I got brought into it for some reason. Then I saw my ex besties name and of course started it all. They started telling me what she was saying behind my back, so I stopped talking to her. Then boom we ain't

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[39] gossip

friends. I made new friends that day, talked to people I never knew who they were. I haven't been getting in a lot of trouble ever since I stopped hanging out with her. Everyone at Cypress Park didn't really like her and thought she was a bad kid to be around. People thought I was going to turn out like her. But now that we don't talk she, doesn't go to the park no more.

Even though I lost someone really close to me, I still gained new friends and I'm still friends, talk to them till this day. I came to the realization that friends come and go. They can also change, even if you have known them your whole life. Things changed for the better. MY friends are the best, and my new friends are being a good impact in my life. Fakes are snakes. LOL. But still hope they doing good.

Naomi

Family Times

Family is important because they will always be there no matter what and they will most likely support you in whatever you want to do. Family doesn't necessarily mean that they have to be related to you by blood. In fact, they could be random people. The important thing is the connection that you may share can be even stronger than family. I also believe that everyone needs that group of support or someone that is always there for them. This memoir is about me and my family. I will show you when in situations they were there for me when I needed help.

This first story is about the time that I found comfort in someone that's a stranger to me, although we are considered family. It will show you that family can still help you feel comfortable in an unknown location or if you're in an uncomfortable situation. You will also see that my mom's words she had told me stayed with me in that moment. One thing you should know about me is that I can be very nervous when doing something new that I haven't done at all. But something that always helps me from being so nervous is trying to make friends with people that are also there with me. I will be talking about how I went to a family gathering but I didn't really know the people there, and I felt pressured to be nice, quiet and respectful.

All that pressure into acting perfect around people had me always on the lookout if I did anything wrong, which led to me being nervous whenever I felt someone was gonna come to talk me. I wouldn't get up from my seat, afraid that I would bump into someone or have an awkward conversation.

"Hi, how are you?" I would softly murmur.

"Do I know you?" they would say with a confused face.

And then comes the awkward silence that makes me nervous and want to run out of the situation like a marathon runner. But after that thought of having an awkward confrontation with anyone I head to the living room of the house where the party is at. I hope to have a little peace and quiet, and I thought this was my best option since everyone was outside enjoying the party. I felt left out of all the fun, so as usual I put my head down and looked at my phone just so they could think that I'm doing something. I stayed there unbothered and pretty relaxed, but my nervousness started to shoot up when I heard the door creaking. This girl waltzed on in with her glasses and curly hair. I couldn't catch what she had in her hand because I looked down quickly. At first I felt uncomfortable being there not knowing if she was looking at me or if she was just minding her own business and doing her own thing. The next thing I know I felt this courage built up in me and decided to open my mouth.

"Hey, you know I've always wanted curly hair," I said confidently. Her curly hair was the first thing that stood out to me when I saw her face to face. She didn't respond for a while. That's when I felt silly and wanted to leave.

"Girl, you do not! My hair is very hard to maintain and comb. I wish I had straight hair that wouldn't get in the way," she loudly responded.

I was a little taken back when she almost even yelled in response to me, but I soon found out that's just the way that she talks. I spent the rest of the day talking to her and when it was time to leave I wanted to stay longer with my new friend. This showed me that family can be there for you even if it is the first time you meet them. It doesn't matter if they have known you for years and years because in that moment I found a new friend.

Another example where family was important to me was when I went on a family road trip to Colorado for my cousin's fifteen. It all started when I woke up from a nap in the car ride when I heard, "We're finally here," my uncle sighed.

We had been on the road for two days but stopped at a motel. We had finally gotten to the house that my aunt had rented because her daughter had wanted a cabin in the woods. I was a little bit frightened because of all the movies that had seen when the kids get lost and killed in the forest. But once we got there, I was mind bobbled because it did not look like a cabin, it looked more like a mansion. The inside of the house was beautiful. It had all wooden floors and about five bedrooms, but the little kids all stayed in the third floor of the house. The third floor had about two bunk beds, two normal beds and couches to watch TV. Overall, the third floor wasn't super big like all the rooms the adults had, but it was a good size for six kids. But what got me and the other kids super jealous was the fact that all the older teens got to sleep on the first floor, where there was a small apartment they could have all to themselves

Once all of us got settled in and us little kids took the third floor that in our surprise actually had a foosball table which made us feel better. The most exciting part was that we were going to be able to go water rafting. I was still a little scared because i don't know how to swim. But my uncle came up and talked to me as soon as he noticed.

