

# Teacher Transformation in the National Writing Project

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*Teachers who have participated in Summer Institutes of the National Writing Project (NWP) have often claimed “it changed my life.” What do teachers mean when they say this? What does it mean to “transform” in a professional development setting, and what might researchers and professional development providers gain from an understanding of teacher transformation as a kind of teacher learning? And how, if at all, does the writing that teachers engage in at the Summer Institute matter for transformation? This article addresses such questions through a study of teacher participants in one NWP Summer Institute involving analysis of interview, observation, and textual data. The author offers a model of teacher transformation that highlights the influence of writing groups and feedback.*

## Introduction

For over thirty years now, participants in the Summer Institutes of the National Writing Project have frequently claimed that the Writing Project experience “changed my life.” The National Writing Project (NWP) began in 1974 at the University of California, Berkeley and has since grown into a network of nearly 200 sites at universities across the United States, dedicated to the improvement of the teaching of writing in schools. Sites’ activities include (but are not limited to) summer institutes for teachers at K-college levels, inservice in K-12 schools, and programs for student writers. In an NWP Summer Institute, experienced teachers from kindergarten through college in all subject areas who have been selected through a process of application and interview gather for five weeks of all-day sessions. The teachers engage in daily personal and professional writing and meet in writing groups. They also demonstrate successful teaching practices of their own, see demonstrations by scholars in education and composition, and spend time discussing and unpacking the principles that underlie those demonstrations. After their participation, they are termed “teacher consultants” and are invited to engage in a variety of activities including offering inservice to colleagues in their school or region, planning continuity activities for Writing Project colleagues, or participating in study groups, retreats, and advanced institutes.

For as long as the NWP has operated summer institutes for teachers, those teachers have voiced claims that their lives were changed or that they were transformed by the NWP. These claims have tended either to add to the mystique and attraction of the NWP for potential participants or to detract from its reputation as a site for serious learning and cast upon it a sort of cultlike aura, depending on the perspective of those hearing the claims. And these claims have sometimes made it difficult for researchers to see clearly what teachers *do* learn in the NWP or how that learning affects those who participate, since available data on NWP experiences has tended to take on a testimonial, almost conversion-narrative feel. In other words, if you ask teachers what happened to them at the NWP Summer Institute, more often than not you get a standard narrative of change, so uniform across participants that it seems almost canned—and these narratives, while celebrated among NWP insiders, have the unfortunate effect for researchers of obscuring more than they reveal about the particulars of the Summer Institute experience.

This article, in which I report on a study of seven teachers in one NWP Summer Institute with particular attention to their writing activities, represents a step in the direction of understanding analytically the nature of the changes NWP teachers have so often called “transformative.” I ask a related series of questions: First, *what* are these changes? Are they learning experiences? Changes in confidence? In identities? Second, are these changes, however dramatic, “transformations” in the way adult learning theorists currently understand that term? If so, how might this study add to or alter that theoretical understanding? And third, once we determine what is occurring and whether to call it transformation, what can we discern about *how* it occurs? With this last question, I want to begin to follow up on one common suspicion about the NWP’s effectiveness, which is that the NWP engenders such dramatic changes because of the writing in which teachers engage in Summer Institutes. This view follows from a line of thinking that has influenced founders, leaders, and participants in NWP activities, having to do with the connections between writing and learning and the idea that writing may itself possess transformative power.

This study’s primary and secondary aims—getting an analytical picture of changes in NWP teachers and examining those changes as potential “transformations”—are important even to those not affiliated with the NWP because they help to complicate understandings of teacher professional development, not least by considering transformation as a kind of development. And its tertiary aim of beginning to consider the role of writing and feedback in these mechanisms is important both for those within NWP and for others interested in professional development more generally because it can help to build a researched understanding of the success of this long-standing program.

To explore these issues, I will first discuss the idea of transformation as a type of learning as articulated by Mezirow (1991, 2000), pointing out potential connections between Mezirow's theory of transformative learning and theories of writing as inducing change or even transformation. I will then review research literature that bears on this inquiry, including work on transformative learning in teachers, on the role of writing in teacher change, and on teacher change in the NWP context. Next, I will describe a study in which I followed a group of teachers through one NWP Summer Institute, analyzing changes occurring in teachers *during* their summer experience as opposed to those collected solely in a post-Institute narrative. Finally, based on the results of that study, I offer a schematic for thinking about teacher transformation that both clarifies what might constitute a "transformation" in professional development and raises new questions about the nature of such transformations and what their results might be.

### **Transformational Learning and the Notion of Writing as Transformative**

To date, Jack Mezirow (1991) provides the most clearly articulated explanation of transformational learning experiences in the field of adult education. I find his understanding of transformation as a particular kind of learning extremely helpful as a starting point for understanding the shifts teachers have reported through the NWP, in its concept if not in its particulars. Mezirow characterizes transformative learning as a developmental event in which the premises behind our current meaning perspectives, our frames for making meaning of experience, are examined and revised. Mezirow describes transformation thus:

Perspective transformation is the process of becoming critically aware of how and why our assumptions have come to constrain the way we perceive, understand, and feel about our world; changing these structures of habitual expectation to make possible a more inclusive, discriminating, and integrative perspective; and, finally, making choices or otherwise acting upon these new understandings. (1991, p. 167)

Rather than simply adding new information or skills within an existing meaning scheme or modifying a meaning scheme so that it can account for some new situation, perspective transformation is actually development. Not only are meanings made of new experiences (as in any learning experience), in transformational learning new ways of meaning-*making* are also forged. As Mezirow explains, "normally, when we learn something, we attribute an old meaning to a new experience . . . . In transformative learning, however, we reinterpret an old experience (or a new one) from a new set of expectations" (1991, p. 11). This study takes up how teachers become aware of and reshape these sets of expectations through writing in the Summer Institute.

According to Kegan (2000), the process of development that Mezirow has termed “transformational learning” is in fact a process of development in which “a way of knowing moves from a place where we are ‘had by it’ (captive of it) to a place where we ‘have it,’ and can be in relationship to it” (pp. 53-54). In other words, in transformational learning, epistemologies are the “forms” that transform. These epistemologies transform by shifting from being factors that tacitly, unconsciously operate in meaning-making (and to which the meaning-maker is therefore “subject”) to being factors that are explicit, that are known to the person making the meaning and can therefore be embraced, rejected, or modified (and are therefore “subject to” the manipulations of the meaning-maker). For example, in Mezirow’s initial study (1991), returning women college students became aware of how their own and their family members’ role expectations for womanhood and motherhood affected their perception; once those expectations and their effects were made explicit, the women then set about revising those expectations and interpreting school and home situations differently as a result. Thus, transformational learning can be looked at as a process of gaining agency or increased control over one’s processes of interpretation.

Mezirow thus offers us a starting point for thinking about transformation; meanwhile, writing has often been thought to possess transformative power. Popular trade books on journaling, for instance, emphasize writing as a way to heal the spirit, discover and renew the self, or overcome addiction (Whitney, 2006), and writing is an important component of the transformation from addiction to sobriety in 12-step programs such as Alcoholics Anonymous and Al-Anon (Daniell, 2003; Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, & Cain, 1998). Writing even has documented physiological benefits, such as lowering the heart rate, that suggest it may provide physical transformation as well as distinct psychological benefits (Esterling, L’Abate, Murray, & Pennebaker, 1999; Francis & Pennebaker, 1992; Pennebaker, 1993, 2002; Pennebaker & Beall, 1986; Smyth, 1998). Writing is implicated in transformations in thinking as well: research on writing-to-learn (reviewed, for example, in Ackerman, 1993; Bazerman, 2005; Langer & Applebee, 1987) shows that writing can induce cognitive change. That writing can foster change, then, is a notion embraced in popular culture and at least suggested in several lines of scholarly research on writing processes.

Consequently, theorists have sought to explain whether, how, and why the act of writing might change writers. Emig (1977) characterizes writing as a unique mode of learning because it is simultaneously “process-and-product” (122), leaving a trace—material and visible—not only in its product, but also in its process, the draft that can be monitored *as* it emerges. Writing thus relies on a self-feedback loop, process-and-product, at every level of composing. A writer must constantly re-read, analyze, and learn from the text-in-process in order to continue producing it. Ackerman (1993), in reviewing writing-to-learn research, steers us

away from this individual, primarily cognitive view of writing as a mode of learning and reminds us of the status of writing as a cultural practice, always situated within (and exerting its own effects on) a shifting web of sociocultural realities. In other words, writing fosters learning insofar as it is responsive to (and calls into being) the knowledge production process of a particular discourse community. Reviewing literature on writing-to-learn twelve years after Ackerman, Bazerman (2005) notes that studies in writing-to-learn have shifted from the emphases on writing as a study skill (e.g. Langer & Applebee, 1987) and journaling in classrooms (as in Fulwiler, 1987) prevalent in the 1980s and 1990s to an increasing focus in the late 1990s and since 2000 on writing in specific disciplinary areas or workplace arenas and in the different genres associated with those areas (e.g., Bazerman, 1988; Berkenkotter & Huckin, 1995; Freedman & Medway, 1994; Sternglass, 1997; Beaufort, 1999). Thus writing is increasingly seen as fostering learning of various kinds, not in an automatic and “natural” way as perhaps suggested by Emig, but instead as a function of its being situated within discourse communities and of its role as a means of participation in those communities. That shift has consequently foregrounded questions not only about learning in classrooms but, further, about how writing in various disciplinary communities shapes thinking and membership in those communities. The present study extends that line of current research by examining the role of writing activities in learning in the context of a professional community.

### **Related Research: Teacher Transformation and Writing in Professional Development**

Participants in the National Writing Project consistently report significant transformation experiences (e.g., Lieberman & Wood, 2003). The centrality of teachers’ writing to NWP activities is evident not only in its espoused core principle that “teachers of writing must also write” (National Writing Project 2006) but also in the time and attention it devotes to supporting teachers as writers, for instance through a series of annual professional writing retreats. Blau and Sperling (1999) note the development and importance of the related phenomena of the NWP, the teacher research movement, and “teachers as authors and authorities in the teaching of writing” (p. 282), situating these phenomena within developments in theory and research toward the end of the twentieth century that frame writing as socially and culturally situated and constructed. Thus writing can be viewed as an important key to NWP experiences of transformation (cf. Blau, 1988, 1993). However, empirical research into such programs typically has focused on their organization as professional networks (Lieberman & Wood, 2003) rather than specifically as sites for writing.

