(Un)Sure Writers: Potential Fluctuations in Self-Efficacy during the Writing Process

Amanda Marie Brooks
(UN)SURE WRITERS:  
POTENTIAL FLUCTUATIONS IN SELF-EFFICACY  
DURING THE WRITING PROCESS

By

AMANDA MARIE BROOKS

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Amanda M. Brooks defended this thesis on June 20, 2016.
The members of the supervisory committee were:

Kristie S. Fleckenstein
Professor Directing Thesis

Michael R. Neal
Committee Member

Kathleen Blake Yancey
Committee Member

The Graduate School has verified and approved the above-named committee members, and certifies that the thesis has been approved in accordance with university requirements.
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ABSTRACT

In “Some Thoughts about Feelings,” Susan McLeod encourages teachers to develop a “theory of affect” that could account for the various emotional processes that students encounter while writing (433). One contribution to such a theory concerns self-efficacy, a mechanism by which students interpret this emotional, sensory input. Self-efficacy plays a crucial role in understanding how students write as both a cognitive and affective activity. As students engage with various texts, they enter into a process wherein they must mediate and interpret the skills they possess. These interpretations, and the beliefs on which they are based, can significantly enable or hinder writers as they engage in the composing process. Therefore, students’ self-efficacy beliefs are vital to their success as writers, both inside and outside of the classroom.

Although a significant amount of research explores self-efficacy as related to motivation and performance outcomes, little has been done to map the potential fluctuations of students’ self-efficacy beliefs throughout the composing process. As students progress through a writing assignment, they encounter challenges to their self-efficacy, such as reading the assignment sheet, drafting, receiving feedback, revising, and assessment. These challenges suggest that self-efficacy is not a stable phenomenon; rather, self-efficacy very probably fluctuates as students engage with the challenges presented by a specific task. Understanding the nature of potential fluctuations is important, then, both in a theory of self-efficacy and in teaching writing. Accordingly, this study seeks to determine if, how, when, and from what causes students’ self-efficacy fluctuates over the course of a single writing assignment involving multiple drafts.

To examine potential fluctuations in students’ self-efficacy, I conducted a case study with two students enrolled in a single section of ENC 1101. I interviewed each of the participants face to face twice—once before they reviewed the assignment and again after they submitted the assignment to be graded—in order to create a narrative arc of their sense of self-efficacy throughout the assignment. These interviews were supplemented by self-assessment questionnaires that were completed by students at four designated moments chosen by the researcher and one spontaneous moment chosen by the subjects. The questionnaires consist of two parts: a quantitative self-assessment and a qualitative reflection. The quantitative self-assessment operates as a self-efficacy scale in order to determine how students perceive their abilities at specific moments in the writing process. Following each of the five quantitative
assessment occasions, students were then asked to respond to a prompt designed to engage them in a qualitative reflection. These qualitative reflections were coded to determine self-efficacy fluctuations, sources of self-efficacy beliefs, and strategies that students evolved to cope with potential fluctuations. I triangulated these data to generate a rich description of the potential ebbs and flows of self-efficacy across the composing process.

My data reveals that self-efficacy does fluctuate as students engage with a single assignment involving multiple drafts. However, the fluctuations manifested in different ways and to different degrees. Fluctuations occurred both from moment to moment during the composing process as well as within each discrete moment of the writing process. Additionally, the students reported that performance accomplishments, social persuasion, and physiological reactions played a role in determining their efficacy perceptions and, thus, in triggering fluctuations. The students drew from these sources to varying degrees, and interpreted the sources differently. These data suggest that the sources students draw from to determine their efficacy beliefs vary from study to student and that the more influential sources are most likely to trigger fluctuations. Finally, this study explores the strategies students evolved to address fluctuations. The results of this study illustrate the need for compositionists to attend to what points in the writing process fluctuations are likely to occur, what factors in the writing process might trigger those fluctuations, and what strategies students evolve to address fluctuations. To that end, these findings invite compositionists to reconsider the role of self-efficacy in the writing classroom, and subsequently alter our pedagogy to account for fluctuations in self-efficacy beliefs as our students compose.
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION: SELF-EFFICACY FLUCTUATIONS THROUGHOUT THE WRITING PROCESS

In “Some Thoughts about Feelings,” Susan McLeod reminds compositionists, “One does not have to watch freshmen at work to know that writing is an emotional as well as cognitive activity—we feel as well as think when we write” (426). She encourages teachers to develop a “theory of affect” that could account for the various emotional processes that students encounter while writing (433). One contribution to such a theory concerns self-efficacy, a mechanism by which students interpret this emotional, sensory input. Recent scholarship has devoted attention to studying the relationship between writing and students’ sense of efficacy (McCarthy, Meier, and Rinderer; McLeod; Pajares and Johnson; Pajares “Self-Efficacy Beliefs, Motivation, and Achievement”; Schunk; Shell, Murphy, and Bruning). Defined as a person's belief in his or her ability to perform at required levels of proficiency, self-efficacy plays a crucial role in understanding how students write as both a cognitive and affective activity. This project explores the nature of the role that self-efficacy plays in students' writing, particularly in regards to the intersection of specific writing tasks and potential changes in writers' levels of self-efficacy.

So far, much of the work that explores the relationship between writing and self-efficacy has focused on two aspects of this phenomenon: motivation and performance outcomes. Both areas suggest the importance of systematically investigating self-efficacy in writing. To begin, self-efficacy beliefs are often studied in relationship to writer motivation (McCarthy, Meier, and Rinderer; McLeod; Pajares and Johnson; Schunk). While not exclusively a function of self-efficacy, writers who are intrinsically motivated, or internally controlled, tend to be more self-directed, take active control of their writing, and see themselves as more capable of setting and accomplishing goals (McCarthy, Meier, and Rinderer). This relationship suggests that students’ sense of efficacy can influence—either positively or negatively—motivation. Moreover, writing studies research indicates that self-efficacy influences student choices, effort, persistence, perseverance, thought patterns, and emotional reactions when completing a writing assignment (Pajares, “Self-Efficacy Beliefs, Motivation, and Achievement”; Pajares and Johnson; Schunk). In addition to motivation, self-efficacy has also been studied alongside writing apprehension, writing anxiety, self-regulation strategies, self-concept beliefs, and achievement goals (Pajares,
“Self-Efficacy Beliefs, Motivation, and Achievement”). This research indicates that students’ confidence in their writing capabilities influences their writing motivation and can be predictive of students’ writing performance outcomes (McCarthy, Meier, and Rinderer; Pajares, “Self-Efficacy Beliefs, Motivation, and Achievement”; Pajares, Johnson, and Usher; Schunk). In fact, more so than any other construct in the cognitive-affective domain, self-efficacy beliefs correlate with how students perform in composing (McCarthy, Meier, and Rinderer; Pajares, “Self-Efficacy Beliefs, Motivation, and Achievement”; Pajares and Johnson; Schunk; Shell, Murphy, and Bruning), a correlation that emphasizes the importance of studying student writers' self-efficacy. Although other factors, including knowledge and skill, play a role in students’ performance outcomes, research demonstrates a strong relationship between writers’ self-efficacy beliefs and the quality of their written products. Ultimately, as students engage with various texts, they enter into a process wherein they must mediate and interpret the skills they possess. These interpretations, and the beliefs on which they are based, can significantly enable or hinder writers as they engage in the composing process. Therefore, students' self-efficacy beliefs are vital to their success as writers, both inside and outside of the classroom.

Although a significant amount of research explores self-efficacy as related to writing motivation and performance, little has been done to map the potential fluctuations—the ebbs and flows—of students’ self-efficacy beliefs throughout the composing process. As students progress through a writing assignment from its inception to its conclusion, they encounter challenges to their self-efficacy, such as reading the assignment sheet; prewriting, or shaping, the assignment; drafting; receiving peer or instructor feedback; revising; and assessment. These challenges suggest that self-efficacy may not be a stable phenomenon in which one student possesses or does not possess an immutable sense of self-efficacy as they proceed to begin and complete a writing project. Rather, self-efficacy very probably fluctuates as people engage with the challenges presented by a specific task. Understanding the nature of potential fluctuations is important, then, both in a theory of self-efficacy and in teaching writing. Accordingly, this study seeks to determine if, how, and when students’ self-efficacy shifts over the course of an assignment. By generating a rich description of the ebbs and flows of self-efficacy in the writing of a single assignment, this project lays the groundwork for determining what factors influence students’ perceptions of self-efficacy. Determining the potential fluctuations in students’ perceptions of self-efficacy would enable composition instructors to intervene more effectively
in the writing process to help students better achieve their goals. If we adjust our pedagogies to account for potential shifts in self-efficacy beliefs, we both support our students’ growth as writers and their self-efficacy as writers, indirectly leading to improved final products. Moreover, increasing students’ sense of efficacy would provide them with the confidence to experiment with their writing and thus continue to grow as writers even after they leave the composition classroom. Finally, in the process, we increase our understanding of the interplay of cognition and affect, enriching our theory of affect that McLeod notes is so important in teaching and writing.

This project responds to the following question: If students' sense of self-efficacy ebbs and flows over the course of a writing assignment involving multiple drafts, how, when, and from what causes do these fluctuations occur? To answer this question, I ask three subordinate questions:

1. At what point or points in the writing process do fluctuations occur?
2. What, if any, factors in the writing process trigger those fluctuations?
3. What, if any, strategies do students evolve to address fluctuations?

To establish the foundation and context for these questions and this project, I begin by defining the key terms, including self-efficacy and writing process. Then, I position this project within the scholarship on self-efficacy, indicating the contribution that this research makes to that scholarship.

**Terminology**

This study’s focus on self-efficacy works to understand if, how, when, and from what causes students’ sense of efficacy fluctuates as they engage with specific tasks over the course of a writing assignment involving multiple drafts. Because the concepts of self-efficacy and writing process inform the basis of this research, it is important to define these terms, which is the purpose of this section. I begin with self-efficacy as the foundational term and then proceed to writing process.

**Self-Efficacy**

I conceive of self-efficacy as perceived confidence in one’s ability to achieve a specific or desired outcome. This definition draws heavily from Albert Bandura’s social-cognitive theory,
which defines self-efficacy as “the conviction that one can successfully execute the behavior required to produce the [desired] outcomes” (193). Bandura’s theory of self-efficacy speaks to the capacity of humans to engage in their own development and participate as agents. Bandura asserts that what people believe significantly influences the way they think, feel, and behave (194). Additionally, Bandura’s theory acknowledges that self-efficacy beliefs are potentially modifiable. Efficacy perceptions can be deliberately changed over time and with effort (“Toward a Unifying Theory” 195-200). This assertion corresponds with writing studies research in self-efficacy that seeks to measure change in students’ self-efficacy beliefs over the course of a semester (Pajares and Johnson) or over the duration of multiple tutoring sessions (Schmidt and Alexander). Moreover, the notion that self-efficacy can be deliberately modified is consistent with research advocating that teachers and tutors attend to students’ internal constructs, such as self-efficacy, in order to help them improve as writers (McCarthy, Meier, and Rinderer; McLeod; Pajares “Self-Efficacy Beliefs, Motivation, and Achievement;” Schmidt and Alexander; Schunk). However, this research does not account for minor fluctuations in self-efficacy or the ways in which self-efficacy might fluctuate while engaging with specific writing tasks in a single assignment. To this end, I hypothesize probable fluctuations as spontaneous or ad hoc shifts in a student’s efficacy perceptions that might result in either an increase or decline in self-efficacy. Additionally, I define fluctuations not as changes in a student’s stable state, although it could encompass that, but more particularly changes in the moment-to-moment completion of a task. Left to explore are the potential fluctuations and their causes in students' writing of a single assignment.

**Writing Process**

This project uses the terms *writing process, composing process,* and *drafting process* interchangeably. The notion of writing as a process emerged in the 1970s, shifting the emphasis of teaching writing from written products to students’ writing processes (Flower and Hayes; Hairston; Murray; Perl). Most process scholars tend to agree that the writing process involves the following activities: prewriting, drafting, revising, and editing (Flower and Hayes; Hairston; Murray; Perl). In their influential work on writing, Linda Flower and John R. Hayes describe writing as comprised of three major elements: the task environment, the writer’s long-term memory, and the writing processes. The task environment includes the elements “outside the
writer’s skin,” and starts with the rhetorical problem (369). For student writers, the rhetorical problem is often a writing assignment prompt. With this rhetorical problem in mind, students attempt to solve it using cues from long-term memory to retrieve useful knowledge and reorganize and adapt that knowledge to the task at hand (371). Flower and Hayes claim writing is a three-part process of planning, translating, and reviewing (369). Planning might include invention activities, such as interpreting the assignment sheet or prewriting. Translating typically equates to drafting the assignment. Reviewing includes both evaluation and revising. While Flower and Hayes’ model does not include social processes such as peer or instructor feedback, composition scholars today generally include feedback as a necessary part of the revising process (Brammer and Rees; Hattie and Timperly; Keh; Sommers; Straub). Additionally, Flower and Hayes’ model emphasizes the meta-cognitive processes that mediate the writing process. Moreover, they argue that the writing process is recursive rather than linear; instead of moving distinctly through the stages of writing, writers constantly cycle though these stages. The organization of these writing processes varies from student to student as well as between types of writing assignments and situations. Accordingly, I conceive of a single writing assignment as a writing project that requires students to cycle through activities comprising a student's writing process, including but not limited to reading the assignment sheet; prewriting, or shaping, the assignment; drafting; receiving peer or instructor feedback; revising; and assessment. The assignment includes both the drafting materials as well as the final, written product. With these definitions in mind, I proceed to outline the relevant scholarship regarding self-efficacy both to contextualize this research project and to indicate the contribution that this research makes to the current scholarship.

**Literature Review**

This project explores the nature of the role that self-efficacy plays in students' writing, particularly in regards to the intersection of specific writing tasks and levels of self-efficacy. Therefore, it is important to contextualize the project with relevant scholarship, the goal of this section. This literature review will progress from self-efficacy as a theoretical construct to self-efficacy as applied to academic contexts, and finally, to self-efficacy as applied to writing classrooms. This research lays the groundwork for studying potential fluctuations in students’ self-efficacy perceptions. In each of these three domains—theoretical, academic, and writing—
self-efficacy is theorized as a phenomenon capable of change. In other words, self-efficacy beliefs are modifiable over time and with effort. In addition to deliberate change, self-efficacy beliefs potentially fluctuate spontaneously in the course of completing a task. While the sources of self-efficacy beliefs have been studied, little has been done to examine how these sources interact to result in a fluctuation, when fluctuations are most likely to occur, and what, if any, effects those fluctuations may have. Accordingly, this study’s goal is to determine whether student writers’ sense of efficacy ebbs and flows over the course of a single writing assignment, and if so, how, when, and from what causes do these fluctuation occur.

**Self-Efficacy**

My research primarily focuses on the intersections of self-efficacy and the writing process; therefore, self-efficacy serves as a guiding theoretical concept. In 1977, Albert Bandura posited a social-cognitive theory in which the beliefs that people have about their capabilities are critical elements in human behavior and motivation. He refers to these beliefs as self-efficacy, claiming that what people believe significantly influences the way they think, feel, and behave (Bandura, “Toward a Unifying Theory” 192). Before social-cognitive theory, psychological perspectives on how behavior is acquired, altered, and regulated suggest that behavior is shaped automatically by its effects with little conscious involvement from those responding (191-2). As research progressed, evidence of the role of cognitive processing in acquisition and regulation of behavior became more prominent (192). This new attention to the role of cognitive processes led to research involving learning via modeling, learning via response consequences, locus of control, and motivation (193). While these areas are certainly important, Bandura situates self-efficacy at the center of his social-cognitive theory, specifically for analyzing changes achieved in fearful and avoidance behavior, that is, behaviors that occur as a result of either fear of something or avoidance of something (193). His theory of self-efficacy assumes that psychological treatment or procedures have the capacity to create and strengthen expectations of personal efficacy (193). An efficacy expectation is defined as “the conviction that one can successfully execute the behavior required to produce the outcomes” (193). Bandura explains that efficacy expectations differ in magnitude, generality, and strength (194). Thus, perceived self-efficacy influences the choice of how to behave in different situations. For instance, people tend to fear and avoid threatening situations that they believe “exceed their coping skills,” but
involve themselves with activities where they “judge themselves capable of handling situations that would otherwise be intimidating” (194). In fact, because self-efficacy can influence what tasks people take up, how long they persist in those tasks, and what their emotional and physiological responses to those tasks might be, Bandura maintains that the beliefs that people hold about their capabilities are better predictors for behavior than their actual capabilities (194).

However, efficacy expectations are not stable, concrete phenomena. Instead, people derive their efficacy beliefs from a variety of factors, which, as they are interpreted, can contribute to raising or lowering their sense of efficacy. Bandura’s theory offers four major sources of information that contribute to self-efficacy perceptions: performance accomplishments, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, and physiological states (“Toward a Unifying Theory” 195). These sources do not necessarily act singularly. Although one source might be dominant, one may “draw to a lesser extent on one or more other sources of efficacy information” (195). One especially influential source is performance accomplishments, also referred to as mastery experiences. Success advances mastery experiences, while failure—particularly repeated failure—lowers them (195). Repeated success often leads to the development of strong efficacy expectations, and once efficacy is raised, the impact of occasional failure is less detrimental (195). With student writing, for example, past successes have the capacity to strengthen students’ beliefs about their writing capabilities. Moreover, during the writing process for a single assignment involving multiple drafts, students have the opportunity to achieve small successes at various stages. If accomplished, this could advance or reinforce students’ sense of efficacy. While mastery experience does play a significant role in the construction of self-efficacy beliefs, many expectations derive from vicarious experience. Many people are able to persuade themselves that “if others can do it, they should be able to achieve at least some improvement in performance” (197), thus drawing confidence from seeing the experiences of others. This aspect of self-efficacy can be important in the classroom. For instance, if students see other students with similar skill levels accomplish a task they perceive as challenging, they are often likely to view themselves as capable of success. Bandura states that vicarious experience tends to be a less dependable source of information about one’s capabilities since it relies on inferences from social comparison; yet, when combined with other sources, it can reinforce or challenge efficacy expectations (197). Additionally, verbal or social persuasion is often used to influence human behavior because of its “ease and ready availability” (198).
Through suggestion, people are led to believe that they can successfully handle a situation that has previously overwhelmed them (198). Although social persuasion certainly can affect behavior, it tends to be less effective than mastery experience (198). However, in the classroom social persuasion can influence self-efficacy, especially in terms of writing feedback. At various stages in the drafting process, students receive feedback from both their instructors and their peers that has the potential to influence self-efficacy perceptions. If an instructor praises students, they are more likely to experience an advance in efficacy perceptions than if an instructor is harsh or overly critical (McLeod 431). Finally, people derive efficacy expectations from physiological reactions, or emotional arousal. People use these physiological or emotive states as indicators of vulnerability and stress, especially in situations they perceive as threatening (Bandura, “Toward a Unifying Theory” 198). Individuals are more likely to anticipate success when they do not experience aversive arousal (198). This is especially relevant for student writers’ self-efficacy: if students experience physical discomfort or debilitating emotions while writing, they are likely to interpret that response as anxiety or fear, which may erode efficacy expectations.

My research specifically draws on Bandura’s sources of efficacy expectations in order to assess students’ self-efficacy beliefs and in order to better determine how, when, and from what causes students’ sense of efficacy may fluctuate. Over the course of a single writing assignment, these four sources of efficacy information are continually received and processed cognitively and affectively. How these factors are processed depends largely on the individual and varying contextual factors including the social, situational, and temporal circumstances in which these events occur (Bandura, “Toward a Unifying Theory” 200). However, Bandura’s explanation of these sources as applied to psychological treatment of fear or avoidance behavior implies that, by appealing to these four sources, efficacy expectations can change, thereby modifying behavior. While appealing to these sources as a way of prompting deliberate change or modification might have valuable pedagogical applications, this study is less concerned with deliberate changes and more concerned with whether self-efficacy beliefs can change moment to moment rather than change from one stable state to another. Specifically, this study asks if, how, and why fluctuations occur in the course of completing a single occurrence of the writing process. Therefore, it is especially important for this study to determine what factors are most likely to contribute to shifts in students’ efficacy perceptions and at what points those shifts might occur.
In so doing, teachers will be better equipped to help reinforce or advance their students’ sense of efficacy during these events.

**Self-Efficacy in Academic Contexts**

Recent scholarship applies Bandura’s theory of self-efficacy to academic contexts, most predominately to address two major areas: 1) the relationship between self-efficacy and college major/career choices and 2) the relationship between self-efficacy beliefs and other related psychological constructs, academic motivation, and achievement. The findings from this research indicate the vital role that self-efficacy plays in student success both inside and outside of academia.

Studies regarding the relationship between self-efficacy and college major and/or career choices tend to be especially fruitful in the areas of science and mathematics (Pajares, “Self-Efficacy Beliefs in Academic Settings” 551). For instance, researchers have reported that mathematics self-efficacy is more predictive of mathematics interest, choice of math-related courses, and math majors than past achievements in math or outcome expectations (551). This line of inquiry has been especially useful for helping undergraduate students to gain insights into their career development (551).

Those studies relating self-efficacy beliefs to other psychological constructs, academic motivation, and achievement are much more closely tied to the interests of my study. These findings suggest that self-efficacy beliefs are correlated with other self-beliefs and internal constructs, including motivation. However, Frank Pajares explains that this correlation depends on the “manner in which self-efficacy and criterial tasks are operationalized and assessed” (“Self-Efficacy Beliefs in Academic Settings” 552). In other words, this relationship is strongest when the perceptions of self-efficacy are most closely matched in temporal proximity, specificity, and correspondence with the assessed task (Bandura, “Guide to Constructing”; Pajares, “Self-Efficacy Beliefs in Academic Settings”; Pajares, “Self-Efficacy Beliefs, Motivation, and Achievement”). These three factors reinforce why studying self-efficacy throughout the duration of a single assignment could prove to be a valuable avenue of inquiry. When self-efficacy is measured as near to the outcome being assessed as possible, the strength of the relationship is increased (Pajares, “Self-Efficacy Beliefs, Motivation, and Achievement” 142). For example, a student’s reported self-efficacy right before drafting is better able to predict
motivation and anxiety than when actually drafting the assignment. Thus, examining students’ self-efficacy perceptions throughout a single assignment allows for a more accurate description of the ways in which students’ beliefs impact the composing process.

Additionally, specificity and correspondence to the assessed task not only enhances the relationship between efficacy perceptions and other internal constructs, but also increases the predictability of self-efficacy beliefs in determining academic performance (Pajares, “Self-Efficacy Beliefs in Academic Settings” 555). To apply to writing studies, if a task involves reading comprehension, students are then asked to provide self-assessments of their perceived capability to respond correctly to questions that require them to comprehend the main ideas from a reading passage (Shell, Murphy, and Bruning 93). Such a measure would likely better predict students’ actual ability in reading comprehension than tasks that are less specific or less closely related. This same principle applies to self-efficacy for writing. Students can be asked to make judgments about their capabilities to perform various skills as related to writing, and if possible, as related to the specific writing task and assessment criteria. When self-efficacy beliefs correspond with the task to which they are compared, prediction of academic performance in that domain increases (Pajares, “Self-Efficacy Beliefs in Academic Settings” 555). Similarly, there does seem to be an interface between self-efficacy and self-assessment. However, this connection is not a focus of this study. Rather, my research examines student writers’ self-efficacy beliefs as they engage in the composing process. By asking students to provide self-assessments of their perceived efficacy at several moments in the writing process, I will be able to develop a more accurate description of the relationship of the students’ self-efficacy beliefs and the specific writing task with which they are engaged.

Self-Efficacy in Writing Studies

I situate my study within the field of writing studies because I am exploring the self-efficacy beliefs of student writers as they engage in the writing process. Although self-efficacy can be applied to many other disciplines, it is a particularly salient topic for writing studies.
because of the strong relationship linking perceived efficacy to motivation and performance outcomes. Studying writers’ motivation provides valuable insights into individual writing processes, including what tasks student writers will attempt, what steps they take, how long they will persist, and what value, if any, they place on the writing task. Similarly, examining how self-efficacy affects performance outcomes situates compositionists to better understand the ways in which students’ perceptions and beliefs impact final written products. While these two aspects are studied alongside self-efficacy most prominently, they are not exhaustive of what self-efficacy has to offer writing studies. Little has been done to map the potential fluctuations—the ebbs and flows—of students’ self-efficacy beliefs throughout the composing process, especially within the course of completing a specific writing task. Mapping these possible fluctuations helps to lay the groundwork for determining what factors influence students’ perceptions of self-efficacy, and moreover, focuses more on how self-efficacy beliefs influence the writing process rather than the written product. With this knowledge, composition instructors might revise their pedagogical approaches to account for triggers that could undercut self-efficacy. Ultimately, studying self-efficacy fluctuations equips instructors to better intervene in the writing process to help students achieve their goals and grow as writers, thus indirectly leading to improved final products.

One of the factors most commonly associated with self-efficacy in writing studies is motivation (McCarthy, Meier, and Rinderer; McLeod; Pajares and Johnson; Schunk). Motivation, or one’s inner impulses or drive to reach a specific goal, is often divided into two categories: extrinsic and intrinsic (McLeod 429). Extrinsic motivators include receiving good grades, pleasing a teacher, or reaching a career goal; intrinsic motivators include ego-involvement (wanting to look smart or wanting to avoid looking stupid) and task involvement (429). Research suggests that internal factors tend to be more effective motivators for student writers than external factors because in task-involvement students perceive the task as inherently valuable, often experiencing a kind of “flow” (429). For instance, if students are intrinsically motivated, they are most likely driven to complete successfully an assigned writing task because they see the assignment as either inherently valuable or an opportunity to showcase their intelligence. However, even if students are internally motivated, they may still experience negative emotional states, causing them to feel anxious or frustrated. Because physiological reactions and emotional arousal are sources of self-efficacy beliefs, students often interpret this
sensory input as part of their beliefs about their skills as writers (429). McLeod encourages instructors to teach students to “monitor their emotional states as they compose” so that students can understand their anxiety or agitation as enabling rather than debilitating (433). Students' emotional reactions to writing can often be indicators of future success or failure: "When students experience negative thoughts and fears about their capabilities, those affective reactions can lower self-efficacy perceptions and trigger additional stress and agitation that help ensure the inadequate performance feared" (Pajares, Johnson, and Usher 107). For instance, if student writers experience anxiety while composing, they are likely to interpret that arousal negatively, perhaps believing that they are less capable of completing the assignment. In contrast, when students feel positive emotions regarding an anticipated task, they are likely to have stronger self-efficacy beliefs. If student writers are excited and energized while composing, they are likely to interpret those emotions as indicators of success. However, too much self-efficacy can just as easily become a problem in the writing classroom. Dale H. Schunk reminds us that overly high self-efficacy can be just as debilitating: “Assuming that learners feel efficacious about surmounting problems, holding some doubt about whether one will succeed can mobilize effort and lead to better use of strategies than will feeling overly confident” (162). Instead, it is important to find the right balance of self-efficacy to enable student writers to succeed and help them to persist through challenges presented by the writing task. A goal of this study is to determine what strategies students develop to cope with potential fluctuations. With this knowledge, composition instructors might help students to build upon those strategies by monitoring their emotions and interpreting them in productive, rather than debilitating, ways.

Motivation has also been discussed in terms of locus of control, which refers to whether people view their behaviors and outcomes as controlled by themselves or as controlled by external agents such as fate, luck, or other people (McCarthy, Meier, and Rinderer; McLeod). Writers who are intrinsically motivated tend to be more self-directed, take active control of their writing, and see themselves as more capable of setting and accomplishing goals (McCarthy, Meier, and Rinderer 467). For instance, an intrinsically motivated student is more likely to believe he or she is capable of receiving a good grade on a paper, and moreover, is more likely to engage in the behaviors necessary to achieve that grade, such as conferencing with an instructor. Thus, it is theorized that writers with high self-efficacy tend to be more internally controlled, and perhaps behave differently as writers when composing than writers with weak self-efficacy
Furthermore, even if a student writer fails at a given task, internally controlled writers see the situation as remediable; in other words, he or she perceives failure as within their control to change. If they take the appropriate actions and make necessary changes, they can be successful the next time they perform in that situation. For example, if internally motivated students receive a failing grade on a writing assignment, they are unlikely to blame outside forces—such as fate or luck—rather their own work ethic. For the next assignment, they might seek tutoring, work harder, procrastinate less, and so forth. Externally controlled writers, on the other hand, do not see either failure or success as something within their capability to change. If they succeed, it is not because of their own effort or skill—and thereby would have little influence on their self-efficacy beliefs—and if they fail, they have no incentive to take measures to improve, as they see their failure as the fault of an external evaluator. Thus, for instance, if a student writer receives an unsatisfactory grade on an assignment, he or she might blame the grade on a personality conflict with the instructor rather than modify behaviors to improve a grade. In this manner, external factors can potentially act as triggers for self-fluctuations. Additionally, writing studies research indicates that self-efficacy influences student choices, effort, persistence, perseverance, thought patterns, and emotional reactions when completing a writing assignment (Pajares, “Self-Efficacy Beliefs, Motivation, and Achievement”; Pajares and Johnson; Schunk). For instance, students with high self-efficacy are more likely to attempt and persist in unfamiliar writing tasks (McCarthy, Meier, and Rinderer; Schunk). In sum, students’ self-efficacy, or confidence in their writing capabilities, influences their motivation to write and to persevere in challenging writing tasks.