" Aye, que te pasa?"[40] he said with a concerned face.

" Nothing….. I just don't know how to swim. Imagine if I fell or if the raft tipped over? That would be embarrassing," I responded back. He smiled a bit when I told him and kinda looked like he wanted to laugh.

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[40] "Hey, are you ok?"

Appendix B: Student-Participants and Teacher Memoirs

"Nothing will happen to you. That's the whole point of wearing a life vest. As long as you have it, you ain't gonna drown. Come on you could sit next to me if you want, but you gotta stop worrying. Everything will be alright," he said while going onto the raft and handing out his arm to me so I could get in, too. In this moment, I felt a sense of relief that at least I had my uncle with me. My uncle is the type of person that anyone would get along with easily and he could make anyone laugh with his jokes or the weird voices he makes.

As we were in the water, there were all these different type of drops or rapids, the whole experience for me was so much fun. When it was all over, I felt like I had survived a 100 mile marathon and I had passed the finish line. My uncle was glad to get off too because we were all hungry so we headed to a Mexican restaurant that was actually pretty good. This is another moment that I felt that family is always there for you even if it's the smallest thing like going on the raft. But I'm glad that my uncle was there to help me because without him saying everything was going to be alright, I wouldn't have that memorable moment.

Overall, throughout the years my family has been understanding when I did something wrong, and we always find a way to look past the bad times. There are also moments that family is all you have, so you have to appreciate it and never take it for granted because no matter what they care for you. And there are many many stories I could write about times where my family was there to support me, and I could also write about the times that maybe they did disappoint me now and then. But who's family is perfect? I'm pretty sure no one's. But I'm glad that we get through everything together.

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Ramon

A Supportive Apa (Dad)

There's a lot I still don't know about what my life may hold, how my future is going to turn out. But I do know that I'm really talented in sports, specifically basketball.

My father has taught me to never give up. "Don't ever let someone tell you something you can't do." He's always reminding me, even though there isn't Mexicans in the NBA, why can't you be the first? Even though he supports me and all, I doubted that one time. I doubted him this one time because I had this tournament going on for my school's basketball team, and we had reached all the way to the championship game. As soon as our semifinals game, all I can remember was my dad slowly coming down from the bleachers, towards the court. I was confused, why is he moving from his seat knowing we have an upcoming game. "Ehhh.. maybe he's just going to buy soda, or use the restroom, or something like that," I thought to myself. I heard a whistle, and it sounded like my dad's so I looked towards that direction. I wish I had not looked...

"Ramon, vamanos,[41] we have to go." Did I just hear what I think he said? This could not be happening, I thought it might have been a dream. I pinched myself, but nothing good came out of that. It stung for a bit and it meant that I was wide awake. I ignored my dad, I couldn't imagine having to leave one of the biggest games my teammates and I worked so hard for. He whistled again, but I kept looking the other way. My dad got closer and closer and he had a face that I haven't seen in a while. As if he was mad or determined to get something done. He pulled me into him, "I said let's go!" As he said those words, I knew I wouldn't be able to change his mind. My teammates and friends watched what was happening. I was so embarrassed that I turned into a big-o-tomato. I stalled for a bit longer, hoping our next game would start so maybe it would change my dad's mind. Unfortunately, that did not happen.

My dad went up to my coach and broke the news to him. My coach's face expression said it all. He tried changing my dad's mind too, but that was a fail.

I said my goodbyes, and wished everyone good luck. As I exited the gym, my dad was all ahead in the parking lot while I was behind, walking slowly, hunched back, looking at the floor. When I reached the car, I broke down into tears. It meant so much to me.

Another time I recall was when my coach held a meeting with all the parents from our basketball team so they can discuss about going out to Las Vegas for a big basketball tournament. My emotions were all over the place when I heard that we might be going over there. It felt like those times when I was little and I would hear the ice cream truck passing by

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[41] let's go

my driveway, pleading my parents for money as soon as possible before it leaves because I really wanted the delicious ice cream. But with it being at Las Vegas and it being a big tournament, the trip would obviously be really expensive. I didn't want to get my hopes all up because I knew there would be a huge possibility of us not being able to go.