Yet some of this work on networks has taken up the questions of writing’s contribution to network learning. Lieberman and Wood’s (2001) account of NWP

as a network foregrounds the role of writing as a central activity behind the growth that teachers experience within that network; they liken writing to teaching in that both are “social acts, though much of the work must be done alone” (Lieberman & Wood, 2001, p. 182). Ershler (2001) describes asking preservice teachers to write and discuss narratives about teaching; over time, “the narrative process affords teachers the opportunity to see themselves in the stories they tell” (Ershler, 2001, p. 169), and the text of the narrative can be examined so that the positioning of the teacher within that narrative as marginal or passive becomes visible and invites commentary. The work on teacher networks and teacher research as a whole points both to the potential of writing as a factor in teacher development and to the importance of other processes that happen, in many cases, to occur through writing but can also occur without writing, such as adopting an inquiry stance.

Beyond the context of teacher networks, composition scholars have also explored how writing in general shapes identity, how identities are literally inscribed in written texts even as those texts take shape within sociocultural discourse contexts (e.g. Brooke, 1991; Ivanič, 1998; Ketter & Hunter, 2003; Newkirk, 1997). This identity work helps to illuminate how learning (through writing) in the context of a teacher network is at least in part a process of coming to identify oneself as a member of the network’s community and of acquiring the conventions of participation in the activities of that community. Studies like these demonstrate the potential for writing activities to contribute to significant changes in identities and stances.

This understanding of writing as a potential factor in teachers’ learning in a professional development context intersects with the limited body of existing research on teachers as transformative learners. Cranton (1996) found in a study of professional development for adult educators that, in order to be transformative, a professional development program must incorporate “the inclusion of a variety of perspectives,” “the articulation of assumptions,” “discussion,” “a critical attitude,” and “activities based on practice” (p. 47). In another study, Cranton and Carusetta (2004) describe the process by which college faculty members develop a sense of authenticity, finding that it is a process of transformative learning that allows mature authenticity to emerge. Whitelaw, Sears, and Campbell (2004) also investigated professional development for university faculty in using technology for teaching in light of transformative learning theory but obtained different results; just two of their nine interviewees showed signs of transformative change. However, their design called for retrospective accounts only, sometimes a few years after the program had occurred. Such accounts might capture *whether* transformation has occurred, after the fact, but can shed little light on *how* a transformation has occurred.

While not specifically referring to Mezirow's notion of transformation, studies of teachers' learning in the NWP context in particular have tended to investigate claims of "life-changing" professional development with attention to two broad areas of concern: concerns about the changes in teachers' classroom practice and the impact of those changes on students; and concerns about how NWP has spurred changes in areas of teachers' lives outside of specific classroom practices, such as thinking or identity. With respect to the first area (impact on classroom practice and on student outcomes), clear evidence has been difficult to produce. Students report being more satisfied with NWP teachers and feeling that they learned more in such teachers' classes (Freedman, 1987), but studies linking such outcomes to student performance are rare; some evidence has resulted from the NWP's Local Sites Research Initiative (National Writing Project, 2008) and a national external evaluation of NWP is now underway. In part this difficulty is tied to difficulty determining just what the classroom practices of NWP teachers are likely to be in the first place; while NWP has traditionally been associated with a process approach, there is in fact no one best approach to teaching writing endorsed by the NWP, and in recent years constructs such as genre have gained increasing influence among NWP practitioners.

To document ways in which the NWP affects teachers' practice and, by extension, student outcomes is a complex and elusive task. Meanwhile, researchers interested in the NWP have simultaneously investigated that second area of concern: questions about the NWP's influence on areas other than specific classroom practices such as teachers' thinking, career paths, and personal lives. It is in the context of this second group of concerns that researchers and theorists have begun to unpack claims of "transformation" and what it means to say that one's life has been changed by the NWP. Presumably the descriptor "life-changing" points to changes either broader or deeper than concrete changes in classroom strategies or procedures (though of course such changes might follow from a transformation). In a study otherwise focused on classroom practice, Bratcher and Stroble (1994) briefly cited as one effect of NWP on teachers a shift in their orientation of concerns from concerns about self-presentation to concerns about students and future action. Fox (2000) found that among the processes central to teacher renewal within the NWP and in other settings are "the development of the teacher's voice" and "the teacher's relationship with her dual identities: her professional/personal selves and her adult/child selves" (Fox, 2000, p. xxv). Lieberman and Wood (2003) focused primarily on classroom teaching; however, in their introductory chapters the authors develop a language for describing changes beyond specific classroom strategies, identifying social practices in which the NWP invites teachers to engage, including changes in thinking, theory, affect, identity, or stance. Those practices include "situating human learning in practice and relationships,"



“guiding reflection on teaching through reflection on learning,” “promoting a stance of inquiry,” and “encouraging a reconceptualization of professional identity and linking it to professional community” (Lieberman & Wood, 2003, p. 22). Blau (1988) theorized such findings by describing the development of the Summer Institute in the early years of the NWP as a revolution in professional development, especially in the areas of conceptualizing the writing teacher’s role, relocating authority, writing about teaching, and community models for classrooms. In a later article, Blau (1993) went on to call the professional community of the NWP an exemplar for communities of learners wherever they occur (in classrooms, disciplines or life), foregrounding the role of writing as both a tool in service of and a metaphor for the construction of meaning in a community of learners. Thus, work on teacher change in the context of the NWP has suggested, however subtly, that the shifts prompted by NWP participation are shifts in teacher identity, stance, and relationships to a professional community; yet, taken as a whole, such work has not shed sufficient light on the mechanisms and processes of such shifts to make clear *how* the shifts come about or even to convincingly demonstrate that accounts of transformation in NWP are anything other than the enthusiastic testimonials that have characterized NWP’s public image since its inception.

### **Purpose and Focus of the Study**

While much further investigation is clearly needed into the specific outcomes of NWP participation for classroom practices and for student outcomes, it is ultimately just as important to develop a clear picture of Summer Institute participation itself, to investigate claims of transformation analytically, and, to the extent possible, to consider the potential of writing as a key factor in Summer Institute experiences. In light of this, the present study aimed:

- to describe the learning experiences teachers have in one NWP summer institute, paying particular attention to the role, if any, that writing experiences might play in that learning, and
- to determine whether and, if so, how those learning experiences might be understood as “transformations.”

### **Methods**

The study was conducted through case study, incorporating sequential interviews, text analysis, and participant observation over a period of 18 months. Case study was selected for its fit with the study’s aims of both describing and explaining (how and why as well as what) and its focus on contemporary events rather than on retrospection or prediction (Yin, 2003).



### ***Setting and Participants***

The setting for this study is the Summer Institute of one National Writing Project site, located on a major university campus in California. The site was founded in the earliest years of the National Writing Project (NWP), and in the years since its inception in 1979, over 500 teachers have participated in the site's annual Summer Institute. Approximately 200 of those teachers remain active in the project, attending continuity program meetings and conducting inservice programs in local schools, teaching in the project-sponsored young writers' camp, and participating in various supplementary programs and special interest groups sponsored by the project. In its fidelity to the NWP model initially developed by the NWP founder James Gray (see Gray, 2000) and articulated in current NWP documents as the model by which all NWP sites are evaluated for continued federal funding, this site is both a representative NWP site and an influential one. This site has in particular maintained a practice of including daily writing time in each year of its operation, and its directors argue that this feature is one of the model's central components. Thus while this study makes claims only about this particular group of teachers in this particular summer institute, it is likely that the phenomena observed here do in fact occur at other Writing Project sites, of which this one site is a telling example.

The seven teachers participating in the study were volunteers, including both men and women, teaching grades two through twelve in public, independent, and parochial schools in two neighboring southern California counties, part of a Summer Institute group of twenty teachers reflecting a similar range of backgrounds. They are identified here by pseudonyms. Table 1 displays further information about the study's participants.

All of the teachers were white; while this potentially limits the applicability of these findings to the experiences of teachers of other backgrounds, the sample is consistent with the demographic makeup of teachers generally at this site and in this region, where recruitment of minority teachers poses a persistent challenge.

### ***Data Collection***

This study incorporates data from the following sources:

- An initial interview, approximately 60 minutes, conducted early in the summer institute period (in week 2 or 3): See Appendix for questions. Interviews were tape recorded and transcribed.
- A text-centered interview, approximately 90 minutes, conducted near the end of the Summer Institute (in week 4 or 5), in which participants supplied and discussed samples of their writing: See Appendix for questions. Interviews were tape recorded and transcribed, and texts discussed in the interviews were collected.

TABLE 1. Participants

Pseudonym	Sex	Ethnicity	Grade(s) and subjects taught	Years of teaching experience	Type of school	Highest degree held
Andrea	Female	White	4th grade multi-subject	17	Private K-8, affluent student body	M.A.
Jill	Female	White	12th grade AP English, American Literature, and ESL	19	Catholic, college prep, large international/ESL population	M.A.
Greg	Male	White	11th grade English, AP English, ESL	7.5	Private, college prep, large populations of special needs and international/ESL students	M.A.
Laura	Female	White	5th grade multi-subject	8	Public, mostly Latino/Latina, high poverty, large population of English Language Learners	B.A.
Liz	Female	White	9th-12th grade U.S. History, Government	8	Public, wide range of SES, approximately 25% Latino/Latina	M.Ed.
Sara	Female	White	8th grade Language Arts	15	Public, mostly Latino/Latina, high poverty, large population of English language Learners	B.A.
Thomas	Male	White	12th grade AP English and History	10	Public high school, science/tech magnet, urban	B.S.

- Written texts of two types:
  - texts supplied by participants during the interviews (such as poems, journal entries, personal reflections, drafts of professional articles, short stories, memoirs). Each participant selected two texts to discuss in the second interview and submit for analysis; Laura and Thomas each provided three additional pieces.
  - texts written and produced for the writing project site: (1) an initial application and (2) an end-of-summer reflection piece (See Appendix for prompts)

- A follow-up e-mail letter written by participants one year after the end of the Summer Institute (see Appendix for invitation); and
- My observations as a participant observer in the Summer Institute. I attended the Summer Institute each day, participated in all activities in which participants were asked to engage (such as writing, responding to presentations, and working in a writing group), collected all documents distributed to participants (such as presentation handouts and writing prompts), and made daily notes about my observations.

### ***Data Analysis***

Data analysis began while data were being collected, in the decisions I made while interviewing and collecting texts. After the data set was complete, however, I engaged in systematic analysis of both interview data and written texts. Interview tapes were transcribed, then reviewed and corrected in light of fieldnotes made at the time of the interview. Interview transcripts and scanned collected documents were coded in a process of content analysis in several passes (examples of codes used in early and later analyses are included in the Appendix).

