ABSTRACT

THE DEVELOPMENT OF WRITERLY SELF-EFFICACIES:
MIXED-METHOD CASE STUDIES OF COLLEGE WRITERS ACROSS THE DISCIPLINES

by Megan Patricia Schoettler

This thesis investigates the development and influences of the writerly self-efficacies of three college students transitioning between first-year composition requirements and disciplinary coursework. Mixed-methods—including interviews, quantitative surveys of writerly self-efficacy, and portfolio analysis—provide insights into how students understand their abilities as writers. Students expressed both generative and disruptive self-efficacy expectations toward writing and learning. These self-perceptions were informed by mastery experiences, social persuasion, vicarious experiences, and affective states surrounding writing. For some students, first-year composition was a meaningful transition for positive efficacy expectations. The study results support the importance of recognizing students’ strengths, conferencing pedagogies, sponsoring co-curricular writing experiences, discouraging normative comparisons, and teaching for genre awareness. Interviews and the quantitative self-efficacy measures revealed at times contradictory data, confirming the importance of triangulation in studying writerly self-efficacies. Implications for classroom instructors are also discussed, including strategies for teaching to support generative self-efficacies toward writing performances and learning writing.
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Dedication

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Chapter One

Introduction: Theorizing the Writerly Self-Efficacies of College Students

As long as I have considered myself a writing teacher, I have been challenged and inspired by the self-perceptions of student writers. As an undergraduate writing center tutor studying English Education, I spent a lot of time reflecting on my interactions with student writers. What I thought about the most were the frequent interactions that sounded like this: “Just so you know, I’m at the writing center because I’m a horrible writer”; “This paper is awful—I just want to throw it out.”; “I’ll never be a good writer.” One could easily respond to these statements with—“No, you’re a good writer!” but I felt these reassurances were superficial. I wanted to explore responses to these statements that would have a lasting impact, and put names and strategies to what would help students the most. In the context of my undergraduate writing center, I began my empirical study of writerly self-efficacies. My junior and senior years of college, I ran two studies evaluating the correlations between tutor response strategies and students’ writerly self-efficacies, and I found that tutors’ words and actions significantly influenced how students understood their abilities. Most importantly, when tutors engaged students in meaningful conversation after students expressed self-doubt, the students left sessions with greater generalized impressions of their abilities. When I began graduate school I thought I had answered what I needed to know about writerly self-efficacies—and then I started teaching first-year composition. Working with my composition students and spending many hours talking about teaching practices with my peers and mentors, I found that I had much more to say and that I had much more I wanted to learn about student beliefs about their abilities. This thesis is the result of my exploration and empirical research into the writerly self-efficacies of college students.

In the study of writing transfer, attention has been drawn to how student dispositions impact student learning (Bromley, Northway, and Schonberg; Driscoll and Powell; Driscoll et al; Perkins et al; Wardle). Dispositions have been defined as “qualities that determine how learners use and adapt their knowledge” (Driscoll and Wells). While a student may attend a class and gain experiences writing in a particular discipline, the dispositions that they carry toward writing impact how they learn, take up, and adapt interconnected concepts and heuristics. Transfer researchers, such as Dana Driscoll and Jennifer Wells and Perkins et al, argue that the field of writing studies should study dispositions more explicitly, as this “may allow us to more fully
understand and address writing transfer” (Driscoll and Wells). Their recommendations align with broader calls to study how student perceptions influence student development and transfer. For example, David Slomp explains that “failure to consider the role that intrapersonal factors play in the transfer process can cloud our ability to assess underlying barriers to transfer” (84). Further, in Rebecca Nowacek’s work on transfer as recontextualization, she models moving past a focus on performances to “the individual student’s conception of self and larger trajectory of intellectual and emotional development” (27). In studying dispositions, we can examine how intrapersonal beliefs and constructs are shaped across time and across exigencies for transfer.

In their 2012 article, Driscoll and Wells explain how dispositions—including motivation, value, attribution, and self-efficacy—“were critical to success in transfer of learning” for their high school and college student participants. Driscoll and Wells call on writing studies researchers to expand our knowledge of complex dispositions, including how they are formed, how teacher choices impact them, and how they continue to inform how we understand transfer. Specifically, dispositions may inform why or how students make decisions to engage in transfer, and what educational choices encourage students to become “problem exploring” (Wardle), to act as “agents of integration” (Nowacek), engage in “mindful abstraction” (Perkins and Soloman) and enter “discursive space of uptake” (Rounsaville).

In writing studies scholarship, there have been a wide variety of ways researchers have approached the disposition of self-efficacy—from replicating theories and methods from psychology (McCarthy et al; Schmidt and Alexander; White), weaving together theories and methods from psychology and writing studies (Bromley, Northway, and Schonberg; Driscoll and Wells; Driscoll et al; Lataweic; Wachholz and Etheridge), to developing new writing studies terms for self-efficacy-related concepts (Tripp). In this study, I will be drawing from scholarship and methods from both writing studies and psychology. In his way, I can expand upon robust cognitive research on student development as well as complicate how it is used to research the experiences of student writers, providing implications for the teaching of college writing. Responding to Driscoll and Wells’ and Perkins et al’s calls to explicitly study the development of writerly dispositions, I seek to discover:

1) How can theories of self-efficacy help us learn more about student writers across the disciplines?
2) How do students perceive their abilities as writers, and what informs these perceptions?

3) What can the study of writerly-self efficacy tell us about the transition from first-year writing classes to writing in the disciplines?

4) What are the affordances and constraints of quantitative and qualitative methods for studying writerly self-efficacies?

To answer these questions, I will begin by discussing existing research on writerly self-efficacies from the fields of psychology, education, and Writing Studies.

Self-efficacy is a disposition that promises insights into student learning and transfer. Developed by a social learning theorist, Alfred Bandura, the concept of self-efficacy refers to a person’s beliefs in their abilities to attain a specific performance achievement. When Bandura published *Social Learning Theory* in 1976—introducing the theory of self-efficacy—he was responding to well-established research on operant conditioning, including the work of B.F. Skinner. Theories of operant conditioning presented humans with little agency, constantly reacting and being changed at the whim of their environments; in contrast, Bandura introduced a theory of self-efficacy that emphasized how internal constructs and agency influence personal choices and decision-making. Bandura theorized and empirically demonstrated that perceptions about one’s abilities impact one’s performances. He stated that:

> There is a difference between possessing skills and being able to use them effectively and consistently under varied circumstances. Development of self-regulatory capabilities requires instilling a resilient sense of efficacy as well as imparting knowledge and skills. If people are not convinced of their personal efficacy, they rapidly abandon the skills they have been taught when they fail to get quick results or it requires bothersome effort (“Self-Efficacy: The Exercise” 733).

Bandura’s work illustrates how personal perceptions influence behaviors, including writing performances. In day-to-day life, people do not usually talk about their “self-efficacy” toward performance—they talk about their confidence, or feelings that they can or can’t do well or succeed at something. The theory of self-efficacy allows researchers to study those beliefs more exactly. Self-efficacy researchers examine perceptions of abilities to achieve specific outcomes, how these perceptions are formed, and what performances are achieved as the result of self-beliefs. The broad term self-efficacy was also broken down by Bandura into two more terms:
outcome expectancy and efficacy expectation. **Outcome expectancy** is defined as “a person’s estimate that a given behavior will lead to certain outcomes” and **efficacy expectation** is “the conviction that one can successfully execute the behavior required to produce the outcomes” (Bandura “Self-Efficacy” 193).

In self-efficacy research, it has been established that self-efficacy expectations are informed by four primary sources: mastery experience, vicarious experience, social persuasion, and physiological states (Bandura “Self-Efficacy: The Exercise”; Pajares; Pajares and Schunk). Here I will elaborate on these sources, including my own examples of how these might evidence themselves in a college writing context. For mastery experiences, “outcomes interpreted as successful raise self-efficacy” (Pajares 140). When students complete a writing task and determine their performance successful, that accomplishment may lead toward more positive self-efficacy expectations for future, similar tasks. In contrast, if the student interprets that performance as a failure, it may lower their efficacy expectation for success with similar tasks in the future. Next, vicarious experience and peer modeling, or “social comparisons made with other individuals,” influence self-efficacy (Pajares 140). Witnessing successful strategies and achievements of others, for example a writing center tutor explaining how they overcame a similar writing challenge, can encourage positive efficacy expectations; however, normative comparisons with peers can also have a negative effect, such as when students negatively compare their abilities to others. Social persuasion occurs when individuals receive direct feedback on their performances and abilities. For college students, these can include feedback and comments from professors and mentors, grades, and assessments from peers. Finally, physiological states, such as feelings of excitement, stress, or anxiety, influence how students experience and interpret their experiences, impacting their efficacy expectations. For example, a student facing a writing task with a history of successful performances with similar tasks, but with intense stress, may have different outcome expectancies toward their abilities.

Typically, self-efficacy expectations are studied in the field of psychology through comprehensive self-efficacy scales, which break down activity domains (such as writing) into discrete abilities or tasks that the researchers believe are necessary for successful performances (Bandura “Guide”). In 1985, Patricia McCarthy, Scott Meier, and Regina Rinderer adopted this strategy to study self-efficacy in the college writing classroom. In their study, they developed multiple surveys, including a measure of writerly self-efficacy. Like other self-efficacy
researchers, they theorized self-efficacy toward writing as a composite of discrete writing abilities, such as writing without run-on sentences, writing “an essay in which the ideas are clearly expressed,” and writing an essay “free of comma faults” (468). In surveys measuring this composite self-efficacy, students rated their perceptions of their abilities to accomplish the tasks which resulted in a summative self-efficacy number. The tasks chosen for the scale were “the most mechanical and perhaps most easily measurable of writing skills” (468). For example, students would rate themselves from 0-100 in response to "Can you write an essay without major spelling errors?" Though McCarthy et al’s survey is consistent with psychology’s approaches to studying self-efficacy, their measure has theoretical problems when it comes to studying writers. First, writerly self-efficacy is presented as a composite of beliefs about abilities that are universal—separated from writing contexts. Second, the survey assumes that a bulk of student beliefs about their abilities are rooted in lower-order concerns, including punctuation, spelling, and grammar.

McCarthy et al distributed their self-efficacy survey to 137 freshmen in the fall semester and 60 of the same students in the spring semester of the same year. In addition to completing the scales, McCarthy et al asked students each semester to write in-class expository essays with similar rhetorical constraints early in the term and again during final examinations. Four raters assessed the essays based on abilities from the writerly self-efficacy measure. Like previous self-efficacy studies, they found that there was a strong relationship between students' evaluations of their own general writing skills and the overall quality of their written products.

Since McCarthy et al’s study, research on academic self-efficacies and writerly self-efficacies has proliferated in the field of psychology. Notably, researchers have studied the relationships between student goal-setting, self-efficacies, and school achievement. In their study of 102 rural high school students, Barry Zimmerman, Alfred Bandura, and Manuel Martinez-Pons (1992) found that the academic goals of parents for their children influence the goals that children set. Students’ personal goals were not directly correlated with student grades—the intervening factors were the students’ self-efficacies for academic achievement and regulated learning. Further, Barry Zimmerman and Alfred Bandura (1994) discovered that first-year college students’ writerly self-efficacies influenced perceived academic self-efficacy and “personal standards for the quality of writing considered self-satisfying” (845). For example, students with higher writerly self-efficacies had higher expectations for what first-year
composition course-grade would be personally satisfying to achieve. Zimmerman and Bandura also found that students with higher writerly self-efficacy expectations and higher expectations for composition course grades engaged in personal goal setting for writing. This study connected writerly self-efficacies to more general academic self-efficacies and demonstrated how student perceptions of their writing abilities are related to their academic motivation and goal-setting behaviors.

Though Zimmerman and Bandura did important work connecting complex student perceptions and behaviors, their approaches to writing are markedly different than the approaches of writing studies scholars. Students in their study completed the Scale Measuring Perceived Self-Regulatory Efficacy for Writing, with which students assessed their perceptions to achieve success with 25 writing tasks. Zimmerman and Bandura developed this set of abilities from their readings of Murray’s work on the writing process, consultations with faculty in the writing program of the study, and their own research on self-regulation of motivation. However, the tasks in the scale demonstrate an underlying assumption that successful writing performances are easy and quick. For example, if a student rated themselves highly in regard to “I can start writing with no difficulty,” they would receive a higher composite self-efficacy score (my emphasis, 850). Further, of the 25 tasks, four of the tasks emphasize that the performance should be done “quickly” or “in short time.” Two examples of this are “I can come up with memorable examples quickly to illustrate an important point” and “When given a specific writing assignment, I can come up with a suitable writing topic in a short time” (my emphasis, 850). Finally, a flaw with the self-efficacy measure is that the quantitative scale assumes that students will all perceive the same weight for how each ability informs their writerly self-efficacy. A task such as “When my paper is written on a complicated topic, I can come up with a short informative title” carries the same quantitative weight as “I can meet the writing standards of an evaluator who is very demanding” (850). One can imagine how perceptions for the ability achieve success in a demanding teacher’s class might make a bigger impact on a students’ self-beliefs than their perceptions of their abilities to write titles of papers.