I later found out that we would be getting new uniforms for the Vegas tournament. I was really excited about that as well, but then I thought to myself, doesn't that mean more money? At that moment, I was really leaning towards the idea of not being able to go. I was really curious, "Pa, are we going to end up going?"

"Yes we are going," my dad replied with smile.

Let's go! I thought to myself. I couldn't believe this was happening. I hugged my dad, "Thank you so much."

Although that championship game thing happened, I know deep down he really does support me. Not only does he support me, but he supports our whole family. I realized that my dad works hard non-stop, making money so I can have all these things that I have gotten and to make me happy.

Not only does he support me financially, but he really does support me, and is very proud of what I've been doing, what I have become. Even though he might not tell me straight up, I noticed this one day when he posted something on his facebook page. He gave me his phone, when he had his facebook page open, and I saw his latest post. It had pictures of myself holding the trophy with my mom in the picture. It said "Congratulations to Ramon for winning the LA City Wide Park All Stars championship. I'm so proud of mijo[42] and I know there will be many more accomplishments to come :-)."

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[42] my son

William

Blackie

This story is about a little boy, probably the age of 5. He lived in a small but comfortable house in El Paso Dr. The boy never knew what was a dog because he had never seen one. For he had heard and knew them by looking in drawings, pictures, and videos as feared, and scary. His grandfather showed him the bite he had of a dog too. Through the years he was told that dogs were fierce and would bite with no hesitation. But one day, the thoughts of a dog changed, and it all started on June,1,2010, his dad has just come from work all tired and sweaty.

"Dad! You're home," William said happily. His dad said hi, and gave him a hug. But as his dad knows that William doesn't like hugs, he was laughing because William was squirming and moving to break free. Just as soon as William broke free, he heard a pounding at the door. He wondered and said, "What could that possibly be?" with a sense of fear and excitement both at the same recurring time. William's dad called everybody to the living room and went outside then came back with a box and placed it the living room and told young William to look inside and take a look. Just as soon as William thought it was a decoration.

But to William's astonishment, a little furry head popped out of the box and stared. William was very surprised. He fell back and stared at it. It had brown eyes and brown legs and a little tail with a brown bottom. "What is that thing?" William thought. "It's small, furry and with a little baby tail." For a moment, the dog stared at him and let his tongue out. William turned his head, and the dog turned his head as well. At the moment, William's mind was like, "Is he mocking me?" Meanwhile William's mom was hysterical saying, "Valdo, es eso un perro!" "Si eve, es un perro." [43] My sister Serafina walked in the room and yelled, "Un Perro!" She tried to hug it, but the dog ran towards William's direction and went behind him. William was like, "Dios mio! Me quiere comer!"[44] But no, the dog licked him and sat next to him.

As the night passed, the dog howled and Will said, "Come here Blackie because it was the color of his fur." Blackie cuddled with him and looked at him and William's mind instantly thought, if this is a dog then I will love every dog there is. That day William brought a concha, which is his favorite bread in the world. Blackie just sleeping, stared up at the concha and licked his lips and whined. William took a piece and gave some to him. He smelled and ate it and did what we now we call the Blackie dance, which involves jumping up on his front paws and slamming them on the floor.

Now this story ends with a night under the stars. Both William and Blakkie were staring at. Matthew was petting Blackie who purring greedily. William saw a shooting star and said to

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[43] "Valdo, is that a dog!" "Yes eve, it's a dog."
[44] "My God! He wants to eat me!"

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Blackie, "Blackie, my wish is for you and me to be inseparable and live our lives together to theday we die. Blackie, you're my brother." That night neither Blackie or William would never forget. Now Blackie and him do everything, they run, walk, and eat together. But now he is old and William still loves him.

That is how William overcame his fear of dogs and made a new friend of which to share moments with to the end.

Teacher Memoir-Ms. Rodríguez

Words Unspoken

I'm not sure exactly when it happened, or how it happened. But when I was in middle school, I became invisible to my dad. This growing pain hit deep nerves because not so long ago, I used to be the apple of his eye.

When I was four, I'd run out to meet him when he came home from work. I'd grab a hold of one leg, position my little body onto his foot, and hold tight wrapping my arms around his calf as he ambled across the yard into the house.

