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SOURCES OF SELF-EFFICACY INFORMATION FOR WRITING:
A QUALITATIVE INQUIRY

By
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A THESIS

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SOURCES OF SELF-EFFICACY INFORMATION FOR WRITING:

A QUALITATIVE INQUIRY

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University of Nebraska, 2016

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This study explored the sources of information that inform students' self-efficacy beliefs in the area of writing. A qualitative phenomenological case study approach was used to capture the experiences of gifted middle school students.

Writing is a critical skill for success in school and beyond, and many students in the United States are not able to adequately write extended texts (Bruning & Horn, 2000; National Center for Education Statistics, 2012). Understanding students' motivation for engaging with writing might provide insight into how to better support students' experience with writing in school. Self-efficacy is a key construct within motivation, and it has been found to be predictive of persistence, completion, and performance (Bruning, Dempsey, Kauffman, McKin & Zumbrunn, 2013; Klassen, 2002; Pajares, 2003). Self-efficacy refers to an individual's perception of his or her ability to succeed at a given task (Bandura, 1977). Bandura hypothesized that students form their self-efficacy beliefs by interpreting information from four sources: mastery experience, vicarious experience, social persuasion, and physiological and emotional states.

The central question of this study was: What are the salient sources of information that students use to form beliefs about their own writing abilities? Thirty-nine students were surveyed about their writing self-efficacy, and four students were purposefully sampled to participate in a semi-structured interview. The students' English teacher was

also interviewed. Findings confirmed that these students used the four hypothesized sources of information to form their self-efficacy beliefs. Two additional sources of information emerged from the data: self-regulated learning strategies and different types of writing assignments. Different sources of information were salient for each student, and the importance of sources appeared to be connected to their learning and goal orientations. The findings capture the experience of four middle school students and extend the ideas of social cognitive theory.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Writing is a complex cognitive task, particularly for developing writers who have mastered the linguistic and compositional aspects of writing and are beginning to shift towards higher-level writing. More complex writing requires not only basic skills such as spelling, punctuation, grammar, and word choice, but also the use of strategies, such as planning, goal setting, considering one's audience, synthesizing information, and revising one's writing (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987; Bruning & Horn, 2000). Writing at this level requires critical thinking and problem-solving in addition to writing conventions, as well as self-monitoring and directing (Bruning & Horn, 2000; Graham & Harris, 2000). Middle school is a transitional time in the experience of being a young writer, as the expectations for writing tend to increase and students are frequently asked to use writing to demonstrate their learning and understanding (Klassen, 2002). In order to meet the challenging demands of higher-level writing tasks, students must be motivated to persist and engage with the task.

Motivation research has identified the self-efficacy construct of Bandura's social cognitive theory as a fundamental component of academic motivation. A sociocognitive perspective assumes that individuals are self-regulating, and possess self-beliefs that influence their thoughts, feelings, and actions (Bandura, 1977; Pajares, 2003). Self-efficacy is a domain-specific belief in one's ability to successfully perform a task, which influences his or her engagement in and successful completion of a task (Bruning et al., 2013; Klassen, 2002; Pajares, 2003). Researchers in the writing field have found that self-efficacy interacts with writing motivation and achievement. Self-efficacy beliefs have been consistently associated with performance, even when controlling for writing

ability (Hidi, Berndorff & Ainley, 2002; Pajares, 2003; Pajares & Usher, 2007). Students with high self-efficacy beliefs are more willing to participate in difficult tasks, persist longer, and work harder (Zimmerman, 2000; Bruning & Horn, 2000). Clearly, writing self-efficacy beliefs are a crucial part of motivation, as students have little motivation to persist with the difficult tasks of writing unless they believe that they will be successful. In order for research to help teachers and schools foster students' motivation for writing, we need to understand how writing self-efficacy beliefs are formed. However, very few research studies have investigated how students develop self-efficacy beliefs (Pajares & Usher, 2007).