In psychology and education research, there has also been discussion as to the level of task-specificity needed for the quantitative assessment of self-efficacy. H.S. Shelton (1990) argued that although self-efficacies were conceptualized as situationally specific (Bandura), self-efficacy can also be conceived generally. A comprehensive, or general, self-efficacy may better
explain student perceptions when they encounter new and less clearly defined tasks—perhaps tasks that require solving ill-structured (or messy) problems (King and Kitchener); however, Namok Choi (2005) found that the more specific and contextual the tasks are in measuring student self-efficacies and self-concepts, the more positive the correlation with academic factors including grade achievement. Choi’s findings reaffirmed Bandura’s original research that self-efficacy has the most predictive power for performance when it is measured at a level specific to the prospective performance (1997). As an implication, it would seem that self-efficacy measures developed in-context are valuable to develop and utilize.

In 1996, Patricia B. Wachholz and Carol Plata Etheridge published their study, “Speaking for Themselves: Writing Self-Efficacy Beliefs of High- and Low-Apprehensive Writers.” This article has received little to no recognition in writing studies scholarship, but the authors do the important work of combining knowledge from writing studies and psychology to develop a mixed-method study of writerly self-efficacies with implications for composition pedagogy. Wachholz and Etheridge worked with 43 students at two rural junior colleges to study “how inexperienced writing students perceive their own writing competence and what students themselves define as sources of those perceptions” (6). In addition, the researchers “examined the effects of writing self-efficacy beliefs on the writing behaviors of high- and low-apprehensive writers…and [the study] provides empirical evidence of how students perceive themselves as writers and the reasons for the confidence they have in their writing skills” (6). Instead of replicating the theories and methods of psychology research, Wachholz and Etheridge begin with writing studies research on writer apprehension (Daly and Miller; Rose) and qualitative methods to study how college writers with varying beliefs came to their perceptions of their abilities as writers.

In their study, the Daly-Miller (1975a) Writing Apprehension Test was administered to 43 writers and the researchers also collected student writing samples. From there, Wachholz and Etheridge selected ten writers for case studies: five writers who reflected high-apprehension in their survey and writing, and five writers who reflected low-apprehension. With these ten writers, they sought to discover how the students understood their writing abilities and what contributed to those perceptions. To study this, “students were asked to conceptualize their perceptions by describing, in writing, what they felt were the specific characteristics of a ‘good writer.’ In addition, they composed a writing profile, describing what they were like as writers;
how confident they felt in their writing skills; and what previous experiences, in school or otherwise, had contributed to their attitudes (7). The information from these writings then guided 30-minute interviews with each of the participants.

Wachholz and Etheridge demonstrate that “the findings support social cognitive theory which suggests a relationship between self-efficacy and performance” (3). Specifically, the researchers isolated what experiences and beliefs seemed to inform the perceptions of low and high-apprehensive writers. The sources for beliefs most frequently mentioned included: 1) previous success or failure in writing 2) previous preparation, that is, previous opportunities for writing 3) prior writing assessment experiences 4) current level of writing skills. This research confirms Bandura and Pajares’ findings that self-efficacy expectations are informed by mastery experience and social persuasion. Wachholz and Etheridge note that though the sources of perceptions were similar across all participants, “low-apprehensive writers reported more positive and successful experiences with the categories of influence, while high-apprehensive writers reported more failure and negative experiences” (16). In other words, low-apprehensive writers were most influenced by positive social persuasion, and high-apprehensive writers were most influenced by mastery experiences that they interpreted as failures.

From their findings, Wachholz and Etheridge provide implications that are consistent with earlier and current disposition research. For example, they explain these findings about students’ relationships with teacher feedback:

Previous success or failure in writing was the most often cited source of students' self-efficacy beliefs. The experiences of being graded and judged, for many students, are not pleasant ones. Even though they expect to make mistakes, they have difficulty distinguishing corrections on their papers from personal assault…It may be that students' beliefs about academic capabilities affect more general beliefs about themselves as individuals. In response to personal assault, the composition strategy of such students becomes avoidance (17).

These observations align with Pajares and Bandura’s research on the impact of social persuasion. Further, this work may point to one of the relationships between writerly self-efficacy and transfer and integration (Nowacek). When students repeatedly receive negative social persuasion, students adopt negative self-efficacy expectations. When they believe they will not be successful at future performances, their effort and value for growing as writers may diminish. A writer who
is not motivated may be less likely to be an “agent of integration” in writing contexts, not actively “working to perceive as well as to covey effectively to others connections between previously distinct contexts” (Nowacek 38). In contrast, a writer with positive self-efficacy toward learning, based upon constructive feedback from instructors, may be more open and willing to make connections if they know this will lead to successful performances.

Ultimately, Wachholz and Etheridge believe that teachers should work to “reverse or prevent negative self-efficacy beliefs about writing” (18). From their case studies with writers, they provide long lists of pedagogical strategies for supporting positive self-efficacies. They suggest that teachers can enhance students’ self-efficacies by “consistently demonstrating through words and actions the belief that students are capable of being successful writers” (18). Specific strategies include recognizing student successes, associating effort with success, helping students set attainable writing goals with benchmarks for improvement, marking grammatical mistakes sparingly, and providing opportunities for teachers and peers to discuss writing.

In her 2012 dissertation “Engaging And Enacting Writing In First-year Composition: Re-imagining Student Self-efficacy In Writing,” Mary Tripp responds to the history of writerly self-efficacy research and rightly critiques theories and methods for assessing writerly self-efficacy. Similar to my observations, she notes that the fields of psychology and writing studies understand student writing behaviors in different ways, which is evidenced in the way some psychology researchers discuss writing—e.g. it should be easy and fast (Zimmerman and Bandura). Tripp also challenges how writerly self-efficacy has been measured, stating: "Self-efficacy researchers rely on survey methods which do not accurately describe the phenomenon when studying writing, or in fact when studying any situation because the survey methods cannot take into account the deeply contextualized nature of learning" (29). She disagrees with the underlying assumption in self-efficacy literature that writing is “performed as a set of discrete tasks according to universal writing rules that can be measured separately” (15). Further, she believes that writerly self-efficacy should not be assessed “as only individually reported beliefs about abilities to complete discrete, universal writing tasks” (15).

In contrast to traditional methods of studying self-efficacy, Tripp uses activity theory in a mixed-methods study to study the writing self-efficacies of first-year college student. Through case studies with writers, interviews with administrators, and analysis of program and classroom documents, she illustrates how self-efficacy can be studied as part of activity systems. She
asserts that existing self-efficacy theory is dependent on “a-contextual views of writing as constructed cognitively by a single writer, independent of the social action of text, tools, and other participants in the action” (198). Because of this and other findings, she suggests that writing studies researchers can study writing efficacy or “the social construction of agency for writing that is emergent through engagement in particular activity systems. Using this definition, writing efficacy helps students learn about writing better than self-efficacy” (197). For example, one of her participants, Danielle, “did not report high self-efficacy for writing, but through her sustained engagement with the motives of the classroom writing system, she demonstrated writing efficacy” (197).

Despite Tripp’s valuable contributions to how our field can understand writing self-efficacy, some of the newest and most circulating methods of studying self-efficacy still rely on direct adaptations of theories and methods from psychology. In the 2013 article “The Empiric Development of an Instrument to Measure Writerly Self-Efficacy in Writing Centers,” Katherine M. Schmidt and Joel E. Alexander describe a tool very similar to the comprehensive assessments self-efficacy researchers from psychology have been using. They describe that the limitations of the past measures were that past scales were designed for high school and grade school students—not college students—and were oriented toward the learning from a single classroom, not a college career’s worth of development. The team developed the “Post-Secondary Writerly Self-Efficacy Scale” (PSWSES) using Alfred Bandura’s scale-creating recommendations and focus groups with writing center tutors. The scale includes twenty positively-framed statements about writing abilities, and participants responded to these with a numbers from 0-100, assessing their perceived abilities to accomplish discrete writing tasks. These writing tasks were designed to reflect informers of writerly self-efficacies, including mastery experiences, social persuasion, vicarious experience, and physiological states. For example, participants were asked to respond to this statement connected to mastery experiences: “Once I have completed a draft, I can eliminate both small and large sections that are no longer necessary.” Schmidt and Alexander distributed the scales over time to writers who used the writing center and did not use the writing center. They found that the self-efficacy of writing center users went up over time, and they posit PSWSES and similar RAD methods as the answer to writing centers’ long-term problem of defending their own value to universities. Since its publication, this work has been cited over a
dozen times as an example of successful RAD research and informed the development of other quantitative, comprehensive self-efficacy measures (White).

As noted by Tripp, using quantitative, universal self-efficacy scales clearly has limitations. First, the design of these scales conveys that student perceptions of their abilities are constructed by the compilation of the same discrete, universal writing tasks. Second, scales such as the one developed by Schmidt and Alexander have validity problems. In their study, the measure was tested for validity by the peer tutor’s perceptions of the writer’s self-efficacy. Though tutors have the opportunity to understand the concerns and performances of the writer during independent or repeat sessions, writerly self-efficacy is ever-changing and dependent on complex student histories. Tutors may also interpret student expressions of self-efficacy inaccurately; for example, a writer might feel like they have to appear unsure or have the need to self-deprecate because they believe the writing center exists for students who need help. Finally, when writerly self-efficacy scales are not triangulated with other methods, it is difficult to say whether the perceived self-efficacy changes are because of the writing center or other experiences.

Most recently in writing studies scholarship, self-efficacy has been recognized as a disposition which influences student transfer (Bromley, Northway, and Schonberg; Driscoll and Wells; Driscoll et al). In their 2012 article, Dana Driscoll and Jennifer Wells present the results of two studies of writing transfer—one with high school students, and the other with college students. Though both researchers did not begin their studies with the intention of analyzing student dispositions, though exploratory, grounded, and mixed methods they discovered that dispositions, including self-efficacy toward writing, “were critical to success in transfer of learning.” Driscoll and Wells state that dispositions play an equally essential role as contexts and curriculum for understanding student transfer and encouraged writing studies researchers to “more explicitly consider the role of learners’ dispositions.”

Drawing from the work of Driscoll and Wells, Amy Latawiec published her 2016 dissertation “Self-Directed Learning and the Development of Self-Efficacy in Writing.” Like Tripp, Latawiec challenges “comprehensive” and purely quantitative approaches to the study of self-efficacy, however, Tripp and Latawiec diverge theoretically. While Tripp argues that “agency and self-efficacy are not bound inside the head of the learner, but are emergent in the action of activity systems” (193), Latawiec asserts that:
Viewing dispositions as an either/or – in the case of Tripp – is not a productive view of the nature of dispositions, especially as they relate to students performance in writing classrooms. Instead, my research looks at dispositions as both internalized beliefs which are also influenced by social contexts. In other words, both the internalized nature of the belief as well as its influence by social contexts are important to understanding the impact of dispositions on students’ writing processes and knowledge. (76)

I agree with Latawiec that self-efficacy theory "is an adequate theoretical framework through which to study dispositions” (76). There are benefits to using activity theory to study dispositions, but I do not agree with Tripp’s argument that self-efficacy research only assumes “a-contextual views of writing as constructed cognitively by a single writer, independent of the social action of text, tools, and other participants in the action” (198). In fact, the basis of self-efficacy is social learning theory, which acknowledges that self-efficacy is developed through social interactions—including mastery experiences interpreted through relationships with others, social persuasion, and vicarious experiences. Activity theory, does however, contribute an emphasis on tools and resources. Though there are affordances and limitations to both activity theory and socio-cognitive theories of learning as theoretical basis for studying self-efficacy, Latawiec’s approach allows her to stay in conversation with significant educational research while adapting and expanding socio-cognitive theories. I see value in Latawiec’s approach, and follow her model as a way to weave together essential scholarship from both psychology and Writing Studies—recognizing that self-efficacy is a personal construct that is influenced within social and material systems.

In Latawiec’s dissertation, she builds a robust argument that now is the time to bridge the “cognitive” and “social” turn in Writing Studies, recognizing “the ‘social’ as also part of students’ cognition.” She states that:

Revisiting and reconsidering psychology’s theories of cognition as they relate to Writing Studies pedagogy can enhance our understanding of whether and how students approach the rhetorical techniques and new discourse communities discussed by Bizzell or why they might be “rigid” or “flexible” in their writing as observed by Rose…We need to see the connection between the cognitive and the social if we want to understand and intervene in the development of students as writers. (7)
By putting Writing studies research into conversation with cognitive psychology, she is able to examine “how pedagogy can influence and foster the dispositions necessary for students to adopt writing practices that lead to success inside (and outside) of the writing classroom” (11). This study responds to Driscoll and Wells’ call for research on dispositions in relation to writer development.