More specifically, data were coded in a content analysis conducted in several passes through the entire data set; categories were developed inductively (Miles and Huberman, 1994). During my first two passes through the full corpus of data, I used open coding to note themes that ran either throughout a single teacher's case or that appeared in multiple cases, and I labeled them using labels derived mostly from terms used by the participants themselves, such as "the real me" or "stuck." Other codes were cover terms I devised to label themes and issues I saw as related but for which participants used a variety of phrasings, such as "anxiety" or "confidence." Passages could be coded simultaneously in more than one way using overlapping highlights. After initial coding was complete, I then clarified categories by examining the full body of text under each code, considering the extent to which the label made sense as a descriptor for the data, uncoding some passages and recoding others, and revising code definitions using constant comparison (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). In this way, the processes of coding data and of determining relevant categories for analysis were fluid and recursive, becoming more stable as patterns emerged over time. I also read the interview data organized by question to ensure that the thematic categories I had devised were not simply outcomes of the interview questions I had posed. For instance, that every teacher had discussed the writing group at length was not in itself salient, for I had asked every teacher to do exactly that. By distinguishing between mentions of the writing group made in response to a direct question and mentions of the writing group made spontaneously in the context of some other discussion, I could distinguish between what was salient for the teachers and what had simply been salient for me as I devised the interview protocol.

Finally, I used the resulting system of codes to construct a schematic representing patterns of experiences and issues common to most of the teachers in the study; that schematic is presented later in this article. This was accomplished through a recursive process of proposing a model, then testing it against a single case and against the aggregated data. I wrote a detailed case study of each participant, summarizing his or her experience chronologically with attention to the themes that had proved most salient in his or her interviews and written texts. Then I selected one teacher and, proposed model in hand, I attempted to identify where his or her experiences mapped onto the model. Where mismatches occurred, I turned to other cases: were the mismatches due to expected small variations between the perspectives of the various individual teachers, or were they mismatched across the board and therefore indicative of a problem in the model? After a long process of adjustment and rethinking, a more or less complete version of the schematic presented in this article was developed. To further refine the theory represented in the schematic, I then reviewed data further to explore alternative explanations and consider negative cases (Miles & Huberman, 1994). I attempted to reread the full data set according to each of two maps: the model I had developed and the model presented in Mezirow (1991). My thinking throughout the process had been informed by Mezirow's transformative learning theory, and I wanted to assess the extent to which my new model and Mezirow's might be congruent, whether the patterns that had emerged in the course of my analysis differed from what transformative learning theory would have suggested before I began.

## **Describing Teacher Change in a Writing-Intensive Setting**

### ***Triggering***

All seven teachers in the study initially expressed what I call "trigger" problems or issues: dissatisfaction with aspects of professional or personal life or senses of needing change, of which the participants were aware from the earliest days of the Summer Institute. These "triggers" were usually mentioned in participants' applications to join the Summer Institute, written in February or March of the year of the study; occasionally they were instead mentioned in interviews at the beginning of the summer, included in a description of the path that brought them to the Summer Institute. While it is possible and even probable that the Summer Institute itself also prompted teachers to consider these issues as problems, they were at least mentioned by teachers before the Institute was well underway.

These triggering issues varied. Liz, for instance, noted that she was not sure she would be able to come back and teach another year if something did not change, citing frustration with the general climate for education and her school administration's response to accountability measures. Thomas spoke of problems

managing the workload of teaching and problems fitting in with colleagues. And Andrea noted difficulty in getting along with colleagues and a sense that she could be doing more for the student writers in her classroom. Table 2 lists triggering issues for each participant.

Three of the teachers (Greg, Jill, and Laura) reported in their initial interviews a common feeling that their classroom practices were not well matched with their own beliefs—almost a sense of being hypocrites in the classroom. Greg, for instance, noted in our first interview that he wanted a “deeper bag of tricks” for teaching writing. He went on:

I’m telling [students] all these great things to do about writing and yet not doing very much of it myself, and trusting what I am telling them to do are things that actually worked for me in the past, and might work for them, but not really trying them out now . . . . So, that’s credibility with the kids and with myself. I want to believe myself and [that] what I am telling them to do actually might be helpful.

Greg related that when he was teaching writing he often felt hypocritical, since his advice came from a place of authority that increasingly seemed false to him. If his approach with students was to speak from experience, but his recent experience included little writing, how could he advise them on their own writing with any authority?

Three teachers noted increasing difficulty working in their school climates. Liz articulated this with passion in her first interview:

**TABLE 2. Triggering Issues**

Participant Triggers	
Andrea	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Difficulty relating with colleagues</li> <li>• Sense she could be doing more</li> </ul>
Greg	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wanting “bag of tricks;” support as had had in practicum (felt like he was making it up as he went)</li> <li>• Tension/ mismatch between own practices and practices recommended to students</li> </ul>
Jill	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Desire for something new; stimulus</li> <li>• Tension/mismatch between student investment in ideas and form</li> </ul>
Laura	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tension/mismatch between providing structure and generating creativity</li> <li>• (above tied to school climate)</li> </ul>
Liz	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School climate</li> </ul>
Sara	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tension between students’ ideas and what needs to be taught (“being too rigid”)</li> <li>• (above tied to school climate)</li> <li>• Wanting to write for self (began earlier in year)</li> </ul>
Thomas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Difficulty relating with colleagues</li> </ul>

And the other thing that really, truly drove me here [to the writing project] was the fact that, I am so frustrated, like I said, with the direction of education in the state and the country, that, I feel like there is no outlet at a school site to deal with it. You are trying so hard to stay afloat and be the best you have dreamed of being in your classroom, and it is very isolating because you don't have the opportunity to come together with other colleagues and talk about, not only the things that are frustrating and how you can still teach in that environment . . . I almost felt like if I didn't do [the writing project] this summer, I did not know if I could go back and be a teacher.

Laura noted similar issues; further, her comments reveal how school climate can be tied to a feeling of hypocrisy in the classroom as well:

NCLB-related pressures sucked a lot of heart out of me . . . I love thinking about my teaching; being reflective, reading a lot, talking to others, etc. However, last year . . . I found myself doing much more rote-, worksheet-, “sage on the stage” kind of work, and far less cooperative groups, investigative learning, conversation-based stuff. I look back now and realize how dissatisfying this was, and—more importantly—how uninspiring and ineffective this was for my students.

I see these “triggering” problems as akin to Mezirow's (1991) notion of the “disorienting dilemma” that can instigate transformative learning; it is an anxiety-provoking situation or experience that results in a sense that something just “isn't working.” It is important to distinguish that it is not just that the teachers had problems in these areas, and then they solved these particular problems or did not. It is true, for example, that Greg ended the summer with a set of recent writing experiences of his own that he could draw from in teaching without feeling as hypocritical. But as the data will show, the trajectories of teachers' Summer Institute experiences were not so direct as the surfacing and then solving of problems like these. Instead, these triggering issues seem more like “presenting problems” that indicate sites of tension where existing meaning schemes were not working to account for and deal with situations. Thus, they can be read as the symptoms of a failure of existing meaning perspectives to reasonably account for experience, potential signs of the inadequacy of one's habitual interpretive frames for making meaning in a new situation. I will argue that the changes that occur here are not transformations of approaches to specific problems, but transformations of the meaning perspectives used to understand, think about, and respond to those problems. For example, a teacher like Liz, whose trigger was her sense of problems in the school climate, did not resolve it by single-handedly transforming that climate (though efforts to alter the climate may be one outcome of her experiences), but by examining and altering the perspectives or frames from which she perceives and deals with that climate.

### ***Accepting the Invitation to Write and Share in the Writing Group***

The triggers described above coincided, for those teachers reporting dramatic change, with accepting the writing project's invitation to write and to participate in the writing group. All Summer Institute teachers were invited to begin writing for between twenty and thirty minutes a day starting one month prior to the start of the Institute, and then for the first 20-30 minutes every morning during the five weeks of the Institute. Moreover, once the Institute began, they were assigned to writing groups and asked to bring pieces of writing-in-progress to the group for feedback a few times a week.

It turns out that "accepting" such invitations to write entails more than simply picking up a pen: five of the seven teachers consistently moved through phases of feeling "stuck," primarily due to feelings of anxiety about the writing. In particular, as I detail below, they reported first feeling blocked or stuck in response to anxiety either that the topics they were inclined to write about or their own abilities were deficient or "unworthy," and later getting "unstuck" through giving themselves permission to write and/or through sharing writing with a group and receiving feedback. It is this group of five teachers (Laura, Sara, Greg, Jill, and Liz) that I claim experienced transformation through their Summer Institute experiences. Most of the discussion below concerns these five, who for ease of reference I will term "the transforming teachers." The remaining two teachers (Andrea and Thomas) responded differently to the Summer Institute's invitations to write and to share in a writing group, and their stories (also described below in a separate section) help to illuminate important aspects of the other five and point toward a clear role for writing activities in motivating the changes teachers underwent in this Summer Institute.

#### **Anxiety about Writing**

The five transforming teachers reported worrying that their writing would not be good enough or that they had nothing to say. Laura wrote in her end-of-summer journal reflection that before the Summer Institute had begun, she felt herself an impostor: "By the time I entered our room . . . June 29th, I was convinced you [the site staff] had invited an impostor; had surely made your first big mistake." Liz explained that she had delayed starting the daily writing practice when assigned because "I was nervous about it and . . . I had anxiety about it." Sara tied this worry to a sense that others would be better writers; sending in her application, she worried that:

[The writing project site] was in [a major university], I went to [a more accessible college], I went to junior college, [this university] is beyond me, it's above my . . . well, of course it's not, I know that, but at an emotional level, it felt intimidating and scary and like I don't really belong.



Greg described feeling, as he had in years past, that in order to begin a journal he needed to have a big occasion to document, a life milestone like turning 30 or getting married. Jill explained that she initially “dreaded” the daily writing and reported feeling “almost paralyzed by my pragmatism. I became consumed with questions: why am I writing about this? This is a worthless subject?! And even if I had begun to write, these questions often got in the way. It made my journal writing painful.”

### Sharing and Receiving Feedback on Writing

Regardless of the teachers’ feelings about the worthiness of their work or how much writing teachers had been able to get done, they were immediately and consistently called upon to share their writing, both with a writing group and with the Summer Institute group as a whole. All five transforming teachers noted that they were nervous about this beforehand. In Laura’s case, the importance of this step was evident when she met with her writing group for the first time, with a piece of writing in hand and not sure whether it was even appropriate to be working on it. She reported telling them, “I’m not really even sure why I’m showing this to you because I’m struggling with what . . . I guess I’m struggling with where I should be in terms of what I’m writing. Or what the purpose of my writing should be.” Laura went on to note:

As I kind of tentatively read it to my writing group I was like, I don’t know if it should just stop, or what, and they were really helpful in just giving me feedback and stuff . . . [another group member] was saying, you know, it could be a piece about parenting, it could be a piece about your son, it could be . . . a lot of different things . . .