Additionally, self-efficacy has often been linked to students’ writing performance outcomes. Performance outcomes refer to the specific knowledge, behaviors, and skills students are expected to learn and demonstrate when accomplishing a task. Often, performance outcomes can refer to the grade students earn on a writing assignment, but might also include the ability to accurately interpret the assignment sheet or to incorporate academic sources into a research paper. More so than any other element within the cognitive-affective domain, self-efficacy beliefs have proven to be predictive of performance outcomes in writing (McCarthy, Meier, and Rinderer; Pajares, “Self-Efficacy Beliefs, Motivation, and Achievement”; Pajares and Johnson; Schunk; Shell, Murphy, and Bruning). Research that explores the relationship between academic capabilities, specifically writing capabilities, and performance outcomes generally agrees that the
variables are related (Pajares and Johnson). In a study involving student attitudes and writing transfer, Dana Lynn Driscoll explains, “Students’ own beliefs about themselves and their writing impacted how they performed as writers.” More so than any other internal construct, students’ self-efficacy perceptions are better able to predict students’ actual performance outcomes. Students who report higher self-efficacy for a given writing task, such as accurately interpreting the assignment sheet, are likely able to do just that.

In order to assess the relationship between students’ beliefs and their writing performance, several studies have constructed an instrument to measure students’ self-efficacy (McCarthy, Meier, and Rinderer; Shell, Murphy, and Bruning; and Pajares and Johnson). The results of these self-efficacy scales are then compared to student writing samples. Most of the early studies relating self-efficacy to performance outcomes using these scales were conducted on college undergraduates (McCarthy, Meier, and Rinderer; Shell, Murphy, and Bruning). For these researchers, writing performance typically refers to holistically scored essays provided by English teachers or trained researchers (Pajares, “Self-Efficacy Beliefs, Motivation, and Achievement” 144). Additionally, this research correlates self-efficacy beliefs with other variables such as writing anxiety, grade goals, depth of processing, and expected outcomes. Consistently, these other variables were typically not statistically significant predictors of writing performance when including self-efficacy (Pajares, “Self-Efficacy Beliefs, Motivation, and Achievement” 148). In sum, self-efficacy beliefs are so strongly correlated to writing performance that other variables, when included, do not appear to be significant. Recent findings confirm the close, predictive relationship between self-efficacy and performance outcomes, but the scales are designed to test the statistical significance of this relationship on larger populations. This research neither explains how or why students’ self-efficacy influences performance outcomes, nor does it explore whether those beliefs fluctuate or change. I intend to devote attention to the individual cognitive-affective processes that students mediate as they draft a writing assignment, paying specific attention to whether students’ self-efficacy beliefs ebb and flow, and if so, how, when, and from what causes do these fluctuations occur.

Additionally, current research suggests a link between student dispositions—such as persistence, self-efficacy, and metacognition—and writing transfer. The attitudes that students bring with them about themselves and writing play an active role in their ability to “learn and effectively use prior writing knowledge in disciplinary courses” (Driscoll). In particular,
students’ beliefs about first-year composition correlate with their ability to transfer knowledge from the writing classroom to other contexts (Driscoll). Although students may have been taught writing processes and skills that would assist them while composing, often they are unable to draw upon that knowledge, instead perceiving each new writing task as completely unfamiliar (Driscoll). Of particular interest is that Driscoll’s study revealed that students’ beliefs about the transferability of the material learned in the writing classroom decrease over time. Students’ attitudes and beliefs have a strong impact on what students learn, what value they place on what they learn, and how they subsequently use what they learn. Driscoll’s findings not only implicate the potential for fluctuations in self-efficacy, but also the importance of studying student dispositions about writing. Driscoll and Jennifer Wells define student dispositions as “individual, internal qualities” or “habits of mind,” such as persistence, self-efficacy, and metacognition.” They explain the role of student dispositions in writing transfer, stating that individual dispositions, processes, and contexts are essential to understanding transfer (Driscoll and Wells). Dispositions, they claim, “are not knowledge, skills, or abilities—their qualities that determine how learners use and adapt their knowledge” (Driscoll and Wells). In their study, Driscoll and Wells found four specific dispositions that either enabled or hindered their participants from successfully transferring knowledge: value, self-efficacy, attribution, and self-regulation. Self-efficacy, specifically, “explains the relationship between students’ beliefs about their capabilities and the likelihood they will take the steps needed to achieve their goals” (Driscoll and Wells). In other words, students must hold generative beliefs about their ability to accomplish their goals in order to do the work that transfer requires. These beliefs can manifest in different ways depending on the student. For instance, some student writers with higher self-efficacy are more likely to persist in unfamiliar writing situations, even if they experience writing anxiety. A student could believe they are capable of accomplishing their writing goal, but simply need to reach out for assistance or more information (Driscoll and Wells).

The assertion that students must believe that they are capable of accomplishing their goals in order to engage in the work or behaviors required is affirmed by James D. Williams and Seiji Takaku in their study, “Help Seeking, Self-Efficacy, and Writing.” They recognize help seeking as a component of self-efficacy, noting that various studies have reported correlations between the two. Generally, students with higher self-efficacy are more likely to seek help, while students with lower self-efficacy are more reluctant to seek help (2). However, these
generalizations have exceptions, namely that some high self-efficacy students may still avoid help seeking behaviors and some students may over-estimate their sense of efficacy (2). Additionally, contrary to earlier research, Williams and Takaku’s study indicated that ESL students who reported lower self-efficacy actually sought help from the writing center (12). Writing anxiety or a sense of low self-efficacy, particularly in new or unfamiliar writing situations can result in help-seeking behavior. Accordingly, because my study traces self-efficacy perceptions over the course of a single assignment, it accounts for these moments of anxiety that could, potentially, trigger an efficacy fluctuation. Moreover, the nature of my study also enables us to see at which point or points in the writing process students are most likely to experience a challenge to their sense of efficacy and whether they seek assistance during these points. Ultimately, this research suggests that students’ dispositions, such as self-efficacy, can have a profound effect on their ability to access, adapt, and employ the knowledge and skills they learn in the writing classroom. If these dispositions fluctuate over the course of a single assignment, and we can determine how, when, and from what causes, we are better equipped to facilitate learning and writing transfer.

Conclusion

As the scholarship on self-efficacy indicates, students’ internal constructs, such as self-efficacy, play a significant role in the composing process and in determining the quality of the final written product. Furthermore, this research suggests that self-efficacy beliefs are modifiable over time and with effort, thus framing the need to study potential fluctuations in students’ self-efficacy perceptions. If compositionists theorize self-efficacy as a phenomenon not only capable of change, but also capable of ad hoc fluctuations, we both increase our understanding of the interplay of cognition and affect, and are better positioned to help support our students development as writers and their self-efficacy as writers. By generating a rich description of the potential ebbs and flows of self-efficacy in the writing of a single assignment, this project lays the groundwork for determining what factors influence students’ perceptions of self-efficacy and what effects such fluctuations may have on student writers.

In the following chapter, I discuss my methodology for determining whether student writers’ sense of efficacy fluctuations over the course of a single writing assignment, and if so, how, when, and from what causes do these fluctuation occur. I explain my case study selection,
and design, as well as data collection and analysis.
CHAPTER 2

METHODOLOGY: INVESTIGATING SELF-EFFICACY AND POTENTIAL FLUCTUATIONS

One difficulty of studying self-efficacy is determining an appropriate methodology. Because of the nature of self-efficacy, research in this area tends to rely on self-reported data, that is, students’ perceptions rather than some external measure. However, Dana Lynn Driscoll emphasizes the relevance and importance of data for better understanding the ways in which students’ internal constructs affect their writing: “A commonly held assumption is that self-reported data can be inaccurate, flawed, or misleading. However, self-reported data remains a necessary method of collection for studies focusing on attitudes or beliefs--the focus of this study.” Like Driscoll’s, my study relies on students’ self-reported data to examine potential fluctuations in self-efficacy beliefs. Because of the limitations of these kinds of data, this chapter seeks to illuminate the methodology of my study, including why I have chosen case studies, how I selected the subjects of my study, and how I collected and analyzed the data. Despite the inherent limitations, such methods are vital to enriching our understanding of affect-related phenomena, particularly as those phenomena pertain to the writing process.

Case Study Methodology: Rationale

To examine potential fluctuations in students’ sense of self-efficacy over the course of a writing assignment involving multiple drafts, this study employs case studies as its primary methodology. According to Robert K. Yin, a case study’s definition is twofold, the first part having to do with the scope of a case study and the second with the features of a case study (16-17). First, a case study is an empirical inquiry that examines a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within a specific context, especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and the context are not distinct (16). Second, case studies are characterized by multiple sources of data, many nuanced variables to consider, and, often, a guiding theoretical proposition (17). The choice of case study as my methodology is based upon the nature of the questions I ask. Case studies are a particularly appropriate methodology for research projects that ask “how” or “why” questions which require an extensive, in depth description of some social phenomenon in which the researchers has “little or no control” (14). In other words, I am studying how the
phenomenon unfolds over time by observing it rather than actively participating in it. The overarching question of my research, “if students' sense of self-efficacy ebbs and flows over the course of a writing assignment involving multiple drafts, how, when, and from what causes do these fluctuations occur?” positions case study as the appropriate methodology because the research focus is on how and why questions, which "lead to the use of a case study…because such questions deal with operational links needing to be traced over time, rather than mere frequencies or incidence” (10). The goal of this research is not to test a hypothesis; instead, I am working to provide a rich description of how the chosen phenomenon works within its context (19). Because students’ self-efficacy beliefs are influenced by multiple sources—both internal and external—I argue that the context cannot be separated from the phenomenon.

To best address my research questions, I opted to use a multiple-case design to try to understand individual enactments of self-efficacy. This design allows me to “cover multiple cases and then draw a single set of ‘cross-case’ conclusions” (Yin 18). Because I identify my “case” as an individual student, and I have two participants for my study, by definition my study does not follow the design of a single-case approach (53). Multiple-case studies emphasize the importance of selecting cases, particularly when the case is rare, unique, or revelatory (56). In multiple-case designs, each case must be carefully chosen in order to either predict similar results (literal replications) or to predict contrasting results that can be anticipated (theoretical replications) (57). However, since my two participants are “representative or typical” cases, such attention to replicability is less relevant for my study (53). Rather, I decided to study multiple cases in order to better illuminate the potential ebbs and flows in individual student enactments of self-efficacy. Across the two individual cases, I predicted similar results: regardless of their self-efficacy levels, I expected both students to experience fluctuations as they engaged with the cycles of drafting. Although multiple-case studies require extensive time and resources, such a study typically generates more compelling, robust data than a single-case study. Additionally, multiple-case studies can more easily lead to generalizable conclusions regarding students’ sense of self-efficacy over the course of a writing assignment, although I am aware that with case studies, generalizability is limited to the parameters of the study.

In the section that follows, I seek to position case studies as a valuable methodology within the field of composition studies that, as of yet, has been underutilized for self-efficacy research. To that end, I make two moves. First, I present research in composition studies that
employ case studies as their primary methodology, particularly as a means of exploring the writing process. Second, I explain the typical methodological approaches to studying self-efficacy and their limitations. In so doing, I argue that case studies provide a more detailed description of the potential ebbs and flows of self-efficacy over the course of a writing assignment.

Within the field of composition studies, case study has been a viable approach to qualitative research. In 1986, Stephen North published “Writing in a Philosophy Class: Three Case Studies” wherein he interrogates the relationship between writing and learning in a college-level writing-across-the-curriculum class in Philosophy (225). He notes that an alternative purpose for the study is to “explore the uses of a hermeneutical method for studying student writing” (225). North’s research remains relevant to composition studies because it opened the door to research that interprets the writing of individual students as meaningful, communicative discourse (226). Moreover, he allows for such a study to be based on a process model in which investigators have little to no say in where or when the participants write; rather, an emphasis is placed on what the students write and not how they write (227). Additionally, case studies have most often been used to study literacy and the writing process. As seen in Christina Ortmeier-Hooper’s case study, “English May Be My Second Language, but I’m Not ‘ESL,’” case study is a useful methodological approach when studying the ways in which self-beliefs and expectations influence student writers. She presents three case studies of immigrant, first-year students as they negotiate their identities as second language writers in the writing classroom. Ortmeier-Hooper encourages us to not “retreat from writing opportunities that encourage all students to reflect upon their literacy experiences, their cultural and linguistic legacies” (410). Such case studies implore us to rethink how we might inadvertently categorize students and to be better aware of the unique needs of student writers. Accordingly, by conducting a case study, my research invites a critical response to essentializing writers’ efficacy beliefs; instead, it addresses the dynamic ways in which self-beliefs and expectations can influence student writers. Finally, case study is also a viable methodological choice for research that studies the writing process. For instance, Terry Mischel’s “A Case Study of a Twelfth-Grade Writer,” looks closely at one student writer in order to “gain some insight into the act of writing itself” (303). Mischel studies Clarence, a student writer who has negative feelings towards writing and English classes. Mischel notes that these negative feelings influence Clarence’s writing process—often resulting
in skipping planning, rushing drafts, and avoiding revision (312-3). Moreover, these negative feelings are “as much a result of his school experiences as his own assessment of the importance of writing” (312). This study demonstrates the ways in which underlying internal constructs can affect a students’ writing process, and therefore, positions case studies as a particularly salient methodology for researching the relationship between internal constructs and the writing process. Each of these uses of case studies highlights the utility of this methodology for studying potential fluctuations in self-efficacy in the writing process.

Although case studies have proven to be a valuable methodology for writing studies research, little qualitative research has been applied to student writers’ self-efficacy. As of yet, research into students’ sense of efficacy has relied heavily on quantitative data derived from self-efficacy scales. Several of these scales (McCarthy, Meier, and Rinderer; Pajares, “Self-Efficacy Beliefs, Motivation, and Achievement”; Shell, Murphy, and Bruning) “focus on mastery experience through a demonstration of skills and/or a self perception of skills” (Schmidt and Alexander). Others are designed to target social persuasion or to trigger more negative emotions (Schmidt and Alexander). However, these scales tend to focus more on short-term or one-time evaluations and tend to be linked to writing products rather than the process (Schmidt and Alexander). While valuable to our understanding of students’ self-efficacy perceptions as related to writing performance, the data generated from self-efficacy scales do not provide a detailed description of the potential ebbs and flows over the course of a writing assignment; nor do they provide insight into the possible reasons for those flows. I use case studies not to determine a cause and effect relationship between self-efficacy and written products or to test the validity of an assessment measure, but rather to explain, describe, and illustrate if, how, when, and from what causes self-efficacy fluctuations occur. Therefore, to answer my research questions, I used interviews, questionnaires, and discourse analysis in order to study the nature of the role self-efficacy plays in students’ writing as they engage in a single writing assignment requiring multiple drafts.

**Case Study Methodology: Application**

In the section that follows, I explain the details of my study, including the site, the participants, and the specific writing assignment. First, I describe the site of study and provide a rationale for selecting a first-year composition course. Second, I detail the specific nature of this
section of the course. Finally, I introduce the subjects of my case study and the particular writing assignment they were working to complete.

Site and Participants

The site of study for this research is a section of ENC 1101: Freshman Composition and Rhetoric at a large, public research intensive university in the Southeast. This course is designed with the major purpose of helping students grow as writers and critical thinkers. The major text for the course is the students' own writing. Students write either four papers taken through a series of drafts, or in some sections, they write three papers and complete a multi-media project, for a total of 7,000 words of polished writing by the end of the semester. Students receive frequent written and oral feedback to their writing from both their teacher and peers and spend class time discussing readings from the common text, Wendy Bishop's *On Writing*, working on invention exercises, workshopping each other’s writing, and working on in-class writing exercises. Teachers meet with students twice each semester in individual conferences. Regular class attendance and participation is required in this class in which students are active participants and learners. The goals of ENC 1101 follow those of the Writing Program Administrators for first-year composition courses and are divided into the following five categories: rhetorical knowledge; critical thinking, reading, and writing; processes; knowledge of conventions; and composing in electronic environments. This course, primarily taught by graduate teaching assistants in the English department, is typically capped at 25 students.

ENC 1101 is a particularly valuable choice as a site for self-efficacy research for two reasons: 1) the type of assignments produced for this class invite a process approach to writing and 2) the students enrolled in ENC 1101 are at a critical and vulnerable stage in their college careers. To address the first reason, ENC 1101 operates as a foundational course wherein the assignments are specifically structured to take students through multiple stages of drafting (see Appendix A). Consequently, the assignments tend to provide more scaffolding by requiring students to conference with their instructors, participate in peer workshops, and submit multiple drafts than those typical of upper-level courses in which students are expected to have already internalized this knowledge and developed their own strategies and processes when writing.

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2 Information about ENC 1101: Freshman Composition and Rhetoric was obtained from the course descriptions found on Florida State University’s English Department website.
According to Florida State University’s *First Year Composition Teachers’ Guide*, ENC 1101 equips and develops the tools necessary to tackle writing projects both in English classes and throughout students' literate lives. In other words, ENC 1101 helps students to navigate the drafting process and investigate their own strategies as writers (Florida State University). Attention to the writing process allows me to collect data at key points throughout the assignment to determine if and when potential fluctuations occur. In a course that emphasizes the writing process and scaffolds assignments to make that process apparent, mapping the potential ebbs and flows of self-efficacy onto particular points of the writing process will be more apparent. Too, students might be both more aware of and more vulnerable to potential fluctuations in their efficacy perceptions as they engage with the composing process, thus emphasizing the need to study potential fluctuations.

Additionally, ENC 1101 students are at a critical and vulnerable stage in their college careers. Students enter college composition with varying perceptions about their capabilities as writers. For instance, Nancy Sommers and Laura Salz identify two roles that students assume: “novice” and “expert.” While not explicitly connected to self-efficacy, Sommers and Salz’s research suggest students’ beliefs about themselves as writers affect their development as writers. Additionally, since ENC 1101 is often taken during students’ first semester of college, many of the students enrolled in this course are inexperienced with college-level writing and thus their perceptions of self-efficacy are particularly vulnerable: “The fact of the matter is that for most if not all, students, familiar ways of reading, writing and thinking are challenged to some degree as they first encounter the particular academic reading, writing, and thinking practices of college classrooms” (Kill 216). Students enrolled in the course are likely to rely primarily on previous writing experiences in high school or other non-academic contexts to determine their beliefs, which they are not always able to access and use for college-level writing (Reiff and Bawarshi 324). Because of their relative inexperience, these students enrolled in ENC 1101 are more likely to be overwhelmed or discouraged if the information is too vast, if they do not feel as though they are receiving adequate guidance, or if they do not feel as though they have the necessary skills to meet the professor’s expectations. Thus, ENC 1101 is a critical course for developing and establishing students’ self-efficacy perceptions. Attending to students’ sense of efficacy can be crucial both to their success in ENC 1101 and their future academic career.
The site of this study also involves a single section of ENC 1101. I chose one particular section of ENC 1101 based on two criteria. I wanted an experienced teacher, i.e., someone who has taught at FSU at least once previously, and I preferred a graduate teaching assistant from the Rhetoric and Composition program. An experienced teacher likely has a better sense of how to structure his or her classes in order to help ensure that students reach the course’s intended outcomes. This means that an experienced teacher has clearly established not only what he or she is teaching but also how to teach it. Such experience and expertise reduce the likelihood that fluctuations in students’ perceptions of self-efficacy result from teacher incompetence or poorly designed syllabi. Additionally, I preferred a section of ENC 1101 taught by someone in the Rhetoric and Composition program. Sections taught by graduate teaching assistants in Rhetoric and Composition are typically based on composition theory. Teaching assistants in the Rhetoric and Composition program gain pedagogical training both through their coursework within the discipline and, often, through the community of the program. Therefore, they are likely to emphasize the drafting and revising process, focus on rhetorical and critical thinking outcomes in addition to skill-based writing outcomes, and provide feedback to student work that is both praising and constructive. There was only one section of ENC 1101 that met these criteria in the fall semester.

The section of ENC 1101 that I selected was taught by a graduate teaching assistant at Florida State University who was finishing his master's degree concentrating on Rhetoric and Composition. His section of the course focused on community and was titled, “Investigating Communities: How We See Ourselves and Others” (see Appendix A). The course goals included helping students to grow as writers and as critical thinkers by encouraging them to investigate and to write about communities that have played a role in shaping them as individuals. In addition to looking closely at themselves, students were invited to take a close look at others within the communities around them and study larger communities they currently participate in or hope to join. The course aimed to help students improve their writing and communication skills in all areas: discovering what they have to say, organizing their thoughts for a variety of audiences, and improving fluency and rhetorical sophistication. Students wrote and revised three major papers, gave an oral presentation, wrote sustained exploratory journals (both in and out of class), and worked directly with an audience of their peers to practice critical reading and response. This specific section encouraged students to reflect and consider the communities they
have been a part of and communities they wish to join. Such a focus might invite students to consider their self-efficacy perceptions both in their ability to compose the assignment successfully, but also in their ability to join their desired communities.

My research studies two students enrolled in the aforementioned section of ENC 1101. Using students from the same course working on the same assignment facilitates detecting patterns across the cases. At Florida State University, the great majority of ENC 1101 students are 17-19 years old, and they often enter college immediately after high school. Most of these students are from middle and upper-middle class backgrounds. The participants in my case study were self-selected and fit into this general demographic. The two students who volunteered for the study were both 18 years old. They both identified as white, native English speakers, and had lived in Florida their entire lives. One student, Davy, was male; the other, Erica, was female. In the following sections, I introduce my case study subjects, including their prior writing experiences, their attitude to taking ENC 1101, and other demographic data.

Davy enrolled in Florida State University right after high school. He was born in St. Petersburg, Florida, but moved to Clearwater at the age of five. Before coming to Florida State, Davy said in his initial interview that he had never lived outside of Pinellas County. He attended public schools, and enjoyed math—especially trigonometry and accounting—and the social sciences. He intended to major in finance with a minor in economics, and hoped to potentially get his master’s degree in finance. With these degrees, he wanted to become a financial analyst for a firm like JP Morgan or Merrill Lynch. With these interests, it is not particularly surprising that English was not one of Davy’s favorite subjects. However, he noted that now that he is taking more interesting classes, he is starting to like it more. He did not usually write outside of academia, but said that he sometimes gets ideas for screenplays because of his high school background in theater. One aspect of writing that continued to crop up for Davy was that of “standardized” writing. For Davy, standardized writing referred both to the writing that students produce for standardized tests, such as the SAT, and writing prompts that do not allow for personalization or creativity. He often referred to his dislike of “cookie-cutter” writing assignments that prompt the same type of responses. He valued uniqueness and creativity in his writing, and explained that he “prefer[s] things that are more unique and something that pops on

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3 This information gleaned from the College Composition Program Director, Dr. Deborah Coxwell-Teague, at Florida State University.
4 Davy and Erica are pseudonyms to keep the identities of the participants confidential.
the paper rather than something that’s just there.” Davy said that he would generally describe his confidence level when writing as “above average,” but that his emotional states varied. When writing came easily, he experienced excitement and enjoyment, but, when he encountered writer’s block, he overthought and started to worry. Davy explained that he likes ENC 1101 more than he thought he would. He looked forward to each assignment and valued the skills that he learned, like interviewing and drafting. Davy was most proud of his writing when he was able to write personally and creatively.

Like Davy, Erica enrolled in Florida State University right after high school. She was born in Tampa, Florida, where she attended public schools. As she shared in her initial interview, Erica enjoyed science and math courses and was interested in becoming an environmental chemical engineer. She hoped to work for an energy plant to prevent large-scale disasters, such as oil spills. Erica explained that she rarely writes outside of school because she “never found a love for writing.” She took AP courses in high school, but noted that they did not adequately prepare her for college writing, and that she had to “start from scratch” to teach herself how to write at this level. Erica often explained that she does not like personal writing, that is, any writing that she perceived as involving her personal views or feelings. She cited fiction as a genre of writing that she enjoyed and felt that she did well, but not poetry. She also disliked research papers, though, because they were not creative enough. Erica was most invested in her writing when she was able to choose a topic that she cared about, but that did not involve her talking about herself. For instance, she mentioned writing about softball because she liked it and used to play the sport, but she would not want to write about her experiences playing softball. When she did write, Erica typically had low confidence levels. She frequently assumed that she would receive at least a grade lower on papers than she actually did, and avoided commas like the plague. However, as she progressed through assignments, she slowly started to feel more confident. Although she did not like showing her writing to other people, she saw this feedback as important to gaining confidence.

Now that I have described the course and the subjects of my study, I will discuss the specific writing assignment that the students composed and my rationale for choosing it. Although the selected section of ENC 1101 offered multiple assignments over the course of the semester that I could have used for my study, I chose the third major writing assignment, “Feature Article: How We See Ourselves within a Community” (see Appendix B). This
assignment asked students to examine a larger community of which they are either already members or which they would like to join. For this assignment, students were invited to compose individual papers in the style of a college magazine article. Additionally, students needed to collaborate with a group of their peers not only to inform their individual compositions, but also to design a website that would host each of the group member’s projects. Furthermore, this assignment was taken through the cycles of drafting, including three major drafts, peer review, and individual conferences with the instructor. My decision to focus on this assignment stemmed from two reasons. First, since this was the third major assignment of the course, the students were likely to have acclimated to college-level writing. Therefore, potential fluctuations in self-efficacy are unlikely to be as a result of the adjusting to college writing from what they were taught in high school courses. Second, the particular genres students were asked to compose in could present challenges to students’ efficacy beliefs. Even if a student writer is typically confident in his or her ability to write an argumentative paper, for example, writing a college magazine article might disrupt or reinforce that confidence. Across the span of this writing assignment, I collected data from the participants at several key moments throughout their drafting process in order to generate a rich description of the ebbs and flows of self-efficacy as students work on a single assignment.

Data Collection

To collect data, I used interviews, questionnaires, and discourse analysis as my primary methods. Interviews are particularly valuable source of data for case studies (Yin 106). In case study interviews, Yin emphasizes the necessity of “conversational,” rather than “structured queries,” which allows for more open-ended and fluid lines of inquiry (106). Additionally, this protocol encourages researchers to attend to the comfort level of the participants while interviewing. Follow up questions should be unbiased and non threatening. For example, posing a “how” question is less likely to create stress and anxiety than a “why” question (106). I interviewed each of the participants face to face twice—once before they reviewed the assignment and again after they submitted the assignment to be graded—in order to create a narrative arc of their sense of self-efficacy throughout the assignment. My interviews best fit the description of a focused interview, in which the interviews are conversational and relatively open-ended, but follow a certain set of questions (107). Each interview had predetermined
questions (see Appendix C) that focused specifically on establishing writing self-efficacy beliefs and detailing the students’ unique writing processes. Additionally, the interview questions drew on Bandura’s four major sources of efficacy: performance accomplishments, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, and physiological states. To maintain a conversational and unbiased tone, my interview questions did not use these terms explicitly. Instead, I asked questions related to these sources to see what sources, if any, the students draw from to form their efficacy beliefs and to what extent they rely on those sources. For instance, to address verbal persuasion, I asked the students, “What kind of feedback, if any, do you normally receive on your writing?” I followed up by asking, “Who normally provides this feedback?” and “How important is this feedback to you?” In this way, I attended to potential sources of efficacy beliefs without leading questions or using terminology unfamiliar to my participants (see Appendix C).