To research writerly self-efficacy, Latawiec studied two of her own basic writing classes at an urban university. Like Tripp, she used qualitative methods, including teacher field-notes, three focus groups, and thorough examination of student texts. One way that Latawiec advances writerly self-efficacy research is her definition of self-efficacy. The way she adapts research from psychology to more productively fit to the context of the college writing classroom is by making “self-efficacy” more flexible. She states: "The term ‘self-efficacy’ utilized in this project refers to students’ perception of their ability to learn – not their ability to ‘write well’” (24). Latawiec suggests that we can rely on student’s own definition and goals of what constitutes successful writing performances and that we should pay attention to students’ perceptions of their ability to learn and adapt in the writing classroom. This approach is different from past self-efficacy research, which was centered on perceptions of performances based upon what the researcher believed was the successful performance. In her work, Latawiec codes for both writing task-based perceptions of abilities (or, a traditional approach to writerly self-efficacy) as well as student perceptions of their abilities toward learning. In this model, she gets a much bigger picture of the contexts of student beliefs, learning, and development of self-efficacies.

The primary finding from Latawiec’s study is that when basic writing students created personal learning outcomes (PLOs) and were able to continuously reflect on those outcomes and their development, they developed more efficacious awareness and language. This efficacious language was expressed equally with the PLOs as well as break-downs of the goals—the steps students believed were needed to accomplish their overall outcomes. Latawiec states that “students who identify and break down their own learning goals might be better able to monitor, gauge, and authentically report on their progress throughout the semester (as opposed to a student who is only waiting until the end of an assignment to see the effectiveness of their broader goal or to answer a survey about their generalized ability to write well)” (117). PLOs to encourage value and motivation can be taught with self-regulation techniques to promote generative writerly self-efficacy. Because of the benefits of this approach, I have expanded my
definition of self-efficacy for my own study, including students’ perceptions of their abilities to learn writing.

In the fields of writing studies and psychology, researchers have investigated how the disposition of writerly self-efficacy is correlated with student achievement (McCarthy et al; Pajares; Zimmerman and Bandura), develops across unique experiences (Bromley, Northway, and Schonberg; Latawiec; Tripp; Wachholz and Etheridge), and influences student willingness to engage in transfer (Driscoll and Wells; Driscoll et al). In my study, I continue to examine how students perceive their abilities as writers and the sources of those perceptions. I extend these studies by also researching how these perceptions impact student decisions and writing performances as they transition between required composition courses and disciplinary coursework.

In Chapter 2 I will describe the methodology and methods of a new study of the writerly self-efficacies of student writers transitioning between composition courses and disciplinary coursework. In Chapter 3 I will present the results of these mixed-method case studies, including narratives about writing lives and the development of writerly self-efficacies of three of the participants and the results of a quantitative measure of writerly self-efficacy. In Chapter 4 I will summarize the findings of the study and provide implications for college instructors and self-efficacy researchers.
Chapter Two
Methodology and Methods for Case Studies of Student Writers

To investigate my research questions, I conducted IRB-approved case studies of five undergraduate students with varying majors at Miami University. By focusing on five student writers, I was able to learn detail-rich stories about their identities, which can “allow researchers to identify any dispositional patterns based on social factors and to consider the specific writer’s identity while coding” (Driscoll et al). In fall 2016, each of these students was enrolled in an advanced composition course—a course utilized by many majors to fulfill university advanced-writing requirements. I visited two of the course sections taught by the same instructor and had interested participants complete slips of paper detailing their names, majors, year of school, and email address. After removing outliers, including students in their senior year, I had about 35 volunteers and randomly selected and contacted 5 participants.

The participants had the same instructor across multiple sections, which created points of mutual experience with composition pedagogies. By recruiting students from a common course, I was able to meet students who were at relatively similar points of their academic careers. Specifically, these students were each close to the beginning of their second year of their majors, had already taken at least one university-required first-year writing course, and were beginning to take courses specific to their majors and disciplines. I chose this site as a response to a gap in the literature—most studies of writerly self-efficacy draw participants from first-year writing courses (McCarthy et al; Tripp; Latawiec). The unique participant group from the advanced composition course provides opportunity to study student self-efficacies as they transition between first-year writing to disciplines of their choosing. Each participant was compensated for their time with a $50 Amazon.com gift card.

To learn about the writerly self-efficacies and beliefs of these students, I collected and triangulated several types of data. First, each student took a general survey of demographic information and past writing experiences, including a quantitative measure of generalized writerly self-efficacy (Appendix A). By including this type of self-efficacy scale in my study, I was able to get an initial “snapshot” of student perceptions of their abilities and test the efficacy of the scale with qualitative methods. This measure used was adapted from the PSWSE scale designed and tested by Schmidt and Alexander; however, I made adaptions to focus more on classroom-based academic writing as opposed to work with the writing center. For example, a
statement regarding student perceptions of their abilities to learn from working with a writing tutor was replaced with a statement about learning about writing in college classes. Additionally, the PSWSE included multiple statements regarding students’ abilities to correct lower-order concerns, so I cut the question “I can find and correct my grammatical errors” and replaced it with “I can fully understand the requirements of college papers from assignment sheets and instructor explanations.” Participants responded to each of these positively-framed statements with a number between 1-10, 1 meaning “I completely disagree” and 10 meaning “I completely agree.” Though some self-efficacy scales measure perceptions between 0-100, Bandura found self-efficacy scales with ten, single unit intervals (1-10) are also stronger predictors of performance (Bandura “Guide”).

Next, each student compiled a writing portfolio with four to five selections that the students considered personally significant: writing that frustrated, challenged, excited, was life-changing, or represented a shift in how they understand writing or the writing process. To encourage students to include samples from across time, they were asked to include one piece of writing from when they were in high school, one from first-year composition or writing in the first year, one from a course or internship in the major, and one piece that they were writing or working toward at the time. Additionally, participants were encouraged to include any other writing they consider important to their development as a writer. I shared a Google Folder with the participants in which they added their documents.

Finally, each participant took part in a one-hour, semi-structured individual interview. Like Wachholz and Etheridge, I used this time to ask participants about their experiences with writing and perceptions about their abilities. However, by conducting interviews that were twice as long and framed around existing student writing, I was able to collect even more substantive and rich data about student experiences. Drawing from discourse-based interviewing (Odell, Goswami, and Herrington), I developed individualized questions based upon participant writing from their portfolios. For example, in an introductory reflection to one of her writing assignments, Taylor wrote: “I usually never have trouble with organization and clarity, but again this was a skill I had to learn in order to write my paper.” Drawing from this statement, I asked Taylor to elaborate on her experiences with organizing writing. I also asked individualized questions based upon participants’ responses to the quantitative self-efficacy assessments. For
example, I asked about particularly low or high-ranked self-efficacy expectations relative to their overall answers.

To complement these individualized questions, I also asked participants general questions about their writing lives and education, reminiscent of Deborah Brandt’s interviews in *Literacy in American Lives*—though with a more narrow focus on school-based writing. Students were asked about their experiences learning writing in high school and college, their academic and non-academic goals, their experiences writing their selected portfolio artifacts, and their perceptions of their writing education, including what teaching strategies they valued or did not value (Appendix B). Like Brandt’s participants, the students in my study were able to “reflect on—indeed, refashion—a memory in terms of its significance for how things have turned out, whether in terms of personal circumstances or shared culture” (12). In other words, when sharing stories and experiences with writing performances, they were able to reflect upon and contextualize their experiences as part of a larger understanding of their writerly self-efficacies.

After the first participant interview, it became clear that the sessions should be more focused around student perceptions of their abilities. To aid with this, I created printed prompts with primary questions, including: 1) How do you understand your abilities as a writer? 2) How have your perceptions about your abilities changed across time? 3) What are the primary contributors to how you understand your writing abilities? and 4) What are the most significant moments, events, places, or people in your writing education? (For better or worse). These prompts were explained at the beginning of the session, and revisited at the end of the session. As students shared their stories and experiences, seeing the prompts reminded them of related and relevant details or situations.

Each of these students’ interviews was messy—their stories bouncing between experiences and ideas across places and times. In total, transcriptions of the five students’ interviews resulted in over 30,000 words. To navigate and analyze their complex stories, I coded for contributors to self-efficacy expectations. Using existing socio-cognitive research, I analyzed how contributors to self-efficacy expectations—including mastery experiences, social persuasion, vicarious experiences, and physiological states—were represented in the interviews with my student participants (Bandura; Pajares). In addition to the contributors to self-efficacy expectations, I coded for as dispositional traits connected to writerly self-efficacy, including...
value, self-regulation, and self-efficacy toward learning (Driscoll and Wells; Driscoll et al; Latawiec; Zimmerman).

**Self-Efficacious Language** was coded when participants made a statement of belief and/or ability for performing a writing-related task now or in the future. This definition draws from Amy Latawiec’s suggestion that following Pajares, “it may be important for qualitative researchers to expand the vocabulary of self-efficacy,” that is, beyond the strict “can do” language by Bandura which is prevalent in quantitative self-efficacy scales, “in other words, it’s important to acknowledge that students might have varying ways of indicating their self-efficacy in relation to their writing” (82). As an example of self-efficacious language, Caleb, a participant in the study, stated: “I'm confident in my writing for the most part, but the place I can use the most help is definitely like revising and editing,” going on to describe what revising and editing strategies would bring him success, and which would not.

**Mastery Experiences** were coded each time a participant discussed a unique writing performance, and this was the most frequently occurring code. Occasionally, participants’ writing performances were coded as multiple mastery experiences, for example, when Taylor talked about writing a research paper in her first-year writing class, the experience was coded as both a mastery experience in writing research papers and a mastery experience writing for her first-year composition class. This code helped me to link related performances across time, such as Taylor’s overall experiences with writing what she calls “research papers.” Further, each mastery experience was additionally coded based upon whether the participant deemed the mastery experience performance a success, a failure, both, or did not include a judgment.

**Vicarious Experiences** were coded when the participant described gaining knowledge from the beliefs and experiences of others, primarily fellow students. Vicarious experiences were gained when participants saw or heard about someone attempting a writing performance, when participants made social comparisons or judgements about their abilities based upon observations of others, and when participants heard frames surrounding writing experiences. For example, Lauren, a Professional Writing major, believes that working for the student newspaper will help her be a successful writer in the future because older writers from the paper have achieved success and have prestigious jobs, such as writing for *Huffington Post*. Another example of a vicarious experience is when Taylor heard the frame at her high school that writing the
sophomore research paper is a horrible, stressful experience, which then influenced Taylor’s self-efficacy expectations for that paper.

**Social Persuasion** was coded when participants described receiving feedback on their own writing performances. These experiences were further coded based upon how the participant believed their performance was being assessed, including feedback that connoted successful performances, lack of success, a combination, and feedback that the participant did not know how to interpret. It is also important to note that that, as found by Alfred Bandura, social persuasion has varying impacts on self-efficacy expectations based upon the participant’s value of the performance, the effort the participant perceived that they put forth, and the credibility and value of the persuader to the participant. For example, when Taylor was given negative feedback by a teacher, but she considered the teacher a discredited “lunatic” (more in chapter 3), it had much less impact on her beliefs than social persuasion from instructors and peers whose feedback she valued.

**Affective States** were coded as participants described how they felt surrounding writing experiences. Generally, these feelings and bodily experiences were further coded by those associated with positive experiences (joy, happiness, accomplishment) and negative experiences (distress, anxiety, stress). In psychological studies, these states have been referred to as physiological states (Bong and Skaalvik; Pajares;), but the feelings and experiences the participants describe align with what scholars from cultural studies, rhetoric, and neurology refer to as affect (Ahmed; Damasio). Though emotion is yet another term used to describe these embodied feelings (Driscoll and Powell), I believe that affect is an accurate term, especially taking into account the relationships of affect among bodies and affect’s role in larger social systems (Ahmed).

**Value** was coded when students expressed personal favor and preference, most often toward disciplines, topics, relationships, and strategies. For example, participants expressed value toward their chosen disciplines and future careers, and when they could connect their writing assignments back to these disciplines and careers, they valued the assignments more.

**Self-Regulation** was coded when participants discussed making decisions to promote personal success based upon knowledge and reflection on how they work and learn (Zimmerman). For example, Lauren demonstrated self-regulation when she described her
systematic goal-writing and goal-achieving process. This strategy helps Lauren stay personally accountable toward her long-term goals, including becoming a professional writer.

Finally, drawing from Amy Latawiec’s focus on student perceptions of their abilities to learn, Learning Beliefs were coded when the participants explicitly stated what teaching strategies encouraged or disrupted their personal learning. Most often, participants described learning beliefs connected to teaching strategies that they felt they had no control over, such as if an instructor would “fix” all of their writing with red pen or if an instructor held conferences.