They told her the piece was compelling, that she should continue the story, and they “pointed” to some passages they thought worked especially well (Elbow & Belanoff, 1989). They responded to the piece *as writing*, employing the writing group norms presented earlier that day; using that response, Laura was in fact able to continue the piece, expanding and revising it for an eventual public reading. Thus, the group’s feedback encouraged Laura to continue, in part by being positive cheerleaders who said, “you can do it,” but more specifically as mirrors in which Laura had the opportunity to see her own writing from another person’s perspective. In suggesting two possible foci for a piece, Tim (a member of her group) articulated at least one version of what the piece was about. For Laura to hear readers’ points of view in this way was important because it provided direction for her continuing writing and, as we will see, her engagement in self-reflection. In fact, four out of the five transforming teachers (Laura, Sara, Liz, and Jill) discussed the importance of this encouraging, “keep going” kind of response that often included little, if any, direct suggestion for revision; they asked for and received initial “no response” response (in which the writing itself was not responded

to explicitly, just heard and validated) that encouraged them to keep going, and eventually began asking for more substantive (and riskier) responses that would help them to revise the writing.

### **Giving Oneself Permission**

After an initial uncomfortable period, these five transforming teachers eventually seem to have come to moments of “giving themselves permission to write” and to share that writing in a group. This move involved noting and accepting that they would be less than perfect as writers and deciding to pursue topics of their own choosing that were important to them. Five of the teachers (Greg, Jill, Laura, Liz, and Sara) explicitly described crossing a decision point or consciously deciding to move ahead with writing and sharing in the writing group despite the misgivings noted earlier. For example, Laura recalled,

Gradually, though, with the help of great modeling on the part of many presenters and fellows; and the gentle encouragement of my writing group, I began to realize that life didn't have to get in the way of writing. It could be the stuff of which my writing was made—and *when I allowed that to happen*, all of a sudden, I became more fluent, more confident, *and much more reflective about both my personal life and my professional life*. (emphases added)

The term “giving oneself permission” comes from the terms participants themselves used to describe this juncture: for example, Liz called it “release,” while Laura used the term “allowed” and recalled telling herself “I just need to stop fighting this, I just need to do this.”

### **Two Exceptions: Thomas and Andrea**

Two of the seven teachers in the study reported experiences that diverged from those of the other five, and their divergence begins here at the point of engaging in sharing with the writing group. Both Andrea and Thomas wrote well before the institute began (as did many of their colleagues in the Summer Institute) and entered the Summer Institute confident in their abilities as writers; further, both Andrea and Thomas described deliberately shielding themselves from response to their writing in the context of their writing groups. Andrea tied this avoidance to two factors. First, she described herself as shy and explained that she chose pieces to share with her writing group that were not “too personal.” She related this to a second concern as well, that colleagues might suggest revisions that she was unwilling to make. Thus, she reported choosing pieces to share with the writing group that were not only less personal but that also seemed finished to her, things she did not mind people “fussing with.” Andrea explained that she thought she was a good writer and that she did not like to “fuss with” her work once she had written it. In other words, Andrea did not seek response from peers to use in making revisions—a characteristic common to the practices of the other five teachers and

one explicitly cited by those five as important. Thomas also reported shyness, speaking with me in depth about his sense of not fitting in either at the Summer Institute, with other teachers generally, or with colleagues in his earlier career as a police officer; this discomfort carried over into his relationships with colleagues in his writing group. He also frequently discussed his lack of time for writing—in fact, he had at one time in his life written prolifically in poetry and prose, posting creative writing on his personal website and eventually courting his wife through online writing. Since becoming a teacher, however, he reported not engaging in any writing at all beyond that required for work (such as lesson plans) or school (such as papers for graduate courses he was taking). While Thomas explained that he regretted this lack of time, lamenting that “my wife is still waiting for a love poem from me,” for example, he did not engage in much original writing during the Summer Institute. When called upon to bring work to his writing group, he most often brought writing completed in graduate courses before the institute began or unit plan introductions he planned to post online for his students. While his writing group members did respond to this writing, Thomas stated that he did not revise according to their feedback.

Unlike the other five participants in this study, neither Thomas nor Andrea reported that the Writing Project experience was an experience of dramatic change or transformation. Andrea later described the Summer Institute as rewarding and “the best thing I ever did” in terms of professional development. Conversely, Thomas later expressed disappointment in the Institute as a professional development experience. Their cases stand in contrast with the other five participants’ accounts of meaningful and important experiences in the writing groups and of a sense of the Summer Institute as very significant, dramatic, or even “life-changing.” Being unlike their Summer Institute peers in their writing practices and writing group interactions, they did not resemble their peers in the shared experiences described below.

### ***Self-Examination***

Having decided to write and to elicit feedback from members of their writing groups, the teachers engaged in self-reflection in their writing. The topics of this self-reflection were not strictly limited to teaching, though for most participants classroom-related themes ran through daily life and were difficult to separate from personal ones. Nor, however, were these topics limited to traumas and other emotional topics that might be expected of therapeutic writing. Topics written about in pieces collected in the study, shown to the interviewer, mentioned in interviews, or read aloud in public included: the future, personal and professional relationships, memories and past experiences, ideas and values, feelings, education and teaching, daily events, and political or news events. Table 3 displays topics taken up by each participant (for information’s sake, I include topics taken up by

Andrea and Thomas even though their paths diverged from the other five participants around this point). Check marks indicate that the teacher wrote about that topic, and more details are included where possible.

In addition to writing about a range of topics, many but not all of them reflecting on personal issues or recounting autobiographical events, participants frequently began to work on more public pieces, addressing both personal and professional issues in a single piece of writing. For Liz, writing on personal topics promoted self-reflection around teaching. She described having “daily epiphanies”—realizations that occurred to her after reflection. Yet Liz’s self-examination did not stop at the classroom door; she also wrote about family, her marriage, and her feelings about having children. Liz described not only recording thoughts and feelings about family members in these writings, but also *learning* about them; she described this self-examination through writing as “like finding a secret door in my house,” discovering on a daily basis thoughts, feelings, and opinions (things she termed “epiphanies”) that she had not been aware she held—or at least she had not been aware she held so deeply.

The teachers often reported feelings of guilt and shame around the worthiness of self-reflective topics as writing topics and around their abilities or performance as writers, as discussed above in the context of “accepting the invitation to write.” They reported worrying about their choices regarding what to write about and their authority to write on those topics. These feelings were described as obstacles teachers had to work through in order to move on. For example, when Laura re-read her journal at the end of the summer, she made this assessment of her earliest writing:

... I had obediently made my first journal entry, as per [the site director]’s instruction. It was an entry that was dubiously hopeful as to whether I would be able to ever find anything interesting or worth writing about.

While topics did come to mind, she reported feeling a sense that she had to have especially “interesting” topics, topics with special “worth.” Apparently the topics about which Laura might normally write did not meet those criteria. Later in the summer, Laura described in her second interview how her writing usually drifted toward the topic of family and mothering, even when she willed herself to move on to something else. She told of her journal writing early in the summer: “what I was finding myself writing about or wanting to write about was only like, home stuff or mom stuff, stuff like that. And um, I have to use that word ‘only’ because that’s how I was kind of feeling, like, ‘only.’” While Laura clearly felt the need to reflect on the topic of “mom stuff,” she felt bad about it, as though it were not a worthy topic; it was “only” mom stuff. As time passed, however, Laura’s feelings changed:

TABLE 3. Topics for Self-Reflection

	Greg	Jill	Laura	Liz	Sara	Andrea	Thomas
The Future				✓ Career; Potential pregnancy		✓	
Relationships	✓ Students and their parents; Marriage		✓ Marriage; Mother/sons	✓ Family; Friends	✓ Marriage; Mother/ daughter	✓ Conflict at work; Written gifts for friends	✓ Letters to family members
Memories/ Past experiences	✓ Early days of teaching career	✓ Memories of women in her family	✓ Family crises; Family milestones	✓ Early days of marriage	✓ Childhood events		
Ideas and Values	✓ Relationships between knowledge, goodness, and love	✓ Faith	✓ Home; Faith				✓
Feelings		✓		✓	✓	✓	
Education/ teaching	✓ Teaching of grammar	✓ Religious education	✓ Family literacy	✓ School climate; Classroom practices	✓ Impact on a former student		✓ Lesson plans; Student writing assignments; Course papers
Daily Events		✓		✓	✓	✓	
Current events/ Politics		✓ Reagan's funeral			✓ Presidential election	✓ Response to NYT magazine article	

... and then [a guest presenter] came ... she mentioned that maybe these [topics that frequently came up in freewrites] were things that I wanted to talk about, and so I did that. I actually started to [make a list of possible writing topics, a strategy offered by the presenter] one morning as we were writing, and I got like, two different things on there, and they both had to do with being a parent and I'm like, you know, I just need to stop fighting this, I just need to *do* this. . .

Laura felt like writing about motherhood, yet she felt anxious and guilty that she was writing about that topic again and again. When she decided to “stop fighting this” and “just *do* this,” the feelings of guilt subsided. She wrote about mothering all summer, both in her journal and in finished pieces that she shared with the group. Once Laura had made this move, one she described later as “acceptance,” she reported engaging in self-examination with minimal, if any, further interference from guilt, anxiety, and shame.

### ***Reframing***

At the heart of the process I witnessed in this study was the reframing of meaning perspectives. By first interrogating current frames and then adjusting those frames or discovering new frames, the teachers acquired new possible lines of action and new ways of positioning themselves in relationship to various others. This phase was, at its outset, congruent with Mezirow's notion of “critical assessment of epistemic, sociocultural, or psychic assumptions” (1991, p. 168). But whereas for Mezirow this assessment in itself leads to tentative role experimentation and eventually changed actions, I will argue that in this study, bound into such assessments were critical moments of reframing, amounting to the epistemological shifts described by Kegan (2000).

Liz's experience illustrates this notion. At the beginning of the Summer Institute she was experiencing problems functioning effectively in her school climate; I called this problem a “trigger” for Liz. She engaged in a process of self-examination, described above; she said she experienced “epiphanies” on a daily basis through writing about not only her classroom climate but also her family, her marriage, and the future. She reported becoming newly aware of her own thoughts and feelings regarding these topics. Once this material had surfaced, Liz reflected on the premises that lay beneath this material: through what frames was she looking that would cause her to see things the way she does? How are those frames working for her? Are there other frames that could work? For example, in the area of school climate, Liz wrote in her initial application essay,

I feel as though the very things that drew me to education nearly ten years ago are slowly fading into the background amidst an atmosphere of standards and state mandated testing. We no longer seem to be collaborating to bring life and meaning to our teaching, but rather to write multiple-choice exams that will prepare our students for

the STAR test . . . needless to say, the current political climate at my school can be deadening.