When I was six, I'd effortlessly balance myself on top of his shoulders, dangling my feet with the joy of my new view of the whole world before me.

When I was eight, I'd pretend to be asleep in the car just so he could carry me into the house, feeling safe and protected in his arms.

But when I was twelve, the apple rotted, and I no longer mattered to my dad.

Initially, this was evident when he forgot to pick me up from my first junior high school dance. I wasn't at ease at the dance, awkward around the kids who all knew each other since elementary, whereas I was bussed-in from the drabby side of town. A few hours agonized into eternity in the school gym that was brightly decorated with colorful streamers and balloons, with bowls of punch and plates of cookies on white plastic table cloths, and with me and my pathetic displays at trying to fit-in. My mood in sharp contrast to the festivities, all I wanted to do was go home, and hope all the other kids would forget by the time we got back to school on Monday, how I embarrassed myself. I hoped maybe they hadn't noticed the way I sat at a chair waiting to be asked to dance, and then walked purposely across the gym as if I saw a friend, and then walked purposely to the restrooms as if I had to reapply make-up that had already been checked in the mirror a dozen times. Then I repeated the same pretenses time and again. Finally, dimmed lights turned to daylight brightness, and the chaperones' calls that the dance was ending were met with instant relief, by me anyway.

Afterwards, miserable, I sat at a school bench and waited for my dad to come get me, hoping anxiously that this time, this set of headlights would reveal our car as it came closer into view. But again and again, other kids would jump into their ride home, and I'd be left sitting. All alone. In the dark. Till there was no one on the benches but me, too embarrassed to make any adult aware of my plight, dreading having to say, "Yes, someone is coming for me . . . My father . . . I think."

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When he finally did arrive, smiling in his carefree and careless way behind the steering wheel, I was so distraught. I burst into the car, slammed the door, and near tears, I accused him, "What took you so long?! The dance was over a long time ago!"

Typical of how oblivious he could be, he dismissed me with, "I'm here, aren't I?"

"Humph." I sat in silence the rest of the way home.

While I may have grown less and less important to my father during junior high, school itself was not always as awkward as that first dance. In fact, school began to be a place where I felt successful--finishing classwork first, getting 100% on tests and all A's on report cards. Middle school years became a blur of friendships found, friendships lost, boys I liked and then didn't anymore, and classes where I slowly began to edge to the top of the heap.

Finally, eighth grade ended, and so ended middle school. One of the last activities was an awards ceremony, a time to acknowledge all of our hard work and achievements. I wore a new dress bought especially for the occasion, and shiny new shoes that hurt my feet, but only when I walked. As countless females had done before me, I faked normalcy in shoes too tight and heels too high, thinking to myself that I was carrying-off pretty well my newfound girl-to-womanhood rite of passage. Once my name was called, I stood up, walked up the aisle, and pranced across the stage. Well, I thought I was prancing, but to the casual observer, I'm sure my efforts more resembled hobbling. Nonetheless, as I made my way across the stage for the fifth time, receiving a certificate for A/B Honor Roll for the whole year, again I shook the hands that stretched out to greet me. Probably one of them belonged to the principal. Whoever they were, they were all strangers to me. I feigned the obligatory appreciative, if not awkward, smile to accompany my limp handshake.

After all of the certificates were awarded to their appropriate recipients, I walked over to where my mom and dad were sitting. I handed all of my awards to my mom, feeling more than a little proud. I had never before been acknowledged for doing well in school. I remembered often feeling other kids were teachers' favorites, even when I got the highest scores. So this was a shock to me--I had no idea that I would receive FIVE certificates.

Appendix B: Student-Participants and Teacher Memoirs

As my mom looked over the awards, my dad stated matter-of-factly, "Gracie got more certificates than you." And just like that, my proud self-satisfied bubble burst, and I was left with that often reoccurring feeling that I would never be good enough, that I didn't matter, that I was invisible, unknown, unseen. I wish I could've hurled my hurt feelings at my dad, saying something like, "Yeah? Well maybe you should take Gracie home and throw her a party!" But I was raised to keep hurt feelings to myself, buried under my skin and shoved deep down beyond reach of my vocal chords.

Too deflated for words, I said nothing.

My father passed away when I was thirty-three years old. My entire life, he never uttered words resembling, "I'm proud of you."

Not at 14, when I was awarded five different certificates of academic achievement.