Once each participant’s interview was coded, I used the codes to link together experiences, search for patterns, and examine changes in self-efficacy expectations. Next, I summarized the participants’ stories as narratives, placing the exact words of student in conversation with my self-efficacy codes whenever possible. This allows me to represent a large portion of the stories they each told while putting them into conversation with self-efficacy research and pedagogical research from Writing Studies. Though the stories were originally told out of chronological order as students recalled different experiences, the narratives are presented chronologically to illuminate the fluctuations of expressed self-efficacy expectations over time. In this thesis, I will be focusing on the experiences of three of these writers: Taylor, Caleb, and Lauren. These participants were given the opportunity to read and respond to what has been written about them in this thesis. Taylor and Lauren responded, and both stated that what is written accurately represents their experiences.

By focusing on three participants, I can concentrate on the depth of their experiences and perspectives. Additionally, these participants were chosen to represent a range of majors: Diplomacy and Global Politics, Finance, and Professional Writing. The two other participants, Emily and Nicole, also had majors connected to business, like Caleb. The participants, each identified by pseudonyms, represent the dominant demographic at this medium-sized, public university; they each are twenty-years-old, identify as white, and are from middle class families with parents who attended college. This racial and class similarity is, of course, a limitation to this study. Each had generally successful past academic experiences and were placed into first-year writing. I agree with Amy Latawiec that basic writing students have the most to benefit from pedagogies that are designed to increase writerly self-efficacy. However, these high-achieving students demonstrate how even students placed directly into first-year writing with consistently successful academic experiences carry both generative and disruptive dispositions
that influence their decision-making and performances, with implications for academic success and career choices.
Chapter Three
Narratives and Survey Results from the Study of Writerly Self-Efficacies

In this chapter, I will describe the results of the case studies of three student writers: Taylor, Caleb, and Lauren. The chapter begins with interview-based narratives about the participants’ writerly development and perceptions of their self-efficacy expectations across time. At the conclusion of the chapter, I will describe the results of the quantitative measure of writerly self-efficacy and how these results both complement and at times contradict the interview data.

Taylor

The first case study is of Taylor, a sophomore Diplomacy and Global Politics major with a minor in Arabic. In her stories, Taylor recounts low self-efficacy expectations in high school connected to “rigid rules” about writing (Rose). When Taylor began college, her first-year composition course was a “turning point” for how she understands her abilities as a writer. She was most significantly influenced when her composition instructor illustrated Taylor’s strengths as a writer during an independent conference. What makes Taylor’s stories particularly interesting is how she describes her experiences writing in her major concurrently with her composition class during her first semester of college. This case gives us insights into how a student perceives the development of her abilities across time, including what prompted changes in perceptions and how those perceptions are carried between writing contexts.

As a senior in high school, Taylor took a government class which focused on current events. She was engaged by the course and discussions of terrorism, and made the peer comparison that she seemed more interested than all the other students. Outside of school, she had passionate discussions with her family and friends about current events, including the rights of Muslim immigrant women. Because of her values and passions, she decided to enroll in the Diplomacy and Global Politics major with a minor in Arabic. At the time of the interview, Taylor was twenty-years-old and her long-term goal was to work in the Middle East advocating for the rights of women. She was looking forward to an upcoming internship opportunity where she would be able to explore this career. That semester she was working hard to get all A’s and to become more involved on campus.

Taylor had low self-belief about her writing abilities in grade school, but she had a mastery experience she considered a success as a freshman in high school. She had an “easy”
English teacher and wrote a paper about a popular song that Taylor read aloud to her class. Taylor received praise from her teacher and peers and in reflection said, “that was the first time I felt good about myself… That was the first time I felt good about my writing skills, my writing ability.” This social persuasion temporarily changed how she perceived her abilities, but the following year those perceptions shifted.

As a high school sophomore Taylor had her first mastery experience with a high-stakes research paper, which she described with many negative affective states: the experience was overwhelming, anxiety-producing, stressful, discouraging, and that it made her consistently worried and nervous. Taylor had vicarious experience toward this assignment because there was a culture of fear surrounding it at her school—“everyone talks about how bad it is.” She also believed that the assignment was designed around unnecessary constraints: “You have to present your paper to her on the due date in the manila envelope with your notecards, with two copies of your paper, so many things. They take everything out and make sure you have everything on the list. It was so stressful.” Because of her fears, Taylor procrastinated researching, which she believes led to lower-quality work and her grade of a C. What made her feel worse was a peer comparison when her cousin wrote a paper on the same topic and received an A. Taylor’s frustrations are consistent with Mike Rose’s explanation of “rigid rules.” When saddled with constraints, she became blocked and unable to write. Taylor began the assignment anticipating struggles from vicarious experience, interpreted this mastery experience as a failure, and had a vicarious experience indicative to her that she could not perform as well as her peers. In culmination, these experiences lead to strong perceptions that she could not be successful at writing.

Continuing her narrative about her high school writing experiences, Taylor generalized that she was a “bad writer” in high school and described a similar mastery experience with research writing as a high school senior. Taylor had heard about her senior English teacher since she was a freshman, and because of this vicarious experience she believed she was the “worst teacher” in the school. For Taylor’s high-stakes senior research paper, she had to write about a book she did not like in the form of a “formula” paper. The rigid rules and low value for the content caused Taylor to do work she was not proud of, and she received a lower grade than she wanted. When reflecting on this experience, Taylor said she was more impacted by social persuasion in the form of written feedback rather than the grade. She stated that her teacher was:
One of those teachers where you get the rough draft back and the whole entire thing is just red. And I just think that’s just really discouraging too. It’s like and they don’t tell you the good things you do, they don’t tell you how you can change it, they don’t really reach out …what I really just don’t like is when they cross things out and pretty much just write the same thing but change the wording because that’s how they think it sounds better.

Taylor was frustrated by this experience and said “I think there are situations when you need to respect the writers.”

Taylor has articulated feedback strategies that produced despair and negative self-efficacy expectations. Her experiences align writing studies and self-efficacy research on teacher commenting, which suggests that comments be oriented toward growth, highlight positive features, and be respectful of student effort (Treglia; Weaver; Sommers; Wachholz and Etheridge). When Taylor did not know what she had done well, but instead saw an overwhelming wall of errors, she was felt discouraged and disrespected. Additionally, she did not understand why her teacher would rewrite her words and interpreted the teacher’s purely negative feedback as evidence that she could not achieve successful writing performances.

Taylor’s perceptions about her abilities as a writer changed when she began college. In her first semester she took a composition course, and her first writing assignment was to respond to “What does writing mean to you?” During a peer review for the assignment, she saw her classmates writing about not liking writing. She said that she thought “Oh my god, why are they saying that?” and then decided “Alright—fine I’m going to talk about how much I hate writing too.” After this decision, she said, “I feel like it just clicked for me. Once I just felt like I could write my emotions—not just what I thought people were expecting…I just felt like I was relaxed, I was comfortable, I felt confident, and I almost had fun writing that paper…I remember that paper really well.” Taylor expressed many positive affective states in her college composition course, which stands out in comparison to her negative experiences in high school. In this course Taylor was also surprised by her teacher’s flexibility and encouragement to write about meaningful, self-selected topics: “I had a lot of freedom to write about things—like a lot of freedom…she constantly was encouraging us to [write] related to our major and I thought ‘I really love writing about politics,’ so I really like that.” Taylor felt relief from the constraints surrounding writing in high school and was motivated by what she considered valuable, self-
selected topics. As a result, she felt that she did better work and described positive affective states associated with her writing experiences.

During her freshman composition course, Taylor experienced a shift in how she understands her generalized abilities as a writer. During an individual conference about an assignment, her first-year composition instructor gave her feedback on her work, saying “You’re a really strong writer—you’re a really good writer.” Taylor said “it just made me feel really good and since then I’ve wanted to keep proving that to myself. And I’m proud of my writing skills now and I want to continue to make them better because I think that’s a really good skill to have in life.” The social persuasion Taylor experienced during the conference had a lasting impact on her writerly self-efficacy expectations. From the social persuasion during the conference grounded in her accomplishments, Taylor developed a new personal frame toward writing—that she could achieve successful performances and gain skills through experience; by having continuously successful mastery experiences, she could build valuable skills.

Concurrently with her first-year composition course, Taylor had her first mastery experience writing a research paper within a course in her major, Diplomacy and Global Politics. She described intense frustration working with her instructor on her writing. The students were allowed to research any topic in global politics, and when she first approached her instructor about her chosen topic of ISIS, she said “he kind of like scoffed at me and was like ‘Ok, yeah right.’” When she told him she was very interested in ISIS and had read several books about the group, he sarcastically told her something along the lines of “Oh so you’re the expert, please tell me about ISIS because I don’t know anything about it.” Taylor was intimidated by the instructor and he repeatedly caused her to cry, but she was persistent in convincing him to allow her to write on ISIS and recognized that she conducted thorough academic research. She said, “He didn’t feel confident about me and I felt like I needed to prove to him that I was intelligent and I was knowledgeable about terrorism.” She said his resistance gave her a “fire” to do excellent work. She reflected on her work saying, “So if I feel like insecure about the project or anything it almost just gives me more drive to work harder on it.”

Taylor got a B on her ISIS paper, which she considered an “ok” grade but not what she deserved. Regarding the impact of the instructor’s negative comments and resistance, she said “I didn’t necessarily take him seriously because I think he’s a lunatic” and the “worst human being I’ve ever met in my entire life.” Taylor’s observation that her beliefs about her professor
impacted the weight of his social persuasion is in agreement with Bandura’s findings. Further, she explicitly disavowed the idea that she may have been discriminated against based upon her gender, but she did say, “what he’s doing is obviously not the right way to do it whatsoever.” She still believes she did excellent research for the ISIS project and considers it her favorite paper.

Though Taylor considered herself a “bad writer” in high school, as a freshman in college she valued her writing efforts and had confidence in her abilities—to the point that she was motivated by teacher resistance rather than discouraged. When her disciplinary instructor attempted to socially persuade her that she did not have the ability to successfully perform the writing task, she wrote off his social persuasion because she did not value his opinion. Regarding Taylor’s writerly self-efficacies, there is the possibility that the motivation and self-efficacy expectations she built in her composition class were informing how she understood her abilities in her disciplinary course. This movement of self-efficacy expectations could be described as collateral transfer, which Beach found occurs when students have “relatively simultaneous participation in two or more historically related activities” (Beach 115). Because Taylor achieved a successful performance writing on political science topics, such as a rhetorical analysis Hillary Clinton’s presidential campaign, in her composition course, she may have believed she could achieve a similarly successful writing performance in the political science course. This is reinforced by the fact that the only disciplinary difference Taylor brought up is that in Diplomacy and Global Politics students have to write in the difficult and new Chicago style. This generalized self-efficacy expectation may have helped her overcome resistance from her professor, but she may have also been overconfident, not realizing the differing disciplinary expectations between writing in her humanities course and writing in political science.

This introductory course research paper was the only mastery experience Taylor had for writing in her major classes thus far. She says that thinking about future writing performances in her major, “I think that [my experience writing in the course] will definitely come into play when I have to do that again…It definitely makes me nervous thinking about it and I definitely think that it’s still going to get me fired up, because I didn’t necessarily prove it to myself fully… I’ll still search for that approval within myself.” Reflecting on her first-year writing class, Taylor had cited value of successful writing performances and the need to “prove” herself. She uses the
same language to express her aspirations for writing improvement and writing ability in her disciplinary course.

At the time of the interview, Taylor was in her second year of college and mid-way through an advanced composition course. She said that she thought she was doing a good job on her papers and that the writing process is easy for her. She thoroughly described her research process for the coursework and made the comparison that she goes beyond what her peers normally do. Taylor compared the teaching in her advanced composition course to that in her first composition course, citing what strategies helped her learn as a writer. In particular, Taylor said that she “loves” individual conferences. She said, “they’ve got a copy of your paper, you’ve got a copy, and you just go through your paper and just talk about your concerns like ‘I don’t think this is a strong paragraph, what do you think?’ and both times they’ve both given me positive feedback and they’ve both given me suggestions, like ‘you know, I think you’re right, here’s the direction I think you should go with this.’” She said that unlike her high school teachers, the instructors were not “writing all over” her work. She said, “For me [having a conversation is] probably the best way that I learn and how I can better my paper. That way I can feel comfortable voicing my concerns.” Conferences with instructors stand out to Taylor as significant learning experiences when social persuasion, such as when her composition professor said “You’re a really strong writer,” positively influenced her self-efficacy expectations. Taylor’s experiences are consistent with recommendations from Wachholz and Etheridge to utilize conference pedagogies and positive recognition to support writerly self-efficacies.