In his social cognitive theory, Bandura (1977) hypothesized that individuals form self-efficacy beliefs based on their interpretation of information from their environment, specifically from four crucial sources. The most powerful source of information is interpreting one's own previous performance, or previous mastery experience (Klassen, 2004; Pajares, Johnson & Usher, 2007; Usher & Pajares, 2006). Other influential sources of information come from vicarious experience from observation and social comparison, and from social persuasions. Finally, self-beliefs can be developed through experiencing physiological and emotional states, such as exhilaration, anxiety, or other mood states (Bandura, 1977; Pajares & Usher, 2007). Research on the sources of self-efficacy has mostly focused on other domains, such as math and more research on how individuals form self-efficacy beliefs for writing is needed (Pajares, 2003; Usher, 2009).

1.1 The Problem Statement

Writing is a crucial skill that students must master in order to be successful in school and beyond, and students must be able to engage in higher-level writing tasks.

However, research demonstrates that the majority of students in the United States are not able to write effectively. According to the National Center for Education Statistics' 2011 report on writing achievement nationwide, only one quarter of 8th and 12th grade students performed at the "proficient" level in writing; only 3% performed at the "advanced" level. Engaging students' motivation for writing is crucial for their academic success, and achievement-motivation research is lacking in the area of writing. Writing self-efficacy beliefs are essential to understanding motivation for writing, and little is known currently about how students form these beliefs (Bruning & Horn, 2000; Pajares, 2003; Usher & Pajares, 2006). Research on the developmental path of self-efficacy beliefs is needed (Klassen, 2002; Usher & Pajares, 2006).

1.2 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to learn more about how students develop self-efficacy beliefs in the area of writing, beginning with Bandura's four proposed sources of information that influence the formation of beliefs as a framework. I was particularly interested in middle school students who were engaging in advanced level writing, so a gifted 7th grade English class was selected for this case study. Students from the class were purposefully sampled based on their self-efficacy profile in the area of writing, and qualitative data were collected about these students. Interviews with the students and their English teacher provided information about their attitudes and beliefs about writing.

1.3 Research Questions

The central question guiding this study was: What are the salient sources of information that students use to form beliefs about their own writing abilities? The subquestions were:

- What sources of information tend to inform low self-efficacy beliefs for writing?
- What sources of information tend to inform high self-efficacy beliefs for writing?

1.4 Researcher Positioning

I am approaching this topic from the vantage point of a teacher of writing as well as a student who strives to write and communicate effectively. I have personally struggled with the anxieties and insecurities that come with putting ones' words and thoughts down on paper. I am a former teacher of middle and high school English and have seen firsthand how crippling or motivating students' emotional experiences with writing can be. Capable students will cringe at the thought of writing if they feel insecure or nervous about their ability, even if their view of themselves is inaccurate. I have also seen students blossom and experience tremendous improvement in their writing when they feel excited or positive about their writing ability. Too many students dislike writing, experience anxiety or dread when faced with writing tasks, and leave high school hoping to never have to write anything again. High self-efficacy beliefs can buffer students and help them have positive experiences with writing. I am interested in understanding what motivates students to engage in such a demanding task, and how their self-efficacy beliefs for writing are formed.

My epistemological point of view fits within a critical constructivist perspective (Merriam, 2009, p. 11). I believe that knowledge is socially and culturally constructed and that education research must account for multiple realities. I believe also that all children deserve a quality education and have a right to knowledge, and that the goal of educational research should be to inform best practices for teachers and schools.

Researchers should strive to bring this information and these practices to as many students as possible.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 What is Self-Efficacy?

In order to succeed at such a cognitively challenging task as writing, developing writers must be motivated and believe in their ability to succeed. Self-efficacy is an individual's assessment of one's ability to succeed in a particular domain or to perform a specific task that is linked to their motivation in that domain or task (Bandura, 1977; Pajares, 2007). Thus, self-efficacy is domain specific: and students can have high self-efficacy in some academic areas and low self-efficacy in others, which affects their achievement in these areas. Self-efficacy interacts with key components of motivation, such as self-concept, perceived value, and apprehension (Pajares & Valiente, 1999; Pajares, 2003). Students with higher self-efficacy are more likely to persist longer, work harder and participate more readily, and to experience fewer negative emotions (Bruning & Horn, 2000; Hidi, Berndorff & Ainley, 2002; Zimmerman, 2000).