The second interview also asked students to comment on, explicate, or extend their responses from the project questionnaires in an informal cued reflection. More so than follow up questions, which prompt an interviewee to further a response, cued reflections offer an opportunity for the subjects to clarify their numeric and written responses, and to consider those responses within the larger context of the project. I asked the students to clarify unclear phrases from their qualitative responses, but I also asked them to comment on patterns I observed across the questionnaires. For example, I asked Davy to comment on why his qualitative response to the statement, “I can successfully complete the assignment in the time allotted,” was a 6 in his self-selected moment, while composing the second draft, despite his otherwise low self-efficacy, and then why his response to that same question dramatically lowered in the fourth questionnaire, before revising the second draft. Both interviews were conducted individually in the Williams Digital Studio and were audio recorded and then transcribed for analysis. Because interviews are often limited by “bias, poor recall, and poor or inaccurate articulation,” Yin recommends corroborating interview data with other methods (106), which I discuss in the following paragraph.

Since this research seeks to study students’ sense of self-efficacy over the course of a writing assignment involving multiple drafts, these interviews were supplemented by self-assessment questionnaires that were completed by students at four designated moments chosen by the researcher and two spontaneous moments chosen by the subjects. In order to determine which moments to request responses to the questionnaires, I isolated four critical thresholds: 1)
after reviewing the assignment, 2) before revising the rough draft, 3) after participating in a peer workshop, and 4) before revising the second draft. I derived the idea of thresholds from ecology and combined it with composition research on writing process. An ecological threshold is the point at which an ecosystem experiences a sudden change in quality, property, or phenomenon, or the point at which a seemingly small change can have a rapid, larger effect on an ecosystem (Groffman et al. 1). The concept of thresholds arose in the 1970s based on the idea that ecosystems have multiple states of stability that are dependent upon environmental conditions. Ecosystems were thought to exist within “valleys of stability” where the depth of the valley represents the “resistance” of the system to potential disturbance and the steepness of the valley sides represents the “resilience” of the system, meaning the speed at which it would return to its stable state (1). However, if an ecosystem is disturbed too much, “the system can be pushed over the hill (threshold), into another valley or state” (1). Although some ecological disturbances are human-caused, often, disturbances are a natural part of an ecosystem. When a disturbance occurs, the system will attempt to re-stabilize. However, this is a delicate process: some disturbances are irreversible and too much human interference to help a system re-stabilize can reduce resilience by eliminating mechanisms that enable adaptation to outside change (4). In other words, disturbance can beget resilience, but only if properly proportioned and managed.

In order to determine the amount of disturbance a system can bear, ecologists have applied the concept of critical loads, or critical thresholds, to the study of ecological thresholds. Critical thresholds are the “determination of the quantity of pollutant inputs that an ecosystem can safely assimilate before there is a change in ecosystem state and/or in a particular ecosystem function” (Groffman et al. 4). In this context, critical thresholds are used to develop strategies to control pollution; however, they need not all result in irreversible or devastating change. Instead, critical thresholds can be thought of as trigger points: when change occurs in a system to a certain degree, it acts as a trigger that initiates threshold occurrence by provoking a switch in feedbacks (Briske and Smeins; Fuhlendorf). Feedbacks are negative when they reinforce the resilience of a stable state and positive when they degrade resilience (Briske and Smeins; Fuhlendorf). The concept of thresholds seems particularly well suited for studying potential fluctuations in self-efficacy. Thresholds can be theorized as points marked by shifts—either positive or negative—in self-efficacy beliefs, which underscores the importance of feedback in the system. It is possible that students’ perceptions of self-efficacy fluctuate between multiple
states of stability. Students may perceive themselves as more confident in their ability to complete a certain task than others, but this does not necessarily result in an overall self-efficacy shift in their perceptions of themselves as students or as writers. However, throughout the drafting process, students encounter various challenges that have the potential to disrupt these stable states. For instance, receiving teacher feedback on a draft could be a significant enough disturbance to trigger a threshold occurrence. Depending on the students’ resistance and resilience, a student might not be able to return to their previous self-efficacy state. Such an occurrence can be either good or bad; a disturbance might raise a student’s self-efficacy as well as lower it. Critical thresholds act as a kind of range to determine at which points and in what quantity a disturbance is likely to trigger a threshold occurrence, thus assisting in the determination of key points at which self-efficacy might be most productively tracked in terms of potential fluctuations.

Based on the concept of critical thresholds, I hypothesized that the following moments in the composing process may trigger a fluctuation in students’ sense of efficacy: 1) after reviewing the assignment, 2) before revising the rough draft, 3) after participating in a peer workshop, and 4) before revising the second draft. These four moments potentially act as threshold triggers because, for many students, these parts of the composing process can be overwhelming. For instance, when students first receive the assignment sheet, they might immediately begin to articulate their sense of efficacy for the assignment. If it seems familiar to them or relatively straightforward, they may experience a positive shift in self-efficacy. However, if the assignment seems difficult, daunting, or confusing, the student may experience a negative shift in self-efficacy. Linda Flower and John R. Hayes’ model of the writing process suggests that students rely on long-term memory to solve rhetorical problems, such as writing assignments. Likewise, Melanie Kill explains that students respond not only to teachers’ delineation of the rhetorical situation, but also to “long, intertextual, and intergeneric memories” (220). Thus, students interpret new assignments based on their previous experiences—a moment of applying one of Bandura’s sources of efficacy perceptions: performance accomplishments. Additionally, Mary Jo Reiff and Anis Bawarshi note that prior genre experience can inform students’ confidence levels as they “negotiate between the resources of their previous writing experiences and the expectations of new academic contexts” (313). Accordingly, students’ perception of their capabilities to complete successfully a new writing task could trigger a fluctuation in efficacy.
perceptions. Moreover, many of these moments are moments of applying feedback. Students are left to negotiate how to assess what is useful for them to incorporate or dismiss for their next draft. Because feedback is a form of social persuasion, another of Bandura’s four sources of efficacy beliefs, the type of feedback that instructors or peers provide can directly influence students’ efficacy perceptions. Susan McLeod explains that we need to look at individual differences when we offer feedback to our students: “…the inadvertently harsh remark we make about one student’s paper might—if she is mastery-oriented—actually help to spur the student on, while the same remark might devastate the student who sees failure as inevitable and stop her progress entirely” (431). Attending to the ways in which students’ efficacy perceptions potentially ebb and flow at moments in the process where they receive feedback would help us better understand these individual differences, and thus, better support our students growth as writers. In summation, these moments are often moments of encountering affirmation or resistance. Therefore, at these specific moments in the drafting process, I distributed a self-assessment questionnaire designed to engage the two students in a reflection on their sense of self-efficacy. Additionally, I distributed the questionnaire at two spontaneous moments when the participants identified particularly high senses of efficacy or particularly low senses of efficacy. Although the cued moments I have selected are theoretically likely to trigger a fluctuation in students’ sense of efficacy, the self-selected questionnaire serves as an opportunity for students to choose two additional moments that are significant to them.

The questionnaires (see Appendix D) consist of two parts: a quantitative self-assessment and a qualitative reflection. The quantitative self-assessment operates as a self-efficacy scale in order to determine how students perceive their abilities at specific moments in the writing process. Most research measuring student writers’ self-efficacy employ Bandura’s four major sources of self-efficacy: mastery experience, vicarious experience, social persuasion, and physiological/emotional reactions. Of these four sources, three (mastery experience, social persuasion, and physiological/emotional reactions) are easily assessed through existing scales (McCarthy, Meier, and Rinderer; Pajares and Johnson; Schmidt and Alexander; Shell, Murphy, and Bruning). However, these scales tend to be limited in focus and are designed for one-time or short-term evaluation. These existing scales often ask students to judge their perceived capability to accomplish certain writing tasks or their confidence with certain writing skills. Similarly, this study follows Bandura’s advice to frame efficacy items “in terms of can do rather than will do”
to assess confidence in one’s future capabilities (“Guide for Constructing” 308). Therefore, the statements on the questionnaire are designed to be “I can” statements that vary from broad, generalized tasks to more specific, detailed tasks. This variety in generality responds to Bandura’s “Guide for Constructing Self-Efficacy Scales” wherein he encourages researchers to include items of varying difficulty and to examine prototypic rather than minute skills.

Additionally, existing writing self-efficacy scales are often linked to written products. More precisely, writing studies research regarding self-efficacy typically assess student writers’ confidence in either 1) performing specific writing skills, such as writing complete sentences; 2) completing a specific writing task, such as writing a research paper; or 3) achieving a specific grade on an assignment or in a composition class overall (Pajares, “Self-Efficacy Beliefs, Motivation, and Achievement;” Pajares and Johnson; Shell, Murphy, and Bruning). Instead, my questionnaires are designed to measure self-efficacy multiple times over the course of the composing process for a single assignment. My concern is with the nature of the role of self-efficacy in the writing process, not the written product. Accordingly, the statements I asked students to respond to are crafted to best reflect the skills, tasks, and activities that are necessary at the particular moment in the process. For instance, after students have participated in a peer workshop, I included items such as, “I can share my writing with my peers without feeling judged or criticized,” “I can effectively decide what feedback to use for my paper and what to dismiss,” and “When I read drafts written by my peers, I can provide them with valuable feedback.” In addition to addressing Bandura’s sources of efficacy expectations, the specificity of these items to the process being studied helps students to more accurately assess their self-beliefs (Bandura, “Guide for Constructing” 310). It also allows for closer temporal proximity to the moment studied (Pajares, “Self-Efficacy Beliefs, Motivation, and Achievement” 142).

Furthermore, the questionnaires employ a Likert scale, which asks students to rate how much they personally agree or disagree with a series of statements using the following scale: (1) totally disagree, (2) generally disagree, (3) somewhat disagree, (4) somewhat agree, (5) generally agree, and (6) totally agree. A “N/A” option is also included. I have chosen to use a Likert scale rather than asking students to rate their confidence on a scale of 0-100 because I believe it is more appropriate for my methodology. Although a scale of 0-100 tends to be statistically stronger than a Likert scale (Pajares, “Self-Efficacy Beliefs, Motivation, and Achievement” 143) this research is not looking to test the statistical reliability of the scale, nor does it seek to correlate self-
efficacy with performance outcomes. Rather, the goal of this case study is to provide a rich
description of three to five students’ sense of efficacy over the course of a single assignment.
Such a description does not require numerical, statistically significant data. Thus, a Likert scale
provides a better description of the participants’ confidence than a number between 0-100.

Following each of the six quantitative assessment occasions, students were then asked to
respond to a prompt designed to engage them in a qualitative reflection, which I define as a
retrospective consideration of the particular moment of the writing process in which they
responded to the questionnaire. Although the prompts vary according to the cued moment in the
drafting process, each asks students to write a 250-400 word description of 1) their confidence at
this particular moment, 2) any past experiences that may affect their confidence, 3) what sorts of
feedback they may have received, and 4) any emotional or physiological states they experience.
These questions are meant to target three of the four major sources of self-efficacy beliefs:
performance accomplishments, verbal persuasion, and physiological states (Bandura). The fourth
source, vicarious experience, is difficult to account for in this kind of reflection. The reflective
prompts for the self-selected questionnaires are more general than the prompts from the cued
moments. The self-selected questionnaires ask that students describe what stage of the writing
process they are in, why they selected this specific moment, and how they would describe their
current confidence level. The qualitative reflection provides a fuller description of the students’
sense of efficacy beyond what can be measured by a quantitative scale. The scale indicates what
the students’ sense of efficacy is; the reflection indicates why and how. Such a measure allows
for this research to not only determine if students’ self-efficacy fluctuates over the course of an
assignment, but also how, when, and from what causes are most likely to trigger such a shift. The
reflections were collected for discourse analysis using a coding scheme derived from Bandura’s
four sources of self-efficacy.

To facilitate data collection, the six questionnaires including both the quantitative self-
assessments and the qualitative reflections were emailed to the subjects of the study. The self-
selected questionnaires were distributed at the start of the study so that the participants could
elect to respond at any point throughout the assignment. The cued questionnaires were
distributed according to the timeline of the assignment. I coordinated with the instructor to
determine the deadlines for the drafts and the date of the peer workshop. At the beginning of the
study, I gave the participants a handout listing the dates that I would send them each
The final component of my data collection is discourse analysis. In order to analyze the students’ reflections, I developed a coding scheme based on Albert Bandura’s four major sources of self-efficacy beliefs: performance accomplishments, vicarious experience, social persuasion, and physiological reactions, which I will discuss further in the next section. This type of analysis enabled me to better understand if students’ individual enactments of self-efficacy fluctuate within critical thresholds, and if so, how, when, and from what causes do these fluctuations occur?

**Data Analysis**

In the sections that follow, I explain my methods of data analysis. First, I describe how I collated and analyzed the quantitative assessments. Second, I detail the coding scheme I used, and how I applied it to the qualitative reflections. Third, I explain how I triangulated the quantitative assessments and the qualitative reflections with the interviews as a means to develop a rich description of any fluctuations that occur over the course of a writing assignment.

**Quantitative Assessments**

This study uses ten quantitative assessments, five from each participant, in order to determine if students’ sense of efficacy fluctuates over the course of a single writing assignment.
and if so, how, when, and from what causes do these fluctuations occur? The quantitative assessments specifically address two of my sub questions: 1) At what point or points in the writing process do fluctuations occur? and 2) What, if any, factors in the writing process trigger those fluctuations? To address these questions, I collated and analyzed the numeric data from the questionnaires in two ways: averages and line graphs. I chose to average the numeric responses for each individual questionnaire in order to get a sense for the participants’ self-efficacy levels at each moment in the drafting process. These averages facilitate tracing horizontal shifts, that is, ebbs and flows of self-efficacy across composing the multiple drafts of the assignment. Horizontal shifts are also more likely to indicate critical threshold shifts, which significantly alter—perhaps permanently—a students’ sense of efficacy. Additionally, I also averaged the numeric responses for the totality of the questionnaires to determine a general self-efficacy level for each student. Such a level is akin to those produced by previous research involving self-efficacy scales (McCarthy, Meier, and Rinderer; Pajares “Self-Efficacy Beliefs, Motivation, and Achievement”; Shell, Murphy, and Bruning; Schmidt and Alexander). Producing this average level of efficacy enables me to compare a generalized, stable state of efficacy to the nuances and potential shifts of self-efficacy beliefs throughout the composing process. Then, I used a line graph to plot the data for the two questions across each questionnaire that remained the same: 1) I think the time allotted for this assignment is reasonable, and 2) I can successfully compose this assignment. This representation enabled me to better determine at what point or points in the writing process fluctuations are likely to occur. Finally, I attended to the specific numeric responses for each individual questionnaire to look for vertical shifts, that is, ebbs and flows of self-efficacy within each moment of the composing process. These data allowed for an exploration of what factors in the writing process, if any, are likely to trigger a fluctuation in efficacy perceptions.

**Qualitative Reflections**

This study uses ten qualitative reflections, five from each participant, in order to answer the following research question: If students’ sense of self-efficacy ebbs and flows over the course of a writing assignment involving multiple drafts, how, when, and from what causes do these fluctuations occur? To best address this question, I have developed a deductive coding scheme (see Appendix E). To code the data, I first split the text from the qualitative reflections into
ideational units. For this project, a unit of analysis comprises of an ideational unit, defined as a complete unit of thought, which may take the form of either a dependent clause or an independent clause. In order to be considered a reference, a unit must refer to an item on the coding scheme as that item is defined in the coding scheme. The coding scheme has three major components. The first seeks to determine self-efficacy fluctuations by coding for advances, declines, and reaffirmations of self-efficacy beliefs as indicated by the participants’ qualitative reflections. The coded data was combined with the numeric responses from the questionnaires and correlated to the interview responses to determine self-efficacy levels. The second seeks to identify what sources the participants draw on to form their self-efficacy perceptions, as well as what factors, if any, are most likely to trigger a potential fluctuation in those perceptions. This aspect of the scheme is based on Bandura’s sources of self-efficacy beliefs. Finally, the third element of the scheme was designed to determine what strategies, if any, do students develop in order to cope with potential fluctuations. Therefore, to address each of these components, I decided upon self-efficacy levels, self-efficacy sources, and self-efficacy strategies as the main terms of my tripartite coding scheme.

**Self-Efficacy Levels.** If self-efficacy is not a stable state, but rather fluctuates as students engage with the processes of specific writing tasks, certain triggers may advance, decline, or reinforce a student’s sense of efficacy, resulting in more, less, or stable confidence in his or her ability to achieve a desired outcome. An advance in self-efficacy refers to any ideational unit that indicates an increased amount of confidence in writing ability. For example, Erica writes, “I would describe my confidence at this level greater than what it was…now that I know what I’m doing, I have complete confidence that I can get out of this paper with a B and get a high B in the class.” A decline in self-efficacy refers to any ideational unit that indicates a decreased level of confidence in writing ability. For instance, Davy writes, “I entirely lost my confidence in this paper, and felt terrified about the final draft as well as the group project.” A reaffirmation of self-efficacy includes any ideational unit that refers to self-efficacy perceptions, but does not result in an advance or decline in efficacy beliefs. An example of a reaffirmation is when Erica writes, “…because I just don’t like writing.” The coded ideational units that referred to self-efficacy levels was used in conjunction with the quantitative questionnaires to determine students’ levels of efficacy at various states throughout the composing process.
Self-Efficacy Sources. In order to determine what factors are likely to trigger a shift in self-efficacy beliefs, I drew from Albert Bandura’s four sources of self-efficacy: performance accomplishments, vicarious experience, social persuasion, and physiological reactions. Accordingly, these data allow me to see what sources my two case study participants most often drew from to form self-efficacy perceptions and in what ways those sources triggered a fluctuation in self-efficacy beliefs. One especially influential source of self-efficacy perceptions is performance accomplishments, also referred to as mastery experiences. Success advances mastery experiences, while failure—particularly repeated failure—lowers them (Bandura 195). Repeated success often leads to the development of strong efficacy expectations, and once efficacy is raised, the impact of occasional failure is less detrimental (195). For the purposes of this study, I consider a reference to performance accomplishments as any ideational unit that refers to a past success or failure with writing. To illustrate, Davy writes, “In the past, revising essays have been easy, and constructive criticism has helped me boost papers.” Efficacy expectations are also derived from vicarious experience. Many people are able to persuade themselves that “if others can do it, they should be able to achieve at least some improvement in performance” (Bandura 197). For instance, if students see other students with similar skill levels accomplish a task they perceive as challenging, they are often likely to view themselves as capable of success. I consider a reference to vicarious experience as any ideational unit that refers to the student’s expected performance level in comparison to another student writer. However, this source did not present in any of the coded ideational units. Another source of self-efficacy is social persuasion. Verbal or social persuasion is often used to influence human behavior because of its “ease and ready availability” (Bandura 198). Through suggestion, people are led to believe that they can successfully handle a situation that has previously overwhelmed them (198). For this study, I will consider a reference to social persuasion as any ideational unit that refers to an instance when a student's self-efficacy perceptions were influenced, either positively or negatively, by another person or a group of people through discussion, feedback, and so forth. For example, Davy wrote, “The peer workshop made me feel as though I was going in a decent direction and gave me other ideas to think about.” Often, people derive efficacy expectations from physiological reactions, or emotional arousal. People use these physiological or emotive states as indicators of vulnerability and stress, especially in situations they perceive as threatening (Bandura 198). Individuals are more likely to anticipate success when they do not
experience aversive arousal (198). Physiological reactions, then, can be defined as any ideational unit that refers to a particular emotional or physiological state, such as anxiety, fear, excitement, nausea, or tension. For example, Erica writes, “Revising makes me irritated and happy all at once.” Coding for the sources of self-efficacy beliefs helped me to determine how and from what causes potential fluctuations occur.

**Self-Efficacy Strategies.** Finally, if self-efficacy fluctuates over the course of a single assignment, students might develop strategies to cope with those potential shifts. If so, those strategies could take the form of action statements, how to statements, or should statements. Therefore, to identify those strategies, I focused on the presence of action statements. *Action statements* can be defined as any ideational unit that refers to a “do” or “done” statement. In other words, when a student explains a strategy that they typically “do” or “have done” to cope with shifts in their confidence. For instance, Davy writes, “I do my best to keep my expectations for a project at the same level if not higher than my instructors.” *How to statements* can be defined as any ideational unit that refers to how they plan to move forward with their writing process. They may also include advice or instructions for how to cope with a shift in self-efficacy. An example of a *how to statement* is when Davy explains, “I believe this method really helps students learn from their mistakes and makes them better in not just writing, but any curriculum they learn in the future.” *Should statements* can be defined as any ideational unit that refers to what one should do in order to cope with a shift in self-efficacy perceptions. This kind of statement might refer both to what the participant should do or what other students, generally, should do. Davy offers one example of a *should statement* when he writes, “Peer workshops are a concept that should be used more often in the classroom.” Coding for self-efficacy strategies enables me to address one of my sub questions: What, if any, strategies do students develop to cope with fluctuations?

**Correlating Data: Interviews**

I triangulated the quantitative assessments and the qualitative reflections with interviews in order to generate a rich description of the potential ebbs and flows of self-efficacy across the process of composing a single assignment involving multiple drafts. The interviews established a generalized sense of the participants’ sense of efficacy before the assignment began and after its
conclusion. The interviews also provided insights into the student writers’ attitudes, previous experiences with writing, and typical writing processes, which could influence self-efficacy. I compared the interviews with the responses to the questionnaires--both the quantitative and the qualitative--to determine whether any potential shifts in efficacy beliefs occurred, at what point or points in the writing process fluctuations were likely to occur, what factors, if any, were likely to trigger a fluctuation is self-efficacy, and what strategies, if any, students evolved to cope with potential fluctuations. In sum, the interviews clarified, confirmed, and elaborated upon the data from the questionnaires to more fully explain, describe, and illustrate how, when, and from what causes self-efficacy fluctuations occur.

Conclusion

Case studies are the ideal approach for generating a rich description of the ebbs and flows of self-efficacy as students compose a single assignment involving multiple drafts. Specifically situating my study in a first-year composition course emphasizes the necessity of reaching out early to develop and establish students’ self-efficacy perceptions. By using quantitative self-assessments, qualitative reflections, and interviews, I seek to illuminate the potential shifts in self-efficacy as they relate to the composing process. In the next chapter, I examine the results of my study in order to answer this study’s overarching research question: If students' sense of self-efficacy ebbs and flows over the course of a writing assignment involving multiple drafts, how, when, and from what causes do these fluctuations occur? In so doing, I hope to enrich our understanding of the role that self-efficacy plays in students' writing, particularly in regards to the intersection of specific writing tasks and potential changes in writers' levels of self-efficacy.
CHAPTER 3  
RESULTS: ANALYZING THE DATA TO EXPLORE POTENTIAL FLUCTUATIONS

In this chapter, the results of the data analysis are presented. The data were collected and then processed in order to answer the current study’s overarching research question: If students' sense of self-efficacy ebbs and flows over the course of a writing assignment involving multiple drafts, how, when, and from what causes do these fluctuations occur? To address this question, I ask three subordinate questions:

1. At what point or points in the writing process do fluctuations occur?
2. What, if any, factors in the writing process trigger those fluctuations?
3. What, if any, strategies do students evolve to address fluctuations?

These questions serve as the organizing framework for this chapter. In answering these questions, I seek to enrich compositionists’ understanding of self-efficacy, particularly as it relates to the writing process.

Data Analysis

**Does self-efficacy fluctuate as students engage with a single assignment involving multiple drafts?**

My data suggest that self-efficacy does, in fact, fluctuate over the course of a single assignment. In their initial interviews before the start of the assignment, Davy and Erica provided insights into their perceptions of their generalized self-efficacy in regards to writing. These insights provide a baseline for the students’ self-efficacy so as to better identify fluctuations. On the one hand, Davy appeared to possess higher self-efficacy in writing than Erica. In his initial interview, Davy said that he would describe his confidence level when writing as “above average,” and “once everything is rolling, like, I’m going good, I’m excited; I’m enjoying the paper.” In his second questionnaire, before revising the rough draft, Davy reaffirmed this level of confidence: “I’m usually very confident in my writing.” Davy explained that he typically performs well on writing assignments and thus assumed that he would do well on this project too. Davy continued in the second questionnaire, “In the past, revising essays have been easy, and constructive criticism has helped me boost papers.” Erica, on the other hand, appeared to have lower self-efficacy in writing than her classmate. She often stated—both during her interviews and in her reflections—that she simply did not like writing. In her first interview,
Erica explained that despite receiving above average grades on her writing assignments, she did not perceive herself as a good writer: “I feel like I’m the worst writer in the world, but my grades never actually reflected that I’m a bad writer; it’s just how I thought I was. I just never think I’m a good writer.” Because of this perception, the grades that she receives on her writing assignments tend to surprise her, she said. She claimed that she often thinks that she will perform worse on an assignment than she actually does: “The grades I get on my papers always surprise me because I always think I do like a grade or lower…a whole letter grade at least lower.” The numeric responses for the first questionnaire, which occurred after reviewing the assignment sheet, confirmed the data of these initial interviews: Davy’s average response was 5.11 out of 6.00, which indicated that he felt very confident at this moment in the writing process; Erica’s average response on this questionnaire was 3.44 out of 6.00, which indicated that she felt somewhat confident after reviewing the assignment sheet. These average numeric responses to the first quantitative self-assessment provide a generalized perspective of the students' self-efficacy at an early moment in the composing process for the assignment. Based on this data, Davy's average numeric response was rather high. A rating of 6 on any of the items in the questionnaire indicates that the student "totally agreed" that he or she could accomplish the specified task. A rating of 5 indicates that the student "generally agreed" that he or she could accomplish the specified task. Therefore, Davy's average response of 5.11 revealed that he felt generally confident in his ability to complete the tasks listed on the first questionnaire. It is likely then, that Davy would have been assessed as a high self-efficacy student at this moment in the process. On the other hand, Erica's average response, 3.44 falls between a 3, which indicates that the student "somewhat disagreed" that he or she could complete the specified task, and a 4, which indicates that the student "somewhat agreed" that he or she could complete the specified task. Accordingly, Erica's average numeric response revealed that her perceived self-efficacy in her writing abilities at this moment in the composing process wavered between feeling somewhat confident and somewhat insecure. Therefore, it is likely that Erica would be assessed as having moderate to low self-efficacy. In sum, the average numeric responses on the first questionnaire supported the students' initial perceptions of their generalized self-efficacy in regards to writing. These data are significant because they provide a foundation for the student’s generalized sense of efficacy near the beginning of the assignment, thus allowing fluctuations to be more identifiable.
As the students progressed through the assignment, however, the average response shifted for both students (see Table 1), indicating that self-efficacy did, in fact, fluctuate. Davy’s confidence gradually advanced, suddenly dropped, and then started to recover. Davy’s final questionnaire, which was the fourth cued moment, before revising the rough draft, had an average response of 4.00 out of 6.00. His average response decreased by 1.11, which suggest

Table 1: Average Self-Efficacy from Quantitative Self-Assessments

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a decline in his sense of efficacy. While Erica’s confidence started lower than Davy’s, it gradually increased and continued to do so throughout the assignment. Erica’s final questionnaire, which was her self-selected moment while revising the second draft, had an average response of 4.75 out of 6.00. Her average response increased by 1.31, which indicates an advance in her self-efficacy beliefs. However, as the table shows, there were several fluctuations throughout the process as well, which I will discuss in the following section.

Additionally, each of the questionnaires contained two of the same questions in order to determine potential shifts in self-efficacy, as well as potential factors in the writing process that might trigger those shifts. One of the repeated questions was, “I can successfully compose this assignment.” This statement was intended for the students to self-assess their confidence to compose the assignment successfully at the particular cued moment of the writing process. If this response shifted across questionnaires, then it is likely the students experienced a fluctuation in their self-efficacy perceptions. As indicated in Figure 1 below, the responses to this question clearly suggest a fluctuation in the students’ beliefs that they could compose the assignment successfully as they engaged with the writing process. In fact, these data seem to generally reflect the same trajectories as the average responses. Davy’s responses were high—three consecutive 6s—until he experienced a decline while composing the second draft, which was his
self-selected moment. His response dropped to a 2. His response increased slightly to a 4 in the fourth questionnaire, before revising the second draft, but it did not return to his original confidence of 6. Erica’s response started in the lower-middle range, 3, but then slightly increased to 4 before revising the rough draft. This increased confidence remained throughout the rest of the assignment. In both cases, the students’ responses to the question, "I can successfully compose this assignment," shifted throughout the drafting process, thus resulting in either a decline or an advance in their belief that they could compose the assignment successfully. The data from this particular question alone demonstrate that both students experienced fluctuations in their self-efficacy beliefs as they engaged with the assignment.