At the conclusion of her interview, I asked Taylor how she understands her abilities as a writer. She said “getting that good feedback and getting those good grades helped me understand my ability and feeling confident in my work. My perceptions changed over time, obviously, from high school to college. We talked about that pretty in-depth, and my [first-year composition] class was definitely that transition.” Additionally, she feels good about her work from in-class peer reviews. She said that when peers praise her work in comparison to their own, “I feel like I shouldn’t feel good about that, but I do.” Reflecting on what experiences shaped her perceptions about her abilities, social persuasion from instructors and peers, especially her first-year writing instructor, made the most impact. Finally, regarding her perceptions about proving her writing ability to herself, she said:
Writing’s just one of those things that I feel like I have a lot of control over, versus like tests and stuff, I get a lot of test anxiety and you don’t know what the questions are going to be, versus like with writing I feel like it’s the amount of effort I put into it, I feel more comfortable with the writing …I’d say I’m a little bit above average of a student but I’m not necessarily a really great student, and so where I have more control over writing I really want to prove it to myself.

In this quote, Taylor shows evidence of a growth mindset (Dweck) toward learning writing when she associates effort with successful writing performances. She retains positive perceptions of generalized writing ability, though because of her experiences she feels nervous about writing in her disciplinary classes. Additionally, she has motivation to show herself she can have successful writing performances, or mastery experiences. Because Taylor recognized her composition class as the primary influence on her positive self-efficacy expectations, we should continue to consider how first-year writing pedagogies—including flexibility, positive recognition, and conferences—promote positive dispositions. In addition, we can consider how important meta-awareness about writing, including genre awareness, may be given how this student transferred her positive self-perceptions to another discipline.

Caleb

The next case study is of Caleb, a sophomore Finance major. Though Caleb also felt limited by “rigid rules” (Rose) in high school writing, he felt that he gained invaluable writing skills and confidence from his senior-year high school English teacher. In college, Caleb took composition, business, and cultural studies courses, and noted that the writing expectations between high school and these courses were “very similar.” Like Taylor, lack of awareness of the disciplinary writing differences may have encouraged him to transfer his overwhelmingly positive self-efficacy expectations. Caleb’s expressed self-efficacy expectations were the most definitively positive, but he also expressed the most resistance to getting help with his writing—calling himself “stubborn.” This case study provides more insights into how students understand their writing abilities across disciplinary contexts and how certain writing perceptions incline students toward or away from learning behaviors.

Caleb’s parents are alumni of the Miami University and he grew up in the area. He chose to study Finance because he enjoys math and working with people, and his aspirations are to do well in school—earning at least a 3.5 GPA—and to secure a finance job connected to the sports
industry. He plays on a club baseball team and states that sports are “something that I really enjoy participating in, watching, talking about. I think I might do a [sports industry] minor or thematic sequence because I'm really interested in sports. I've grown up always liking them so I'd like to incorporate them into my writing assignments if I can.” With the encouragement of his parents, Caleb is motivated to be successful at the university and makes coursework even more meaningful by connecting it to his values.

When asked about his typical writing process, Caleb spoke in great detail about strategies he uses to achieve successful writing performances and what gets in the way of success. For example, he stated:

I feel like my best writing is when I get ahead of the curve and don't wait until the last minute. So, an example of that is if I get [an assignment], [I] start a week in advance. I usually just try to the first day try to write an intro and come up with a thesis, once I get my thesis that really helps me out a lot… I'm not going to write any more [that day]--I'll just be out walking around and I'll just have a thought and I'll jot that down on my notes on my phone… I feel like my ideas come at just at random times. I don't know how to explain it. I have really tried to look at the computer screen and think of ideas, but they're not always going to be the best, so if I give myself a lot of time to write, I usually do pretty well, but I don't always do that. I procrastinate a lot.

In this quote, we can see that Caleb is aware of what personal strategies lead to successful performances. He attributes this knowledge to practice with high school and college writing. Though he recognizes strategies that work for him, he has trouble enacting them, exhibiting a lapse in self-regulation. He did note, however, that he finds it very helpful when courses—such as his advanced composition course—have schedules that require scaffolding of writing assignments.

After explaining his typical writing process, Caleb described his writing experiences in high school: “I was never really a big English guy. I would consider myself a pretty good writer and I've been told I'm a pretty good writer by a lot of teachers that I've had, but I never really liked it. I was always [thinking] ‘I don't know how I'm doing right now’ because I'm not really invested.” However, as a senior in high school, Caleb was engaged in his world literature class by his teacher and built personal confidence and value toward writing. He said, “she always liked my writing,” and her positive social persuasion helped him to understand his abilities. Reflecting
on his experience, he said, “I just think the first thing she succeeded at was building a relationship and getting me interested in the topic and then from there she just continued to give good examples, kept an open atmosphere in the classroom for discussion. I felt comfortable to bring up my points.” Each of the many writing assignments in his class was scaffolded so that the students would get feedback from the instructor before class discussions in which they could introduce ideas from their writing. His teacher’s feedback and the scaffolding of the assignments helped Caleb feel more comfortable expressing new ideas—his ideas had been tested and he knew he would not be publically “shut down” by his teacher. In this case, practice across mastery experiences with early social persuasion through feedback increased his self-efficacy expectations for success in the classroom.

Caleb spoke a lot about the commenting and feedback practices of his senior-year high school teacher. He stated that “Even if she didn't agree with what you were saying, she wouldn't say ‘No you're wrong.’” Instead, she would consistently point out things he was doing right and use evidence to support her suggestions for revision. He says that he really enjoyed her style of feedback and that it helped build his confidence. He compared his high school teacher’s strategies to other classroom experiences, including when teachers only commented on what he had done wrong. He said, “If you get too many of those comments, it just makes you think ‘I don't want to try to bring up another point, because I just keep getting this wrong.’” Caleb recognizes that the social persuasion of his teachers impacts his enjoyment and self-efficacy expectations toward his writing.

Caleb’s reflections on his experiences with feedback provide several implications for teaching for generative writerly self-efficacy and transfer. First, Caleb’s experiences are consistent with existing commenting research, which emphasizes how mitigated feedback—with a balance of positive and negative elements—helps student feel less “inadequate” and more motivated to grow and revise (Treglia; Weaver). More specifically, his experiences support the suggestion that providing social persuasion on what performances students are achieving successfully can positively contribute to their self-efficacy expectations (Wachholz and Etheridge). Next, the type of feedback he receives impacts his motivation to attempt future performances, and exclusively negative feedback may limit his drive to be an agent of integration, as expressed by Nowacek. If a writing mastery experience is met with overwhelmingly negative social persuasion, when met with a similar mastery experiences he
may be less likely to 1) make the effort he believed was necessary for a successful performance and 2) attempt to learn and adapt from his instructor’s feedback. Finally, Caleb is more engaged and has a clearer understanding of his abilities when revisions and suggestions are part of a conversation with the writer— as opposed to simplistic and authoritative teacher feedback that tells him “you’re wrong—change your writing to this.” This perspective is similar to Taylor’s, whose writerly self-efficacies were most impacted through social persuasion in the form of conversation and negotiation.

Regarding the development of his writing ability, Caleb felt that limited writing opportunities were a “set back” for him in high school. Caleb described what it was like to have many rhetorical and generic constraints:

For me, for worse, a lot of teachers would tell me ‘This is exactly how the writing has to be’—especially with organization and ideas, they didn't give you much room to wiggle to be creative with how you want to get your ideas out there. When you're in a pigeon-hold, like you have to do it exactly like this, it discourages creativity. And I'm not a really a creative person, but it...kind of makes the writing more bland in my opinion. And I've done a lot of writing assignments like that and I think that set me back in my writing for a while. I [would want to know] ‘Ok, that's the topic?’ and the standard question would be, ‘what's the format that you want?’ and [teachers will] be like ‘five paragraph paper’ and [students will] say ‘I've done this before, I know how it works.’ But I think it's worse to get into something like that because while it's important to know how to write a five-paragraph paper, that shouldn't be the only thing you know how to write. For a while that was the only thing I was comfortable writing. When I was asked to write something else, I had no idea where to start. So it really set me back with regards to being prepared for college I guess, because I don't think I've written one five-paragraph paper in college.”

In high school, Caleb generally showed low value toward writing, and because he had to write many similar five-paragraph essays, he thought, “I've done this a million times. This is boring.” When Caleb began writing in college, the mastery experiences he could draw from were primarily writing five-paragraph essays. The difference of expectations and the lack of practice initially led to confusion and low self-efficacy expectations. These experiences are consistent with other participants, including Emily and Nicole, who were demotivated by repetitive high school assignments and challenged by new writing expectations in college.
When Caleb began college he took a first-year composition course, writing in new, flexible genres and picking topics—such as sports—that he values. When asked about his experiences in the course and his perceptions of his writing abilities, he commented upon his teacher’s commenting practices, again acknowledging the impact of social persuasion. He said that his composition instructor was not “feedback friendly”: “she didn't give a lot of feedback, especially in regards to substance in your writing”—which Caleb refers to as argument and organization—“she kinda looked more at the grammar…But with substance stuff she kinda just let that go.” He said that the lack of feedback was difficult because he put so much work into the argument and he could not tell if he was ever on the right track. He stated:

“It's like - you would expect the teacher in this sense be the one who has the most knowledge about the readings that they're giving you. And if you're taking the time to really think about the readings and develop points about how this reading can be attached to your life…if you're making that comparison and then you don't get too much feedback on it it's—you don't really know if it's a good idea, you just don't have an idea if you're on the right track, if you truly understood the reading or if you made a poor connection… Is it worth it to put in all this effort? That's why I really like the feedback where it's like, yes, this is good, other times it's like yes, this part is good but like, consider this.”

When Caleb reflects on his development as a writer, he considers his teachers as experts whose social persuasion carries weight that will inform him if he is achieving a successful performance. When the teacher provides inadequate social persuasion in the form of grammar-focused feedback, he does not know what he achieved and how to grow. Additionally, if Caleb did not receive substantive social persuasion, it influenced his willingness to pursue hard work. Though some student writers place emphasis on social persuasion from grades, Caleb highly values substantive feedback on his ideas and choices as a writer.

At the time of the interview, Caleb had taken few classes connected to his major, and one of these classes was marketing. In this course, he wrote papers as part of a team and shared with me his section of one of the papers—a SWOT analysis. The group assignment engaged student creativity and problem-solving skills, and Caleb’s team invented a product which he explained in

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1 The composition program at this university does not train or ask instructors to give feedback this way, but of course practices vary among teachers.
interest and in detail. Although the SWOT analysis was a clear mastery experience, Caleb does not think he will have to replicate or practice this specific genre again. He said,

“For what I want to get into I'll mainly be reading these and like analyzing these more so than putting them together. And in the real world a lot of these will be computerized and put together for you, but it could be my job to look at something like this and then go into a sales meeting and give a kind of pitch that I'm about to give. That's more applicable I think than actually writing it, but writing it now will definitely help me understand it more and seeing what all goes into it.”

Though Caleb does not think he will have to repeat this writing performance, he acknowledges how the experience writing within this genre is building his self-efficacy expectations for performances in his career.

When discussing writing expectations in college, Caleb drew connections among writing experiences across time and disciplines. He credits his senior-year high school teacher for preparing him for college writing. He described:

I think if I didn't have her I kind of wouldn't be as interested in writing and wouldn't have had that high school practice about stretching points, and that's kind of what all of college writing is about. It's taking what's in the text and like stretching it and comparing it to something else. For another class right now I'm about to start writing a paper - it's a class about zombies –this class is like vintage, exactly what I did in high school –it's like reading stuff and comparing it to something else.

Further, he said that his SWOT analysis was closer to a research project than a typical English paper, but two English research papers he has written were “very similar” to his disciplinary writing. He said that for each of these writing experiences “I have to throw stats in here that back up my points and so I think it's kind of like a mini-research paper kind of thing, and I've written many of those in English classes that have helped.” However, he states that business writing is more professional and less opinion-based, and what he learned about rhetoric in his writing classes is more applicable to everyday life. As a generalized statement across writing contexts, Caleb stated, “I'm very confident with my writing.” Reminiscent of Taylor, Caleb seems to have a generalized self-efficacy toward writing; because he believes that his various writing performances are very similar, he brings generalized self-efficacy expectations and outcome expectations between them. Though Caleb makes adjustments to his self-efficacy expectations
based upon perceived disciplinary differences, largely, he retains generalized self-efficacy expectations. He did not share any specific moments of frustrated writing transfer or integration (Nowacek), but his perceptions suggest that he may be making too many generalizations about writing expectations that his instructors may not share.