Not at 17, when I went to an east coast prep school in between my junior and senior years of high school.

Not at 18, when I received countless offers of university admissions and scholarships.

Not at 21, when I studied in Italy and traveled throughout Europe.

Not at 22, when I graduated from Stanford.

Not at 24, when I earned my Masters degree from UCLA.

Not even at 32, when I finally measured-up to that traditional yardstick which deems the worthiness of all Mexican females--getting married and having a baby.

After his funeral, my mother handed me a newspaper clipping. It was old, illegible with the words faded along the lines of its many folds. Still, I recognized the picture in the article. It was me at 18. The newspaper article detailed my local celebrity, high lighting that I was the first in my family to go to college and listing the numerous scholarship offers from universities across the country. Unsure why my mom handed me this archaic artifact, I simply looked at her.

"Your dad had this in his wallet. Every time he met somebody, he'd take it out and brag about you."

In that moment, I didn't know what to make of that information. So I simply mourned my father. And I mourned the parts of me that were stuck in the misery that began in middle school and that continued throughout adulthood, the parts that longed to hear the words that he never spoke, not to me: "I love you. I'm proud you're my daughter."

Appendix C: English Translations of Spanish in Student Text and Dialogue.

(Item 1) From Fig. 5.10, (Writing Excerpt #9) and Appendix B, Alina's Final Memoir

Spanish Text	English Translation
"?! Qué estabas pensando?! ?! Qué estabas haciendo con una navaja ?!" "Edmond me lo dio." "?Por que te lo dio ?" "Porque ere de su amigo y me dijo que se lo dia." "?Y porque no se lo pudo dar Edmond ?" "Porque yo lo miro más que Edmond lo mira. El va a la escuela que está al lado de mia." "?No es la que a donde va Edmond ?" "No es la escuela del otro lado, no es la escuela a donde va Edmond."	"What were you thinking?! ?! What were you doing with a knife?! " "Edmond gave it to me." "Why did he give it to you?" "Because it was his friend's and he told me to give it to him." "And why couldn't Edmond give it to him?" "Because I look at it more than Edmond looks at it. He goes to the school that's next to me. " "Not the school where Edmond goes?" "It's not the school on the other side, it's not the school where Edmond goes."

(Item 2) From Fig. 5.22, Alina's Draft Memoir

Spanish Text	English Translation
"?!Que estabas pensando quando lo esiste?!" "No se, yo no estaba pensando. No más lo ise porque lo quiera probar." "Eso no importa gorda. Lo que importa es que tu esiste, y fue mal." "Yo ya se abuelita, pero solamente fue un poquito. No fume el gallo entero, solamente un poco." "Mira, mas alrato te vas a poner marijuana como tu hermano. El siempre esta fumando y está haciendo mal en la escuela." "!Eso no es cierto! Nunca voy hacer como el! No tiene dinero, siempre está fuera de la casa. Voy acer mejor de el. No mas mira. El también es un pendejo que no hace caso y el no es cholo, yo soy la chola porque yo siempre estoy con todos los cholos." "?! Tu eres una pinche chola?!" "Si, mi mama nunca te dijo?"	"What were you thinking when you did that?!" "I don't know, I wasn't thinking. I just wanted to try it. " "That doesn't matter, *gorda*. What matters is that you did it, and it was bad. " "I already know abuelita, but it was only a little. I didn't smoke the whole joint, just a little. " "Look, in a while, you are going to be like your brother with marijuana. He is always smoking and doing badly at school. " "That is not true! I will never be like him! He has no money, he is always out of the house. I'm going to do better than him. No more look. He is also a pendejo who doesn't listen and he is not cholo, I am the chola because I am always with all the cholos. " "You are a pinche chola ?! " "Yes, my mom never told you?