Furthermore, the discourse analysis of the qualitative reflections yields some insight into these shifts in self-efficacy levels. Of the coded references to self-efficacy levels, 50 percent of Davy’s ideational units indicate a decline in self-efficacy, 36 percent indicate an advance in efficacy beliefs, and 14 percent indicated reinforcement of his efficacy beliefs (see Fig. 2). The clear majority of Davy's responses indicate a decline in his self-efficacy levels; however, these coded references to decline are not evenly distributed across the questionnaires. The first
reference to a decline was in the second questionnaire, before revising the rough draft. At this stage in the writing process, Davy was beginning to feel the challenge of the assignment. He wrote in his reflection that he's been "stumped with the rough draft," but quickly followed this statement with a declaration that his instructor or his peers will be able to help him out. Davy did not report any decline in self-efficacy levels in the third questionnaire, after participating in a peer workshop. In fact, all of the other coded references to a decline occurred in either Davy's self-selected moment, while composing the second draft, or the fourth questionnaire, before revising the second draft. Davy noted that he chose this self-selected moment because it was a particularly low point. In his self-selected moment, Davy wrote that he was "not proud of [his] work ethic, felt "out of his element," and "lost [his] willpower to write as well as [his] confidence in [his] writing technique." Davy explained that he did not feel like his writing reflected his usual style; it felt bland and boring. In his fourth questionnaire, Davy wrote, "My structure was off and average at best, my grammar was plain and boring, and my arguments seemed to lack." He indicated in his initial interview that this feeling is one of the challenges he faces when writing, "Because then I'll reread it and it sounds kind of bland, and it's almost like I'll fall asleep while reading it. And, I just can't…it's kind of annoying. It's like my biggest pet peeve aside from the
typical biting nails kind of thing." Then, in his second interview, Davy confirmed that his dissatisfaction with his writing style influenced his self-efficacy levels:

I just could not get myself to write how I typically did and it was just kind of...I mean, I pushed through it and finished it, but it just didn't sound as good as I thought it would. And I mean everyone said the paper was fine, but when I read it back it just all sounded so bland to me. It didn't pop out like it usually does to me. So, I didn't have that enjoyment from it.

This sudden decline in his confidence was a devastating blow for Davy: "I entirely lost my confidence in this paper, and felt terrified about the final draft as well as the group project." The challenges presented by composing the second draft and revising the second draft were overwhelming for Davy, and despite mostly occurring during the latter moments of the writing process, these moments had a significant impact on Davy's self-efficacy levels since he referenced a decline in self-efficacy levels more frequently than either advance or reinforcement.

Despite ample references to a decline in self-efficacy, Davy did also experience some advancements, constituting 36 percent of his coded references to self-efficacy levels. The majority of these references occurred in the first questionnaire, a moment in the writing process during which Davy indicated that he felt particularly confident. He wrote that he felt excited about the writing the course assigned and claimed that they were more "creative" and "engaging" than writing he had done in the past. Additionally, he wrote, "These assignments have shaped me into a better writer, given me a rejuvenated enjoyment of composing these assignments, and revived my enjoyment of learning." This initial confidence echoes the results of the quantitative data: early in the composing process, Davy felt more excited than anxious and felt confident that he could successfully compose the assignment. Davy also reported an advance in his efficacy beliefs after participating in the peer workshop. He wrote that the peer workshop made him "feel more confident as a writer." Davy's last coded reference to an advance in self-efficacy beliefs occurred in the fourth questionnaire, before revising the rough draft. Although this cued moment was largely marked by references to a decline in self-efficacy, he explained that his group mates helped him to feel better about his draft. He wrote, "After this advice, I felt more confident with the third draft"; however, this ideational unit was qualified by a reference to a reinforcement of efficacy levels: "but I’m definitely still tense about confronting the final draft." This particular reference suggests that while Davy might have experienced a slight advance in his self-efficacy
beliefs, he had not fully regained his original confidence. The other reference to reinforced efficacy beliefs occurred in the second questionnaire, before revising the rough draft. Davy wrote that he is "usually very confident" in his writing--a reaffirmation of his, at the time, advanced self-efficacy. However, this statement was also qualified with a coded reference to physiological reactions: "...but if I see things falling apart I definitely start to get anxious." Davy anticipated that his confidence in his writing abilities may not remain stable. Based on the discourse analysis of the qualitative reflections, Davy experienced declines, advancements, and reinforcements to his self-efficacy beliefs throughout the process of composing the assignment. Accordingly, because Davy reported significantly more decline than advance or reinforcement, it seems reasonable to conclude that he experienced an overall negative shift in self-efficacy beliefs as he composed the assignment.

In contrast, Erica’s references to self-efficacy levels comprised of 67 percent advance, 17 percent decline, and 17 percent reinforce (see Fig. 3). The vast majority of her coded references to self-efficacy levels indicate an advance in her efficacy perceptions. References to an advance

![Erica's Self-Efficacy Levels](Figure%203%3A%20Erica%27s%20Coded%20References%20to%20Self-Efficacy%20Levels)

Figure 3: Erica's Coded References to Self-Efficacy Levels
to complete this assignment, while at other points I was going to have a mini melt down because I wasn’t entirely sure what I was supposed to be doing with the essay as a whole." At this moment in the writing process, Erica felt confident and capable, a state that she did not experience in the earlier stages of the assignment. Erica further explained in her second interview, that she chose that moment for her self-selected questionnaire specifically because she perceived it as a "positive moment" unlike her responses to the cued questionnaires. She finally felt confident about her writing:

> Because I was finally, like, grasping what I needed to do, and everything was coming together. My confidence level was …I was like, 'You can do this. You're a smart person.' Because, you know, English sometimes tends to make me not feel smart, but so does calculus and chemistry…I have my moments. So yeah…and it's, like, more positive and I know what I'm doing.

Erica wrote that she had greater confidence than at previous points in the assignment and that this increased confidence enabled her to write and revise better. However, while Erica predominantly attributes her advanced self-efficacy to her self-selected moment, the data suggest that her confidence in her writing abilities gradually increased throughout the assignment. For example, in the third questionnaire, after participating in a peer workshop, Erica wrote that she felt "more in control of the paper" than she had previously. Then again, in her fourth questionnaire, before revising the second draft, she wrote, "I felt extremely in control this time because I knew for sure what I wanted to do with my paper." These ideational units demonstrate that her self-efficacy advanced over the course of the assignment, which correlates to her statement during the first interview about her typical confidence when writing. Erica explained that for each assignment she has approached for ENC 1101, her confidence moves through a series of ups and downs: “When I first start, not so great…and I get slowly more confident and then more confident, and by the time the final gets turned in I’m like, ‘Oh, this is a pretty decent paper.’” Her self-efficacy gradually advances throughout the process until she feels in control of the assignment and confident in her writing capabilities.

Despite the abundance of references to an advance in self-efficacy levels, Erica also referred to declines and reinforcements of her self-efficacy levels. She mentions a decline in her self-efficacy in the first questionnaire after reviewing the assignment sheet. She wrote that she does not feel confident with this assignment because she has "barely started on it." While she
noted not feeling particularly confident, she seemed to acknowledge that her confidence might increase as she progressed through the assignment. Strangely, her other reference to a decline occurred during her self-selected moment, which was largely positive. However, the reference to a decline does not refer to how she perceived her efficacy at that moment in the process; instead, it referred to her past perceptions: "As I mentioned earlier I wanted to have a break down and quit at life with English and just not write the essay." Similarly, in her second interview, Erica explained that control was important to her but that she gains control gradually. When she felt out of control—like she typically did at the beginning of an unfamiliar assignment—her "confidence drops." To further clarify her point, Erica stated, "Not being in control of what’s happening in your paper is very, very bad. It’s proven to be bad for me…. It’s like I don’t feel in control and then, like, I’m progressively becoming in control." When she first began the assignment, Erica wanted to abandon the essay. The challenge felt too unfamiliar and out of her control. However, as she progressed through the assignment, she gained control and subsequently advanced her self-efficacy. Erica was quick to distinguish, though, that feeling more confident about her writing did not change her perceptions about herself as a writer. In her interviews and in the second questionnaire before revising the rough draft, Erica stated that she did not like writing. Despite advances in her self-efficacy, Erica did not enjoy writing; she only saw herself as more capable of composing the assignment successfully. In sum, Erica reported significantly more coded references to an advance in self-efficacy beliefs than either decline or reinforcement, and thus, very probably experienced an advance in her self-efficacy beliefs. Based on the above data from both Davy and Erica, it is clear that self-efficacy is not a stable phenomenon in which one student possesses or does not possess an immutable sense of efficacy; rather, self-efficacy does fluctuate as writers engage with the challenges presented by a specific task.

Finally, as another point of comparison to discern possible ebbs and flows in self-efficacy, I averaged the students’ numeric responses to all of the completed self-assessment questionnaires. The average of these responses generates a number akin to those produced by traditional efficacy scales (McCarthy, Meier, and Rinderer; Shell, Murphy, and Bruning; and Pajares and Johnson). By generating this kind of average, this study can compare a generalized, stable state of efficacy to the nuances and shifts of self-efficacy beliefs experienced throughout the composing process. Davy’s overall average response was 4.89, a relatively high self-efficacy
level. Erica’s overall average response was 3.95, which is slightly above a moderate self-efficacy level. Based on these numbers, one would assume that Davy would encounter few challenges to his self-efficacy and confidently engage with the writing assignment throughout the drafting process and that Erica might be susceptible to challenges to her efficacy perceptions, but still progress through the assignment with a fair amount of confidence. However, their self-efficacy levels as they engaged with the assignment varied—sometimes significantly—from these averages. As a result, compositionists might need to reconsider the current scholarship regarding self-efficacy in the writing classroom.

These students’ efficacy perceptions were not stable states, as such an average might suggest. Instead, their self-efficacy beliefs fluctuated as they engaged with various tasks throughout the writing process. These fluctuations inform the current scholarship on self-efficacy, much of which suggests that efficacy is a relatively stable state. Students are assessed as having higher, middle, or lower self-efficacy regarding their writing capabilities, and accordingly, are assigned certain attributes. For instance, writers with higher self-efficacy tend to be more internally motivated (McLeod), have an internal locus of control (McCarthy, Meier, and Rinderer), and are more likely to attempt and persist in unfamiliar writing tasks (McCarthy, Meier, and Rinderer; Schunk). While Bandura’s research acknowledges that self-efficacy beliefs are potentially modifiable, doing so requires extensive time and effort. However, this research does not account for minor fluctuations in self-efficacy or the ways in which self-efficacy might fluctuate while engaging with specific writing tasks in a single assignment. As these fluctuations confirm, students may feel efficacious at one point in the composing process, such as after participating in the peer workshop, but then feel anxious or insecure as they revise the second draft. As the data indicates, both students experienced fluctuations in their self-efficacy beliefs, but these fluctuations manifested in different ways and to different degrees. Determining whether or not self-efficacy fluctuates as students engage with a single writing assignment is insufficient. To that end, in the next section, I identify at what point or points in the writing process these fluctuations occurred in order to better understand the nature of potential shifts in self-efficacy.

**At what point or points in the writing process do fluctuations occur?**

After determining that the participants’ self-efficacy beliefs did fluctuate throughout the writing process, I then analyzed the data to explore when these fluctuations occurred. Examining
when fluctuations occur allows for a deeper understanding of the variables involved in potential shifts in self-efficacy. By identifying the point or points in the writing process in which fluctuations occurred, my study situates self-efficacy fluctuates within students' individual writing processes and pre-existing attitudes about writing. Moreover, determining when fluctuations are likely to occur enables compositionists to intervene in the writing process to help students better achieve their goals and develop as writers. In this section, I discuss the two types of fluctuations I observed as the students composed the assignment: horizontal and vertical. Horizontal and vertical shifts offer two ways of understanding at what points in the writing process fluctuations occur.

**Horizontal Shifts.** I define horizontal fluctuations as shifts in self-efficacy that occur from moment to moment during the composing process. For instance, when a student feels very confident after reviewing the assignment sheet but then feels less confident after participating in a peer workshop, a horizontal shift is likely to have occurred. Horizontal shifts were evident for both participants, as Table 1 and Figure 1 indicate above. For example, in Table 1, the average numeric responses shift--either positively or negatively--from one quantitative self-assessment to the next, even if only slightly. Horizontal shifts can either be positive, resulting in an advance in self-efficacy beliefs, or negative, resulting in a decline in self-efficacy beliefs. These shifts seem to have occurred at each cued moment of the writing process and the students’ self-selected moments. However, in this discussion of the results, I will only present the findings of the most prevalent horizontal fluctuations that occurred: 1) after participating in a peer workshop, 2) before revising the rough draft, and 3) while composing the second draft. These moments demonstrate clear and significant fluctuations that exemplify the types of horizontal shifts that occurred throughout the drafting process.

The numeric responses for both students on the quantitative self-assessments indicate an advance in self-efficacy after participating in the peer workshop. Davy’s average response increased from a 5.22 to a 5.60, and Erica’s average response increased from a 3.88 to a 4.00. Accordingly, both students explained that the peer workshop was a helpful experience for them that bolstered their confidence working on this assignment. Davy wrote in his qualitative reflection, “Our group definitely made me feel at ease with the peer workshop” and “I would most definitely say it was helpful for aiding me in my writing process.” Similarly, Erica wrote,
“The peer workshop made me feel as though I was going in a decent direction and gave me other ideas to think about. The peer workshop helped to instill some confidence in me this time because I didn’t feel as though they were tearing every part of my paper apart and not leaving any positive feedback behind.” The types of feedback that Erica and Davy received during the peer review were vital to their efficacy beliefs. Both students mentioned in their initial interviews that they had experiences with peer review that were less than helpful in the past, citing cases where their peers were not directive enough, too critical, or not constructive. For this assignment, both students viewed the peer workshop as constructive and ultimately experienced an advance in their self-efficacy beliefs. These results have significant implications for peer review as a pedagogical practice, which will be discussed later in this chapter.

Another key horizontal shift is when Erica experienced an advance in her self-efficacy before revising her rough draft. Her average numeric response increased from 3.44 to a 3.88, and her response to the question “I can successfully compose this assignment” increased from a 3 to a 4. Both responses indicate that a positive horizontal fluctuation in her self-efficacy has occurred. Erica explained in her first interview that her confidence level increased as she progressed through the assignment:

When I first start, not so great. Because usually, he explains it to us in class and we write a first draft, and I think he reads through them and we don’t get the gist of it…well we get the gist of it, but we’re not executing it properly. Like, we have the right idea, it’s just not being executed the right way. And then he’ll just like go over a few more points and I get slowly more confident and then more confident and by the time the final gets turned in I’m like, “Oh, this is a pretty decent paper.”

Because Erica claimed that she often feels that she needs a draft or two before she can feel comfortable composing the assignment, it makes sense that her self-efficacy would advance as she moved through the process. In fact, the correlation between the point of the writing process and self-efficacy levels is one that Erica is very familiar with. She explained that this gradual increase in confidence—specifically her confidence to compose the assignment successfully—is very normal for her. She said, “Like, it’s just when I finally solidify what I know, what I’m doing, my confidence level jumps, which them helps me because if I have a bad confidence level, it’s just not going to be a good writing process.” Consequently, revising the rough draft
appeared to be a turning point for Erica. After this point in the writing process, her self-efficacy continued to increase throughout the assignment.

For Davy, another point of fluctuation occurred while composing the second draft, his self-selected moment. At this moment in the writing process, Davy reported feeling crippling writer’s block: “I had a constant feeling of writer’s block that made me incapable of building up my paragraphs.” He described the writer’s block as happening every 10-15 minutes. In his final interview, Davy explained, “For the first draft, I was really confident. I had my own interviews, I had theirs…I definitely had a bit of trouble…putting their own words into my paper. The first draft wasn’t as difficult, but then the second draft came and for some reason I, like, lost my confidence entirely.” At this stage, Davy reported a 2 or a generally disagree to the statement “I can successfully compose this assignment,” and his average numeric response was a 3.00, a dramatic drop from his earlier average of 5.60 on the third cued questionnaire. Moreover, the fluctuation that Davy experienced at this moment in the drafting process had lasting effects on his self-efficacy perceptions. Davy explained, “I was in that rut and even after, I felt that confidence blow where I didn’t feel like myself and my writing style.” The numeric data affirm this perception; while Davy’s self-efficacy did advance in the fourth cued questionnaire, it did not fully recover to its previous level before his self-selected moment. Therefore, composing the second draft seems to be not only a point at which Davy experienced a fluctuation in his self-efficacy beliefs, but also a critical threshold trigger. His efficacy perceptions shifted into another state that is difficult, and perhaps impossible to completely recover from.

Overall, both students in this case study experienced horizontal fluctuations, that is, shifts in self-efficacy as they moved from moment to moment in the composing process. Horizontal shifts demonstrate the ways in which self-efficacy perceptions can fluctuate at various points in the writing process and, moreover, that these points are not the same for every student. Both students experienced a positive horizontal shift after participating in the peer review; Erica experienced a positive shift before revising her rough draft, and Davy experienced a negative shift while composing his second draft. Furthermore, while the students experienced fluctuations in their efficacy perceptions at different points in the writing process and to different degrees, these horizontal shifts suggest that, while the four cued moments, 1) after reviewing the assignment, 2) before revising the rough draft, 3) after participating in a peer workshop, and 4) before revising the second draft, have the potential to be critical thresholds, the students’ self-
sponsored moments were points marked by critical threshold shifts. As explained in Chapter 2, an ecological threshold refers to a point at which an ecosystem experiences a sudden change in quality, property, or phenomenon (Groffman et al. 1). Thresholds allow for even a small change to have a rapid, larger effect on an ecosystem (1). At each of the cued moments in the writing process as well as the self-sponsored moments that the students selected, while composing the second draft and while revising the second draft, the students experienced a fluctuation in their self-efficacy levels. According to the concept of ecological thresholds, these moments, then, were marked by a disturbance that could trigger a critical threshold occurrence. However, not all of the moments seem to have triggered a threshold shift. In these instances, there was a disturbance—as indicated by the slight horizontal shift—but the students restabalized, and thus remained within their valley of stability. In other moments, though, the students’ self-efficacy advanced or declined by at least 1 point, which indicates a significant shift in self-efficacy levels. I would argue that when this degree of shift occurs, it constitutes a critical threshold that pushes students into either a higher or lower efficacy state. For instance, if a student’s self-efficacy fluctuates between 5.11 and 5.22, as Davy’s did, his self-efficacy could be said to be in a valley of stability. However, when it declined from 5.60 to 3.00, a critical threshold occurred. In Figure 4 above, I have plotted the averages from the numeric responses to the questionnaires (see Table 4).

![Average Self-Efficacy Levels](image)

**Figure 4: Average Self-Efficacy from Quantitative Self-Assessments Graph**
1) onto a line graph in order to better illustrate how critical thresholds apply to the findings from my study. For Davy, the following moments in the writing process were critical thresholds: composing the second draft and before revising the second draft. As aforementioned, when Davy’s efficacy perceptions drastically declined from 5.60 to 3.00 while composing the second draft, he entered into a lowered self-efficacy state that was difficult or perhaps impossible to recover from. In this case, the disturbance he experienced while composing was not properly proportioned or managed to beget resilience. He did, however, begin to recover before revising the rough draft when his efficacy level advanced from 3.00 to 4.00, another threshold occurrence. It is possible that Davy would eventually be able to return to his previous efficacy state, but he did not do so within the time constraints of this study. These instances of critical thresholds demonstrate a need to attend to students’ self-efficacy levels as they compose. Composition instructors might benefit from putting into place practices to help students monitor their efficacy perceptions as they compose, paying special attention to when these levels deviate from what they might identify as within the realm of stability for them. These metacognitive practices could also help students to better identify factors that could result in a disturbance capable or triggering a threshold occurrence. The horizontal shifts that occurred at the cued and self-sponsored moments in the writing process suggest that these moments are points at which self-efficacy might be most productively tracked.

Additionally, because these fluctuations occurred for both students at different points in the writing process and to different degrees, horizontal shifts further inform our understanding of process theory wherein compositionists attend to the unique writing processes for each individual student. In addition to students' cognitive processes, self-efficacy fluctuations impress the need to study affective processes as students compose. If composition instructors assume that students who feel confident in their ability to compose the assignment successfully at the beginning of the process will consistently maintain higher self-efficacy, they could miss or misinterpret signs suggesting otherwise. For instance, if a student who generally has higher self-efficacy starts to turn in assignments late or the quality of the writing drops, an instructor might interpret this behavior as laziness or carelessness when, in fact, it could be a result of lowered self-efficacy. Accordingly, composition instructors might account for fluctuations in students’ self-efficacy in their pedagogy. Given that self-efficacy will fluctuate, instructors can plan for these fluctuations in advance. In addition to increasing awareness of the ways in which self-efficacy beliefs affect
student writers, instructors might allow for check-ins at key moments throughout the course, so that they are better positioned to offer encouragement or assistance as needed. Similarly, Mary Louise Buley-Meissner argues for the usefulness of having students complete the Daly-Miller measure of writing apprehension at the start and end of writing courses. In so doing, teachers are better able to identify problems that may need to be discussed with the student individually or with the class at large (4). These assessment measures also help the teacher to track their students’ progress as they work to become more confident and capable writers (4). However, the Daly-Miller measure of writing apprehension works similarly to a self-efficacy scale; it produces a score that sums up the students’ apprehension level. While such a score is useful, it may not offer the same level of insight as a measure that also includes a space for students to reflect on and describe their experiences. Moreover, this data suggests that such a measure should be distributed more frequently than once at the beginning and end of the semester. Compositionists might consider implementing self-efficacy check-ins with their students throughout the semester so that they are better situated to intervene in the writing process to help students achieve their goals. Later in this chapter, I will discuss at what moments fluctuations occurred and what factors likely triggered fluctuations. The answers to these questions might assist instructors in determining when to check in with students as well as what factors to look out for.

**Vertical Shifts.** I define vertical fluctuations as ebbs and flows of self-efficacy within each discrete moment of the writing process. Vertical shifts indicate that a student may be more confident with some tasks related to the particular moment than other tasks. For example, before revising the rough draft, students may feel confident in their perceived ability to find and incorporate evidence to support their claims, but they lack confidence when it comes to organization. Like the horizontal shifts, these vertical shifts occurred across each of the questionnaires, but some had more frequent or more drastic fluctuations than others. For Erica, some of the most notable vertical shifts occurred after reviewing the assignment sheet and after participating in a peer workshop. For Davy, vertical fluctuations were most evident before revising the second draft.

After reviewing the assignment sheet, Erica’s responses to the quantitative self-assessment varied widely. For instance, while she reported a 6 to the statement, “I can read and understand the assignment sheet,” she indicated a 2 to the statements, “I can effectively respond
to the given prompt,” and “I can meet the expectations of this assignment.” In other words, while Erica understood the assignment sheet and the task she was being asked to complete, she did not confidently believe that she could fulfill the assignment successfully. This finding is consistent with Erica’s typically lower self-efficacy. As she has mentioned, she “just never think[s] [she’s] a good writer.” She also responded with a 5 to the statement, “I can start writing this paper without any difficulty,” and in fact, she could. However, being able to start writing without difficulty is not the same as being able to compose the assignment successfully for Erica: “Like, the first draft I can do pretty early and, like, put down my thoughts…I can do that, but by the time the third draft rolls around and I need to work on it, I’m like…I’m blocked, like, I can’t do this.” She saw rough drafts as lower stakes writing—she could put words on the page easily—but putting words on the page did not mean that she was meeting the expectations of the assignment or her instructor, a key element to Erica’s self-efficacy. Another point of vertical shifts was after participating in a peer workshop. Erica wrote that although she did not like people reading her work, she knew that peer workshops were helpful to her writing. Accordingly, she responded with a 2 to the statement, “I can share my writing with my peers without feeling judged or criticized” but a 5 to the statements, “Based on the feedback I received, I know what I need to do to improve my paper,” and “I can make the changes necessary to improve my paper.” Despite feeling uncomfortable, Erica experienced an advance in her self-efficacy after the peer workshop. Erica’s ebbs and flows of self-efficacy during the peer workshop are similar to those of apprehensive writers. Buley-Meissner explains that students tend to be apprehensive about writing when they know that their work is going to be evaluated. However, she writes that these students do not dislike evaluation itself: “They worried about it; they felt uncomfortable about it; but they also seemed to accept it as a necessary part of learning to write” (6). These vertical fluctuations help to describe Erica’s self-efficacy levels as she composes and to generate a more accurate description of her efficacy perceptions as she engages with specific writing tasks. Even within a single moment in the drafting process, self-efficacy can fluctuate, an insight that suggests the importance of instructors attending to students as they engage with each task in the writing process. Even if students seem initially confident about their capabilities, it does not mean that they will be confident in every aspect of the particular writing task.

Davy experienced vertical fluctuations most often before revising the second draft. He responded with 3s to the statements, “I can appropriately follow grammar and punctuation
conventions,” and “I can edit and proofread my paper.” It’s important to note that these responses followed his self-selected moment wherein he experienced a decline in his overall self-efficacy. In that moment, he noted, “I just could not get myself to write how I typically did…it just didn’t sound like my own typical style that time, for some reason.” In his initial interview, Davy wrote that he was most confident in his unique writing style: “It’s kind of unique; I tend to try to use more semicolons, like quotations, hyphens that kind of thing to make things a bit more different than what typical students write.” After his bad experience with writer’s block, Davy’s confidence in his grammar, punctuation, and proofreading seem to have declined. However, he still responded with a 6 that he is capable of writing complete, coherent sentences, and that he can invest a great deal of time and effort into revising his work. It seems probable that perhaps some of the reason that Davy’s self-efficacy level had not fully recovered from the sudden decline was because of his lack of confidence in certain writing tasks such as editing and proofreading. These findings indicate that some writing tasks might hold more sway with students’ self-efficacy than others.

In sum, the vertical shifts in response to the self-assessed writing tasks indicate that each of these tasks does not weigh equally on students’ self-efficacy, a finding consistent with Bandura’s earlier studies of efficacy perceptions. Bandura explains that efficacy expectations differ in magnitude, generality, and strength (194). Therefore, some expectations have a stronger or greater pull than others. Additionally, Bandura’s “Guide for Constructing Self-Efficacy Scales,” encourages researchers to include criteria for the assessed task ranging from minute and specific to broad and general. He provides the example of someone’s efficacy expectations to lose weight; perceived self-efficacy will account for more variation in weight if the researcher accounts for “perceived capability to regulate food purchases, eating habits, and physical exercise than if it is confined solely to eating habits” (310). Similarly, by attending to the various tasks required to be successful at each point of the composing process, we can paint a more accurate picture of the ebbs and flows of self-efficacy as students engage with a single assignment involving multiple drafts. As aforementioned, given that self-efficacy will fluctuate, composition instructors might allow for check-ins with their students, thus enabling them to intervene to help students better achieve their goals. However, vertical shifts indicate that fluctuations in efficacy perceptions occur not only from moment to moment in the composing process, but also ebb and flow within each discrete moment. Checking in with students at various
points in the writing process can only do so much and is unlikely to account for vertical shifts while in task. Therefore, composition studies might consider metacognitive awareness of self-efficacy as an indirect or unwritten outcome for composition courses. Much like theories of transfer that claim that the best way to foster transfer is through explicitly guiding students to make the connections necessary for transfer, compositionists might work to make students more aware of their self-efficacy beliefs as well as in what ways and to what extent those beliefs can impact their writing. In D.N. Perkins and Gavriel Salomon’s words, we can be “good shepherds” of self-efficacy. Similarly, Susan McLeod explains that "teaching people how to interpret sensory input" is not a new practice (433). She offers the example of medical patients who are told that they are going to experience "pressure" rather than pain (433). If we tell students to expect fluctuations in their self-efficacy beliefs, they are better able to attend to that information as "normal" rather than threatening. By working to develop metacognitive awareness, composition instructors can help students develop and practice strategies for interpreting and coping with shifts in their efficacy perceptions. Such awareness would allow for students to monitor their own self-efficacy beliefs and account for both when fluctuations are likely to occur and what factors in the writing process are likely to trigger them.