She characterized the school climate as “deadening,” and she characterized her own role as the victim’s, literally as one who is being killed. She in fact does not describe her own reactions to the problem, what she is doing to resist or adapt; instead, the climate is simply described as something that is, an organism with a life of its own. A week into the Summer Institute, after writing and discussing this problem with colleagues on an almost daily basis, Liz returned to the topic in her first interview, yet her comments in the interview differed from her application essay in two ways: first, she began to address where the school climate came from and how widespread it might be, and second, she directly addressed her own stake in the problem and how she was dealing with it. She said,

I think it’s changed; I think, you know, the standardized testing has really, really changed the climate of schools. And I don’t think my school is all that different from a lot of places; I did change schools 4 years ago, I taught somewhere else for 4 years and it was a very different environment, but the local environment was different, too. So, I don’t know if it’s the same there now . . . I think administration has a big deal to do with how you can function in your school site. I’d love to say that it doesn’t affect my teaching, that what happens up there . . . doesn’t affect me, but it *has* affected me, the last couple years. I mean, I’ve been told, I’ve been *directed*, that it’s breadth not depth, and I have to gear my curriculum that way. And, you know, I really really struggle with that.

While in these statements Liz still located the problem in administration, policy, or “up there,” she took a more active role, considering whether school climates can change and the extent to which it has affected her own teaching. Thus we see Liz move from simply describing a problem to self-reflection about that problem, and we simultaneously see the beginnings of a move into considering the premises behind her experience of the situation: she interrogated whether the climate is worse in all schools or only in her current school, how if at all that climate has changed over time, and how her own classroom choices were affected by it.

Still later, in the second interview, Liz commented on the same topic again in a different way. She moved from talking about the problem of school climate and its impact on her teaching to talking about the issues behind that problem:

I think the problem, even before that climate, even before being pressured to cover more with less time, with social studies is content. What do I drop? What do I cover? What do I spend 2 weeks on? What do I spend 2 days on? You know . . . that’s hard, and I don’t think I ever fully resolved that as a teacher and I don’t know if I ever will.

The pressing issues she had struggled with of climate and assessment pressure are here examined as part of a larger set of issues with social studies as a discipline:



inherent in social studies is this issue of coverage, and the accountability issues come in after that. By the end of the summer, Liz consistently approached this problem from the perspective of an experienced social studies teacher, drafting a professional article and making plans for teaching that accounted for this view. Here she moved from interrogation of existing frames to adjustment of those frames.

Using the material that came to light during self-examination, Liz looked behind that material to determine its sources and implications. It is as though she became aware of a lens which she had been using for interpretation all along but which was transparent to her before. She acknowledged she had in fact been using a particular lens for interpretation; sensing that there may be other lenses, she questioned where this lens came from and what its implications for her life might be. Reframing the problem as a social studies disciplinary problem means that it is now a problem on which Liz, as a social studies expert, can speak with authority. With the old frame, if she wanted to “talk back” to the problem, she had to talk “up,” addressing her comments to a principal she saw as increasingly hostile or to a remote group of legislators or people in the U.S. Department of Education. Now it is a social studies problem, and she can “talk back” to colleagues, members of her professional association, administrators, and even policymakers from the position of a fully qualified member of the discipline.

While participants’ experiences of course varied according to individual concerns and issues of salience, those experiences can be organized into thematic categories: reframing what writing is and who can do it, reframing self as a writer, reframing other aspects of self (such as a leader), and reframing aspects of teaching. Table 4 lists areas of reframing for the five transforming teachers.

Laura’s example illustrates how reframing might occur along more than one of these lines simultaneously and suggests how one strand might inform another. One notable instance of reframing for Laura was her shift from describing her mothering role as “only mom stuff” to describing it as a central and valued aspect of her identity. By the summer’s end, instead of discounting the writing she did about mothering as “only” and struggling with whether to continue it, she ultimately described seeing it in fact as offering something that her children might benefit from. This was not so much a reframing of the writing as writing—she noted that she was unsure if as writing it was “anything great”—but a reframing of the importance of being a mother and what the mother role can mean for her.

Laura also seems to have reframed her perspective on her teaching, particularly her sense of what her task was in the classroom. At the beginning of the summer, Laura had described herself as caught between conflicting needs, trying to help students “celebrate the language” and enjoy writing but also trying to help them in “accurately addressing a prompt, or building on a thesis.” Initially it was

TABLE 4. Reframing

Participant	Areas of Reframing	Sample Comments
Greg	• What writing is and who can do it	I think about it [writing] as a much more organic thing than I did before.
	• Self: as writer	I've had the thought a couple of times that I might start calling myself a writer. Not that I have a business purpose, but previously I have called myself a teacher, a linguist—never a writer.
Jill	• Self: as writer	Well, I'm much more confident in what I'm doing . . . you know, I hadn't thought of myself as a writer, I had always thought of myself as a reader and so, this has been a very affirming thing . . . I feel confident, if I decide to sit down and put this to paper, I can do that.
	• Teaching: inspiration in relation to concern for form	I have come to realize the importance of inspiration. I don't think I was very good at inspiring my students to write before this project. Now, I understand its importance for me and I understand how crucial it is for my students.
Laura	• What writing is and who can do it	life . . . could be the stuff of which my writing was made
	• Self: as writer	That summer for the first time, I considered the possibility of calling myself "a writer"
	• Self: abilities; as a leader	I got a shot in the arm with regard to my own abilities, and I believe that it was really where I began—in earnest—to see myself as a teacher-leader.
	• Teaching: relationship between structure and expression; her own role	Last year . . . I found myself doing much more rote-, worksheet-, "sage on the stage" kind of work, and far less cooperative groups, investigative learning, conversation-based stuff. I look back now and realize how dissatisfying this was, and—more importantly—how uninspiring and ineffective this was for my students.
Liz	• Teaching: "climate" vs. Social Studies discipline	I think the problem, even before that climate, even before being pressured to cover more with less time, with social studies is content.
	• Self: as a writer	. . . now I feel like I'm able to potentially write professionally.
Sara	• Self: as a writer	I feel like [my writing] is more the writing of a writer, I do feel that shift, it is more the writing of a writer rather than the writing of a girl.

not something she named as a problem at all. For example, Laura had noted in her Summer Institute application, written in February of the previous year, that

Although it sometimes feels stilted and that it flies in the face of my innate desire to make writing creative and true to the author's voice, I have found that the use of a planning organizer (an example would be a "4-Square"), and a very specific rubric throughout the process . . . has become the skill I have focused on most, and from which I have seen the most dramatic results.

Laura noticed that it felt "stilted" sometimes, yet that feeling was not so pronounced as to produce much dissonance. In the application essay, she presented it as a teaching strategy that she was proud of and found particularly effective. Yet during the Summer Institute, that potential disconnect had apparently become a problem: asked about a problem in her teaching, she cited "the struggle to balance the two poles of pursuing the joy of writing . . . and the structure of writing . . . I have struggled with that for the past four years, not being able to marry the two." By summer's end she had reframed this issue—that is, she surfaced, examined, and then transformed the meaning perspectives with which she made sense of this particular practice and of how it fit into her overall approach to teaching writing. She now described seeing her old stance—the same stance she had described confidently in her application essay—as "uninspiring and ineffective for my students." The activities she had previously seen as supporting students she now labeled "more rote-, worksheet-, 'sage on the stage' kind of work." Her new stance, expressed for example in her final journal evaluation, was that "teaching is best done with the heart and mind in tandem." For Laura this meant more activities like "cooperative groups, investigative learning, conversation-based stuff." While these changes around teaching might seem at first unconnected to the changes she reports in her sense of the mother role, Laura tends to refer to them as connected, for example noting them in the same sentence or in the same paragraph of a written account of her summer experience. And since several teachers reframed along more than one thematic line, some directly tied to teaching and some not, it is reasonable to suspect that reframing in one domain might facilitate doing so in another or that self-reflection on a single topic might make possible reframing along several lines—particularly since all of the teachers tended to speak of these several domains in a single stream rather than recounting them in separate incidents.

Reframing led to a new sense of authority and, therefore, opened up not only new ways of seeing but also new ways of being. And insofar as authority is a constant issue in composition processes (as literally, "author-ity," and as writers necessarily must occupy positions determined not only by their own experience but by the exigencies of audience and genre), reframing might be particularly encouraged in writing processes where writers consider feedback and undertake revision.

### *Resolving to Reorient*

As described above in the context of reframing, when teachers altered perspectives on teaching, the change was a change in ways of thinking about teaching problems rather than the adoption of specific teaching methods. This helps to explain why teachers were not heavily engaged in class planning during the summer. Instead, they were engaged in changing *stances* that affect teaching and students. And stance, as reflected in how one sees, feels about, or responds to situations, is not exactly plan-able. Instead of delineating specific action steps, participants usually announced a will to act; they declared an intention to do things differently. I have identified this phase as “resolving to reorient.” Instead of drafting concrete plans for changes in teaching, the teachers gathered ideas for *possible* plans and then resolved to change practices while delaying the declaration of any specific plan. Liz declared, “I just told someone in my writing group that it’s July, and I’m, already I’m excited to go back [to my teaching] and rework it and . . .,” but then trailed off without specifying what exactly she will rework. Similarly, Jill claimed, “I don’t think I was very good at inspiring my students to write before this project. Now, I understand its importance for me and I understand how crucial it is for my students. I know the issue of inspiring writing will be the biggest change in my teaching as the result of being a participant in this project.” I do not think this means that the teachers do not in fact change practices after their summer experiences—in fact, a year later, the teachers attested that they did use specific lesson ideas demonstrated during the summer (and other work on NWP outcomes has documented the adoption of specific strategies as well; see for example, Bratcher & Stroble, 1994; Neves, 2001; Pritchard & Marshall, 1994; Staley, 2001). Instead, it appeared that the teachers found it necessary or appropriate to name new directions or approaches shortly after reframing, approaches that they might (or, perhaps, might not) enact with specific classroom actions later. So while Mezirow (1991) describes a phase he calls “planning a course of action,” I did not observe the formation of distinct action plans. Instead, I found that teachers consistently “resolved to reorient” future actions according to changed perspectives.

Teachers made such resolutions to reorient not only in the area of teaching but also in the area of becoming a writer. I noted how teachers called assumptions about what writing is and about who can do it into question, and how they reframed notions of themselves as writers. Now those same teachers resolved to live as writers, to think and behave more like they now would say a writer does. Greg pledged, “And, I think, my plan is to just keep doing it [daily writing] because I think I’ve realized that there is not a need to turn it into something fantastic.” He listed some more practical ideas, but they still did not carry the force of “plans of action” that one might include on a to-do list:

I've had the thought a couple of times, I might start calling myself a writer, not that I have a business purpose, but previously I have called myself a teacher, a linguist, never a writer, I have done a lot of writing in both of those roles, but um, I think I'll start sending stuff out, I want to get a writing group going during the other months.

Greg indicated that he planned to change, and he said he was serious about it (and in fact he went on to join a creative writing class the following academic year), yet here he advanced not plans so much as intentions. That he would call himself a writer seemed as important or more important to him at this point than any concrete plans for enacting that. These shifts in self-concept thus spread beyond teaching to broader changes in self-definition, identity, and ways of life.