Appendix D: Teacher Tool for Student-Conferencing

THE [...] chool
Reading/Writing Conference Cheat Sheet

	Moves	Tips and Pitfalls	You might say...
Research	1. Get students talking about their writing/ reading.	• Begin with an open ended question that gets kids to say a lot about their work. • Be quiet and listen intently. • Ask assessment questions that nudge students to give you more information about their work. • Ask students to SAY MORE about what they tell you. *If you're not getting anywhere, ask students about another kind of writing work that they're doing:* • What can I help you with today? • Where are you in the writing process? • What are you doing to write this really well? • What craft moves are you trying? • What writing goals are you working on? • What are you doing that we've talked about in minilessons?	• What are you working on as a reader/writer today? • Last time we met you were working on _____. How's that going? Can you show me where you did that? • What is your plan for what you'll do next? • How do you assess this jot/ entry?
	2. Look at the student's writing/reading notebook.	• Look at a part of the student's writing in which she's doing the work she told you about. • You do not have to have the student read the draft aloud! • You do not have to read the whole draft! • If you are doing a "blind read", look for how the student is doing with one of her writing goals or a recent mini-lesson.	• Let's take a look at your work...
Feedback	3. Give feedback.	• Narrate what the child is doing well. • Where possible compliment something you're going to teach. • Use process versus person-oriented feedback.	• You're not the kind of reader/ writer who...No, you're the kind of reader/writer... • One thing you're doing as a reader/writer...

Adapted from Carl Anderson, author of *How's It Going?* and TCRWP

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Appendix D: Teacher Tool for Student-Conferencing

	Moves	Tips and Pitfalls	You might say...
Teach/Coach	4. Teach	• NAME what you're going to teach, using the rubric as a guide if applicable. • Explain WHAT the craft move or convention is, usually by showing a mentor text. (Kids can't do what they can't imagine.) • Describe HOW to do the work (give a strategy).	• Can I give you a tip about one thing that could help you be a better writer/reader? • One of the things that helps me... • Today I want to teach you that readers/writers often...They do this by... • Do you see how (I/the author)...
	5. Coach the student	• Give the student a minute or two to try out what you taught. • Ask them to talk out how it could go in their writing/reading. • Guide them in trying out the strategy we taught them to do the new work. *Beware the danger of leading students, instead of guiding them.*	• So let's try this together... • Remember to...
Link	6. Link the conference to independent work.	• Let the student know that you expect them to try out what you just taught. • Point out that the student will continue to work on what you just taught over the couple of weeks or months.	• So whenever you are...you can remember to... • What's your plan as a reader/writer when you get back to work on your own? • I want you to try this in your reading/writing now. • I'll check on you later today/ this week to see how you're doing...

Appendix E: *Table--Recorded Conferences and Corresponding Writing Excerpts*

CONF. Day	Naomi Conf.	Naomi Paper	Jessica Conf.	Jessica Paper	Ramon Conf.	Ramon Paper	Chris Conf.	Chris Paper	Student/ Tchr Conf
1		ND1		JD1		RD1		CD1	STC1.R1 (D2)
2	PC1.N1	ND2	PC2.J1	JD2	PC3.R1	RD2	PC4.C1	CD2	STC2.N1 (D2)
3	PC5.N2	ND3	PC6.J2	JD3	PC8.R2	RD3	PC8.C2	CD3	STC3.J1 (D2)
5	PC9.N3	ND4	PC10.J3	JD5	PC11.R3	RD5	PC12.C3	CD5	STC4.C1 (D7)
6	PC13.N4	ND5	PC14.J4	JD6	PC15.R4	RD6	PC16.C4	CD6	STC5.J2 (D8)
7	PC17.N5	ND7	PC18.J5	JD7	PC19.R5	RD7	PC20.C5	CD7	STC6.J3 (D11)
8	PC21.N6	ND8	PC22.J6	JD8	PC23.R6	RD8	PC24.C6	CD8	STC7.N2 (D14)
10				JD10	PC25.R7	RD10	PC28.C8	CD10	STC8.C2 (D15)
11	PC27.N7	ND11		JD11		RD11		CD11	STC9.R2 (D16)
13		ND12	PC29.J7	JD13	PC30.48	RD13		CD13	STC10.C3 (D17)
14	PC31.N8	ND14		JD14		RD14	PC32.C9	CD14	STC11.J4 (D17)
15		ND15		JD15	PC34.R9	RD15	PC33.C10	CD15	STC12.N3 (D17)
16	PC37.N9	ND16		JD16	PC38.R10	RD16	PC36.C11	CD16	STC13.R3 (D16)
18	PC41.N10	ND18	PC39.J8	JD18	PC42.R11	RD18	PC40.C12	CD18	STC14.J5 (D18)
William	PCX44.21								
Alina	PCX45.A1	PCX45.A3							

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