**What, if any, factors in the writing process trigger those fluctuations?**

As mentioned in the previous section, the students experienced both horizontal and vertical shifts in their self-efficacy beliefs as they engaged with the writing process. Yet the moments in the writing process did not trigger ebbs and flows of self-efficacy alone. Instead, as the students progressed through the assignment, they dealt with a myriad of factors that could trigger an advance, decline, or reinforcement of their self-efficacy beliefs. In this section, I seek to unpack what factors in the writing process trigger fluctuations in students’ self-efficacy beliefs. In order to do so, I make three moves. First, I examine which of Bandura’s four sources of efficacy beliefs the students drew from to inform their self-efficacy. Second, I describe the relationship between the sources students drew from to determine their self-efficacy and the levels of efficacy they report. Finally, I explore whether there is a correlation between which sources students rely on and the point or points in the process in which they experience fluctuations.
In order to determine which sources the students drew on to inform their self-efficacy perceptions, I coded their qualitative reflections for Bandura’s four sources of efficacy beliefs: performance accomplishments, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, and physiological reactions. Both Erica and Davy reported that performance accomplishments, verbal persuasion, and physiological reactions played a role in determining their self-efficacy beliefs. Vicarious experience did not seem to be a significant factor. Erica’s self-efficacy sources were nearly split into thirds; performance accomplishments comprised 29 percent, social persuasion comprised 41 percent, and physiological reactions comprised 30 percent (see Fig. 5). Davy’s sources were much more skewed: physiological reactions comprised 67 percent, social persuasion comprised 27 percent, and performance accomplishments comprised 6 percent (see Fig. 6). These data

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5 When asked directly about vicarious experience during an interview, Erica stated that she does not assume that her writing performance will be as good as someone she perceives as having similar abilities to her, while Davy said that he would. However, vicarious experience did not present as a factor in the qualitative reflections, nor did it come up naturally during the interview. Perhaps vicarious experience was absent from the questionnaires because writing is not directly observable. They might see the written products that their group members or other peers submit, but the process of writing the assignment involves internal factors that are difficult, if not impossible to observe. So, while they could hypothetically imagine their reaction to vicarious experience when asked, it probably did not influence their writing efficacy beliefs in practice.
suggest that the sources students draw from to determine their self-efficacy beliefs vary from student to student. While Bandura maintains that performance accomplishments are the most influential source of self-efficacy beliefs, he also explains, “The impact of information on efficacy expectations will depend on how it is cognitively appraised. A number of contextual factors, including the social, situational, and temporal circumstances under which events occur, enter into such appraisals” (200). Accordingly, for this assignment, the sources that the students drew from to form their efficacy perceptions may be influenced by these contextual factors.

![Davy's Self-Efficacy Sources](image)

**Figure 6: Davy's Self-Efficacy Sources from Qualitative Reflections**

Furthermore, the source or sources that tend to be the most influential are more likely to trigger fluctuations as they engage with the writing process. For instance, if students primarily draw from social persuasion, the feedback that they receive from their instructor or peers is more likely to influence their self-efficacy perceptions than their prior experiences. As a result, knowing what sources tend to be the most influential to students as they compose enables composition instructors to adjust our pedagogies to account for potential shifts in self-efficacy. Additionally, since not all students interpret these sources in the same way, awareness of what sources students draw from allows instructors to better respond to their students’ needs as they are composing.
Both students indicated that performance accomplishments were a source of their efficacy beliefs. While neither Erica nor Davy had past experience composing the kind of writing their instructor assigned them, they both drew from performance accomplishments to derive their efficacy perceptions. Accordingly, performance accomplishments influenced the students’ levels of self-efficacy as they engaged with the writing process. This influence occurred in two specific ways: 1) Davy used his past experiences with academic writing in general to inform his self-efficacy and 2) Erica slowly built up performance accomplishments as she progressed through the assignment. Davy derived his initial self-efficacy beliefs from his past performances in academic writing. Davy explained that he typically performs well on writing assignments and thus assumed that he will do well on this project, too. He had gotten good grades on the last two projects for the class, and in his interview, he said that his confidence is typically above average. In one of his qualitative reflections, Davy wrote, “In the past, revising essays have been easy, and constructive criticism has helped me boost papers.” His past successes with academic writing informed his self-efficacy; because he had been successful in the past, he perceived himself as capable of success in the future. After reading the assignment sheet, Davy responded with a 6 in his questionnaire, to the statement, “I can successfully compose this assignment,” regardless of having no experience composing a college magazine article or a website. Davy’s assumption is consistent with Mary Jo Reiff and Anis Bawarshi’s research, which indicates that students often draw from experience composing within the same domain (324). That is, even if they have experience composing in outside of academia, such as work or personal writing, they are unlikely to draw from those experiences when composing an academic paper (324). Reiff and Bawarshi caution that this practice can lead to “unwarranted confidence in task recognition and use of prior knowledge” (324). Therefore, Davy might have perceived the writing assignment as similar to those he has successfully completed, but, if it differed significantly, he might have drawn from resources and strategies that are unlikely to have helped him confidently compose in this new genre. For Davy, this claim appears to be accurate. As he progressed through the assignment, he reported a decline in his ability to compose the assignment successfully. Davy wrote, “I slowly felt my control slip away from me during the revising of this draft, the abrupt cluster that had occurred knocked me off the typical path, and trekked to areas less traveled.” Near the end of the study, he reported his belief that he could successfully compose the assignment as a 2, a drastic change from his initial confidence. Davy derived only 6 percent of
his self-efficacy perceptions from performance accomplishments, meaning that it was not as
strong as an influence as either social persuasion or physiological reactions. Therefore, as he
progressed though the assignment, he began to receive input from other efficacy sources, which
had more of an effect on his perceptions. His past successes with writing were not influential
enough to his beliefs to prevent the decline in his self-efficacy while composing the second draft.

As aforementioned, both students drew from performance accomplishments to advance
their self-efficacy levels. While Davy relied on past successes composing academic writing,
Erica formed her self-efficacy beliefs from small successes as she progressed through the
drafting process. Erica derived 29 percent—nearly a third—of her efficacy perceptions from
performance accomplishments. Mastery experience was crucial to her perception of future
capabilities. However, since she did not feel like she had adequate experience to draw from, she
developed performance accomplishments with smaller successes throughout the composing
process. For instance, Erica explained that, when she first began this writing assignment, she felt
like a “deer in headlights” because the types of writing she was asked to complete were unlike
any other writing she had done in high school. Erica said that her confidence at the beginning of
this assignment was low, and she responded with a 3 to the statement “I can successfully
compose this assignment.” She claimed that she needed to teach herself from scratch how to
compose in ENC 1101. In her initial interview, Erica said, “AP classes are supposed to reflect
what we’re doing in college, at least on the English side, because in the math and science side so
far it has, but on the English side it’s completely different.” Writing in her AP English classes
did not provide her with a sense of experience composing in college, let alone a magazine article
or a website. Reiff and Bawarshi claim that students often reference their high school writing
experiences, particularly college preparatory or advanced placement English courses, as
contributing to their perceived future successes in college writing (322). Yet, when students
realize that their high school experiences are less applicable to their new writing tasks, they need
to develop new strategies. Erica wrote, “I feel as though I need a draft or two before I can feel
comfortable that I am headed in the right direction or even have anything good to work with in
the paper.” As she progressed through the drafting process, Erica steadily grew more confident in
her ability to compose this assignment. As she achieved small successes, like praise from her
instructor during a conference or positive feedback from her group during peer review, Erica
began to feel more comfortable and experienced composing her assignment. As she was revising
her second draft, Erica wrote, “I wanted to have a break down and quit at life with English and just not write the essay. However, now that I know what I’m doing, I have complete confidence that I can get out of this paper with a B and get a high B in the class.” As she moved through the drafting process, Erica gained successful performance accomplishments and accordingly experienced an advance in her sense of efficacy. Erica’s development of performance accomplishments could be thought of in terms of gaining genre knowledge. In the writing classroom, students are expected to learn both the rules of the genre they are asked to compose in as well as the variations within that genre, thus resulting in genre knowledge. Amy Devitt defines genre knowledge as "knowing not only, or even most of all, how to conform to generic conventions but also how to respond appropriately to a given situation" (577). As Erica progresses through the unfamiliar assignment, she gradually became more familiar with the conventions and expectations of the genre. Devitt claims that genre can contribute to our understanding of the writing process, specifically in determining where writers’ goals come from and how writers’ know what to change when revising (581). As Erica gained experience composing in the genres of the assignment, she was better able to articulate her goals and determine what to revise in order to be successful, thus contributing to her self-efficacy.

Another important factor that triggers fluctuations in self-efficacy is social persuasion. Bandura explains that verbal or social persuasion is often used to influence human behavior because of its “ease and ready availability” (198). Through suggestion, people are led to believe that they can successfully handle a situation that has previously overwhelmed them (198). Although social persuasion certainly can affect behavior, Bandura contends that it tends to be less effective than mastery experience (198). However, my data suggests otherwise: both students refer to social persuasion in their qualitative reflections more often than performance accomplishments. Erica references social persuasion 41 percent of her coded references compared to 29 percent performance accomplishments. Davy refers to social persuasion 27 percent of his coded references compared to 6 percent performance accomplishments. Granted, simply because social persuasion presented more frequently does not necessarily mean that it had a stronger influence than performance accomplishments. It is possible that the students were simply more aware of the effect of social persuasion on their confidence levels, a potential limitation of self-reported data. Even so, social persuasion did present as a factor that triggered fluctuations in self-efficacy. As mentioned earlier, both Erica and Davy indicated that
constructive feedback influenced their confidence while composing the assignment. Erica explained during her initial interview that her instructor provided her with criticism during a conference that helped her to compose the next draft: “I mean, like, it’s criticism. It’s constructive. It helps. It helps me write my next…It helped me write my third draft.” While showing other people her work makes her feel uncomfortable and judged, she knows that it is extremely important to her writing: “The feedback that I get makes me feel more comfortable because I am told that my paper is not as bad as I thought it was and that only a few things need to be tweaked and it helps to bring up my confidence level because the paper is not as crappy as I made it out to be in my head.” However, Erica noted that not all social persuasion advances her self-efficacy. She explained that this peer workshop “helped to instill some confidence” because she “didn’t feel as though they were tearing every part of [her] paper apart and not leaving any positive feedback behind.” Therefore, the types of feedback that peers and instructors provide can be critical to students’ self-efficacy.

For Davy, even the anticipation of receiving feedback advanced his self-efficacy. In his second questionnaire, he wrote, “I’ve honestly been kind of stumped so far with this first rough draft, but I know my instructor and classmates will be there to help out,” and on the same questionnaire he responded with a 6 to the statement, “I can successfully compose this assignment.” He praised the merits of peer review and said, “Peer workshops are a concept that should be used more often in the classroom.” Additionally, Davy said that he wished he had gotten more feedback from his instructor, especially right after his rough patch: “I’d say kinda getting more input from my instructor. That would definitely be another factor I could’ve used more…Probably after I realized I was in that rough spot. I’d say right before and right after to see what he saw as a difference in my writing style and what else I could do to help improve myself.” In sum, social persuasion was a significant factor in Davy’s self-efficacy beliefs, especially as it advanced his self-efficacy when he lacked confidence is his writing ability. Much like performance accomplishments, social persuasion seemed to trigger only advances in self-efficacy for both students, rather than declines.

Given the importance of social persuasion to the students’ self-efficacy perceptions, these data have significant implications for peer review. The positive experiences both students reported after participating in the peer workshop demonstrates the relationship between peer review and student confidence. In their study regarding students’ perspectives and attitudes on
peer review, Charlotte Brammer and Mary Rees claim that students are more likely to feel confident about their ability to review their peers’ work and to see peer review as a valuable activity if they see peer review as purposeful and if their instructors commit to the activity by spending time discussing it and offering training. Additionally, Richard Straub advises students to think of peer reviewing as test piloting. Straub suggests that for students to feel comfortable giving and receiving peer feedback, they should consider the context of the assignment, limit the scope of their feedback to the most important issues, talk to the writer like a helpful friend, and explain all comments clearly. In so doing, students are more likely to feel confident offering feedback and are more likely to view the feedback they receive as helpful. Because Erica and Davy had such positive responses to the peer workshop, it seems likely that the students who participated in the workshop were, perhaps, prepared for and effective in offering constructive feedback to their peers. By emphasizing the importance of peer review and the role of collaborative learning in the composition classroom, instructors can help students to see peer review as a valuable activity. Moreover, instructors can help students to develop and practice strategies for effectively offering feedback to their peers. In so doing, peer review can be used to help bolster students’ self-efficacy levels as they compose a writing assignment.

Finally, students’ physiological reactions when composing can trigger a fluctuation in self-efficacy levels. These physiological reactions can be either positive, such as excitement or a state some students refer to as “flow,” or negative, such as writer’s block, anxiety, or discomfort. Unlike performance accomplishments and social persuasion, physiological reactions were associated with both advances and declines in the students’ self-efficacy levels. Davy, for example, derived much of his efficacy perceptions from his physiological reactions, which comprised 67 percent of his references to self-efficacy sources. Davy explained that his mood makes a difference in his writing: “Honestly, all depends on my mood and how I feel my paper is going.” When he is excited, he has higher self-efficacy, but when he experiences writer’s block or anxiety, his self-efficacy declines. In his initial interview, Davy said, “I’d say, like, once everything is rolling, like, I’m good. I’m excited. I’m enjoying the paper, but say, once I get stuck, it’s not like I get panicky, but I kinda…it’s like what am I going to do? Do I…do I try this? No, that doesn’t work, and I start to over think my…like, everything.” Additionally, Davy knew that his emotions were likely to fluctuate as he wrote. He noted that usually he experiences writer’s block at least once per assignment, but that it usually dissipates after he takes a break.
and comes back to it. However, during this assignment, Davy claimed that his emotions shifted far more than usual and that, once the writer’s block hit, it was harder to shake. At the beginning of the assignment, Davy wrote that assignments like this one were brand new to him, but “quite invigorating,” and later in his second questionnaire, he wrote, “This paper has been an interesting start for me. I’m usually not used to group projects. I’m definitely out of my comfort zone right now, but I kind of like it.” He explained that, even though he felt out-of-control with this type of writing, he saw this project as a challenge that he was capable of completing successfully. Yet, as he continued drafting, the weight of the challenge overwhelmed him: “…when I felt, like, out of control, like, everything was falling apart, that was more of a freaking out aspect instead of the more exciting. It was something new. I was like ‘Oh, cool, this is something new to learn, something new to try,’ but then, after a while, I was kinda like, ‘I tried it, I didn’t like it.’ I’m kinda freaking out at this point.” He explained that he “lost his confidence entirely” and began to experience anxiety and writer’s block. Such fluctuations resonate with insights offered by Reiff and Bawarshi, who note that students are sometimes initially confident regarding unfamiliar writing assignments, yet this confidence begins to “wane” as they realize the complexity of the task (326). At first, composing in a new genre was exciting and invigorating for Davy. However, as the challenges built upon one other, he eventually felt overwhelmed and lost. Thus, he experienced a decline in his overall sense of efficacy.

Similarly, Erica also referred to physiological reactions for both advances and declines in her self-efficacy. When she felt “out of control” she was nervous and worried, which contributed to her lower levels of self-efficacy. On the first questionnaire, Erica wrote, “I am very nervous for this assignment because we are in the early stages and I am stressing out about the paper when I have not even managed to put any ideas together to form a sensible thought.” On this same questionnaire, Erica responded with a 3 to the statement, “I can successfully compose this assignment.” Her anxiety about being able to meet the expectations of the assignment contributed to her lower efficacy levels. However, Erica also remarked that writing under a deadline helps her to feel more efficacious about her writing. She said that she “writes[s] better under pressure” and that doing so helps the “flow” of her writing: “For some reason, even in high school, I could not start a paper early and feel confident that it was going to be a good paper.” The excitement of writing with a deadline facilitated her writing, and helped her to feel more confident in her writing abilities. Physiological reactions, then, can both advance and erode a
writer’s self-efficacy, depending on what the reaction is, how strong the reaction is, and when it is experienced. These findings are consistent with McLeod's insights about writing anxiety. McLeod claims that often studies regarding writing anxiety suggest that emotions have only negative effects on writers; however, she explains that "emotions can be enabling as well as crippling" (428). Yet, whether physiological reactions have a positive or a negative effect is largely determined by the cognitive interpretation of sensory data. McLeod writes that although there are plenty of cognitive reasons to explain students' distress, these theories do little to explain why "competent" writers experience such high levels of anxiety or frustration. She suggests that George Mandler's theory of emotions offers some insight into this phenomenon: "some competent writers, because of their beliefs, perhaps, interpret physiological arousal in negative terms" (432). Students may experience similar emotional states and physiological reactions, such as butterflies in the stomach, but interpret them differently. One student might view the feeling as excitement while another might view it as fear or anxiety. For Erica, the cognitive interpretation of her physiological reactions seemed tethered to her writing process. In the earlier points of the process, she interpreted her emotions as anxiety, and thus, they were debilitating. However, as the deadline loomed closer, she interpreted her emotions as pressure, which she viewed as enabling. Consequently, her confidence in her ability to compose the assignment successfully increased.

These data suggest that composition instructors should devote more attention to the emotional states that affect student writers as they compose. As aforementioned, metacognition might prove to be a salient way to attend to fluctuations. McLeod references Lester Faigley’s claim that one way composition instructors can help students to write better is to help increase their awareness of the cognitive processes involved in their composing and revising (433). Similarly, McLeod states that we might examine how expert writers manage their emotional states while composing, and use those strategies as models with our students (433). Accordingly, we can help students to interpret physiological reactions in ways that can be enabling rather than debilitating: "We can work out specific coping strategies to help students control their affective reactions--monitoring their emotional state, allocating their energy, stopping themselves when they are over-excited--so that their emotions work for them rather than against them" (433). Given that physiological reactions do have an effect on student writers' self-efficacy beliefs, teaching students how to interpret and monitor these emotional states could help them to feel in
control, increase their confidence in their writing abilities, and, perhaps, advance their efficacy perceptions.

Furthermore, the students did not experience performance accomplishments, social persuasion, and physiological reactions equally throughout the assignment. Often, the sources of efficacy beliefs were closely associated with a point or points in the writing process. As Table 2 and Table 3 indicate below, references to each self-efficacy source vary across the cued and self-selected moments of the composing process. Given the ways in which the students drew from the sources to determine their self-efficacy beliefs, these findings are unsurprising. However, they do allow us better insight into the specific ways that students’ self-efficacy intersects with

### Table 2: Self-Efficacy Sources Distributed by Points in the Writing Process (Davy)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>After Reviewing Assignment Sheet</th>
<th>Before Revising Rough Draft</th>
<th>After Participating in Peer Workshop</th>
<th>Composing Second Draft</th>
<th>Before Revising Second Draft</th>
<th>Revising the Second Draft</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Performance Accomplishments</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Persuasion</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physiological Reactions</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 3: Self-Efficacy Sources Distributed by Points in the Writing Process (Erica)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>After Reviewing Assignment Sheet</th>
<th>Before Revising Rough Draft</th>
<th>After Participating in Peer Workshop</th>
<th>Composing Second Draft</th>
<th>Before Revising Second Draft</th>
<th>Revising the Second Draft</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Performance Accomplishments</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Persuasion</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physiological Reactions</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
the writing process. On the one hand, as aforementioned, Davy relied on performance accomplishments very little, and used his past successes with academic writing to predict future success on the assignment. Therefore, it stands to reason that he really only referred to performance accomplishments after reviewing the assignment sheet and before revising the rough draft. After those points, however, he began to rely more on other efficacy sources. The reasons may be twofold: 1) performance accomplishments were not particularly strong influences on Davy’s self-efficacy to begin with and 2) at this point in the assignment, he might have realized that his past successes were less applicable to his current writing task than he anticipated. Erica, on the other hand, relied on performance accomplishments throughout the writing process, which echoes my earlier discussion of how she developed performance accomplishments with smaller successes to advance her self-efficacy.

As one would expect, social persuasion was most often referenced after participating in a peer workshop. This correlation makes sense given that the nature of workshopping is providing feedback to others about their writing, and this feedback has the capacity to advance, decline, or reinforce self-efficacy beliefs. As I mentioned previously, both students experienced an advance in their efficacy perceptions after participating in a peer workshop. They reported that receiving feedback from their peers was crucial to their confidence when composing. Erica stated that even though she did not like showing her work to other students, she knew it was ultimately helpful. Erica wrote on her third questionnaire, “The peer workshop made me feel as though I was going in a decent direction and gave me other ideas to think about.” Getting positive feedback during the peer review helped Erica to feel more confident moving forward with the assignment and her writing in general. Davy explained that he normally has positive experiences with peer review but that he wishes the feedback was sometimes more directive. Even so, he wrote, “I would most definitely say it was helpful for aiding me in my writing process.” However, after participating in the peer review was not the only spike in references to social persuasion. Erica also reported social persuasion as a significant factor after reviewing the assignment sheet. At this stage in the writing process, she felt uncertain and anxious but anticipated that receiving feedback would be helpful: “The criticism that is provided has always proved to be helpful and allowed me to go in the direction my paper needs to go.” In other words, Erica was well aware that social persuasion weighed heavily on her self-efficacy, especially to advance her moderately low confidence about writing. Accordingly, she rarely let her anxiety about the assignment overwhelm her; she knew
that if she encountered difficulties, she could conference with her instructor or ask her group
mates for feedback. Similarly, Davy deliberately relied on social persuasion to help advance his
self-efficacy when he lost his confidence while composing the second draft. Davy explained that
his peers reassured him that his writing was okay, even after he experienced his sudden decline.
Even though he was unhappy with the way his writing sounded, his peers boosted his
confidence: “At first, this sounds rough when your confidence is low, but the group insisted it
sounded the same as ever, which was a good thing in their eyes.” After talking to his group,
Davy felt better about his writing and thus experienced a slight advance in his self-efficacy. In
the fourth questionnaire, before revising the second draft, Davy wrote, “This feedback from my
peers has been crucial to boosting my confidence again and bringing back my original full
strength creativity.” Accordingly, his response the question, “I can successfully compose this
assignment,” moved from a 2 to a 4. His peers’ feedback at this point in the process enabled him
to begin regaining his writing confidence. In sum, social persuasion presented as a positive
source of self-efficacy perceptions most frequently after participating in the peer workshop.

Physiological reactions did not appear to correspond to any specific point or points in the
writing process, or at least, they did not assume primary importance at any specific point.
Instead, physiological reactions were almost like background noise that the students had to
mediate throughout the composing process. For Davy, they occurred at every cued and self-
selected moment aside from the peer review. However, whether his physiological reactions were
positive (resulting in an advance of self-efficacy) or negative (resulting in a decline of self-
efficacy) did relate to when the reactions were experienced in the process. Earlier in the process,
such as after reviewing the assignment sheet and before revising the rough draft, Davy’s
physiological reactions were largely positive. He wrote about enjoying the assignment and
feeling excited by the challenges that the writing task presents: “The prompts make me think
analytically and creatively, making for a process that makes me look forward to writing.” He felt
“in control” of the assignment. However, as he progressed into the later stages of the process,
such as composing the second draft, his physiological reactions turned negative. He was plagued
by writer’s block, and reported feeling “lost and out of control.” It seems as though his
physiological reactions were, at first, enabling and helpful; but then, as they built up, they
became inhibitive and crippling to both his writing and his self-efficacy. Erica’s experience was
almost the reverse of Davy’s. She started by experiencing negative physiological reactions. She
was nervous, anxious, and stressed after reviewing the assignment sheet and before revising the rough draft. However, as she progressed to revising the second draft, her physiological reactions turned more positive: “And then, I, like, turn in the final draft. I’m like, ‘You freak yourself out for nothing.’ And then, like, just by the end of…when I turn it in it’s like a wave of relief because it’s done.” Erica never really experienced the enjoyment or excitement from writing that Davy initially felt—perhaps because she just does not like writing—but she does experience a sense of relief when the assignment is over. While physiological reactions do not seem to assume primary importance at any particular moment in the writing process, they do significantly impact the students’ efficacy perceptions.

In each of the above instances, the students relied on different sources at different points in the writing process. While many of these results are unsurprising, such as relying on social persuasion to determine efficacy perceptions after participating in a peer review, they do allow compositionists to better see how these factors intersect with the writing process. Therefore, as instructors seek to check in with their students and help them to develop and practice metacognitive strategies, they might be able to better predict what sources of efficacy beliefs are likely to challenge students efficacy perceptions and what sources are likely to raise, lower, or reinforce those perceptions as needed. For instance, if a student reports feeling lowered self-efficacy after participating in a peer review, an instructor might assume that the student received negative feedback. The instructor can then work with the student to help improve his or her writing and, subsequently, self-efficacy. These data also reinforce the need to teach students strategies to monitor and interpret their physiological reactions. Since physiological reactions did not appear to correspond to any particular points in the writing process, it would seem likely that they occur—positively or negatively—throughout composing. As a result, instructors might help students to interpret this emotional input in a way that is enabling rather than debilitating.

**What, if any, strategies do students evolve to address fluctuations?**

Over the course of the study, several strategies emerged as ways the students in my case study prepared for or coped with potential fluctuations in their efficacy beliefs. In order to prepare in advance for potential challenges to their senses of efficacy, the two students in this study developed specific action plans for their writing process. For example, Erica wrote, “The process I go through to revise my essay is that when I write the first one it is a plan of what
direction I see my essay going in, later when I start to actually write a draft I write a couple of pages of complaints so it is all out of my head for when I start." She expanded on this idea during her interviews. Essentially, she just needed to put something on the page, even if it was a list of excuses and complaints, in order to get past the initial anxiety she experienced when composing. Erica also typically wrote her body paragraphs first and her introduction and conclusion last because by that point she had a better sense of “what I want to do, what the teacher wants to see, and what is generally going on.” Another of Erica’s strategies was to write with pressure for a deadline. She knew that she wrote best under pressure, and so if she experienced difficulty writing early, she waited until closer to the due date: “And then I’m like, you know what? You know how you roll. We’re just gonna wait until, you know, Wednesday before it’s due, and we’re just gonna type out a paper, and then you’re gonna go through and edit it like you always do.” Because she anticipated difficulty starting on a writing assignment, Erica had strategies in place to help her to handle the inevitable challenges to her self-efficacy. While some of Erica’s strategies were helpful, such as waiting to write the introduction and conclusion last—a strategy that composition instructors often offer their students—others were less beneficial. Buley-Meissner explains the situation of Isaac, a nonnative English speaker with high writing apprehension. Like Erica, Isaac waited to start working on writing assignments: “The longer he waited, the more pressure he felt to produce something, anything that would fill the black pages of his composition notebook” (7). However, this pressure can sometimes lead to rushed or disorganized written products. Moreover, procrastinating on an assignment in order to feel “pressure” did not really help Erica to develop performance accomplishments, an important source of her self-efficacy beliefs. Instead, she might be better served following the advice of Buley-Meissner: “…time spent procrastinating had to be changed into time spent imagining, pursuing, and shaping concrete possibilities for…class essays” (7). Similarly, composition instructors might offer strategies to help students avoid procrastination. They might set more frequent deadlines for smaller pieces of the assignment, encourage students to set realistic goals, practice time management skills, and break down large tasks into smaller, more approachable ones. Ultimately, composition instructors can help students develop more effective strategies to resist lowered self-efficacy states and to bolster their confidence when composing.

Additionally, Davy explained that he works to manage his expectations. In his first questionnaire, Davy wrote, “I do my best to keep my expectations for a project at the same level
if not higher than my instructor’s.” He also mentioned expectations in his first interview. He said, “I try to stay…not like open-minded, but I kinda like to make sure I’m not expecting something you’re not going to get. Like get your hopes up for a situation.” Davy tried to keep his expectations both high and reasonable—a rather difficult balance. However, it was one way in which he prepared for potential shifts in his self-efficacy. While Davy’s strategy to manage expectations sounds well and good, he neglected to explain how he managed his expectations. He believed that having both high and reasonable expectations are things that writers should do, but seemed unprepared to take the steps necessary to maintain this expectation when he encountered challenges to his self-efficacy perceptions. Another potential problem is that Davy identified himself as a skilled writer with high confidence in his writing abilities. As mentioned in Chapter 1, Reiff and Bawarshi suggest that confidence can be an indicator of the types of transfer with which students will engage to complete unfamiliar writing tasks (325). Students who expressed lower confidence were more likely to break down their previous genre experience into strategies and were more likely to draw from a composite of genres to complete the assignment (325). Students who expressed higher self-confidence generally named fewer strategies for composing and were more likely to apply whole genres to the assignment, even when it was less appropriate for the situation (325). Davy likely did not have concrete strategies in place to manage his expectations because he had not encountered challenges to his self-efficacy from which he could not recover. Perhaps he was accustomed to having high expectations that were reasonable given his past performances on writing assignments, and, since he identified as a confident writer, he did not rely much on strategies so much as holistic experience. Instructor intervention and metacognitive awareness might help Davy to develop strategies to help manage his expectations as he composes in new or unfamiliar situations. Given that self-efficacy fluctuates, instructors might take up McLeod’s suggestion to find out how professional writers monitor and manage their emotional states while composing and then teach those strategies to their students.