An example of Caleb’s generalized writerly self-efficacy can be found in his explanation of pre-writing. His positive self-efficacy expectations for pre-writing are part of a larger writerly self-efficacy, or writing self-concept, that he integrates between writing experiences (Shelton; Choi). He states: “A lot of my writing is planning, so that…is obviously going to be applicable no matter what you're writing. So a huge thing for me is just having [experienced writing] all these papers for my English classes in the past. I understand how much time it takes me to write a paper and so that, on a basic level, helps me plan my writing.” Caleb’s self-efficacy expectations toward what he sees as a generalized skill—planning and prewriting—informs how he understands his abilities across writing contexts. This is a case where a discrete “universal” writing task, pre-writing, is recognized by a student as part of a composite self-efficacy. This perspective of writerly self-efficacy is consistent with how quantitative self-efficacy measures represent student beliefs (McCarthy et al; Schmidt and Alexander).

Caleb’s writerly self-efficacy expectations were further illuminated when I ask about his experiences at the business writing center. As part of business writing teams, Caleb has brought his work to the writing center for two required appointments, and both times he thought the consultant feedback was extremely valuable. He said that during his last appointment the consultant “saved” their team from getting a bad grade because she helped them realize they were not following the assignment requirements and she helped them separate the large project into tasks. However, when I asked if Caleb would ever return to the writing center, he said that he does not need help as a writer, except perhaps for editing, but he is “stubborn” about not wanting to change his words because he trusts his own judgement more than anyone else. Though he would consider suggestions from a peer, he expressed reservations about peer feedback as well:

“I don't really want help when I'm working on it… I love my writing style… I don't think that has anything to do with English, I think that's my personality. I'm kind of a stubborn person. I like things the way that I like them, and if I'm doing the writing I like, I'm confident in what I'm choosing because I'm that's how I am with really everything.
Throughout his interview, Caleb expressed high value and confidence in his ability to get constructive feedback from teachers, but he does not necessarily want criticism or suggestions from peers. However, several times he cited getting good feedback during peer reviews and other students as contributors to how he understands his writing abilities. Caleb’s resistance to seeking social persuasion from peers—including writing center consultants—and seemingly high confidence toward writing could lead to missed opportunities for development. As Tripp observed in her study, “students who measured the highest on standard self-efficacy surveys often demonstrated the most resistance to writing in the new ways” (178).

Additionally, Caleb shared that in high school, when he was “not as confident at all,” he once sought feedback on all of his papers from his father. He stated, “my Dad's good at English and I had him look over some of my papers and I'll pretty much give him free reign.” His Dad would make changes to his work, but Caleb says that now he would not do that. He stated that with confidence, “I have taken ownership of my writing more.” This is another example of how Caleb resists social persuasion about his writing performances from anyone but his instructors.

At the conclusion of the interview, Caleb reflected on the sources of his writing beliefs. He attributes his confidence in his college writing abilities to “practice, good teaching, and familiarity with the process.” Though he considered himself a “lower-end” writer in high school, with difficulty finding evidence and the constraints of five-paragraph essays, he says he is now better at writing skills and feels more comfortable.

Caleb expressed the most exclusively positive self-efficacy expectations during the interviews, but he also described generalizations among writing contexts and the most resistance to opportunities for writing growth—including writing center consultations. His case study shows the importance of pedagogical strategies for increasing self-efficacy expectations, including providing substantive feedback, putting responses to writing in “conversation” with the student and their growth, and providing opportunities for peer review. Though Caleb expresses positive self-efficacy expectations, his dispositions may not be the most generative, or encouraging of positive development (Bronfenbrenner and Morris 810). His case study encourages us to consider how realistic perceptions of writing abilities, or accurate self-assessments, maybe more generative for transfer and integration than simple confidence.
Lauren

Lauren, the final participant I will focus on in this thesis, is a junior Professional Writing major. Though Lauren is a junior, she is also just beginning to take classes within her major because she switched majors from Journalism. What sets Lauren apart from Taylor and Caleb are her motivation, self-regulation, and extra-curricular experiences with writing. From her experiences at student-run newspapers, seeking advice from mentors, and pursuing self-sponsored writing tasks, Lauren has high confidence for her ability to grow as a writer—not just to achieve successful writing performances. Though she struggles with negative peer comparisons, Lauren self-regulates for short and long-term goals and believes her drive will help her achieve success in future academic and career challenges.

In high school, Lauren had significant writing and leadership experiences that led her toward her career path. When Lauren was a senior, she was the editor-in-chief of her high school’s prestigious magazine and had many responsibilities, including acting as the manager for other editors and student reporters. She said that she loved the experience and it made her want to keep writing.

In her AP English class, her teacher pushed her and motivated her to become a strong writer. She said:

I always say that my junior year of high school, my AP English class was the hardest class I've ever taken. Harder than even any of my college classes. My professor was just super wise, I loved him so much. [The class was] hard, but I still got an A, it was like good challenging, you know. Just cause my professor like would let us know if it wasn't great. So he was just like humbling and he just gave us like good criticism. And also, especially in my junior AP class we write at least one paper a week. So like we had so much experience by the end of the semester to improve.

From her pre-college writing experiences, Lauren expressed a growth mindset, associating hard work, practice, and feedback with mastery experience and skill development (Dweck).

Late in her high school career, Lauren’s magazine team went on a trip to New York City to visit the publishing office of a major magazine. She was able to meet professionals in the field and learn how parts of the organization work together to compose a magazine. She said, “that just really confirmed to me that I wanted to work in writing, either newspaper or magazine.” Lauren has a goal of working in the writing industry and also values Christian ministry. At the
time of the interview, she was interested in combining her goals and values to write for a Christian organization. To pursue this dream, Lauren started as a Journalism major at Miami University, but switched to Professional Writing because she thought it would be more flexible for her career.

When Lauren began her college career, she was worried about “starting from the beginning” and being an underdog—after all, she had accomplished a lot as a high school student. Though Lauren tested out of the first-semester FYC course, she took the second-semester FYC course\(^2\), and had fun writing creative pieces related to her personal experiences. She said, “I really connected with my professor, she gave me good feedback and just kind of let me know that I was a good writer, so that confidence from professor's feedback really like drives me in my writing career.” Starting her college career, Lauren’s feedback from her FYC instructor was a confirmation that she could achieve successful college writing performances. Even though the instructor was not from her field of Professional Writing, Lauren valued her social persuasion enough that she considers her feedback one of the lasting, primary contributors to her writerly self-efficacy expectations.

Lauren is a driven student who utilizes self-regulation techniques, including personal goal setting, to help her toward her ambition of becoming a professional writer. During our interview, Lauren pulled out her journal and described goals that she set for herself for the semester. Two of her “writing-based goals” were getting published in her home-city newspaper and publishing creative writing in the university’s student publication. Lauren described what it was like preparing for this set of goals:

In the start of this semester I just sat down with myself and was like "You're a junior and you just changed your major to Professional Writing. You can't change your major again or you'll be here for eight years. You got to stick with what you're doing." And I think also talking with my old professor really helped me. He was just saying like "If you know there's a skill you have and something you want to do, just pursue that 100%" and he also just encouraged me to try to get published, and he said submit things to random magazines and part of the career is getting rejected many more times than getting accepted. And I'm from [a city in the Midwest] and I grew up reading the [that city’s

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\(^2\) This was a “composition and literature” course that has since been discontinued and replaced by an advanced writing requirement. This requirement can be met by a wide range of courses across the disciplines— including the advanced composition course she is in.
newspaper] and I knew there was a guest-reader column in that, so that's how that goal came about.

This quote reveals how faculty mentors can contribute to students’ development of self-efficacy. In this case, the faculty mentor was encouraging, and told her to pursue mastery experiences as a professional in her field. He also created a vicarious experience in which Lauren could view failure as normal for someone with her goals. From their discussion, she created a concrete plan of action for herself.

Lauren succeeded in her goal of being published in the city newspaper, but her poems were rejected from the university publication. She was excited to be published, and made the social comparison that not many college students get published as a guest columnist in that newspaper. She was also encouraged that her creative column was chosen because she does not consider herself creative, and has low-self efficacy expectations for creative writing. However, when Lauren’s poems were not accepted for publication, it felt more confirming for her that she could not achieve success with certain creative writing performances. Even though Lauren did not have high self-efficacy expectations for creative writing, she still made explicit goals to practice and test her skills to benefit her career. Ultimately, Lauren considered her newspaper publication a successful mastery experience, and the rejection of the poems as a failure.

After attempting these goals, Lauren reflected upon who she was as a professional writer, and described approaching a mentor. She said:

I went in to talk with my old Journalism professor who I'm still friends with, and I literally walked into his office and asked, "Can you just tell me if I'm a good writer?"

And, cause I was just—I don't know—I feel like every day to some extent I suffer from insecurity that I'm not good enough for the field, so yeah, being published, that was a good confidence boost, being rejected from [the university publication], that humbled me a lot…He said something snarky like "Why are you even asking that?" He's tough with me and he was like, "Of course you are." But the advice he gave me was, "You have to remember that there's always going to be someone who's better than you at every single thing you do. The problem starts when we start comparing ourselves to others," which is something that I struggle with a lot because there's so many people on this campus who are better writers than I am, but I just have to focus on the progression that I've had.
Lauren understands that the feedback and judgments of her mentors (or social persuasion) inform her writerly and professional self-efficacies. When she felt a lapse of confidence in her abilities, she reached out for social persuasion. Her mentor also provided a significant frame for how Lauren handles vicarious experiences. Lauren described the challenges of comparing herself to other writers in her major, and her mentor encouraged her to reframe her thoughts. Instead of focusing too much on social comparisons, he wanted her to accept that others have different abilities, sometimes achieving more successful performances, but she has to put that to the back of her mind. This pedagogical move is supported in academic self-efficacy research, which suggests that teachers should invest efforts toward making students less preoccupied with normative ability comparisons in school (Bong and Skaalvik). I asked if Lauren’s professors ever talked about peer comparison in her coursework, and she said, “No. I’ve never heard anything from professors unless I’m talking with them one on one, and I’m close with them, and I’m telling them that I’m insecure about my writing.” She did not have an opinion as to whether peer comparison should be talked about in the classroom. Lauren’s value of independent meetings with her mentors and their contributions to her self-perceptions are similar to Taylor’s experiences with teacher conferences. These experiences further demonstrate the importance of conferences for supporting generative writerly self-efficacy.

Lauren also had a lot to say about the social persuasion she receives from her professors directly on her writing performances. She stated:

My favorite [class] this semester, the professor goes through the Word doc I submit as the final paper and whenever he sees something wrong he comments on it. Whenever he sees something good he comments on it also…I love that…I guess it just makes me feel proud of my work when there are lots of positive comments…So it’s like, if you scroll through the Word document once I received my grade you can see all the comments on the side and I really like that. And in another class I’m in—I love the class a lot—but like what I wish there was more of what the other professor is doing instead of just having a comment on the end that says "good job with this, you could have worked on this." When she says "you can work on this" it's just a general thing. I like it when professors nit-pick me.

Lauren has significant professional drive which causes her to seek mastery experiences and social persuasion—in and out of the classroom—which she takes seriously. Comments on her
papers are one way she knows if she can achieve successful writing performances and how she can grow her skills, and like Caleb, she prefers significant, specialized feedback. Her experiences reflect Sommers’ suggestions that comments be oriented toward student growth—not generalized and rubber-stamped, but specific to student development. However, Lauren’s preferences also bring to mind other commenting literature which suggests that teachers should avoid over-commenting, especially on lower-order concerns (Bean; Wachholz and Etheridge). Lauren looks for the most feedback that she can get, and one of her valued personal goals is to improve her grammar. When taking into account the motivation of students like Lauren and their writerly self-efficacies, we may consider how feedback strategies can be flexible based upon student needs and goals. This kind of flexibility aligns with recommendations from Macklin’s pedagogy of compassion and Latawiec’s study. Latawiec states that:

   Putting the emphasis on students’ agency – that is, their choices about what to value (or what is to be gained) in the class (and even how certain class activities are designed and approached) – is the way to keep students’ experiences and perspectives at the heart of a classroom that might need to achieve a particular set of goals in order to prepare students for the writing sequence they will face at their University. (125)

If Lauren was given a chance to explain her professional goals and feedback preferences to her instructor, she may have been able to get social persuasion she found more constructive.

   Outside of the classroom, Lauren takes on self-sponsored writing projects and spends a significant amount of time working at the university’s student-run newspaper, where she has benefited from social persuasion and vicarious experiences provided by the faculty supervisor. For example, the faculty supervisor of the newspaper told her, "Lauren, you're getting so much hands-on experience. You need to take advantage of this. You're in a newsroom in a college newspaper, but it's still like mimicking how they do it in the professional world.” Her supervisor described the benefit of having mastery experiences, and Lauren makes connections to how these experiences influence her professional writing self-efficacy expectations. She stated, “I think [at the newspaper] going into a piece of writing and wanting to learn will help me receive criticism best from others.” Lauren sees how the experiences she gains at the newspaper will help her do challenging work as a professional writer—including negotiating how to process criticism.