### ***Trying New Roles***

Teachers in the study discussed exploring new role options in the context of an active process of trying them on or adopting or rejecting them. It may have happened after the resolution to a new orientation had been made, or it may have happened concurrently with the processes of reframing and of coming to that resolution. The trying on of roles occurred both in teachers' interpersonal interactions with other teachers at the Institute and in the sense that writing always involves taking on a role or persona.

### **Trying New Roles in the Summer Institute Group**

Teachers used the temporary, new social setting of the cohort of Summer Institute teachers to consciously try on new roles. Greg reported that on his school faculty and in most social settings, "I'm the person who makes peace . . . I am always trying to make sure that everybody is okay. Sometimes at the expense of my own." He went on to describe taking that role in the family and in the workplace (such as in his function as department chair at school). Yet during the Summer Institute, he reported experimenting with something different:

I'm almost never in a situation where I'm doing this kind of sharing and talking and talking about myself and what I'm doing. And so, I get really excited about it; I'm always volunteering to read my stuff [here at the Summer Institute]. And part of me is saying, is that, part of me is the peacemaker part of me thinking I ought to not do this because it is going to make me stand out and things are not going to be even and running smoothly. One of the things I have sort of given myself permission to do, this summer, I don't know if it is starting or what, is to be a little bit more selfish and do this for me.

Ordinarily, as in a faculty meeting, Greg said he would hesitate to raise his hand to speak for his small group, because it would seem more important to him in his role as peacemaker to ensure that other voices are heard. It would be "selfish" to put his hand up every time an opportunity to share came up—even if he had something solid to contribute each time—because he would be hogging the group's attention

and perhaps stepping on someone else's chance to speak. At the Summer Institute, he temporarily set that orientation aside. He said he had consciously "given [him]self permission . . . to be a little bit more selfish and do this for me." In this new, provisional role he gave himself permission to take, he volunteered when he wanted to: "I'm doing this kind of sharing and talking and talking about myself and what I'm doing. And so, I get really excited about it; I'm always volunteering to read my stuff." He says he found the experiment rewarding: "it is so exciting for me to do it and see what happens." The temporary nature of the Summer Institute experience and the encouragement that he got from his writing group and others to share made it safe for Greg to try this new role out.

### Trying New Roles in Writing

Writing itself can also facilitate experimentation with roles. Teachers in the Summer Institute reported taking on, in writing, positions that at first might seem contrived or false; trying on the role, however, made it more comfortable. Table 5 lists instances in which the five transforming participants reported conscious experimentation with new roles.

Liz, having chosen to write in her Summer Institute notebook after a particularly frustrating episode in the remodeling of her house, exclaimed, "who am I? I'm not an English person . . . [laughs]." An "English person," she supposes, would naturally write in response to stress; the ordinary Liz would not. The "English person" is a role she was consciously aware of and knew how to enact on the page, even though she is actually a social studies teacher.

Greg described something similar, explaining why he was especially happy with a particular passage in his short story. He was proud of the passage for its depth:

And . . . I don't know what it means. I think, I mean, I can come up with meanings for it; I can come up with symbolism. But it feels like, being able to do that with something that I wrote, it's kind of a cool experience because it's like, you know, *I* wrote it, of course I should know what it means, but, it's almost like there was something transcendent about it, it came from somewhere else. But clearly it came through me. And I think that writers often talk like that: being in the moment, writing, and something comes through them instead of them having to pound it out. And that was one of those moments.

When Greg referred to meanings "coming through him," he referred to a feeling of being surprised at what one has said or at how well one has been able to do something. Insofar as composing requires a writer to take on a role as speaker or narrator of a piece, it enables the writer to see things in the way that speaker would see them and say things that speaker would say. Hence Greg surprised himself by saying things in his writing differently (and to his mind, better) than "normal

TABLE 5. Trying New Roles

Participant	Roles	Examples
Greg	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sharing, talking about self; not being peace-maker; “selfish”</li> <li>• Writer</li> </ul>	I’m almost never in a situation where I’m doing this kind of sharing and talking, and talking about myself and what I’m doing. And so, I get really excited about it; here I’m always volunteering to read my stuff. And part of me is saying— part of me is the peacemaker part of me thinking “I ought to not do this because it is going to make me stand out, and things are not going to be even and running smoothly.” One of the things I have sort of given myself permission to do, this summer, I don’t know if it is starting or what, is to be a little bit more selfish and do this for me.
Jill	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Various perspectives to speak from within a piece of writing</li> </ul>	I would assume my audience, if I sent this out once I was finished, would have to be religious educators or parents who have chosen religious education for their children . . . if I go in this new direction of talking to a student . . . it’s on the academic edge because without academics, and mostly talking to adults even though I may use conversation with a student to kind of, you know, get the point across.
Laura	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Writer</li> <li>• Teacher-leader</li> </ul>	I’m writing poetry—that’s quite a switch for me . . . I guess that’s where I “am” these days.
Liz	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “English person”— someone who would write in response to events</li> <li>• Professional writer</li> </ul>	I was so frustrated because we are trying to remodel our house and . . . we’re way over budget and I am feeling, I’m spinning, we’re feeling way out of control, you know? So, instead of, I went for a walk and then I wrote and I was like, who am I? I’m not an English person. . . [laughs]
Sara	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not volunteering but hanging back and listening</li> <li>• Writer</li> </ul>	This has been interesting; I’m usually the one who talks a lot, and I feel like [here at the Summer Institute] I am being a much better listener, I am enjoying sitting back and observing.

Greg” would say them and, more to the point, making meanings available to the reader (what Greg calls “symbolism”) that extend beyond the meanings “normal Greg” would make.

Both types of situations described here—the temporary community situation of the Summer Institute and the myriad temporary rhetorical situations writers find themselves in when approaching different writing tasks—created opportunities for the teachers to try on new roles in a provisional way. The teachers in the



Summer Institute used those opportunities to experiment with ways of seeing, thinking, acting, and being that follow from their changing meaning perspectives.

### ***Building Competence and Confidence through New Roles and Relationships***

All five of the teachers reporting transformation reported gaining specific competence to fit their reframed perspectives; for four out of the five teachers, this gain in competence was accompanied by an explicitly named gain in confidence as well. Mezirow cites this growth as part of a phase he calls “building competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships” (1991, p. 169). I would build on that notion to claim that not only are confidence and competence gained, they are in fact gained *through* those roles and relationships.

Knowledge and skills for teaching, for example, were acquired through presentations by others, and knowledge and skills for writing were acquired through practice and feedback—elements we would recognize as part of writing instruction in a classroom setting. Yet more interesting is that teachers acquired knowledge and skills through reorganizing their own ideas by presenting their own practices. In presenting a teaching activity, they not only improved their teaching through practice but, more importantly, they also learned to say new things about the activity, to frame the activity differently. This served as a rehearsal for the new stance or orientation. Liz, for example, demonstrated a series of classroom activities she used to teach about a historical event, the murder of Emmett Till. While the activities themselves were familiar to her, well-established slices of her regular classroom practice, the presentation could potentially make them unfamiliar in two ways: one, she had to plan for them with a new audience in mind (the community of teachers with whom she had been experiencing such powerful growth rather than her usual audience of high school students), and two, the discussion afterward might have raised aspects of the teaching practice that she had not thought about or that challenged her established rationales. Thus in planning the activity and in unpacking it in discussion, Liz had an opportunity to acquire something new, a new stance from which to think about and talk about this slice of her work. Asked after her presentation whether there were things she says now that she would not have said before, Liz replied, “a lot of things I wouldn’t have said, but I think there are things I said and I didn’t know why I said them . . .” She elaborated principles that had shaped her teaching for several years:

things like, “Yes, my students write in history class. Writing across the curriculum is very important,” you know; yes, we write to learn, but I don’t think I knew why that was true. So now I feel like I can speak to those things, you know? In a real way, in an authentic way, in a way that I know what I’m talking about.

Thus gains in specific knowledge and skills were directly tied to gains in confidence. Advances in Liz's classroom practice were as much results of her increased authority over her own practice as they are results of the refining of any particular strategy.

Laura's experience underscores how these gains come through the relationships teachers have built in the Summer Institute. Laura, for instance, reflected:

That summer, I became reminded of how much I thrive on academic conversation . . . That summer I got a shot in the arm with regard to my own abilities, and I believe that it was really where I began—in earnest—to see myself as a teacher-leader . . . That summer, I experienced community, acceptance, renewal, and challenge. I continue to feel a part of that learning community, and continue to be challenged to think about literacy in new and different ways because of it.

First, Laura noted the importance of the discourse she participated in during the summer; second, she noted a gain in confidence (along with resulting actions); third, she tied those two themes to the community of colleagues she experienced in the Institute. In other words, "academic conversation" led to "a shot in the arm with regard to my own abilities," and this was made possible by the "learning community" that keeps the conversation challenging yet "bolsters" her to persist in trying to meet that challenge.

Greg's comments tell a similar story. Greg surprised himself when he responded to the news of a friend's cancer by crafting a poem:

I didn't even think twice about it, I was like, oh, this is going to be a poem. And that just kind of fell out as a poem on the page . . . the pieces of the email became the beginning of the stanzas. I wouldn't have done that [before] because I wouldn't have felt like I had any right to be doing poetry . . . I don't do it a lot; I don't write a lot of poetry, and so it was a new genre, it was a new kind of music to be playing. And until I had done it in here and shared some of what I'd done, I didn't feel like, you know, I had the right to be doing it because it is not what I do.

Greg gained confidence to try writing in a genre he previously "wouldn't have had any right" to use, and he gains this confidence after he "had done it in here *and shared some of what I'd done*" (emphasis added). In relationship to members of his writing group and others in the Summer Institute with whom he had shared, Greg reported having developed the confidence to try poetry outside of the Institute as well—and, I should add, it is likely that trying poetry outside of assignments will help him become more competent also. In practicing a new skill with support from others, we not only gain confidence through their help and feedback—we also get better at the skill itself by practicing and adapting to their feedback. Table 6 summarizes such gains reported by all five of the teachers reporting changes (Andrea and Thomas are excluded here).