When their strategies to prepare for fluctuations did not work, the students developed methods of coping, that is, strategies that helped them to either raise their efficacy levels or at least prevent them from declining further. These coping strategies included help seeking, rubber ducking, pushing through the difficult section, or, when all else failed, taking a break. Because both students reported an advance in self-efficacy after participating in a peer workshop and
indicated social persuasion as a particularly influential factor, help seeking was an important strategy. Davy said that he typically goes to his friends, parents, or his instructor to help him with his writing. When he encountered serious writer’s block, feedback from his peers was especially helpful: “I overcame these obstacles through working with my peers on techniques and receiving insight on what could be emphasized throughout my paper.” Erica also mentioned that speaking to her instructor and her peers was helpful for making her feel like she was on track with the assignment. She explained, “What has helped though with those drafts is to have someone read them even though I do not want them to read it.” Seeking out help from their peers or instructors was instrumental to advancing the students’ self-efficacy beliefs throughout the writing process. Another interesting strategy that emerged was “rubber ducking.” Davy explained that it is an IT term, meaning when a person talks to an inanimate object to figure out how to fix a problem. Davy noted that he talked to his stapler when he felt the challenge of the assignment to be overwhelming. Doing so helped him “address the problems that are there and in the process, it’ll hit you like what the problem was and how to solve it.” This strategy was particularly important for Davy, who acknowledged that his state of writer’s block typically involves over-thinking. Talking to his stapler allowed him to get out of his own head and progress with his draft. Additionally, both Erica and Davy had moments where they reported “pushing through” the challenging sections of their writing. Davy said that sometimes he just “types through” feelings of frustration. At his lowest point of self-efficacy, he wrote, “I attempted to overcome these obstacles through my usual routine, but nothing had worked. I pushed through the writing and turned it in.” Similarly, Erica said that she would sometimes “hit enter a couple of times and just start typing…see how it sounds, see if I can get a formation of an idea to continue in the next sentence.” If that did not work, she often pushed through by working on another section.

Finally, both students reported the need to take breaks and do something else, especially when they encountered writer’s block. For Davy, taking a break usually meant listening to music. He said, “I’ll listen to [show tunes] and it kind of helps me to relax. I’ll take my mind off that for about ten minutes and hopefully come back with, like, a fresh set of eyes to look at the paper and go from there.” Usually, taking a break worked for Davy, and he could finish up his draft pretty easily afterwards, but during this assignment that was not the case. He ended up having to try out new strategies, like cleaning his apartment:
I definitely was trying to get my mind off the paper and try to get back into it, but at the same time I think the procrastinating was kinda just me...’cause I felt like my writing wasn’t that good. I was trying to avoid the situation as a whole. Instead of trying to address it, I was kinda like maybe I should just do something else instead, something that I know I could be actually good at.

Cleaning his apartment was a way for Davy to try to regain control of some aspect of his life, especially when his usual strategies were not working. For Erica, taking a break meant doing something “mind-numbing like scroll through Facebook or Instagram” on her phone. It could not be an activity that is too engaging, like Sudoku: “I know not to play Sudoku because I’ll never resume my paper.” When Erica took a break, she needed to choose her activities carefully: it needed to be distracting enough to take her mind off the paper, but not too distracting to prevent her from going back to it.

By employing strategies to prepare for and cope with potential shifts in their self-efficacy beliefs, the students indicated that they were aware of how challenges presented by the specific writing tasks could affect their confidence while composing as well as their potential to mitigate the effects of these challenges. However, without guidance from composition instructors or professional writers, the strategies that the students developed may not be as effective or applicable to their situation as they could be. Erica and Davy’s pre-emptive strategies had varied results; Erica’s confidence seemed to advance as she moved through her strategies, but Davy’s declined. Perhaps this is because Erica developed her strategies though trial and error. For instance, she noted in her initial interview that she tried—multiple times—to start writing assignments ahead of time, but had little success. Davy, on the other hand, seemed to have little experience encountering challenges to his self-efficacy that required him to develop ways to maintain his high expectations. The students’ other strategies are largely reactive—ways of coping when something in the writing process goes wrong. A benefit of the strategies that the students developed is that they are flexible and can be applied to various moments throughout the drafting process. However, while many of these strategies, such as help seeking, rubber-ducking, and even taking a break can be helpful, they do little to help students interpret these challenges to their efficacy perceptions as normal, perhaps inevitable, parts of the writing process. Composition instructors, therefore, might work to help students develop a greater
awareness of the challenges they might expect while composing a writing assignment, and help them to practice flexible strategies they can employ as they encounter those challenges.

**Conclusion**

My interpretation of the data suggests that self-efficacy is not a stable state, but rather fluctuates as students engage with the challenges presented by a specific task. Both students’ self-efficacy perceptions ebb and flow over the course of the single writing assignment involving multiple drafts. However, not all of these fluctuations constituted a critical threshold shift. Often, certain points in the writing process triggered a minor shift in self-efficacy but did not constitute a critical threshold shift because the students were able to recover from the disturbance and remain within a valley of stability. Yet even minor shifts in self-efficacy perceptions can have a significant impact on students’ composing processes and their beliefs about themselves as writers, thus indirectly affecting the quality of their written products. As the above sections illustrate, compositionists need to attend to what points in the writing process wherein fluctuations are likely to occur, what factors in the writing process might trigger those fluctuations, and what strategies students evolve to address fluctuations. There are multiple ways in which compositionists might adjust their pedagogies to account for fluctuations in self-efficacy beliefs, but the thread that runs through each is metacognition. As composition instructors, we can put into place check-ins as students compose to better intervene in the writing process, we can explicitly teach our students how their beliefs can affect their writing, and we can help our students develop strategies to monitor and interpret their efficacy perceptions as they compose. However, each of these pedagogical moves depends on students’ metacognitive awareness and the benefits of fostering it through explicit classroom activities. Students need to be aware of how their beliefs shape their writing, learn to anticipate when and what will trigger fluctuations, and employ strategies to reinforce and bolster their self-efficacy beliefs.

While developing this kind of metacognition will take time and effort, I suspect that such practices are not so far removed from what our students already do as they compose. My case study data suggest that students can access the beliefs they hold about their writing capabilities and that they use those beliefs as predictors of their own performance outcomes. Not only did the students’ self-efficacy perceptions fluctuate throughout the composing process, but also they fluctuated in ways and at times that they anticipated. Both students were able to articulate what
factors or points in the process were likely to advance, decline, or reinforce their self-efficacy. For instance, Davy explained that his writing style heavily influenced his efficacy perceptions: when his writing style feels boring or bland, his efficacy declines. He also noted that he is usually very confident in his writing abilities, but that if he sees things not going well, he gets anxious. Similarly, Erica was aware that her confidence would go through a series of ups and downs. She predicted that as she progressed through the assignment, she would gradually feel more in control, and thus experience an advance in her self-efficacy. Both students’ beliefs about their ability to complete specific performance outcomes, such as writing with proper grammar or to better grasp the nature of the assignment did correspond to their efficacy expectations. This research suggests that if compositionists ask students to describe their beliefs about their writing abilities, these beliefs are probably fairly accurate predictors of their actual abilities. Much like the cognitive process movement advocates asking students if we want to know what they think, my data indicate that we might also want to ask students what they feel. By checking in with students and asking them to articulate their beliefs about their writing capabilities, instructors can help students develop metacognitive awareness of the ways in which their beliefs can influence their writing processes and subsequently, their written products. With this knowledge, composition instructors can make informed choices as they adjust their pedagogies to account for fluctuations, thus supporting students’ growth as writers and their self-efficacy as writers.
CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND FUTURE POSSIBILITIES

As stated in Chapter 1, Susan McLeod calls for compositionists to develop a “theory of affect” that would enrich our understanding of the interplay of cognition and affect vital to our teaching and learning (433). To that end, she proposes three avenues of inquiry: writing anxiety, motivation, and beliefs. While I agree that each of these broad areas offer valuable insight into the intersection of affect and cognition in writing studies, one specific area that needs more attention is self-efficacy. Self-efficacy operates as a mediating mechanism by which students interpret their emotional, sensory input. In fact, more so than any other internal construct, such as writing anxiety or motivation, self-efficacy has been proven to be predictive of performance outcomes in writing (McCarthy, Meier, and Rinderer; Pajares, “Self-Efficacy Beliefs, Motivation, and Achievement”; Pajares and Johnson; Schunk; Shell, Murphy, and Bruning). As students engage with their writing processes, students enter into an activity wherein they must mediate and interpret the skills they possess. These interpretations reflect the mediation of self-efficacy beliefs, and these beliefs can significantly enable or hinder student writers as they compose. Given this understanding, exploring the nature of the role self-efficacy plays in our students’ writing is of particular importance. Therefore, as one step toward developing a robust theory of affect as it connects with cognition, this study seeks to complicate and expound on the current understanding of self-efficacy for writing studies, and it does so through an investigation of changes in self-efficacy. Often, studies involving self-efficacy and writing present self-efficacy as a stable phenomenon in which students are assessed as having a certain efficacy level, which subsequently influences their written products. However, self-efficacy very probably fluctuates as students engage with the challenges presented by a specific writing task. Understanding the nature of potential fluctuations is important, then, both in a theory of self-efficacy and in teaching writing because such knowledge could advance composition pedagogy and support student learning. Accordingly, the goal of this study was to determine if self-efficacy fluctuates as students engage with a single assignment involving multiple drafts and, if so, how, when, and from what factors do these fluctuations occur. To answer this question, I asked three subordinate questions:

1. At what point or points in the writing process do fluctuations occur?
2. What, if any, factors in the writing process trigger those fluctuations?

3. What, if any, strategies do students evolve to address fluctuations?

These questions allow for generating a rich description of the ebbs and flows of self-efficacy in the writing of a single assignment, and thus lay the groundwork for determining what factors influence students’ perceptions of self-efficacy. This increased understanding of self-efficacy, specifically as it relates to fluctuations, would enable composition instructors to intervene more effectively in the writing process to help students better achieve their goals. Moreover, if self-efficacy fluctuates and if we understand the nature of that fluctuation, composition instructors can adjust their pedagogies in order to account for these shifts in self-efficacy beliefs. In so doing, we better support our students’ development as writers and their self-efficacy as writers, perhaps indirectly leading to improved written products. Finally, if we are able to advance students’ sense of efficacy through pedagogical interventions, we might provide our students with the confidence to experiment with their writing, and thus continue to grow as writers even after they leave the composition classroom.

In this concluding chapter, I make three moves. First, I summarize the findings of this thesis according to the aforementioned research questions and explain the implications of those results. Second, I address the limitations of the research project and thus the limitations of the findings that I have presented here. Finally, I outline possible future avenues for research concerning fluctuations in self-efficacy beliefs.

Summary of Results

Self-Efficacy Fluctuations

Based on the results of my case study, it seems clear that self-efficacy does fluctuate as students engage with a single assignment involving multiple drafts. In their initial interviews, Davy and Erica provided some insights into their generalized perceptions of their efficacy beliefs for writing. Davy appeared to possess higher self-efficacy, and described his confidence level when he writes as “above average.” Erica, in contrast, appeared to have lower self-efficacy. She explained that she did not perceive herself as a good writer, despite the grades that she receives on writing assignments. These perceptions were reaffirmed by the numeric responses to the first questionnaire, after reviewing the assignment sheet. Davy’s average response on this
questionnaire was 5.11 out of 6.00, while Erica’s average response was a 3.44 out of 6.00. These average numeric responses provide a generalized view of the students’ self-efficacy beliefs at an early moment in the composing process. Together, the responses from the initial interviews and these numeric data are significant because they provide a baseline, thus allowing for the identification of fluctuations.

As the students progressed through the assignment, their efficacy perceptions did, in fact, fluctuate. Erica’s self-efficacy steadily increased as she composed throughout the assignment while Davy’s dramatically decreased while composing the second draft, and then began to recover while revising the second draft. These fluctuations were reflected in the students’ qualitative reflections on both the cued and self-sponsored questionnaires. Of Davy’s coded references to self-efficacy levels, 50 percent indicate a decline, 36 percent indicate and advance, and 14 percent indicate reinforcement. Accordingly, because Davy reported significantly more decline than advance or reinforcement, it seems reasonable to conclude that he experienced an overall negative shift in self-efficacy beliefs as he composed the assignment. In contrast, Erica’s references to self-efficacy levels comprised on 67 percent advance, 17 percent decline, and 17 percent reinforce. Erica reported significantly more coded references to an advance in self-efficacy beliefs than either decline or reinforcement, and thus, very probably experienced an advance in her self-efficacy beliefs. These references to self-efficacy levels demonstrate that self-efficacy does fluctuate as students engage with various tasks throughout the writing process, thereby challenging traditional assumptions about the stability of self-efficacy in writing situations. Rather than considering self-efficacy as a relatively stable state in which students are assessed as having higher, middle, or lower self-efficacy, my research indicates that we need to account for the ways in which self-efficacy changes while students engage with writing tasks. These fluctuations confirm that students may feel efficacious at one point in the composing process, such as after participating in a peer workshop, but then feel anxious or insecure in another moment in the process, such as revising the second draft. However, the fluctuations manifested in different ways and to different degrees. Therefore, this study also explores at what point or points in the writing process fluctuations occurred as a means of better grasping the nature of potential shifts in self-efficacy.
Points of Fluctuation: Horizontal and Vertical Shifts

By examining when fluctuations occurred, my study situates self-efficacy fluctuations within students’ individual writing processes and pre-existing attitudes about writing, thus contributing to a more thorough understanding of the variables involved in potential self-efficacy shifts. Moreover, determining when fluctuations are likely to occur enables compositionists to intervene in the writing process to help students better achieve their goals and develop as writers. While analyzing the data from my case study, I observed two types of fluctuations: horizontal shifts and vertical shifts. Each type of shift offers a different way of understanding at which points in the writing process fluctuations occur.

Horizontal shifts, or shifts in self-efficacy that unfold from moment to moment during the composing process, were evident for both participants in the case study. Based on the responses to the questionnaires, the students’ self-efficacy perceptions shifted to some degree at each cued moment of the writing process and at the students’ self-selected moments, although the most prominent horizontal shifts occurred after participating in a peer workshop, before revising the rough draft, and while composing the second draft. Both Erica and Davy reported experiencing an advance in their self-efficacy perceptions after participating in a peer workshop. Both of their average quantitative responses notably increased, and they each explained in the qualitative reflections that the peer workshop was a helpful practice that bolstered their confidence while composing. These results have significant implications for peer review as a pedagogical practice. Because Erica and Davy had such positive experiences with peer reviewing, it seems likely that the students who participated in the workshop were, perhaps, prepared for and effective in offering productive feedback to their peers. Additionally, Erica experienced an advance in her self-efficacy before revising her rough draft. At this point in the composing process, she noted that she finally felt like she had a solid grasp of the assignment. After this point in the writing process, Erica’s self-efficacy continued to advance. Because Erica claimed that she often feels like she needs a draft or two before she can feel comfortable composing, it makes sense that her efficacy would advance as she progressed through the assignment. Finally, Davy experienced a significant horizontal fluctuation while composing the second draft, which was his self-selected moment. At this point in the drafting process, Davy reported feeling crippling writer’s block, which dealt a devastating blow to his confidence while composing the assignment. Even after this moment in the process, this fluctuation had lasting effects on his efficacy perceptions. In the
next questionnaire, before revising the second draft, his efficacy advanced slightly, but did not recover to his efficacy level before this decline. Thus, it is likely that this particular horizontal fluctuation constituted a critical threshold shift, a point at which a seemingly small change can have a sudden larger effect. In this case, a critical threshold shift is a fluctuation that pushes students out of their valley of stability into another efficacy state—either positive or negative—that is difficult if not impossible to reverse. Attending to horizontal shifts in self-efficacy, especially critical thresholds shifts, helps to determine at what points in the writing process self-efficacy might be most productively tracked. Moreover, because horizontal shifts occurred at different points in the writing process and to different degrees for each student, horizontal shifts further inform our understanding of process theory wherein compositionists attend to the unique writing processes for each individual student. In addition to students' cognitive processes, self-efficacy fluctuations impress the need to study affective processes as students compose. Given that self-efficacy will fluctuate, instructors can plan for these fluctuations in advance. In addition to increasing awareness of the ways in which self-efficacy beliefs affect student writers, instructors might allow for check-ins at key moments throughout the course, so that they are better positioned to offer encouragement or assistance as needed.

While I anticipated that self-efficacy would fluctuate horizontally across the assignment, I was surprised to find that self-efficacy also shifted vertically, that is, self-efficacy ebbed and flowed within each discrete moment of the writing process. Like horizontal shifts, vertical shifts occurred across each of the questionnaires, but some fluctuations were more frequent or drastic than others. For Erica, some of the most notable vertical shifts were after reviewing the assignment sheet and after participating in the peer workshop. For Davy, vertical fluctuations were most evident before revising the second draft. These vertical shifts indicate that each of the tasks needed to be successful at each point in the composing process did not weigh equally on the students’ self-efficacy beliefs. While the students might have felt capable with one specific task, other tasks might have been perceived as more challenging. Therefore, instructors may need to be more attentive as students engage with each task in the writing process. Even if students seem initially confident about their capabilities, it does not mean that they will be confident in every aspect of the particular writing task. Additionally, because these fluctuations seemed to occur relatively frequently, composition instructors might consider teaching students how to
monitor their self-efficacy levels and subsequently develop and practice strategies to help them cope with potential fluctuations and the factors in the writing process that might trigger them.

Factors that Triggered Fluctuations

As the students composed the assignment, they encountered multiple factors within the writing process that influenced their self-efficacy levels. These factors can trigger advances, declines, or reinforcements of the students’ efficacy perceptions and thus are worthy of note. To unpack these factors, I first examined which of Bandura’s four sources of efficacy beliefs the students drew from to form their self-efficacy beliefs. Both Erica and Davy reported that performance accomplishments, social persuasion, and physiological reactions played a role in determining their efficacy perceptions. Erica drew from these three sources relatively equally, while Davy’s sources were much more split. These data suggest that the sources students draw from to determine their efficacy beliefs vary from study to student and that the more influential sources are most likely to trigger fluctuations. Moreover, while the students drew from these sources to varying degrees, they also interpreted the sources differently. For instance, while both Davy and Erica reported that performance accomplishments influenced their self-efficacy levels as they composed, they drew from past experiences in different ways: 1) Davy used his past experiences with academic writing in general to inform his self-efficacy and 2) Erica slowly built up performance accomplishments as she progressed through the assignment. Accordingly, performance accomplishments helped to advance Davy’s self-efficacy beliefs towards the beginning of the writing process, but then dwindled as he received input from other sources. Erica, however, drew from performance accomplishments steadily throughout the assignment, and subsequently experienced an advance in her efficacy beliefs.

Additionally, both students relied on social persuasion as a source of their self-efficacy perceptions. Interestingly, in both cases, social persuasion triggered an advance in the students’ self-efficacy. When the students received feedback from their instructor or their peers, they noted that it was often encouraging and constructive, thus contributing to their increased confidence while composing the assignment. Furthermore, physiological reactions triggered both advances and declines in the students’ efficacy perceptions while composing the assignment. Davy noted that his mood makes a difference in his writing. When he is excited about an assignment, he has higher self-efficacy and writing comes to him easily; when he feels blocked or anxious, he has
lower self-efficacy and starts to overthink. While emotional ups and downs are not unusual for Davy, he remarked that the writer’s block he experienced while composing this assignment was far worse than he had experienced previously. At first, composing in a new genre was exciting and invigorating for Davy. However, as the challenges built upon one other, he eventually felt overwhelmed and lost. Thus, he experienced a decline in his overall sense of efficacy. Although Erica did not experience writer’s block as Davy did, she did report feeling “out of control” and anxious towards the beginning of the writing process, thus contributing to her lowered efficacy levels. However, she also claimed that her emotions could be enabling. By writing under pressure, she felt that her writing flowed better and helped her to feel more confident about the quality of her writing.

These findings concerning physiological responses are consistent with McLeod’s claims about emotions in writing. Often studies regarding writing anxiety suggest that emotions have only negative effects on writers; however, she explains, "emotions can be enabling as well as crippling" (428). Yet, whether physiological reactions have a positive or a negative effect is largely determined by the cognitive interpretation of sensory data. Because physiological reactions are cognitively interpreted, there is a link between how students interpret physiological reactions and whether they advance, decline, or reinforce their self-efficacy perceptions. Finally, the sources that the students drew from to determine their efficacy beliefs often corresponded to certain points in the writing process. For instance, the students were most likely to draw from social persuasion after participating in a peer workshop. While many of these results are unsurprising, they do allow compositionists to better see how these factors intersect with the writing process. Therefore, as instructors seek to check in with their students and help them to develop and practice metacognitive strategies, they might be able to better predict what sources of efficacy beliefs are likely to challenge students efficacy perceptions and what sources are likely to raise, lower, or reinforce those perceptions as needed.

**Strategies Evolved to Address Fluctuations**

While instructors might consider helping students to develop and practice metacognitive strategies to advance self-efficacy, the findings of my study revealed that students have strategies already put into place to prepare for or cope with potential fluctuations. Some of these strategies were pre-emptive, such as putting any words on the page, writing an introduction and conclusion
last, or managing expectations. Other strategies were more reactionary, the students developed as them to either raise their efficacy levels or at least prevent them from declining further. These coping strategies included help-seeking, rubber ducking, pushing through the difficult section, or when all else failed, taking a break. By employing strategies to prepare for and cope with potential shifts in their self-efficacy beliefs, the students indicated that they were aware of how challenges presented by the specific writing tasks could affect their confidence while composing as well as their potential to mitigate the effects of these challenges. However, without guidance from composition instructors or professional writers, the strategies that the students developed may not be as effective or applicable to their situation as they could be. Composition instructors, therefore, might work to help students develop a greater awareness of the challenges they might expect while composing a writing assignment, and help them to practice flexible strategies they can employ as they encounter those challenges.

**In Summation**

The results of my case study suggest that self-efficacy does fluctuate as students engage with a single assignment over multiple drafts. However, these fluctuations manifested in different ways and to different degrees. Additionally, these data indicate that certain points or factors in the writing process can trigger critical threshold shifts, that is, a shift that pushes a student’s self-efficacy out of a valley of stability and into another efficacy state. While most of the fluctuations were minor shifts, even minor shifts in self-efficacy perceptions can have a significant impact on students’ composing processes and their beliefs about themselves as writers. My results illustrate the need for compositionists to attend to what points in the writing process fluctuations are likely to occur, what factors in the writing process might trigger those fluctuations, and what strategies students evolve to address fluctuations. To that end, these findings invite compositionists to reconsider the role of self-efficacy in the writing classroom, and subsequently alter our pedagogy to account for fluctuations in self-efficacy beliefs as our students compose.

**Theoretical and Pedagogical Implications**

As my results indicate, the students' self-efficacy beliefs fluctuated as they engaged with various tasks throughout the writing process. These fluctuations inform the current scholarship
on self-efficacy, much of which suggests that self-efficacy is a stable phenomenon in which a student either possesses or does not possess an immutable sense of efficacy. As discussed in the previous chapters, self-efficacy in writing studies often focuses on assessing students' efficacy perceptions according to a scale and then correlating those assessed self-efficacy levels with specific performance outcomes, such as grades, or certain writerly attributes, such as anxiety or motivation. While such research is insightful and demonstrates the importance of self-efficacy for student writers, it neglects to account for fluctuations in self-efficacy or the ways in which self-efficacy might fluctuate while engaging with specific writing tasks in a single assignment. The presence of self-efficacy fluctuations, therefore, further informs our understanding of process theory wherein compositionists attend to the unique writing processes for each individual student. In addition to students' cognitive processes, self-efficacy fluctuations impress the need to study affective processes as students compose. If composition instructors assume that students who feel confident in their ability to compose the assignment successfully at the beginning of the process will consistently maintain higher self-efficacy, these teachers could miss or misinterpret signs suggesting an eroding self-efficacy and potentially eroding performance. In fact, even within a single moment in the composing process, self-efficacy can fluctuate, an insight that suggests the importance of instructors attending to students as they engage with each task in the writing process. Even if students seem initially confident about their capabilities, it does not mean that they will be confident in every aspect of the particular writing task.

Furthermore, these fluctuations in self-efficacy beliefs may constitute critical thresholds shifts, points at which even a small change can have rapid, larger effects. The notion of critical thresholds for self-efficacy beliefs enriches our understanding of the ways in which self-efficacy affects student writers as they compose in two ways. First, critical thresholds offer the possibility that students' self-efficacy fluctuates within multiple stable states, or a valley of stability. Rather than a single number produced by a self-efficacy scale, students' perceptions of efficacy might fluctuate as they engage with specific writing tasks without significantly impacting their generalized sense of efficacy. Second, critical threshold shifts indicate the critical importance of attending to fluctuations. If self-efficacy fluctuations can trigger a critical threshold shift that pushes a student into either a higher or lower self-efficacy state, that is difficult if not impossible to recover from, it could have significant implications for our teaching and writing. However, even when fluctuations do not trigger critical threshold shifts, they can still significantly impact
student writers' composing processes, their beliefs about themselves as writers, and perhaps indirectly, the quality of their written products. Therefore, these data underscore the importance of compositionists attending to what points in the writing process fluctuations are likely to occur, what factors in the writing process might trigger those fluctuations, and what strategies students evolve to address fluctuations.

Given that self-efficacy will fluctuate, I offer three ways in which compositions instructors might adjust their pedagogies to better account for fluctuations. First, as composition instructors, we can put into place check-ins as students compose to better intervene in the writing process. Second, we can help our students to develop metacognitive awareness by explicitly teaching them how their beliefs can affect their writing. Third, and finally, we can help our students develop or build on already existing flexible strategies to help them monitor and interpret their efficacy perceptions as they compose.

One way that instructors can increase awareness of the ways in which self-efficacy beliefs affect their students is to allow for check-ins at key moments throughout the course. Check-ins might take the form of assessment measures designed to gauge students' self-efficacy at that particular moment, as well as to offer a space for students to reflect on and describe their experiences. In so doing, teachers are better able to identify problems that may need to be discussed with the student individually or with the class at large. By asking students to respond to assessment measures throughout the semester, teachers can also track their students’ progress as they work to become more confident and capable writers. I would argue that due to the prevalence of fluctuations throughout the composing process, teachers should distribute assessment measures frequently throughout the semester, but at least before and after each major assignment of the course. Check-ins provide an opportunity for students to critically reflect on their self-efficacy beliefs and, perhaps, predict at what points in the writing process they anticipate challenges and what factors might trigger fluctuations. As a result, check-ins would position instructors to intervene effectively in the writing process and thus help students better achieve their goals by offering encouragement or assistance as needed.

While checking in with students can help instructors to better account for fluctuations, my data indicate that fluctuations occur not only from moment to moment in the composing process, but also ebb and flow within each discrete moment. Checking in with students at various points in the writing process can only do so much and is unlikely to account for vertical shifts
while in task. Therefore, composition studies might consider metacognitive awareness of self-efficacy as an indirect or unwritten outcome for composition courses. Much like theories of transfer that claim that the best way to foster transfer is through explicitly guiding students to make the connections necessary for transfer, compositionists might work to make students more aware of their self-efficacy beliefs as well as in what ways and to what extent those beliefs can impact their writing. Composition instructors can help students monitor their efficacy perceptions as they compose, paying special attention to when those perceptions deviate from what students might identify as within their realm of stability. We might take up McLeod's advice to teach our student how to interpret their emotions, to not mistake pressure for pain. If we tell students to expect fluctuations in their self-efficacy beliefs, they are better able to attend to that information as "normal" rather than threatening. These metacognitive practices could help students to monitor their own self-efficacy states, and better identify both when fluctuations are likely to occur and what factors in the writing process are likely to trigger them.

By working to develop metacognitive awareness, composition instructors can help students develop and practice strategies for interpreting and coping with shifts in their efficacy perceptions. Although students may develop their own strategies to prepare for and cope with potential shifts in their self-efficacy beliefs, their strategies may not be as effective or applicable to their situation as they could be. While strategies, such as help seeking, rubber-ducking, and even taking a break can be helpful, they do little to help students interpret the challenges to their efficacy perceptions as normal, perhaps inevitable, parts of the writing process. Composition instructors, therefore, might work to help students perceive fluctuations as normal events that can be addressed via a set of flexible strategies. As instructors, we can help guide our students to develop and implement those strategies based on the students' own interpretation of their efficacy perceptions, the points in the process where they anticipate fluctuations, and the factors in the writing process that might trigger those fluctuations.