   Lauren also understands her work at the newspaper through vicarious experience and social persuasion from her peers. Reflecting on her experiences, she stated:
I've learned so much, like my freshman and sophomore year in the newsroom. Like looking at the juniors and seniors I just thought they were awesome. And lots of them now have graduated and are working—one of them is working at The Huffington Post.

I've just learned a lot from other editors.

Though Lauren does wrestle with peer comparisons which cause self-doubt, other peer comparisons improve her self-efficacy expectations for growing as a writer and earning a job in the field. She has had first-hand experiences observing the efforts and successes of students further along, which research suggests is significant to building academic self-efficacy (Pajares and Schunk). Finally, the social persuasion she receives from peer editors, even those less experienced than her, is another way she knows her abilities as a writer. The newspaper editor at the time of the interview, who was a sophomore, told her: “Lauren, you're my best writer. I don't have to worry about you at all.”

At the conclusion of the interview, Lauren reflected on her writing experiences and writerly self-efficacies. She said, “The most significant moments in my writing education were working for those two publications, the high school one and then the [university newspaper]. And then, like I said, the relationships that I form around my writing and the feedback I get from those people are really useful to me.” The co-curricular experiences Lauren has had as a developing professional are valuable to her; she has built mastery experiences and received social persuasion that evidences her development and abilities. Additionally, she sees feedback from her instructors and peers as integral to her growth and indicative of her abilities. Finally, Lauren summarized her perceptions of her abilities: “I'm confident in my writing skills, and even in the days that I'm not, I'm always confident in my work ethic, and my discipline, and my enthusiasm toward getting my job done, so I don't worry about that too much.” Though Lauren’s self-efficacy expectations for different types of writing may fluctuate, Lauren has high self-efficacy expectations for self-regulation and learning. Lauren’s high self-efficacy expectations for learning seem conducive of future academic and professional success, and are closely aligned to the dispositions Amy Latawiec wanted to promote in her basic writing courses.

**Results from the Quantitative Self-Efficacy Scale**

I will now address what can be learned by putting qualitative and quantitative methods for studying writerly self-efficacy into conversation. Each writer took the adapted Post-Secondary Writerly Self-Efficacy Scale (Schmidt and Alexander) designed to evaluate student
perceptions of abilities toward individual writing tasks for a composite writerly self-efficacy score. Out of the three participants highlighted in this study, Lauren had the highest average composite self-efficacy score (8.09 / 10), Taylor had the middle score (7.66 / 10), and Caleb had the lowest (6.33). These results are particularly interesting because when talking generally about their perceived abilities as writers, Lauren remained the most hedging, stating that she is not always confident in her writing abilities, but is confident in her abilities to learn. Caleb, however, made the most generalized statements that he was “very confident” in his writing. When individual writing tasks are broken down, it seems that Lauren had the highest self-efficacy expectations for those tasks and Caleb the lowest. But when these participants reflected extensively on their perceptions and experiences as writers, the qualitative data describe very different dispositions than the survey. When Lauren considers her perceptions of her abilities and how they influence her writing performances, she is much more focused on her self-efficacy for learning and self-regulating toward her goals. When Caleb was asked about his perceptions of his abilities as a writer, he provided some examples of writing tasks that he had low self-efficacy expectations for, but largely maintained the idea that he is a confident writer who does not need more help from peers.

In some cases, the participants also rated themselves much higher or lower toward specific writing tasks than how they described their perceptions in the interviews. For example, Lauren described that based upon feedback from her mother, she does not think she is strong with grammar and considers grammar one of the areas she needs the most instructor support for. However, in the PSWSE scale, she rated herself “9” in response both statements “I can identify and correct surface-order concerns (such as run-on sentences, punctuation) that would interfere with the meaning of my writing” and “When I read a rough draft, I can identify areas that can be improved when they are present in the paper.” Another inconsistency between the survey and the interviews occurred when Caleb rated himself a “3” in response to “I can use prewriting strategies (such as mapping out the structure and main sections of an essay) before writing the first draft.” From the quantitative scale, one might assume that Caleb does not know or typically apply prewriting strategies. However, in his interview he extensively described using several prewriting strategies, noting his day-to-day process for assignment writing and describing that these are particularly useful when courses, such as his advanced composition course, include scaffolded pre-writing strategies in the syllabus. Additionally, a piece of writing that Caleb
included in his portfolio is an outline of his SWAT analysis. It is possible that the participants misinterpreted the questions in the PSWSE; however, I think these inconsistencies point to the importance of combining quantitative and qualitative methods for studying writerly self-efficacies. I hypothesize that in the intensively reflective process of the interviews, participants brought forward writing perceptions and experiences that they may not have originally considered while quickly taking the quantitative measure.

Another important finding regarding the PSWSE is that while the scale asks directly about students’ physical or mental abilities, students in the study did not express that these abilities contribute to their perceptions of their abilities as writers. One of the statements maintained from the original scale is “I can manage physical discomfort while writing (e.g., headaches, stomach-aches, back-aches, insomnia, muscle tension, nausea, and/or crying).” I believe this statement was originally included in the scale to represent physiological states, which Bandura and Pajares found informs self-efficacy expectations; however, in self-efficacy research, physiological states more often refer to students’ affective experiences, such as stress and anxiety, rather than strictly ability of the body. The statement in the scale assumes that anything beyond “comfortable” feelings during the writing process will lead to lowered comprehensive self-efficacies. In response to this statement, Taylor responded with “4” and Lauren responded with “2.” These were both their lowest response numbers and brought down their cumulative self-efficacy scores. However, during their long interviews in which they expressed many writing experiences and perceptions, Taylor and Lauren never indicated that physical or mental discomfort lowered their perceptions of their abilities to achieve success with their writing tasks and assignments. There are several reasons this may not have come up in the interviews, including: 1) The participants may not have felt comfortable bringing up physical or mental abilities and 2) The participants did not believe that perceptions of their abilities to “manage physical discomfort” impacted their perceptions of their abilities as writers. Overall, if quantitative self-efficacy scales continue to be developed in the future, I do not believe similar statements should be included. By including these statements, we assume that writers only assess their abilities positively if they conform to a certain kind of ability. Self-efficacy researchers should consider Margaret Price’s critique of ableist research models that presume that “persons with mental disabilities are presumed not to be competent, nor understandable, nor valuable, nor whole” (26).
Additionally, some of the results of the scale provide more insights into the experiences of the writers. For example, in the quantitative scale, Caleb rated himself a “5” out of 10 in response to “I can maintain a sense of who my audience is as I am writing a paper.” This score is informative in the light that Caleb seemed to perceive many writing assignments across disciplines as similar. Perhaps, he wrestles more than he expressed with understanding the demands of different instructor audiences.

Overall, a greater portion of participant responses to the PSWSE were consistent with their perceptions expressed in the interviews than those that were not consistent. Regarding the inconsistencies, this study demonstrates that students represent their perceptions differently across methods for assessing self-efficacies toward writing. Participant interviews may allow students the time and reflection needed to more accurately represent their experiences and perceptions as writers. Additionally, the results indicate that factors that self-efficacy researchers may have considered important for the construction of self-efficacy toward writing—such as feeling comfortable—may not be integral to student beliefs.
Chapter Four

Conclusions and Implications for Teaching and Research

Theories of self-efficacy help writing teachers and researchers understand the dispositions of their students, including how students come to hold beliefs about themselves, and then how teachers might adapt instruction for better learning. In this study, three participants held unique views about their potential as writers and learners. The participants entered college with a wide range of self-beliefs toward writing, and consistently their mastery experiences and dispositions toward writing in high school were based in rigid rules, limited genres, and testing cultures. When Taylor and Lauren entered first-year composition classes, their dispositions toward writing—including low self-efficacy expectations and low value—were changed. Taylor, in particular, describes her experiences in first-year composition as a “turning point” for her perceptions of her ability as writer. These changes of perception were informed by researched teaching strategies in composition—including highlighting student successes and conferencing pedagogies. In the disciplines, the participants’ complex dispositions influenced decisions about learning, including transfer and integration, risk-taking, motivation, avoidance, and goal-setting. As these students move forward in their disciplines, their experiences can be further studied for additional insights into the shaping and influence of writerly self-efficacies.

Generative Writerly Self-Efficacy

In Wachholz and Etheridge’s study, the underlying assumption was that teachers should employ strategies for their students to have the most positive self-efficacy expectations possible. I suggest that teachers and researchers should focus less on what dispositions are most positive, and more on which self-efficacy expectations are most generative, or productive for learning. The results of my study speak to how students’ high self-efficacy expectations toward writing do not necessarily mean students are learning the most or transferring most productively. When Taylor and Caleb talked about their experiences writing in their major disciplines, they expressed understanding their abilities toward writing in the same, or very similar, ways that they had expressed their abilities toward writing in composition courses and other disciplines. This was paired with little knowledge about the differences in disciplinary writing expectations between their classes. I suggest that Taylor and Caleb represent a unique position for students transitioning between composition coursework and writing in the disciplines—they had positive understandings of their abilities as writers and little understanding of how expectations of their
writing performances were different between their courses. While their self-efficacy expectations were high, they may not have been the most generative, or encouraging students to recognize room for learning and growth. If students do not have meta-awareness about writing and have high self-belief, they may be more inclined to generalize perceptions of what it means to write among college writing contexts. This lack of awareness of disciplinary and genre differences paired with high generalized writerly self-efficacies may have informed the frustration Taylor experienced writing in a new discipline and the “blanket” approach Caleb used toward college writing.

While teaching for positive writerly-self efficacies can encourage motivation and successful performances, these strategies should be balanced with writing meta-awareness and teaching for high efficacy expectations toward learning writing. As Tripp discovered, “High self-efficacy on these surveys did not always translate to better learning… students who scored the lowest on these surveys sometimes improved writing practices and expressed the most new knowledge about writing” (178). In my own study, Caleb expressed the highest self-efficacy expectations in his interview, and also the most rigidity and resistance toward feedback and change in his writing practices. The ideal may not be for students to have the highest self-efficacy expectations possible; instead, students should benefit from recognizing their strengths, understanding how their perceptions are formed, and having high self-efficacy toward learning. By teaching for generative self-efficacies, teachers can help their students have realistic understandings of their writing abilities and learning potential. Teaching for generative self-efficacies, including self-belief toward writing and learning, may be particularly important for disenfranchised students who have been told they cannot learn and cannot write.

Building upon the recommendations of Wachholz and Etheridge, Tripp, and Latawiec, I will propose initial strategies writing instructors can use to promote generative writerly self-efficacies and self-efficacy toward learning. First, I suggest that writing instructors adopt strategies that promote a growth-mindset toward learning (Dweck). When students hold a fixed mindset of intelligence, they view skills as static. These students might place themselves within boxes of “I’m a good writer” or “I’m a bad writer,” and not connect how learning influences skills. In contrast, a student who has adopted a growth-mindset can associate hard work with success, and understands that skills and intelligence are fluid and can be prompted to grow. Educators promote a fixed mindset when the use “person praise”—“You’re such a good
writer!”—which caused students in Dweck’s study of grade school students to lose their confidence and seek less challenging activities. In contrast, students who receive “process praise”—“You have done great work on x. I can tell how much thought and effort went into this paper”—adopt the growth mindset and were motivated, resilient, confident, and eager to perform challenging tasks. By teaching students how learning works and using process praise to highlight their accomplishments, we can support student perceptions of their abilities to grow as writers. In this study, Caleb conveyed more of a fixed mindset toward writing. He used the most “fixed” intelligence terms, seeing himself at different times as a “bad” or “good” writer. He also was not interested in getting feedback from other peer writers, calling his outlook “stubborn.” In contrast, Lauren and Taylor conveyed growth mindsets—both associating hard work with development of skills. For Lauren, this mindset was informed by how mentors talked about personal growth and seeking mastery experiences, and Lauren purposefully sets goals to for her writerly development.

Next, writing instructors can promote student self-efficacy toward learning by having students create and monitor personal learning goals and engage in reflective writing. When students create learning goals and engage in self-regulation toward those goals, they gain greater expectations for their learning and writing abilities (Zimmerman; Bandura and Zimmerman; Latawiec; Wachholz and Etheridge). Further, reflective writing allows students to construct knowledge based on their experiences (Yancey) and practice self-regulation to recognize development and need for behavior change (Latawiec). In Latawiec’s study of basic writers, she found that students developed efficacious language when they constructed personal learning outcomes (PLOs), consistently reflected on their development toward those outcomes, and broken down their PLOs into smaller steps. Additionally, instructors can continuously provide feedback on student progress toward their goals through response and conversation. When students like Taylor have the opportunity to reflect genuinely on their experiences as writers—including how they have had terrible experiences with writing—instructors learn about student self-beliefs and can do more to individually support student development.