TABLE 6. Gains in Competence and Confidence

Participant	Examples of reported gains
Greg	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Confidence: “the right” to do poetry</li> <li>• Competence: new terms/concepts (e.g., genre)</li> </ul>
Jill	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Competence: specific classroom strategies</li> <li>• Competence: terms and ideas from readings (e.g., “genre theory;” multiculturalism)</li> </ul>
Laura	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Confidence: teaching with “heart”</li> <li>• Competence: new terms/concepts (e.g., “genre,” modeling)</li> </ul>
Liz	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Confidence: conviction re practices</li> <li>• Competence: new terms/concepts (e.g., “agents” [Brandt, sponsors])</li> </ul>
Sara	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Competence: revision (e.g., deleting chunks)</li> </ul>

### *Living in the New Frame*

Through the series of experiences described here, the five transforming teachers had “reframed” an epistemological stance or stances, made a commitment to reorienting not only their teaching but also their lives in response to those, tried out roles for doing so and gathered the necessary competence and confidence for doing so. Next, the teachers in the Summer Institute presumably set out to live their lives in new ways. I have argued that the changes these teachers made are more about ways of knowing and seeing than about enacting new courses of action—surely it is possible that one could drastically change actions without changing meaning perspectives at all, and conversely, a titanic shift in perspective may not translate into many visible changes at all. Liz appears, based on her follow-up letter and my continued contact with her through the Writing Project site, to have kept most of the same classroom strategies, changing, for instance, not her lesson plans but the things she says (maybe even just says to herself) about those practices. Yet must not *some* type of follow-through be involved in transformative learning? The simple fact that teachers who have engaged in writing-intensive professional development continue to claim that “it changed my life” suggests that some aspect of the experience must be lasting, whether grounded changes in their decisions and behavior or whether matching a discourse and identifying with a professional community; otherwise it would not continue to be cited by those participants as a life-changing experience or turning point<sup>1</sup>. This study’s participants did in fact make claims that sound like “changed my life” claims: Jill called it “the most powerful professional experience of my life” and Laura said “I have talked about [the writing project] to many folks, both fellow educators and others in my life, and have always characterized it as a very important time for me.” Laura also claimed that her Summer Institute experience “has changed how I view myself as a writer and as a learner.”

Perhaps “living in the new frame” may take visible form in action, but it may also include less visible forms of “living,” such as new emotional responses to recurring situations or new ways of defining problems. The teachers in this study did take some concrete actions: Greg, for example, enacted his new perspective on “being a writer” by sitting in on a colleague’s creative writing course the following year; Laura enacted her new perspective by beginning a graduate program—something that she said had not seemed possible or relevant under her old perspective. But these visible steps are perhaps not as important as components of a “follow-through” phase as are the emergence of perceptions and responses that differ from the perceptions and responses that would have followed from the prior perspective.

### **Toward a Model**

Figure 1 depicts a pattern of teachers’ reported experiences in the Summer Institute of this NWP site, built from consistencies seen in the data for five of the seven participants in the study (Greg, Jill, Laura, Liz, and Sara). The other two participants’ experiences (those of Andrea and Thomas) looked quite different from the five represented here; however, the way in which they differed serves to confirm rather than to challenge this model. The remaining five teachers shared a set of experiences over the course of the five-week institute.

In Figure 1, the boldly outlined ovals linked by bold arrows represent major phases in the learning process experienced by teachers in this study. The white rectangles show significant contributing processes at various phases. The shaded oval and the grey, dashed lines connecting it to each phase represent the important ways in which it matters that this process is situated within a community of teachers and writers. Finally, the thin, dotted arrows reflect some key ways in which sharing and receiving feedback on writing appear to operate throughout the process. Not every teacher’s experience includes every single phase, but in the main the schematic describes most teachers’ path from an initial engagement in writing to life in a revised frame of reference. While the phases do “progress” in a kind of chronology, it is important to note that they are not discrete steps—that is, teachers might engage in more than one phase at a time or return to phases multiple times during this process.

### **Discussion**

This study’s findings have a range of implications for future research, both my own and that of colleagues interested in the NWP, in writing, and in teacher development more generally. First, the study does suggest that writing was a particularly potent factor in the learning experiences of these teachers; writing and interactions with colleagues around writing seemed to initiate and/or enhance the effects of

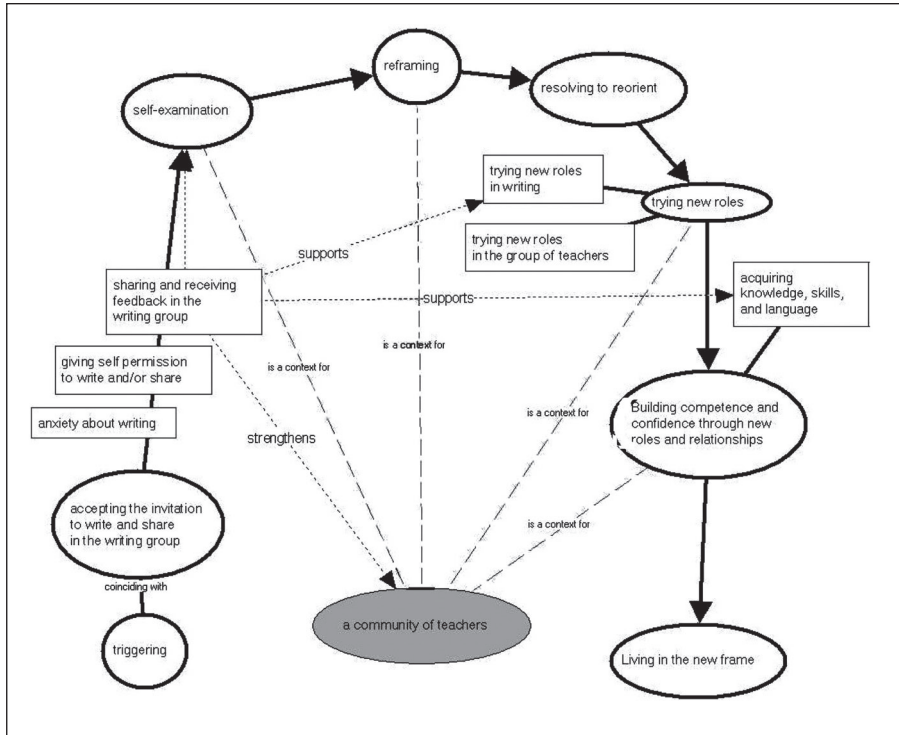


FIGURE 1. Schematic Representation of Teacher Transformation in a Writing-Intensive Setting

experience at each stage of the learning process described here. It is notable, for instance, that the difference between the five teachers who reported significant change and the two who did not was a difference in participation in the writing-related activities of the Institute. These two teachers led presentations, participated in whole-group sessions, and in every other way participated at a level similar to that of their colleagues except when it came to writing and to sharing that writing in a writing group. Other Summer Institute features, such as presentations, talk, inquiry, and relationship-building, have been well documented as important mechanisms in the Summer Institute’s influence on teachers (see, for example, Lieberman & Wood, 2003; Neves, 2001), but this study suggests that writing activities are certainly important sites where issues of stance, authority, and identity are worked out. We could benefit from future research examining the interplay between these several influences along with how many of these activities are in fact carried out through one kind of writing or another.

This study also draws attention to the complicated relationship between personal and professional concerns for teaching. The NWP, partly though its association

with a writing process pedagogy and with a number of teaching practices often identified as “expressivist,” has sometimes been criticized from within and from outside the NWP for overindulging the tendency of many teachers in writing project summer institutes to produce a good deal of “personal” writing, describing and reflecting on personal problems and private experiences, at the expense of academic or professional writing—the kind of writing about professional or disciplinary issues that is privileged and valued in higher education and more broadly in the learned professions.<sup>2</sup> In a climate of increased attention to accountability, it is natural to ask how these activities in the personal domain affect professional activity, classroom practice, and ultimately student learning. Yet for the five “transforming teachers,” writing and learning on personal topics and on professional topics happened in tandem; all of the teachers in the study intertwined personal and professional themes both in their writing and in their reports of change. Thus, this study encourages future research that, like earlier work by researchers such as (but not limited to) Fox (2000) and Sunstein (1994), takes a broad view of professional development and includes the teacher as person in its vision of the professional teacher—but that, unlike much of the existing work on individual teaching lives, considers that development as situated within a sociocultural context.

Next, the study confirms a finding of other studies of NWP: that a major outcome of the Summer Institute is increased confidence for teachers, the self-assurance to trust and even argue for and defend their own professional judgments. It shows, however, that this change in confidence was not merely a superficial “ego boost” for teachers but was instead tied to a process of serious inquiry into and adjustment of ways of thinking about teaching, learning, writing, and life. These results also highlight the connection between dramatic professional development experiences for teachers and the presence of a professional community formed through collaborative work (in this case in writing groups) and sustained over time. These two features are unfortunately not shared by many professional development programs; attention to the particulars of this process and its outcomes will contribute to a better understanding of how professional development changes teachers and to better opportunities for teachers to engage in lasting change.

But are the changes teachers experienced in this Summer Institute “transformations?” The study’s findings are consistent with Mezirow’s concept of transformational learning in that the change experienced by the teachers “. . . involve[s] [their] sense of self and always involves critical reflection upon the distorted premises sustaining [their] structure of expectation (1991, p. 167). Further, the general arc of experience identified here is for the most part consistent with (while not identical to) that which Mezirow observed in his work with returning women college students. If there is a central moment or turning point in the experiences of teachers documented here, it is at the point of reframing; this is the point at

which meaning perspectives or frames of reference are modified or new ones are adopted.

Studies like this one, concerned with teacher transformation as I define it here, offer several important contributions. First and most immediately, this research describes analytically a phenomenon heretofore often thought of as “magic”—a conception of the mechanism of the Summer Institute that has made it at once prized by many of those who work within NWP and inscrutable to researchers who would extrapolate from it to inform an understanding of professional development in general. By shifting our attention toward issues of epistemology and the accompanying issues of authority and agency, this work shifts our focus from documenting what behaviors teachers display to understanding why those actions happen. In this way, we gain insight both into how the learning occurs in the first place (as examined in this study) and into how the learning is then enacted in classroom practice.

The question of how an NWP Summer Institute affects observable classroom practices has been addressed repeatedly (albeit with varying degrees of clarity) in the research literature; Pritchard and Honeycutt’s (2006) review aggregates these various studies and documents that teachers’ classroom practice does in fact change at least sometimes in response to Summer Institute activities in some visible ways, though these studies are surprisingly few given the NWP’s longevity and popularity. Understanding teacher transformation in the NWP helps us to approach such studies in different and perhaps more productive ways. This study helps to clarify that while classroom practice is of course an important indicator of change in teachers, it is not in and of itself a sufficient criterion for deciding whether transformation has taken place or even whether learning has taken place. For example, the results of this study help to explain why changes in the classroom practices of Summer Institute participants have been difficult to document in the past: teachers’ learning experiences in this summer institute, while not unrelated to classroom practice, were not focused there. Instead, they encompassed more global perspectives on writing, self, and students—perspectives which can of course be expected to affect practice but which do not translate into easily predictable patterns of change in practice. A researcher might visit three classrooms and see similar practices occurring in each—perhaps all three teachers have students working in groups to review one another’s written work, for example—and yet the reasons for those practices and the ways of perceiving classrooms, students, and writing that lead to those choices might look quite different for each teacher. This study suggests that if we are to look at NWP-influenced changes in classroom practice in the most productive way possible, we must start not by observing whether and how a set of “NWP practices” are implemented but by first observing how and what teachers learn in Summer Institutes, including the many aspects of teacher learning in that setting—such as epistemological shifts and accompanying shifts



in agency and authority—that are not explicitly tied to practices, and *then* tracing how the learning of particular teachers gets enacted in particular practical choices. Tracking teacher transformation does not eliminate our need to know how teachers are enacting change in classrooms (and indeed, a limitation of the present study is that it does not follow teachers into their classrooms) but it reorients that inquiry to include not only what actions are taken but what intentions, questions, and understandings shape those actions. A follow-up study to this one might look first to the particular domains of meaning perspectives that are reframed by a given teacher and then look accordingly into his or her classroom practice rather than looking for common sets of specific classroom practices used by groups of teachers. We must take “changed my life” claims seriously and work to shed analytical light on the heretofore “magic” mechanisms of change in the NWP Summer Institute, to research this instance of professional development and others in a manner consistent with a view of teachers as thinkers and people rather than as the trainable enactors of others’ ideas.