**Implementation**

Each of the above pedagogical practices depends on students' metacognitive awareness and the benefits of fostering it through explicit classroom activities. Students need to be aware of how their beliefs shape their writing, learn to anticipate when and what will trigger fluctuations, and employ strategies to reinforce and bolster their self-efficacy beliefs. In Chapter 3, I argue
that while developing this kind of metacognition will take time and effort, I suspect that such practices are not so far removed from what our students already do as they compose. Students are often able to articulate their beliefs about themselves as writers, and are likely able to describe their strengths and weaknesses while composing as well as what factors increase or decrease their confidence in their writing abilities. My research suggests that if compositionists ask students to describe their beliefs about their writing abilities, these beliefs are probably fairly accurate predictors of their actual abilities. Much as the cognitive process movement advocates asking students if we want to know what they think, my data indicate that we might also want to ask students what they feel. As a result, instructors can make informed choices as they adjust their pedagogies to account for fluctuations and are much more effectively positioned to support their students' growth as writers.

**Limitations of the Study**

While the results of my study indicate the importance of considering self-efficacy fluctuations in the composition classroom, there are a few limitations to this study, and thus to the results of the study. First, my case study only had two participants, which is simply not enough to generalize to the larger population of college composition students. There would need to be many more participants to claim such generalizability. The data that I have collected and analyzed here offers a rich description of the ebbs and flows of self-efficacy through individual enactments. While my participants are representative, or typical, cases, it cannot be assumed that the fluctuations they experienced are representative of those a larger population would experience, especially since the fluctuations for each student already manifested in different ways and to different degrees.

Additionally, as I explained in Chapter 2, my case study methodology included the opportunity for the participants to respond to the self-assessment questionnaires at two self-selected moments as they composed the assignment. Both students only submitted one self-selected questionnaire either due to time constraints, memory lapses, or simply a failure to experience another moment of what they perceived as a significant fluctuation. Although I prompted the students to complete the questionnaires at the cued moments in the writing process, there was no way to prompt the students to complete the self-selected questionnaires without potentially influencing their selection. Because my case study had only one self-selected
questionnaire from each participant, it is possible that the students experienced other moments of fluctuation during the composing process that remain unaccounted for.

Furthermore, this study only examined fluctuations in self-efficacy beliefs for a single assignment in the course. In order to make more generalizable claims about the nature of the role that self-efficacy plays in regards to the writing process, this study would need to be expanded to include other major writing assignments. Without data from other assignments, it is difficult to say whether or not these fluctuations occurred as a result of the specific assignment they were composing or if fluctuations will occur while students compose any kind of writing assignment.

Finally, this study did not take into account any sociocultural factors, such as gender, age, race, or ethnicity, which may have affected the data. While I noted these demographic data when I introduced the participants of my study, the focus of this research was not on the influence of such factors, but rather in what ways self-efficacy intersected with students' writing processes. However, it is very likely that sociocultural factors do play a role in determining students' self-efficacy beliefs, in particular the points or factors in the writing process that might trigger fluctuations in those beliefs. All of these limitations indicate the need for more research regarding this particular phenomenon. In the following section of this chapter, I outline what future iterations of similar research projects might look like.

**Directions for Future Research**

Future research projects examining the phenomena of self-efficacy fluctuations might take several different directions. First, there needs to be a greater number of student participants in this kind of study. Two students are simply not enough to make larger, generalizable claims about compositions students. Were I to continue this research project, the first step would be to recruit at least five students to participate in the study, conduct the same interviews, distribute the same questionnaires at the cued moments, emphasize the importance of the self-selected questionnaires, and code and analyze the data according to the coding scheme I used in this project in order to get a better description of individual enactments of self-efficacy as students compose a single assignment involving multiple drafts. I would also be curious to conduct a case study on an entire class, though admittedly such a large population would require extensive time and effort. Such an investigation would allow me to make more robust claims about the ways in which self-efficacy fluctuates as students compose.
Future research projects might also need to increase the duration of the study. This project explores whether self-efficacy fluctuates as students compose a single assignment involving multiple drafts. Thus, it provides only a glimpse of what students experienced throughout the course. Given the results of my study, it is likely that students experience challenges to their self-efficacy beliefs throughout the course. If I continued with this project, I would like to trace the ebbs and flows of self-efficacy during an entire span of a composition course. This increased duration would enable researchers to attain a better description of self-efficacy fluctuations, and would allow for tracking students' progress as they gain experience composing in college. Additionally, I could also envision this type of research benefiting from a longitudinal study. After students participate in the initial case study for their composition course, it would be interesting to follow up with them to see if their efficacy perceptions continue to shift after leaving the composition classroom.

Finally, future research projects might consider the role that sociocultural factors play in determining students self-efficacy beliefs, and consequently in self-efficacy fluctuations. The first step to such a study would be to recruit students that represent a more diverse population of gender, age, race, and ethnicity. Then, the research questions from this project would need to be adjusted to account for how sociocultural factors might influence students' self-efficacy perceptions, and what sociocultural factors might trigger fluctuations in self-efficacy beliefs. Accordingly, the interview questions and self-assessment questionnaires would need to reflect the new goals of the study, and the coding scheme would need to be revised to account for the influence of these factors.

**Final Thoughts**

This project emerged from my dedication to the importance of studying the intersection of the affective and cognitive domains on student writers as they compose. I firmly believe that we need a better understanding of how our students' emotions, attitudes, and beliefs impact their writing processes, and consequently, their written products. By examining whether self-efficacy fluctuates as students engage with the composing process, this project offers one way in which we might enrich our understanding of the interplay of cognition and affect in the writing classroom. Furthermore, given that self-efficacy fluctuates, my research suggests a way forward. As instructors, we are uniquely positioned to attend to our students' self-efficacy beliefs, thus
enabling them to increase their confidence while writing and continue to grow as writers, even outside of the composition classroom. Our students can provide us with incredibly valuable insights into their self-efficacy perceptions and the ways in which those perceptions affect their writing. We need only start by asking them.
APPENDIX A

ENC 1101-49 COURSE POLICY SHEET

ENC 1101.49 Investigating Communities: How We See Ourselves and Others
Fall Session 2015

TR 2:00-3:15 p.m. WMS 310
Instructor: Tyreek Minor
Office: WMS (Williams Building) 331
Office Hours: TR 3:30-4:30 p.m.
Email: xxxxxxxxxxxxxx

First Year Composition Mission Statement
First-Year Writing courses at FSU teach writing as a recursive and frequently collaborative process of invention, drafting, and revising. Writing is both personal and social, and students should learn how to write for a variety of purposes and audiences. Since writing is a process of making meaning as well as communicating, FYW teachers respond to the content of students’ writing as well as to surface errors. Students should expect frequent written and oral response on the content of their writing from both teacher and peers. Classes rely heavily on a workshop format. Instruction emphasizes the connection between writing, reading, and critical thinking; students should give thoughtful, reasoned responses to the readings. Both reading and writing are the subjects of class discussions and workshops, and students are expected to be active participants of the classroom community. Learning from each other will be a large part of the classroom experience.

If you would like further information regarding the First-Year Composition Program, feel free to contact the program director, Dr. Deborah Coxwell-Teague at xxxxxxxxxxxxxx

Our Course Goals
This course will help you to grow as a writer and a critical thinker by encouraging you to investigate and to write about communities that have played a role in shaping you as an individual. In addition to looking closely at yourself, you will take a close look at others within the communities around you and study larger communities you currently participate in or hope to join.
This course aims to help you improve your writing and communication skills in all areas: discovering what you have to say, organizing your thoughts for a variety of audiences, and improving fluency and rhetorical sophistication. You will write and revise three papers, give an oral presentation, write sustained exploratory journals (both in and out of class), work directly with an audience of your peers to practice critical reading and response, and learn many new writing techniques.
We will begin the semester with Paper #1 which asks you to examine your own literacy history and how you see yourself as a member of the writing/reading community.
From there you will use community as the lens with which to examine and write about someone else in Paper #2, and then in Paper #3, you will examine a larger community you are currently a member of or one you think you would like to join. To conclude our course, we will focus briefly on oral communication as each student will organize and present his/her favorite paper from the term to the class. You will not read your paper to the class, but you will convey what about the process of writing the paper was most enjoyable, challenging, memorable, etc.

Required Materials
Requirements of Course

All of the formal written assignments below must be turned in to me in order to pass the course.

Attendance is also a requirement. More than four (4) absences in a 15-week course is grounds for failure. Three “tardies” will constitute an absence.

Students are in danger of failing if they exceed four (4) absences over the course of the semester.

In addition:

- Three papers, edited and polished
- Oral presentation
- Multiple drafts and revisions of each of the three formal papers
- Exploratory journals, some in-class & some out-of-class
- Two individual conferences
- Thoughtful, active, and responsible participation and citizenship, including discussion, preparation for class, in- and out-of-class informal writing
- Check email and course Blackboard site daily

Evaluation

Rough drafts will be graded on completeness and potential—not on editing, coherence, or other mechanical issues.

If you miss a scheduled workshop or show up to a workshop without a complete and thoughtful draft (or the requested number of copies, etc), your final paper grade will be lowered by 1/3 (this means a final paper that would normally be a B would become a B- if you missed one workshop, a C+ if you missed two workshops, etc. Please note that showing up without a draft, without a draft that addresses the given assignment, without having posted your draft on Blackboard, or without bringing the required number of copies of your draft all carry the same penalty as missing the workshop altogether. No exceptions. IT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO LISTEN TO/CHECK BLACKBOARD FOR DIRECTIONS AND COME PREPARED TO ALL CLASS MEETINGS AND WORKSHOPS.)

Final papers will be graded on audience-awareness, organization, thoughtfulness, and editing.

Each final paper will be handed in with a packet of required materials (rough drafts, process writing, etc). If you fail to hand in a final paper on time or with the necessary required materials, your final paper grade for that assignment will be lowered by a full letter grade.

All other written and oral work (quizzes, journals, presentations, etc) will be graded on meaning or content and appropriateness to the assignment.

Paper 1—Personal Exploration: How You See Yourself as a Writer (20%)
Paper 2—How You See Another: Community Member Profile (30%)
Paper 3—Featured Article: How You See Yourself and Others within a Community (30%)
Oral Presentation—Writing Process: Your Favorite Paper from our Course (10%)
Journals—Writing activities, in and out of class (10%)
ALL FORMAL PAPERS AND THEIR DRAFTS MUST BE COMPLETED AND TURNED IN TO EARN A PASSING GRADE IN THIS COURSE.

Attendance
I keep strict attendance and will adhere to the First-Year Writing rule that an excess of four absences in a 15-week class [that's the equivalent of 20% of this course] is grounds for failure. You should always inform me, ahead of time when possible, about why you miss class, but letting me know you will be out of town or that you don’t feel well, etc. does not “excuse” the absence. All absences, no matter what the reason, count toward the total number. Save your absences for when you get sick (it will happen, trust me) or for family emergencies. If you are late to class (and/or conference) three times, it will be counted as an absence. Not showing up for a conference counts as an absence as well.
Please keep in mind that attendance in this course means being here both physically and mentally. Sleeping, not participating, or detracting from the progress of the class is grounds being asked to leave for the remainder of the class meeting and counted absent for the day.

Drafts and Workshops
FSU believes that writing is an on-going process that includes stages of invention, drafting, revision, and editing. These stages don’t always happen in a set order, nor do they necessarily happen only once during any given writing task.
To encourage this process-approach to writing, each paper in ENC 1101 will consist of several drafts. These drafts will be due on designated workshop days—days on which you will be expected not only to receive feedback on your own work but also to generate feedback on the work of your peers.

You are required not only to attend workshops with a completed and thoughtful draft, but you are also expected to contribute to the workshop by giving your peers’ drafts your full attention and offering them honest, helpful criticism.

You should submit your draft to our course Blackboard site (please use .rtf format) well in advance of class time so you will be prepared to share your work as soon as class begins. Sometimes you will be expected (you will have ample time to prepare) to bring one or more hard copies of your draft to class.

I will take up drafts at various times during the course and provide written and/or oral feedback. I will not tell you what to do because your writing should be a reflection of your choices as a writer—I will offer suggestions by discussing with you how your work has affected or reached me as a reader. I will act as a “sounding board” on which you can flesh out your ideas and bring your intentions as a writer to fruition from the initial invention stages of an assignment all the way to editing and polishing your final drafts.

Please see the Evaluation section of this course information sheet for the penalties associated with missing a workshop or coming to a workshop unprepared.

Journals
Each week, we will engage in a number of journaling assignments. Some of these assignments will be completed in class, others will require that you spend some time reading, reflecting, and writing outside of designated class meeting time.

First-Year Composition Course Drop Policy
This course is NOT eligible to be dropped in accordance with the “Drop Policy” adopted by the Faculty Senate in the spring of 2004. The Undergraduate Studies Dean will not consider drop requests for a First-Year Composition course unless there are extraordinary and extenuating circumstances utterly beyond the student's control (e.g.: death of a parent or sibling, illness requiring hospitalization, etc.). The Faculty Senate specifically eliminated First-Year Composition courses from the University Drop Policy because of the overriding requirement that First-Year Composition be completed during students' initial enrollment at FSU.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is grounds for suspension from the university as well as for failure in this course. It will not be tolerated. Any instance of plagiarism must be reported to the Director of First-Year Writing and the Director of Undergraduate Studies. Plagiarism is a counterproductive, non-writing behavior that is unacceptable in a course intended to aid the growth of individual writers. Plagiarism is included among the violations defined in the Academic Honor Code, section b), paragraph 2, as follows: "Regarding academic assignments, violations of the Academic Honor Code shall include representing another's work or any part thereof, be it published or unpublished, as one's own." A plagiarism education assignment that further explains this issue will be administered in all first-year writing courses during the second week of class. Each student will be responsible for completing the assignment and asking questions regarding any parts they do not fully understand.

Academic Honor Policy

The Florida State University Academic Honor Policy outlines the University’s expectations for the integrity of students’ academic work, the procedures for resolving alleged violations of those expectations, and the rights and responsibilities of students and faculty members throughout the process. Students are responsible for reading the Academic Honor Policy and for living up to their pledge to “…be honest and truthful and…[to] strive for personal and institutional integrity at Florida State University.” (Florida State University Academic Honor Policy, found at http://fda.fsu.edu/Academics/Academic-Honor-Policy.)

Civility

This class will NOT tolerate disruptive language or disruptive behavior. Disruptive language includes, but is not limited to: violent and/or belligerent and/or insulting remarks, including sexist, racist, homophobic or anti-ethnic slurs, bigotry, and disparaging commentary, either spoken or written (offensive slang is included in this category). While each of you have a right to your own opinions, inflammatory language founded in ignorance or hate is unacceptable and will be dealt with immediately.

Disruptive behavior includes the use of cell phones, pagers or any other form of electronic communication during the class session (email, web-browsing) outside of instructed class usage (i.e. If I tell you to live Tweet during a film). Disruptive behavior also includes whispering or talking when another member of the class is speaking or engaged in relevant conversation (remember that I am a member of this class as well). This classroom functions on the premise of respect, and you will be asked to leave the classroom and issued an absence if you violate any part of this statement on civility.

College-level Writing Requirement

To demonstrate college-level writing competency as required by the State of Florida, the student must earn a “C” or higher in the course, and earn at least a “C” average on the required writing assignments. If the student does not earn
a “C” average or better on the required writing assignments, the student will not earn an overall grade of “C” or better in the course, no matter how well the student performs in the remaining portion of the course.

American Disability Act
Students with disabilities needing academic accommodations should in the FIRST WEEK OF CLASS 1) register with and provide documentation to the Student Disability Resource Center (SDRC) and 2) bring a letter to the instructor from SDRC indicating the need for academic accommodations. This and all other class materials are available in alternative format upon request.

Additional Information

FSU Student Food Pantry
According to a 2014 study conducted by Feeding America, nearly 31% of college students reported having to choose between paying for educational expenses and paying for food. The Dean of Students Department at FSU runs a food pantry for students who are in need of food. The food pantry is located in University Center A, Suite 4100. Students are required to show their current FSU ID and to sign a waiver form. Due to limited resources, students are requested to take only one bag of food at a time, but may visit the food pantry as often as necessary. For more information, contact the Dean of Students Department at 850-644-2428 or visit https://dos.fsu.edu/resources/food-pantry.

Reading/Writing Center (RWC)
Part of the English Department, the RWC serves Florida State University students at all levels and from all majors. Think of the RWC as an idea laboratory: it is a place to develop and communicate your ideas!
Who uses the RWC? In short: everyone! The RWC’s clients include a cross-section of the campus: first-year students writing for composition class, upper-level students writing term papers, seniors composing letters of applications for jobs and graduate schools, graduate students working on theses and dissertations, multilingual students mastering English, and a variety of others.
As of Fall Semester 2012, the RWC currently has four locations: the newly remodeled Williams 222 location, the gleaming Johnston Ground location, the happening Strozier Library location, and the up-and-coming Dirac Library location. Visit fsu.mywconline.com to register and make appointments.

Digital Studio
The Digital Studio provides support to students working individually or in groups on a variety of digital projects, such as designing a website, developing an electronic portfolio for a class, creating a blog, selecting images for a visual essay, adding voiceover to a presentation, or writing a script for a podcast. The DS has both Macs and PCs, and some of the cool software available in the DS includes Photoshop, InDesign, Windows Movie Maker, iMovie, and more!
There are two DS locations: Williams 222 and Johnston Ground; appointments are made through the same site and schedule as the Reading/Writing Center.

Description of Paper Assignments (These descriptions are subject to modification as I see fit)

Paper One — Personal Exploration: How You See Yourself as a Writer
This essay should explore the aspects of what makes you who you are as a writer. As a person, and as a member of your larger communities, what has shaped you as a writer, and a student of writing, to this point? Who has influenced your attitudes and perceptions toward reading, writing and academic education? What decisions or events in your life have determined your literacy? How did you become the writer you are today?
For this essay, explore all of these questions by considering and reflecting on your past experiences with reading and writing. Think of the communities you belong to (home, school, hobbies, social groups, etc.) and how those
communities have contributed to your evolution into the literate person you are today. You may choose to focus on a turning point, such as a time when a teacher influenced you, the first great book you read that introduced you to the joys of literature, or the influence of a friend or family member on some aspect of your literacy history. Or you may choose to focus on a practice you have developed, or an experience related to your literacy that has impacted you. Your focus might be positive or negative—you may relate a struggle connected to reading or writing (perhaps it was never something you liked), or you may want to discuss a discovery you made (perhaps you enjoy a particular genre of literature) that changed your perspective.

Whatever your focus, this essay should contain a significant amount of analysis and interpretation of what has shaped you. Tell your story in this essay, but move beyond narration to reflect upon and articulate why and how the experience(s) was(were) significant for you. How were you shaped as a person and within your larger communities by this experience/event/discovery? The essay should provide a level of detail, through example, anecdote and explanation, which enables a reader to relate to your experience and to understand your perspective. It should provide significant insight into what or who has made/makes you who you are as a writer, reader, student and person of your world. The various drafting stages of this assignment will ask you to focus on using sensory detail and description, using dialogue, and taking risks through radical revision.

The final draft will be 5-7 typed, double-spaced pages. You will use 12 point Times New Roman font, 1 inch margins, MLA Style headings and page set-up.

**Paper Two – Community Member Profile: How We See Another**

As our class is focused on community, this essay asks you to examine a community in relation to one of its members. Before you start work on this paper, you will want to consider what a community is, how it functions, what traits its members have, and why this community exists. In your first paper, you wrote about yourself; now, you are being asked to closely examine another person and write a profile. Unlike a biography that catalogs the major events in a person’s life, a profile looks at a person through a specific lens. The lens you choose dictates which traits and experiences will be highlighted. A profile based on a person’s job will look very different than a profile looking at someone’s childhood. You will use community as the lens with which to examine someone. Choose someone to profile whom you think belongs to an interesting community or whose relationship with that community tells a lot about the person. There are any number of opportunities to find a unique view of this person through his/her involvement with a community—you may choose generation, culture, profession, etc.

You will want to explore both the community and the person. In what ways does this person interact with this community? What traits do all members of the community possess? How does this person reflect this community? How would this person be different if he/she didn’t interact with this community?

In order to discover the answers to these questions, you will want to interview this person (maybe more than once). The interview(s) will allow you to integrate direct quotations into your paper.

Here are a few examples to keep in mind:

- Maria is from Cuba and extremely religious. A profile could examine how religion, especially aspects of Cuban Catholicism, helped her when she immigrated to the U.S.
- Bruce is a civil engineer. He is obsessed with structural safety and has spent 20 years traveling around the country examining structures. His profile could focus on how his career has influenced his hobbies, lifestyle, and thought processes.
- Susan was born in the 50s and grew up during Vietnam. She saw a picture in a magazine of a girl in Vietnam running from a bomb. Her profile could center on her loss of innocence during that era, an era when it is often argued our nation lost her innocence as well.

Your essay will most likely include description, narration, analysis, and reflection; it is up to you to decide how these will all be integrated. You will not merely describe the person and his/her community, but you will analyze the relationship between the person and the community, paying special attention to why this relationship deserves to be

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explored in a profile. Why is looking at this person in this light particularly interesting, important, or insightful? The various drafting stages of this assignment will ask you to focus on thoughtful representation of your subject matter, your audience’s perspective, description, analysis, and using interviews as source material.

The final draft will be 5-7 typed, double-spaced pages. You will use 12 point Times New Roman font, 1 inch margins, MLA Style headings and page set-up.

Paper Three – Feature Article: How We See Ourselves and Others Within a Community

We began the semester by looking at ourselves and what shaped us in a community of readers and writers. Next we interviewed another person and examined a community in relation to one of its members. Now we will examine a larger community we are currently a member of or one we think we would like to join. We will expand our writing lens to include a much larger, broader focus that will now cover a more expansive community.

As you write this essay you will work in a small group—in a community of your peers with similar interests or intents. You will explore the inside of a community to which you currently belong or a community you would like to become a part of by working closely with those who are members of similar communities or have similar interests. For example, you could be part of a group of students with the same or similar academic or professional goals. These goals could range from anything such as becoming a doctor, a lawyer, a stay at home dad, a teacher, a researcher, a musician, etc. If you are unsure of your academic or professional goals, this would be a great opportunity for you to explore something you think you are interested in.

While in this group, you will research your topic with the intent of publishing your essay as a feature article for a college magazine. You will inform and describe some of the important ideas behind your academic or professional goals for people who might want to pursue the same avenue. Some questions you might consider: What is my academic or professional goal? What kind of knowledge do I need to understand this goal better? What types of classes will I need to take? What characteristics do I need in order to successfully obtain these goals? What are the societal stereotypes that I might need to overcome? How will these stereotypes affect me? In order to answer these questions, you will need to interview people in your field in academia or working professionals.

You will also need to examine questions about yourself: Why do I have these goals? Where do they stem from? Am I secure and/or comfortable with my goals? Do they fit with what I want to do with my life? How do I know this for sure (reflect and research)? What do I know about myself that will be conducive for this field? What stereotypes might I need to overcome to succeed?

Finally, you will need to reflect and respond: What did I already know and what did I learn as a result of my research?

Each member of your group will write a separate paper; however, much of the research will be done together and then reported back to each other. Therefore, while your essays might contain similar information, each will go in a different direction based on the individual writing the essay. Working on this project should enable you to walk away from it with a better understanding of what it means to work alongside members of your community, and it should also help you learn more about the community you want to become a part of in the future.

The various drafting stages of this assignment will ask you to focus on thoughtful representation of your subject matter, your audience’s perspective, description, analysis, and using various types of source material (interview, ethnography, periodicals, the web, etc).

The final draft will be 5-7 typed, double-spaced pages. You will use 12 point Times New Roman font, 1 inch margins, MLA Style headings and page set-up.
Final Project: Multi-Genre Collaboration--How We See and "Re-See"

More a multimedia project than a traditional essay, this assignment requires collaboration, reflection, and revision, and will focus on how we and others see our writing. You will work on a radical revision of the writing you did previously in the semester investigating community. By revising previously written essays so that they take the form of other genres, you will learn the importance of and various techniques for revision and will have an opportunity to engage in critical thinking about the many audiences you will encounter as writers and the appropriateness of writing (and rewriting) for a variety of rhetorical situations.

Working in groups (according to similarity of communities written about earlier or whatever logically connects you), students will analyze the writing already completed over the semester and recreate a sampling of selected pieces into two or three various multimedia genres (a graphic story, a video, a web page, a brochure a skit, or other form). All revision/re-creation must be guided by a cohesive theme for the overall project as decided upon by the group.

As a first step to creating the multi-genre project, each group will develop a rhetorical analysis of the community for which their previous writing was initially created, and propose a plan for redesigning that writing into the new project tailored to a prospective audience/community. For example, several students might write a plan for a web design, design business ads, brochures, and/or business plans. A group of student musicians/music majors whose earlier essays focused on the role of music communities in their lives might write a song, perform it for the class, design an album cover, and/or create a web design showcasing their band. Each group's plan should be reviewed and approved by the instructor. Students will engage in significant revision of each selected original piece to ensure appropriateness to audience and project theme. Each group will create a rationale or introductory piece (2-3 pages) that explains the project's purpose and reach and justifies how its objectives are accomplished. Each group member must contribute to the rationale, and each group member must work on a new piece for the project. Groups will present finished projects and rationales to the class.

In addition, each individual student within a group will be responsible for a 2-3 page reflective essay detailing the analysis, collaboration and rationale that supports the group's final project and the individual role the student played within the group.

- 2-3 typed, double-spaced page group rationale/introductory piece
- 2-3 typed, double-spaced page individual reflective essay
- Additional number of pages will vary depending on the forms of the chosen genres for the radical revisions.

Grading/Evaluation

| Paper One: 20% |
| Paper Two: 25% |
| Paper Three: 25% |
| Project: 10% |
| Journals: 10% |
| *Participation: 10% |

Final Grades

| A | 93 – 100 | C | 73 – 76 |

100
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<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>In-Class Activity</th>
<th>Work for Next Class</th>
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<tr>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>Introduction to Class Icebreaker You’re Literate and That’s Great</td>
<td><em>On Writing</em>, Chapter One intro</td>
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<td>8/25/15</td>
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<td><em>On Writing</em>, Chaprer Two intro, “The Literacy Narrative”</td>
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<td><em>McGraw-Hill</em>, Chapter One</td>
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<td>Thursday</td>
<td>“I’m in shape; a circle is a shape…” What Constitutes Good Writing? Writing, The Writing Process, How Writing is Judged</td>
<td><em>On Writing</em>, Domitila De Chungara’s “Let Me Speak”</td>
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<td>8/27/15</td>
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<td><em>On Writing</em>, Lorrie Moore’s “How to Become a Writer”</td>
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<td>Week 2</td>
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<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>Plagiarism Exercise Assigning Essay One Brainstorming</td>
<td><em>On Writing</em>, Bukola O. Awoyemi’s “Is English Your First Language?”</td>
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<td>9/1/15</td>
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<td><em>On Writing</em>, Langston Hughes’ “Theme for English B”</td>
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<td><em>On Writing</em>, Evan Peterson’s “Invention Exercises: Writing for Inspiration”</td>
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<td><em>On Writing</em>, Anne LaMotte’s “Shitty First Drafts”</td>
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<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>Developing a Process What Makes Peer Review Helpful?</td>
<td><em>On Writing</em>, Richard Straub’s “Responding—Really Responding—to Other Students’ Writing”&lt;br&gt;Draft #3 of Essay One</td>
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<td>9/8/15</td>
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<td>Thursday</td>
<td>Workshop Day (Mandatory Attendance)</td>
<td><em>On Writing</em>, Amy Tan’s “Mother Tongue”&lt;br&gt;<em>On Writing</em>, Paule Marshall’s “Poets in the Kitchen”&lt;br&gt;Draft #3 of Essay One</td>
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<td>Community Introduction to Essay Two The Interview</td>
<td><em>On Writing</em>, Ashlie Nole’s “A Window into My Life”&lt;br&gt;<em>McGraw-Hill</em>, Chapter 2&lt;br&gt;<strong>Final Draft</strong> of Essay One</td>
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<td><strong>Week 5</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Weekly Themes</strong></td>
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<td>Tuesday 9/22/15</td>
<td>Profile/ing</td>
<td><strong>On Writing</strong>, Haunani-Kay Trask’s “Tourist, Stay Home” <strong>Journal Entry #4</strong></td>
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<td>Thursday 9/24/15</td>
<td>Communities and Stereotypes</td>
<td><strong>Second Draft of Essay Two</strong></td>
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<td>A Thorough Examination</td>
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<td><strong>Week 6</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Weekly Themes</strong></td>
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<td>Tuesday 9/29/15</td>
<td>Student Conferences</td>
<td>Be sure to bring 2nd Drafts of Essay Two</td>
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<td><strong>On Writing</strong>, Michael Hendrickson’s “Music Television Mike” <strong>Journal Entry #5</strong></td>
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<td>Thursday 10/1/15</td>
<td>Student Conferences</td>
<td>Be sure to bring 2nd Drafts of Essay Two</td>
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<td><strong>On Writing</strong>, Lauren Kiser’s “Bulane” <strong>On Writing</strong>, Cory Slingsby’s “Solitary Someone” <strong>Draft 3 of Essay Two</strong></td>
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<td>Tuesday 10/6/15</td>
<td>Style &amp; Content</td>
<td><strong>On Writing</strong>, Brent Staples’ “Just Walk on By: A Black Man Ponders His Power to Alter Public Space”</td>
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<td>Let’s Find Some Common Ground</td>
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<td>One Writing, Kenneth Reeves’ “Freaks and Geeks”</td>
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<td>Tuesday 10/13/15</td>
<td>A Look Ahead Group Interviews</td>
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<td>Thursday 10/15/15</td>
<td>Interview Questions “Look at you prepare for your day…”</td>
<td>On Writing, Rita Dove’s “To Make a Prairie”</td>
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<th>Journal Entry #7 Rhetorical Analysis and Proposed Plan for final project groups</th>
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<td>Conferences: One-on-One and Group</td>
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<td>On Writing, Donna Steiner’s “Sleeping with Alcohol”</td>
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<tr>
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<th>Stereotypes “I ain’t got no type…”</th>
<th>On Writing, Spike Lee’s “Journal Entries: Do the Right Thing”</th>
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<td>Thursday</td>
<td>Workshopping for the Greater Good</td>
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<td>Journal Entry #10</td>
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<td>Journal Entry #11</td>
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<td>Final Project Roundup</td>
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<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>Final Project Work: What’s (Not) Working?</td>
<td>Journal Entry #12</td>
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<td>Thursday</td>
<td>Seize the Day</td>
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<td>Thursday</td>
<td>Wrap-up</td>
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<td>12/3/15</td>
<td>Course Evaluations</td>
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APPENDIX B

PAPER THREE ASSIGNMENT SHEET

Paper Three –Feature Article: How We See Ourselves and Others Within a Community

We began the semester by looking at ourselves and what shaped us in a community of readers and writers. Next we interviewed another person and examined a community in relation to one of its members. Now we will examine a larger community we are currently a member of or one we think we would like to join. We will expand our writing lens to include a much larger, broader focus that will now cover a more expansive community. You will research your topic with the intent of publishing your essay as a feature article for a college magazine. You will inform and describe some of the important ideas behind your academic or professional goals for people who might want to pursue the same avenue. Some questions you might consider: What is my academic or professional goal? What kind of knowledge do I need to understand this goal better? What types of classes will I need to take? What characteristics do I need in order to successfully obtain these goals? What are the societal stereotypes that I might need to overcome? How will these stereotypes affect me? In order to answer these questions, you will need to interview people in your field in academia or working professionals.