In order to study writing achievement and motivation, it is crucial to consider self-efficacy, because existing research demonstrates that the “beliefs that students create, develop, and hold to be true about themselves are vital forces in their success or failure in school” (Pajares, 2003, p. 140). Previous research has consistently demonstrated that high writing self-efficacy beliefs are associated with positive writing outcomes, such as persistence for difficult tasks, increased strategy use and goal setting, decreased writing anxiety, and successful task performance (Bruning et al., 2013; Pajares & Johnson, 1996; Pajares et al., 2007). Although research has demonstrated that there is a connection between writing self-efficacy and writing performance for students of all ages, genders, and ethnicities (e.g., Pajares & Johnson, 1994, 1996; Pajares, Miller, & Johnson, 1999;

Pajares & Valiante, 1999, 2001; Schunk & Swartz, 1993; Shell, Colvin, & Bruning, 1995; Zimmerman & Bandura, 1994), how students form their self-efficacy beliefs is not yet well understood.

Bandura (1977) hypothesized that there are four sources of information from which individuals glean information about their abilities, which affects their self-efficacy development. These four sources of information are: 1) one's own previous mastery or non-mastery experience, 2) vicarious experience by observing others, 3) social persuasion, and 4) physiological and emotional states (Bandura, 1977; Schunk, 2003). As students work on writing, they interpret the results of their efforts and develop beliefs about their abilities. When they interpret their efforts as successful (mastery experience), self-efficacy increases; if they see their experience as unsuccessful (non-mastery experience), self-efficacy decreases (Pajares et al., 2007). Vicarious experience often occurs through modeling, either by teachers or peers, and has been found to be not as influential as personal experience. Social comparison is a crucial component of vicarious experience, and may be particularly salient for middle school students who are developmentally vulnerable to comparisons due to their "burgeoning awareness of peers and their relative abilities" (Klassen, 2002, p. 176). Students' self-efficacy can also be shaped by messages they receive from others, such as teachers, peers, friends, or family members, about their perceived abilities and the value of tasks. Finally, strong emotional or physiological experiences, such as stress, anxiety, or pride, can be interpreted as indicators of ones' ability (Bandura, 1977; Pajares et al., 2007; Schunk, 2003).

2.2 Writing Self-Efficacy Research

Prior to 1990, writing research tended to focus on the cognitive processes involved in composition and students' skills and abilities, but later investigations began to look into the importance of students' "thoughts and beliefs," and revealed that students' affective experiences with writing are important for their achievement (Pajares & Johnson, 1995; Schunk, 2003, p. 159). Early inquiry into students' attitudes towards their own writing and writing abilities found mixed results. For instance, Pajares and Johnson (1995) argued that early measures may not have accurately assessed self-efficacy for the corresponding writing task, and this led to efforts to create improved measures of self-efficacy that align with a particular task. In 1995, Pajares and Johnson conducted a path analysis to study the relationships between writing achievement and affective variables, such as self-efficacy, writing self-concept, and writing apprehension. Their sample was 181 9th grade students from an ethnically diverse population. The study took place over two class periods, in which students completed the Writing Skills Self-Efficacy scale (Shell et al., 1989), the Writing Apprehension Test (Daly & Miller, 1975) and an essay writing assignment. Teachers provided ratings of students' writing abilities, and statewide writing scores were collected. They found that students' writing aptitude strongly predicted their self-efficacy, demonstrating that mastery experience is an important source of self-efficacy information. Interestingly, Pajares and Johnson (1995) also found that, "students' writing anxiety does not directly influence their performance," but instead this path was mediated by self-efficacy beliefs (p. 17). This indicates that physiological and emotional states may be an important source of information for forming writing self-efficacy beliefs. Pajares and Johnson (1995) also

found that girls reported lower writing self-efficacy than boys, indicating that these beliefs vary across genders and perhaps across other demographic factors as well.

Pajares and Johnson's (1995) study led to further inquiry into the sources of self-efficacy for writing.