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### NOTES

1. And in fact those claims do persist long after the end of the Institutes; Lieberman and Wood (2003) confirm this. In addition, the NWP Legacy study now underway involves interviews with people who participated in NWP summer institutes prior to 1994, and participants in that study voice “changed my life” claims as well.
2. There has been debate in recent years among writing project directors and other leaders of the NWP about the ratio of personal to professional writing that is appropriate in an NWP summer institute, with some national leaders insisting that personal writing has no place at all in an NWP summer institute, and that all the writing sponsored and produced in a summer institute should address professional and content area questions.

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## APPENDIX 1: INTERVIEW GUIDES

### Interview Guide, First Interview

The first questions have to do with the writing you've been doing this summer. Can we get that out and talk about it a little?

1. What kinds of writing have you been doing? Can you show me some examples of what you mean? (get categories, types, etc.)
2. Looking at one piece in particular, one that feels interesting or important:
  - a. What process did you go through to write that?
  - b. What was happening before, during, after?
  - c. Follow up specific to the piece
3. Tell me about what you do when you write. What comes first, second, etc.?
4. What topics have you been writing about?
5. Have you done writing like this in the past?
  - a. How did you come to it?
  - b. What was that like?
6. How do you feel when you are writing?

Next I'd like to ask you about your work as a teacher.

7. Describe what a really good teaching day is like for you.
8. What about a really good teaching year?
9. Can you tell me about a problem you've had in your teaching?
  - a. How did you see it at the time?
  - b. How do you see it now?
10. What would you say are your main jobs as a teacher, the things you feel most responsible for?
11. What comes easiest to you in your work?
12. What is most difficult in your work?

The next questions have more to do with you in general, and who you are as a person. I know that's a big topic and difficult to explain, so just feel free to answer any way you want. We'll come at it from a couple of different directions.

13. Can you finish this sentence for me? "I am a person who . . ."
14. I have some information about your career in your application, but I'm more interested in your story of what brings you here. What path brought you to the Summer Institute today?

- a. What are some of the important events along that path?
15. Can you tell about a misfortune that occurred along the way, or an obstacle you have had to face on the way to this point?
16. If I went to someone who knows you well, how would he or she describe who you are?
  - a. How would you agree and disagree with that description?

### Interview Guide, Second Interview

Interviewees came to the interview with at least three pieces of writing they had worked on over the summer that they were willing to share with me.

For each specific piece:

1. Tell what steps you took to write this . . .
  - a. Idea/how got started
  - b. Draft: when? Where? What thinking about?
  - c. Took to group? Other responders? What response did you get?
  - d. Revisions?
  - e. Goals for piece? Any further plans?
2. Can you point out a part of the piece you're especially happy with? (Specific passage) Explain . . .
3. Can you tell about a problem with the piece?
4. How is this like your writing in general/how is it typical or representative?
5. How is this unlike your writing in general/different or atypical?
6. How do you imagine the audience for this piece?
7. Imagine a reader for this piece who doesn't know you. What impression/picture would he/she get?

General questions:

8. How do you decide what to bring to your writing group?
9. Tell about writing group experience. What's it like? How is it like/unlike your expectations?
10. How is your writing same as it was before? How different?
11. Are there words/terms you've picked up this summer?
12. What do you say now about teaching that you wouldn't have said before?
13. What do you say now about writing that you wouldn't have said before?
14. Tell me about three important moments from this summer.
  - a. What did you learn from each of those moments?
  - b. What qualities in you did this period (summer) bring out?

## APPENDIX 2: WRITING PROMPTS USED IN THE SUMMER INSTITUTE

### Application Prompt

#### Personal Statement

In an informal and reasonably brief letter of application, please tell about your personal and educational background and teaching experience, and describe one strategy that you believe in for the teaching of writing or reading—ideally a strategy that you actually use with your students and find successful. School principals and other administrators should feel free to describe teaching approaches they encourage or strategies for encouraging effective literacy instruction in a school or district.

### End-of-Summer Reflection Prompt

#### The Daily Writing Discipline: A Self-Study

During the last day of the Summer Institute we are asking that you use your journal writing time to write a final journal entry in the form of a personal report on your experience as a practitioner of the daily writing discipline for the Summer of 2004 . . .

To prepare for your report, please read back over your journal (or your morning writing, wherever you kept it) from the time you began to practice the daily writing discipline for this Summer (sometime after orientation day) to see what the discipline of daily writing has meant to you. As you re-read your journal, look for changes that may have taken place over time in your writing, in your attitude toward writing, in your sense of yourself as a writer and thinker. In looking for changes in your writing, note especially any changes that may have taken place in your fluency (how much you wrote), in the topics that you wrote about, in your voice or style. See if you can discern any patterns of development. Can you learn from this review anything about yourself as a writer, as a teacher, as a leader, as a person? What has the journal meant to you in any of your roles? Considering your experience as a case study, what can you say about the discipline of daily writing in your case?

## APPENDIX 3: PROMPT FOR ONE-YEAR FOLLOW-UP DATA

### Invitation for Follow-up Letter

I am now in the writing stage of my dissertation project (it seems to be taking forever!) and I just wanted to thank you again for your help. Hopefully it was at least somewhat interesting for you too.

I'm also interested in your perspective now that a year has passed since our interviews. If you have the time and if you feel so inclined, I'd love to know your thoughts on two questions:

1. How would you describe your experiences with the Summer Institute to someone who didn't know much about it? You might think about it in terms of before—during—after, or you might prefer to characterize it overall, then and now.
2. How is the writing you did during the summer relevant to that experience (if at all)?

If you choose to respond to these questions, I hope you'll feel free to do it informally, in a quick email. I certainly am not asking you for a significant commitment of time or energy at the beginning of the school year!

Either way, thanks again for sharing your experiences with me. I am really grateful for your help.

#### APPENDIX 4: SAMPLE LISTS OF CODES FROM EARLY AND LATE STAGES OF ANALYSIS

Early Analyses	Final Scheme
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• anxiety, guilt and shame</li> <li>• audience</li> <li>• being or becoming a writer</li> <li>• changed writing practices</li> <li>• community of teachers</li> <li>• connections</li> <li>• definitions of different kinds of writing</li> <li>• ego~ humility~ confidence</li> <li>• feedback—how it affects writing</li> <li>• fitting in</li> <li>• follow-through</li> <li>• having a story to tell</li> <li>• hypocritical</li> <li>• I'm all over the place</li> <li>• importance of writing</li> <li>• journaling</li> <li>• need strategies</li> <li>• personal disclosure</li> <li>• prior NWP site involvement</li> <li>• real me</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• change over summer               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ change over summer/unspecified change</li> <li>◦ change over summer/~changed my life~ claims</li> <li>◦ change over summer/energized or restored</li> <li>◦ change over summer/colleagues</li> <li>◦ change over summer/being a writer now</li> <li>◦ change over summer/confidence in abilities; taking seriously</li> <li>◦ change over summer/reconceptualize writer~writing</li> </ul> </li> <li>• triggers               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ triggers/need strategies</li> <li>◦ triggers/school climate</li> <li>◦ triggers/feel need to write</li> <li>◦ triggers/ended up here by accident</li> <li>◦ triggers/ended up here by accident/came for line on resume</li> <li>◦ triggers/feel hypocritical</li> <li>◦ triggers/balance curriculum</li> <li>◦ triggers/interpersonal relating/fitting in</li> <li>◦ triggers/need stimulus</li> </ul> </li> <li>• accepting invitation to write and share               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ accepting invitation to write and share/guilt~shame—topics not worthy                   <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◊ accepting invitation to write and share/guilt~shame—topics not worthy/it's selfish to write for me</li> </ul> </li> <li>◦ accepting invitation to write and share/giving self permission                   <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◊ accepting invitation to write and share/giving self permission/feedback</li> </ul> </li> <li>◦ accepting invitation to write and share/stuck or unstuck</li> </ul> </li> <li>• self-examination               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ self-examination/topics/relationships</li> <li>◦ self-examination/topics/relationships/who I am</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• school climate</li> <li>• “selfish”</li> <li>• self-monitor</li> <li>• self-reflection</li> <li>• site director</li> <li>• spiritual</li> <li>• stuck or unstuck</li> <li>• students’ position</li> <li>• talking more or less</li> <li>• voice work-life balance</li> <li>• writing groups</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ self-examination/topics/the future</li> <li>◦ self-examination/topics/current events or politics</li> <li>◦ self-examination/topics/task specific</li> <li>◦ self-examination/topics/memories or past</li> <li>◦ self-examination/topics/education and teaching</li> <li>◦ self-examination/topics/values</li> <li>◦ self-examination/topics/daily events</li> <li>• reframing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ reframing/being or becoming a writer</li> <li>◦ reframing/self <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◊ reframing/self/ways of being in a group</li> <li>◊ reframing/self/abilities/confidence</li> <li>◊ reframing/self/as a writer</li> </ul> </li> <li>◦ reframing/what a writer or writing is</li> <li>◦ reframing/teaching</li> </ul> </li> <li>• trying new roles <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ trying new roles/in the site group <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◊ trying new roles/in the site group/talking more or less</li> </ul> </li> <li>◦ trying new roles/trying new roles in writing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◊ trying new roles/trying new roles in writing/professional writing—new role</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> <li>• resolving to reorient <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ resolving to reorient/plans for writing</li> <li>◦ resolving to reorient/plans for teaching</li> </ul> </li> <li>• community of teachers</li> <li>• gaining confidence and competence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ gaining confidence and competence/acquiring knowledge-skills-language</li> </ul> </li> <li>• writing groups <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ writing groups/disclosure</li> </ul> </li> <li>• feedback— how it affects writing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ feedback—how it affects writing/in Institute</li> <li>◦ feedback—how it affects writing/outside Institute</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
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