Finally, teachers can encourage generative writerly self-efficacy by encouraging growth-mindsets and providing feedback on goal setting as part of larger, ongoing conversations with students about their learning and perceptions of their abilities. Each participant in this study shared that they valued social persuasion from instructors when it was part of a conversation—
whether that was a conversation in person in which the student felt genuinely respected or conversation through written feedback in which the teacher engaged substantively with the choices of the writer. When students felt they were in conversation with instructor, they had a more realistic sense of what they had accomplished and how to grow. Additionally, Taylor felt like she could more comfortably ask for guidance. One pedagogical model that may be productive for encouraging generative writerly self-efficacy is Tialitha Macklin’s pedagogy of compassionate writing response (CWR). In this model, the teacher and students engage in observation, goal-making, negotiation, and reflection to lead to productive teaching and learning adapted to student needs. In a classroom following the CWR model, Lauren could share with her instructor her goal of perfecting her written academic English, and then get feedback more targeted toward her goals. This could then improve Lauren’s expectations for her success as a writer and student.

It is worth noting that when teaching interventions are made to encourage generative writerly self-efficacies, it cannot be expected that every student a course will adopt the same dispositions toward writing or same shifts in their perceptions. For example, though each of the study participants had the same advanced composition instructor, they talked about their experiences in the class and the impacts upon their writerly self-efficacies very differently. Some participants talked about how their efficacy expectations were influenced by feedback practices of the instructor, some talked about the scaffolding of the assignments, and others barely mentioned the course—focusing on prior classroom experiences or extra-curricular writing. As Tripp noted of her own study, the results “suggest that students do not move in lock-step as the teacher directs, but engage with each new system and enact the motives of that system in different ways depending on their histories and the contradictions they experience during the semester” (177). However, when students discussed writing experiences across different writing systems and contexts, Wachholz and Etheridge’s recommendations for composition pedagogies—including helping students identify their strengths, encouraging goal-setting, and providing opportunities for practice with in-person instructor and peer feedback—increased writerly self-efficacy expectations.

**Contributors to Self-Efficacy Expectations**

Another primary contribution of this study is that it confirms several contributors to writerly self-efficacies, including the impact of social persuasion from teachers. When student
interviews about their perceptions as writers were coded with contributors to self-efficacy from psychology and writing studies research, patterns emerged that were consistent with previous findings. For example, students relied upon mastery experiences—successes, and failures—to describe how they understood their beliefs. Caleb emphasized the value of classroom practice as mastery experiences. By having many writing assignments across high school and college, and learning when he is “on the right track” from instructors, he feels like he has the skills he needs for future writing experiences. Lauren emphasized the importance of co-curricular writing experiences working for high school and college newspapers as the greatest contributors to her writing growth and her perceptions of her abilities. At the newspaper she gains practice “mimicking how they do it in the professional world” and building beneficial dispositions toward writing, such as the ability to receive feedback and grow from it instead of feeling overwhelmingly inadequate. Participants also cited the influence of mastery experiences that they interpreted as failures. When Lauren pursued the mastery experience of writing and submitting poetry to a publication and was rejected, she said it was confirming for her that she could not achieve certain levels of success as a creative writer. When Taylor was challenged with instructor resistance and a lower grade than she expected to receive in a disciplinary course, she said it made her “nervous” thinking about writing in her major in the future.

Participants in this study also confirmed the influence of social persuasion on self-efficacy expectations. Most notably, the participants talked about conferences with professors and instructor commenting strategies. Taylor and Lauren specifically cited the meaningful impact in-person conversations with first-year compositions instructors and other mentors had on positive self-efficacy expectations. However, Caleb did not share the same experiences with first-year composition and did not bring up in-person writing feedback. Taylor and Lauren’s experiences not only align with Wachholz and Etheridge’s recommendations to include individual conferences in writing classes, but also speak to the importance of small class sizes so that instructors have the time to get to know and directly respond to the work and perceptions of their students. Additionally, each participant noted the influence of teacher commenting practices. They stated that when instructors tell them what they are doing correctly, they know what they are doing right and the feedback raises their beliefs about their abilities. The participants also described being demotivated, having their agency taken away, and having lowered self-efficacy expectations when instructors gave overwhelmingly negative feedback
and/or non-substantive feedback. These participant experiences also reinforce the importance of having small class sizes and teaching research-based commenting practices from Writing Studies, both for teachers in our discipline and when we facilitate writing-across-the-curriculum initiatives. Additionally, based upon Lauren’s experiences, we should consider what feedback strategies would look like if they were flexible to address student goals.

This study also confirms the impact of affective states and vicarious experiences upon perceptions of writing ability. Taylor, in particular, used affective states to describe how her experiences and perceptions of her abilities changed across high school and college. Stress and fear was associated with lowered perceptions of her abilities to succeed, and feelings of comfort and fun were associated with heightened beliefs in her abilities as a writer. Students also felt that they could be successful, or felt less certain about their abilities, from vicarious experiences learning from the performances of other students. Lauren was encouraged by vicarious experiences, watching more experienced students succeed toward goals like her own. However, Taylor became preoccupied with comparisons and failure when a relative her age achieved a higher grade, and Lauren struggles with comparing her abilities to her peers going into the same field. Like Lauren’s mentor who reminded her to focus on her own successes and growth, writing teachers should invest efforts toward making students less preoccupied with normative ability comparisons (Bong and Skaalvik).

Implications for Future Research

Several limitations impact the generalizability of this study, including the small sample size and similarity of demographics among participants. Though this study does not produce generalizable findings, this work does intersect, complement, and challenge existing studies of writerly self-efficacies. Another limitation is that like other writing studies researchers, I am taking “the students at their words” (Jarratt, Mack, Sartor, and Watson 50). In studying perceived self-efficacy expectations, this is unavoidable, but I acknowledge it is very messy. The messiness of qualitative, self-efficacy research is especially apparent in the narratives of the student writers, when in the process of being interviewed they were exploring and putting words to many complicated and contradicting writing experiences. However, the data and results of this study are valuable and future studies can continue to triangulate methods.

This study complicates and contributes to methods for studying the self-efficacy expectations of writers. In accordance with Tripp and Latawiec, I believe that the quantitative,
universal measures of writerly self-efficacy are inherently flawed. While composite academic self-efficacy scores may continue to be valuable for researchers studying general college student experiences and the behaviors that indicate success, it is not ultimately very useful as a single measure to have a composite, universalized self-efficacy measure for writing. Writing performances and perceptions are not universal—students across disciplines, cultures, and classrooms respond to differing writing expectations. Therefore, it does not make sense to assume that self-ranking on presumed universal writing tasks will be indicative of how students understand their lived experiences with writing. Instead, quantitative self-efficacy measures, when used, should be designed to match the contexts of writing situations as closely as possible, as modeled by Tripp. I do acknowledge that quantitative scales are a much faster and more easily replicable way of studying generalized writerly self-efficacies. I recommend that if these scales continue to be used in large scale projects—such as those trying to justify the value of writing center work—these methods should be complemented with qualitative methods which focus on individual student identities and experiences. I recommend such individualized methods because due to the influence of vicarious experiences and normative comparisons, focus group interviews may not accurately represent individual students’ writerly self-efficacy beliefs.

The field of writing studies can benefit from additional research on the construction and impacts of writerly self-efficacy and self-efficacy toward learning writing. I suggest that the model of studying self-efficacy I employed, including gathering artifacts, administering surveys, and interviewing individual participants, can tell us more about the perceptions and experiences of writers across varying contexts. Future studies would also benefit from larger samples sizes and greater diversity among participants. More could also be learned by triangulating classroom experiences with instructor interviews to learn about how instructors understand and respond to the writerly self-efficacies of their students. In a longitudinal study of these writers, the methods can be replicated to examine how these students come to understand their self-efficacy expectations in advanced courses. This type of study across time could further answer the research question: What can the study of writerly-self efficacy tell us about the transition from first-year writing classes to writing in the disciplines? Additionally, more can be learned about how self-efficacy expectations relate to writing transfer and integration, including if students beyond this study also carry generalized self-efficacy beliefs early in their college careers and what happens to writerly self-efficacies when students are engaged in first-year composition
classes and advanced writing classes that teach for transfer and genre awareness. Finally, I suggest that there should be additional research into how ongoing teacher-student conversations and customized feedback strategies—aligned to writer goals—impact student self-efficacies toward writing and learning.

Self-efficacy expectations toward writing and learning are influenced by the pedagogies and the programs across the university; because of this, writing program administrators and teachers should consider how to best support generative self-efficacy expectations for the learning of all students. This study provides initial recommendations for encouraging generative writerly self-efficacies, and through future mixed-methods studies of diverse students, more can be learned about valuable dispositions for student learning.
Works Cited


Treglia, M. O. “Teacher-Written Commentary in College Writing Composition: How Does it Impact Student Revisions?” *Composition Studies*, 2009, 37(1), 67-86.


Appendices

Appendix A: Initial Survey with Quantitative Measure of Writerly Self-Efficacy

Background Information

Name:
Major(s):
Minor(s):

Please briefly describe your education settings in high school and college:
Example: I attended a public high school in the suburbs of Cincinnati and then I attended a community college for two years. This is my second year at Miami University.

Are you a first-generation college student?

Gender identity:
Racial identity:
Age:

Please select each of the following statements that are true:

- I took a first-year composition course or other introductory writing class at a college or university.
- I took a first-year composition course or other introductory writing class at a Miami University.
- I earned AP English credit from high school coursework.
- I took a dual enrollment composition course in high school for which I earned college credit.
- I was exempt from introductory writing classes because of my AP scores.
- I was exempt from introductory writing classes because I participated in the Miami University portfolio program.
- I have taken courses outside first-year composition that have required a significant amount of writing.
- I have taken courses within my major that have required a significant amount of writing.
- I have taken or am taking the capstone course within my major(s).
- I have heard about the writing center at Miami University or at another college.
- I have had an appointment at a college or university writing center.
- I have had an appointment at the Howe Writing Center at Miami University.
- I have experience as a tutor (any subject) from high school or college.
- I have conducted undergraduate research independently or with a faculty member.

Please rate the following statements with a number from 1-10.
1= completely disagree
10=completely agree

1. I can identify and correct surface-order concerns (run-on sentences, punctuation) that would interfere with the meaning of my writing.
2. I can invest a great deal of effort and time in writing when I know it is important for my goals.
3. I can articulate my strengths and challenges as a writer.
4. I can find and incorporate appropriate evidence to support important points in my writing.
5. I can be recognized by others as a strong writer.
6. When I read a rough draft, I can identify areas that can be improved when they are present in the paper.
7. I can maintain a sense of who my audience is as I am writing a paper.
8. I can easily manage physical discomfort while writing (e.g., headaches, stomach-aches, back-aches, insomnia, muscle tension, nausea, and/or crying).
9. When I read drafts written by peers, I can provide them with valuable feedback.
10. When I have a pressing deadline for a paper, I can manage my time efficiently.
11. I can attribute my success on writing projects to my writing abilities more than to luck or external forces.
12. When a student who is similar to me receives praise and/or a good grade on a paper, I know I can write a paper worthy of praise and/or a good grade.
13. Once I have completed a draft, I can eliminate both small and large sections that are no longer necessary.

14. I can write a paper without experiencing overwhelming feelings of fear or distress.

15. When writing papers for different courses (for example, Biology, English, and Philosophy classes), I can adjust my writing to meet the expectations of each discipline.

16. I can use prewriting strategies (such as mapping out the structure and main sections of an essay) before writing the first draft.

17. I can find ways to concentrate when I am writing, even when there are many distractions around me.

18. I can fully understand the requirements of college papers from assignment sheets and the instructor's explanations.

19. I can invest a great deal of effort and time in writing a paper when I know the paper will not be graded.

20. In my college classes, I can learn new strategies that promote my development and success as a writer.
Appendix B: Interview Questions

1) Can you tell me about your education in high school and college? What kind of high school did you go to?

2) What are some of the goals you have had during your high school and college education? These could include academic goals, career goals, sports goals, personal goals.

3) Are there any extracurricular activities that have been very important to you in high school or college?

4) Can you describe your typical writing process for a paper you have to write for a college class?

5) Portfolio exploration:
For each portfolio artifact:
Please describe the piece of writing you brought in.
What class was it for?
What did you have to do?
What was your process like for writing it?
Do you remember any support you have for writing it?
Did you feel like you could be successful?
Did you receive any feedback on the assignment?
I noticed you did X in this paper, can you explain why you made that choice?
How does this document reflect your understanding of yourself as a writer at that time?

6) Which of these artifacts do you think had the most impact on how you understand your ability as a writer?

7) How do you currently understand your ability as a writer?

8) What support or experiences were most valuable to you in your writing education? What do you wish you could change?

9) Do you think you can be successful at writing in your future career or (goal)?