You will also need to examine questions about yourself: Why do I have these goals? Where do they stem from? Am I secure and/or comfortable with my goals? Do they fit with what I want to do with my life? How do I know this for sure (reflect and research)? What do I know about myself that will be conducive for this field? What stereotypes might I need to overcome to succeed?

Finally, you will need to reflect and respond: What did I already know and what did I learn as a result of my research?

The various drafting stages of this assignment will ask you to focus on thoughtful representation of your subject matter, your audience’s perspective, description, analysis, and using various types of source material (interview, ethnography, periodicals, the web, etc).
The final draft will be 5-7 typed, double-spaced pages. You will use 12 point Times New Roman font, 1 inch margins, MLA Style headings and page set-up.
APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Set 1: Initial Interview

1. Demographic data: where born, school background, age, academic interests, career plan, etc.
2. Tell me about your writing experiences, such as do you write outside of school, do you enjoy writing, etc.?
   a. Follow up: What kinds of things do you write?
3. Describe your typical writing process. That is, what do you normally do when you write?
   a. Follow up: How similar would you say your process is to what you are doing in ENC 1101?
   b. Follow up: How is the class going so far? What do you like, dislike, and so forth?
   c. How does it compare to the writing you did in high school?
4. How would you describe your confidence level in general when writing? Your emotional states?
5. What sorts of writing do you do well? What kind of feedback, if any, have you gotten on that writing and from whom? What sorts of writing give you a feeling of satisfaction or the sense of a job well done?
   a. Follow up: Who normally provides this feedback?
   b. Follow up: How important is this feedback to you?
6. What sorts of writing frustrate or challenge you? How do you work through or overcome these challenges?
7. If someone who has similar knowledge and skills to you does well on a writing assignment, do you think you will too? Explain.

Set 2: Final Interview

1. Reflect on the experience of composing this assignment. Then, describe the writing process you used for this assignment. That is, what did you do when you wrote?
2. How would you describe your confidence level when writing? Your emotional state? Would you say that this is the same or different from before the start of this assignment? How so?
   a. Follow up: Why do you think you felt that way?

3. What did you do well in this assignment? What kind of feedback did you receive on this aspect and from whom? How did that feedback affect you? What parts of this assignment gave you a feeling of satisfaction or the sense of a job well done?

4. What do you think could be improved in this assignment? What kind of feedback did you receive on this aspect and from whom? How did that feedback affect you?
   a. Follow up: Who normally provides this feedback?
   b. Follow up: How important is this feedback to you?

5. What was the most difficult/challenging/frustrating aspect of this assignment? How did you work through this difficulty?

6. Do you anticipate doing well on this assignment? What grade do you think you should receive? Why?
   a. Follow up: Would you say that is better, worse, or similar to other grades you’ve received in this class? Why?

7. Based on the participants’ responses to the questionnaires, I may decide to prompt them to comment on, explicate, or extend one or more of their responses in a cued, retrospective protocol.
APPENDIX D

SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONNAIRES

Set 1: After Reviewing the Assignment

Self-Assessment Questionnaire

Part 1: Please respond to the following statements based on how much you personally agree or disagree. In other words, please rate how much they reflect how you think or feel personally.

(1) totally disagree
(2) generally disagree
(3) somewhat disagree
(4) somewhat agree
(5) generally agree
(6) totally agree
(N/A) not applicable

For each statement, circle or highlight the number that most closely corresponds to the degree of your agreement or disagreement. Note: there is no right or wrong answer. All that is important is that you indicate your personal feeling.

a) I can read and understand the assignment sheet.

1  2  3  4  5  6  N/A

b) I know what task is being asked of me.

1  2  3  4  5  6  N/A

c) I can effectively respond to the given prompt.

1  2  3  4  5  6  N/A

d) I know what my teacher’s expectations are for this assignment.

1  2  3  4  5  6  N/A
e) I can meet the expectations of this assignment.

1 2 3 4 5 6 N/A

f) I can start writing this paper without any difficulty.

1 2 3 4 5 6 N/A

g) Even if I don’t like this topic, I can still write a good paper about it.

1 2 3 4 5 6 N/A

h) I feel that the time allotted for this assignment is reasonable

1 2 3 4 5 6 N/A

i) I can successfully compose this assignment.

1 2 3 4 5 6 N/A

Part 2: Reflect on your experience reading and reviewing the assignment sheet. Then, please write a 250-400 word description of your confidence at this particular stage of the writing process. For instance, did you feel in control or out of control? Why did you feel that way? If you have completed an assignment like this one in the past, what were the results? What kind of feedback have you received when writing this kind of assignment (or just writing in general) and does this feedback influence your confidence level? How do you feel about the assignment so far (e.g. nervous, excited, bored, comfortable, etc.)? Why?

Set 2: Before Revising the Rough Draft

Self-Assessment Questionnaire

Part 1: Please respond to the following statements based on how much you personally agree or disagree. In other words, please rate how much they reflect how you think or feel personally.

(1) totally disagree
For each statement, circle or highlight the number that most closely corresponds to the degree of your agreement or disagreement. Note: there is no right or wrong answer. All that is important is that you indicate your personal feeling.

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<th>6</th>
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<td>a) I can invest a great deal of time and effort into revising my work.</td>
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<td>b) Once I have completed a draft, I can eliminate redundancies or unnecessary sections.</td>
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<td>c) I can find and incorporate appropriate evidence to support important points.</td>
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<td>d) When revising the rough draft, I can identify gaps when they are present in my paper.</td>
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<td>e) I can decide how best to organize my paper with little difficulty.</td>
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<td>f) Based on feedback I received, I know what I need to do to improve my paper.</td>
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<td>g) I can make the changes necessary to improve my paper.</td>
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h) I feel that the time allotted for this assignment is reasonable.

1 2 3 4 5 6 N/A

i) I can successfully compose this assignment.

1 2 3 4 5 6 N/A

Part 2: Reflect on your experience as you prepare to revise your rough draft. Then, please write a 250-400 word description of your confidence at this particular stage of the writing process. For instance, did you feel in control or out of control? Why do you feel that way? In the past when you have revised your writing, what were the results? What process do you typically go through to revise your essay? What kind of feedback have you received after revising a writing assignment and does this feedback influence your confidence level? How does revising make you feel (e.g. nervous, excited, bored, irritated, relieved, comfortable, etc.)? Why?

**Set 3: After Participating in a Peer Workshop**

Self-Assessment Questionnaire

Part 1: Please respond to the following statements based on how much you personally agree or disagree. In other words, please rate how much they reflect how you think or feel personally.

(1) totally disagree
(2) generally disagree
(3) somewhat disagree
(4) somewhat agree
(5) generally agree
(6) totally agree
(N/A) not applicable

For each statement, circle or highlight the number that most closely corresponds to the degree of your agreement or disagreement. Note: there is no right or wrong answer. All that is important is that you indicate your personal feeling.
a) I can share my writing with my peers without feeling judged or criticized.
1  2  3  4  5  6  N/A

b) I can receive constructive criticism without experiencing negative emotions or physical discomfort.
1  2  3  4  5  6  N/A

c) I can effectively decide what feedback to use for my paper and what to dismiss.
1  2  3  4  5  6  N/A

d) When a student who is similar to me receives praise on a paper, I know I can write a paper worthy of praise.
1  2  3  4  5  6  N/A

e) When I read drafts written by my peers, I can provide them with valuable feedback.
1  2  3  4  5  6  N/A

f) Based on feedback I received, I know what I need to do to improve my paper.
1  2  3  4  5  6  N/A

g) I can make the changes necessary to improve my paper.
1  2  3  4  5  6  N/A

h) I feel that the time allotted for this assignment is reasonable.
1  2  3  4  5  6  N/A

i) I can successfully compose this assignment.
1  2  3  4  5  6  N/A
Part 2: Reflect on your experience participating in a peer workshop. Then, please write a 250-400 description of your confidence at this particular stage of the writing process. For instance, did you feel in control or out of control? Why do you feel that way? Have you even participated in a peer workshop before? If so, what were the results? How did the peer workshop make you feel? Why? Was the workshop helpful for you? Why or why not?

**Set 4: Before Revising the Second Draft**

Self-Assessment Questionnaire

Part 1: Please respond to the following statements based on how much you personally agree or disagree. In other words, please rate how much they reflect how you think or feel personally.

- (1) totally disagree
- (2) generally disagree
- (3) somewhat disagree
- (4) somewhat agree
- (5) generally agree
- (6) totally agree
- (N/A) not applicable

For each statement, circle or highlight the number that most closely corresponds to the degree of your agreement or disagreement. Note: there is no right or wrong answer. All that is important is that you indicate your personal feeling.

a) I am capable of writing complete, coherent sentences.
   1  2  3  4  5  6  N/A

b) I can appropriately follow grammar and punctuation conventions.
   1  2  3  4  5  6  N/A

c) I can edit and proofread my paper.
   1  2  3  4  5  6  N/A
d) I can apply the feedback from my instructor on this assignment.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | N/A |

e) I can invest a great deal of time and effort into revising my work.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | N/A |

f) I can make the changes necessary to improve my paper.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | N/A |

g) I feel that the time allotted for this assignment is reasonable.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | N/A |

h) I can successfully compose this assignment.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | N/A |

Part 2: Reflect on your experience as you prepare to revise your second draft. Then, please write a 250-400 description of your confidence at this particular stage of the writing process. For instance, did you feel in control or out of control? Why do you feel that way? What process do you intend to use to revise? Do you anticipate any obstacles during the revision (physical discomfort, distraction, writer’s block, etc.)? How will you overcome these obstacles? What feedback has been the most helpful for you in terms of revision? From whom? How does the idea of revising your third draft make you feel?

**Set 5: (2) Subject-Selected Moments**

**Self-Assessment Questionnaire**

Part 1: Please respond to the following statements based on how much you personally agree or disagree. In other words, please rate how much they reflect how you think or feel personally.

(1) totally disagree
(2) generally disagree
(3) somewhat disagree
(4) somewhat agree
(5) generally agree
(6) totally agree
(N/A) not applicable

For each statement, circle or highlight the number that most closely corresponds to the degree of your agreement or disagreement. Note: there is no right or wrong answer. All that is important is that you indicate your personal feeling.

a) I can successfully complete this particular task in the writing process.
1 2 3 4 5 6 N/A

b) I can overcome any difficulties or challenges I might face while writing.
1 2 3 4 5 6 N/A

c) I feel that the time allotted for this assignment is reasonable.
1 2 3 4 5 6 N/A

d) I can successfully compose this assignment.
1 2 3 4 5 6 N/A

Part 2: Reflect on your experience at this particular stage in the writing process. Then, please write a 250-400 description what you are currently working on with your assignment and why you selected this moment to take the questionnaire. How would you describe your confidence at this particular stage of the writing process?
APPENDIX E

CODING SCHEME

Units of Analysis

For this project, a unit of analysis will comprise of an ideational unit, defined as a complete unit of thought, which make take the form of either a dependent clause or an independent clause. In order to be considered a reference, a unit must refer to an item on the coding scheme as that item is defined in the coding scheme.

Introduction

This study uses ten qualitative reflections, five from each participant, in order to answer the following research question: If students' sense of self-efficacy ebbs and flows over the course of a writing assignment involving multiple drafts, how, when, and from what causes do these fluctuations occur? To best address this question, I have developed a deductive coding scheme with three major components. The first seeks to determine self-efficacy fluctuations by coding for advances, declines, and reaffirmations of self-efficacy beliefs as indicated by the participants’ interview responses and reflections. The coded data was combined with the numeric responses from the questionnaires to determine self-efficacy levels. The second seeks to identify what sources the participants draw on to form their self-efficacy perceptions, as well as what factors, if any, are most likely to trigger a potential fluctuation in those perceptions. This aspect of the scheme is based on Bandura’s sources of self-efficacy beliefs. Finally, the third element of the scheme was designed to determine what strategies, if any, do students develop in order to cope with potential fluctuations. Therefore, to address each of these components, I decided upon self-efficacy levels, self-efficacy sources, and self-efficacy strategies as the main terms of my tripartite coding scheme. In the sections that follow, I will list these categories as well as the subcategories related to them, and provide a definition with two examples of each to serve as criteria by which each unit of analysis will be evaluated.

Scheme

Each term in this scheme will be accompanied by a brief definition for each of the subcategories, which will be used to identify units to be coded. I will also provide examples from the qualitative reflections to demonstrate how these terms might apply to the texts.
Self-Efficacy Levels

If self-efficacy is not a stable state, but rather fluctuates as students engage with the processes of specific writing tasks, certain triggers may advance, decline, or reinforce a student’s sense of efficacy, resulting in more, less, or stable confidence in his or her ability to achieve a desired outcome.

• Advance (A): An advance in self-efficacy refers to any text that indicates an increased amount of confidence in writing ability.
  o Ex. “This excitement has made my writing more creative and engaging than a stale paper without unorthodox words or syntax” (Davy).
  o Ex. “I would describe my confidence at this level greater than what it was…now that I know what I’m doing, I have complete confidence that I can get out of this paper with a B and get a high B in the class” (Erica).

• Decline (D): A decline in self-efficacy refers to any text that indicates a decreased level of confidence in writing ability.
  o Ex. “I entirely lost my confidence in this paper, and felt terrified about the final draft as well as the group project” (Davy).
  o Ex. “As of right now, I do not feel as though I am in control of what is happening with my essay” (Erica).

• Reinforce (R): Any text that refers to self-efficacy perceptions, but does not result in an advance or decline in efficacy beliefs.
  o Ex. “…because I just don’t like writing” (Erica).
  o Ex. “I’m usually very confident in my writing…” (Davy).

Self-Efficacy Sources

In order to determine what factors are likely to trigger a shift in self-efficacy beliefs, I draw from Albert Bandura’s four sources of self-efficacy: performance accomplishments, vicarious experience, social persuasion, and physiological reactions. Accordingly, this data will allow me to see what sources students most often draw from to form self-efficacy perceptions and in what ways those sources might trigger a fluctuation in self-efficacy beliefs.

• Performance Accomplishments (PA): One especially influential source of self-efficacy perceptions is performance accomplishments, also referred to as mastery experiences. Success advances mastery experiences, while failure—particularly repeated failure—
lowers them (Bandura 195). Repeated success often leads to the development of strong efficacy expectations, and once efficacy is raised, the impact of occasional failure is less detrimental (195). For the purposes of this study, I will consider a reference to performance accomplishments as any ideational unit that refers to a past success or failure with writing.

- Ex. “When I have revised my writing in the past, the results varied” (Erica).
- Ex. “In the past, revising essays have been easy, and constructive criticism has helped me boost papers” (Davy).

- Vicarious Experience (VE): Efficacy expectations are also derived from vicarious experience. Many people are able to persuade themselves that “if others can do it, they should be able to achieve at least some improvement in performance” (Bandura 197). For instance, if students see other students with similar skill levels accomplish a task they perceive as challenging, they are often likely to view themselves as capable of success. I will consider a reference to vicarious experience as any ideational unit that refers to the student’s expected performance level in comparison to another student writer. Vicarious experience did not present as a source of efficacy perceptions in the qualitative descriptions. However, the students did reference this source when asked directly in their initial interviews. I include some of those references as examples.
  - Ex. Me: “If someone who has similar knowledge and skills to you does well on a writing assignment, do you think you will too?”
    Davy: “Oh. I would say yes, but if there’s like small differences in the styles that the teacher may prefer…I’d say it’s similar, but not exactly the same.”
  - Ex. “…like my best friend, we’re on the same writing level and we’ve had the same classes and she’ll be like, ‘Oh, I got this grade on the paper,’ and I’m like, I don’t even want to look now” (Erica).

- Social Persuasion (SP): Verbal or social persuasion is often used to influence human behavior because of its “ease and ready availability” (Bandura 198). Through suggestion, people are led to believe that they can successfully handle a situation that has previously overwhelmed them (198). For this study, I will consider a reference to social persuasion as any ideational unit that refers to an instance when a student's
self-efficacy perceptions were influenced, either positively or negatively, by another person or a group of people through discussion, feedback, etc.

- Ex. “The peer workshop made me feel as though I was going in a decent direction and gave me other ideas to think about” (Davy).
- Ex. “The feedback that I get makes me feel more comfortable because I am told that my paper is not as bad as I thought it was and that only a few things need to be tweaked, and it helps me to bring up my confidence level because the paper is not as crappy as I made it out to be in my head” (Erica).

- Physiological Reactions (PR): Often, people derive efficacy expectations from physiological reactions, or emotional arousal. People use these physiological or emotive states as indicators of vulnerability and stress, especially in situations they perceive as threatening (Bandura 198). Individuals are more likely to anticipate success when they do not experience aversive arousal (198). Physiological reactions, then, can be defined as any ideational unit that refers to a particular emotional or physiological state, such as anxiety, fear, excitement, nausea, or tension.
  - Ex. “Revising makes me irritated and happy all at once” (Erica).
  - Ex. “I had a constant feeling of writer’s block that made me incapable of building up my paragraphs” (Davy).

**Self-Efficacy Strategies**

Finally, if self-efficacy fluctuates over the course of a single assignment, students might develop strategies to cope with those potential shifts. If so, those strategies could take the form of action statements, “how to” statements, or “should” statements.

- **Action Statements (AS):** Action statements can be defined as any ideational unit that refers to a “do” or “done” statement. In other words, when a student explains a strategy that they typically “do” or “have done” to cope with shifts in their confidence.
  - Ex. “I do my best to keep my expectations for a project at the same level if not higher than my instructors” (Davy).
  - Ex. “I write the body paragraphs first and then go and do the introduction and conclusion” (Erica).

- **“How To” Statements (HS):** “How to” statements can be defined as any ideational unit that refers to how they plan to move forward with their writing process. “How to”
statements may also include advice or instructions for how to cope with a shift in self-efficacy.

- Ex. “I believe this method really helps students learn from their mistakes and makes them better in not just writing, but any curriculum they learn in the future” (Davy).
- Ex. “To me they [first drafts] are always something that just shows a thought process and trying to get my ideas down onto paper” (Erica).

- “Should” Statements (SS): “Should” statements can be defined as any ideational unit that refers to what one should do in order to cope with a shift in self-efficacy perceptions. This kind of statement might refer both to what the participant should do or what other students, generally, should do.
  - Ex. “Peer workshops are a concept that should be used more often in the classroom” (Davy).
  - Ex. “…I definitely recommend peer workshops with a purpose for composing a fun project or for education…” (Davy).
APPENDIX F

FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY CONSENT FORM

You are invited to take part in a Case Study that explores potential fluctuations in students’ sense of self-efficacy over the course of a writing assignment involving multiple drafts. You were selected as a possible participant because you are currently enrolled in a section of ENC 1101 at Florida State University. We ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in this study.

This study is being conducted by Amanda Brooks, a master’s degree candidate in the Florida State University English Department. She will be conducting this study in consultation with her major advisor, Dr. Kristie Fleckenstein, Professor in the FSU English Department.

Background Information:
The purpose of this case study is to explore the nature of the role that self-efficacy plays in students’ writing, particularly in regard to the intersection of specific writing tasks and levels of self-efficacy, defined as perceived confidence in one’s ability to achieve a specific or desired outcome. As students progress through a writing assignment from its inception to its conclusion, they encounter challenges to their self-efficacy, such as reading the assignment sheet; prewriting, or shaping, the assignment; drafting; receiving peer or instructor feedback; revising; and assessment. Self-efficacy is not a stable phenomenon in which one student possesses or does not possess as sense of self-efficacy. Rather, self-efficacy fluctuates as people engage with the challenges presented by a specific task. Accordingly, this study seeks to determine if, how, and when students’ self-efficacy shifts over the course of an assignment so that teachers can take this knowledge about self-efficacy and use it to create more effective approaches to teaching writing.

Procedures:
If you agree to be in this study, you will:
1) Participate in two individual, face-to-face interviews—once before you review the assignment and again after you have submitted the assignment to be graded. The interviews will last between 45 minutes to an hour, but no longer.
2) Respond to a total of six questionnaires—four at cued moments in the writing process and two at subject-selected moments. These questionnaires will consist of two parts: a quantitative self-assessment and a qualitative reflection. Each should take about 30 minutes to complete.

3) Provide a copy of all drafting materials composed over the course of the writing assignment. By agreeing to take part in this study, you also accept that you will be included in any notes taken during the course of the scheduled interviews; however, you will have access to all notes taken relating to your involvement with the interview.

Finally, should you wish, you can terminate your participation in this study at any time and all associated notes concerning you shall be removed with no penalty or consequence whatsoever.

**Risk and Benefits of Being in this Study:**

This study has no serious risks: information will be collected from students regarding self-efficacy perceptions and writing process. In order to address the potential risk of threatening confidentiality of all students who elect to participate in the study, any individual identities will be removed from the questionnaires and drafting materials collected from the students.

Additionally, all efforts will be made to keep private information confidential, and all identifying information will be removed from the collected data before results are published.

As for benefits, you will have the opportunity to learn more about yourself as a student/writer while you reflect and consider your self-efficacy perceptions throughout the stages of the writing process. This reflection will help you to better evaluate your own strengths and weaknesses as a writer and to come to a deeper understanding of how your personal beliefs can affect your writing. Additionally, it will also enable you to better determine if, when, and where to seek assistance when writing.

Because I am asking you to participate in a study involving over 5 hours of your time, I am offering a $10 gift card to Starbucks upon completion of the study. You must complete the study in its entirety in order to receive the gift card, which will be distributed at the conclusion of the study.

**Confidentiality:**
All records will be kept private and confidential to the extent permitted by law. I will not include any information that would make it possible to identify students in any sort of report that I might publish. Research records will be stored securely in a locked drawer in WMS 224. I will record the names of those who participate in this project. However, I will only do so to sort the data. When I write the thesis, I will keep the names of those who participate confidential. Furthermore, if students are quoted in the final published study, they will be assigned pseudonyms to further prevent any possibility of identification. Dr. Fleckenstein, my advisor, and I will be the only ones with access to the records. Audio recordings from interview sessions will only be listened to by me and will be erased one year after the recording date. The interview sessions will be held in the WMS Digital Studio, which the researcher will reserve during the scheduled interviews in order to protect against any threats to the confidentiality of the participants of this study.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:
Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate, and to what extent you so choose, will not affect your current or future relations with the University or within the English Department. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any questions and/or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

Also, as your instructor has stated in the verbal introduction to this study, your choice to participate (or not to participate) in this study and subsequent interviews will have absolutely no influence over your grades in this class nor will it potentially affect your grades in future classes.

Contact and Questions:
The researcher conducting this study is Amanda Brooks. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have a question later, you are encouraged to contact her by email at [mask] or by phone at [mask]. Additionally, you may also contact her faculty advisor, Dr. Kristie Fleckenstein, at [mask] or at [mask]. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher(s), you are encouraged to contact the FSU IRB at 2010 Levy Street, Research Building B, Suite 276, Tallahassee, FL 32306-2742, or 850-644-8633, or by email at humansubjects@magnet.fsu.edu.
You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.

**Statement of Consent:**

I have read the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

__________________________________  _______________
Signature       Date
APPENDIX G

HUMAN SUBJECTS COMMITTEE APPROVAL MEMORANDUM

Office of the Vice President for Research
Human Subjects Committee
Tallahassee, Florida 32306-2742
(850) 644-8678 • FAX (850) 644-4392

APPROVAL MEMORANDUM

Date: 09/24/2015
To: Amanda Brock
Address:
Dept.: ENGLISH DEPARTMENT
From: Thomas L. Jacobson, Chair
Re: Use of Human Subjects in Research
   Critical Thresholds: Self-Efficacy Fluctuations throughout the Writing Process

The application that you submitted to this office in regard to the use of human subjects in the proposal referenced above have been reviewed by the Secretary, the Chair, and two members of the Human Subjects Committee. Your project is determined to be Expedited per 45 CFR § 46.110(c) and has been approved by an expedited review process.

The Human Subjects Committee has not evaluated your proposal for scientific merit, except to weigh the risk to the human participants and the aspects of the proposal related to potential risk and benefit. This approval does not replace any departmental or other approvals, which may be required.

If you submitted a proposed consent form with your application, the approved stamped consent form is attached to this approval notice. Only the stamped version of the consent form may be used in recruiting research subjects.

If the project has not been completed by 09/22/2016 you must request a renewal of approval for continuation of the project. As a courtesy, a renewal notice will be sent to you prior to your expiration date, however, it is your responsibility as the Principal Investigator to timely request renewal of your approval from the Committee.

You are advised that any change in protocol for this project must be reviewed and approved by the Committee prior to implementation of the proposed change in the protocol. A protocol change/amendment form is required to be submitted for approval by the Committee. In addition, federal regulations require that the Principal Investigator promptly report, in writing any unanticipated problems or adverse events involving risks to research subjects or others.

By copy of this memorandum, the chairman of your department and/or your major professor is reminded that he/she is responsible for being informed concerning research projects involving human subjects in the department, and should review protocols as often as needed to ensure that the project is being conducted in compliance with our institution and with DHHS regulations.

This institution has an Assurance on file with the Office for Human Research Protection. The Assurance Number is IRB00000446.

Cc: Kristie Fleckenstein • Advisor

HSC No. 2015.16229
REFERENCES


Coxwell-Teague, Deborah. Personal Interview. 03 May 2015.


Amanda M. Brooks is an MA student studying Rhetoric and Composition at Florida State University, a teaching assistant in the College Composition Program, the Computer-Writing-Classroom Coordinator for the English Department, and a consultant in the Digital Studio. She received her BA in English with a minor in Creative Writing from Stetson University. Amanda has presented at the Conference of College Composition and Communication on the intersections of self-efficacy and genre knowledge and has presented at the Feminisms and Rhetorics conference on the juxtaposition of images as visual argumentation. Amanda is originally from Tampa, FL.