2.3 Research on the Sources of Self-Efficacy Beliefs

Building on their previous work on writing self-efficacy, Pajares, Johnson, and Usher (2007) conducted a correlational study of the sources of students' self-efficacy for writing across several grade levels. In this study, the authors utilized Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory to directly measure if and how significantly the four proposed sources of information were related to students' self-efficacy. Their sample included 1,256 students from three different schools, ranging from grades 4 to 11, who were generally white and middle class, and all of whom were typically developing students. By testing a range of ages, Pajares et al. hoped to contribute to the understanding of the development of self-efficacy. They administered the Sources of Self-Efficacy Scale (from Lent, Lopez, & Bieschke, 1991) in order to determine which of the four proposed sources of information were related to students' writing self-efficacy. This measure had not been used previously with writing, so they conducted an Exploratory Factor Analysis and found four factors, mastery experience, vicarious experience, social persuasion and physiological states, with each item loading onto the expected factor. Pajares et al. also administered a measure of Writing Skills Self-Efficacy (from Pajares & Valiante, 1999, 2001), and collected teacher ratings of writing competence.

The findings of Pajares et al. (2007) provided valuable information about the different sources of information that influence the development of self-efficacy beliefs.

They used multiple regression analysis to explore the influence of each hypothesized source of information on writing self-efficacy. These relationships were tested on the full sample, by gender, and by grade level; they also used multivariate analysis of variance to explore whether the sources varied as a function of gender or grade level. The authors found that each of the sources correlated with one another and with writing self-efficacy; results revealed that mastery experience, social persuasion and physiological states were predictive of writing self-efficacy. Consistent with previous research that examined domains other than writing, they found that prior mastery experience with writing was the most significant predictor of writing self-efficacy across genders and grade levels. Vicarious experience, as proposed by Bandura, also was predictive of writing self-efficacy. They found that for middle school students, having very high or low anxiety was predictive of writing self-efficacy, but physiological states was not predictive at the high school level.

Pajares et al. (2007) also found that girls reported more mastery experience, more vicarious experience and less anxiety, had higher writing self-efficacy, and were rated better writers than boys across grade levels. This demonstrates that gender may predict self-efficacy, at least in the domain of writing. An unexpected finding was that elementary students generally had higher writing self-efficacy than older students and they concluded that, “middle school seems to be the critical juncture at which academic motivation, in this case self-efficacy, decreases,” (Pajares et al., 2007, p. 114). These results demonstrate that writing self-efficacy might decrease as children develop.

2.4 Literature Gap

Researchers have demonstrated the importance of self-efficacy for writing achievement and motivation. Pajares et al.'s (2007) research revealed that all four sources of self-efficacy information hypothesized by Bandura (1977) influence students' writing self-efficacy beliefs. However, much remains unknown about how students *develop* these beliefs. There may be additional sources of information, such as "self-talk, invitations, experiences of flow, and self-regulatory strategies" (Pajares et al., 2007, p. 117). Additionally, Pajares et al. (2007) used anxiety and stress as a proxy for physiological states, which does not account for positive physiological and emotional experiences, such as exhilaration, pride, and optimism, which may influence the formation of self-beliefs. There is a need to learn more about how students interpret and evaluate their writing experiences, and how they interpret messages from others (Pajares et al., 2007). Work by Pajares and others revealed that there may be significant differences in how boys and girls interpret self-efficacy information, and that middle school may be a turning point when students' self-efficacy and confidence for writing can begin to decline, as demands, expectations, and tendency for social comparison increase (Klassen, 2002; Pajares et al. 2007; Pajares, 2003).

2.5 Qualitative Research on the Sources of Self-Efficacy Beliefs

Qualitative methods allow researchers to dig deeply into the subjective experiences of individual people in order to reveal generalizable findings about a phenomenon, such as self-efficacy. Although the vast majority of self-efficacy research has been conducted using quantitative methods, there is a movement towards using qualitative and mixed methodologies to explore this construct. Pajares, one of the

leading researchers in the field of writing self-efficacy, argued that for the field to move forward, “quantitative efforts will have to be complemented by qualitative studies aimed at exploring how efficacy beliefs are developed, how students perceived that these beliefs influence their academic attainments and the academic paths they follow” (Pajares, 1996, p. 566). Qualitative research can help uncover what sources of information students use to evaluate their own capabilities. This could lead to the creation of interventions to improve self-efficacy and academic performance. Several studies have adopted qualitative methods to explore the topics of academic self-efficacy and motivation (Behizadeh, 2012, 2014; Usher, 2009).

Usher (2009) used a qualitative approach to learn more about how middle school students form self-efficacy beliefs for math. Usher identified eight middle school students as either high or low in math self-efficacy based on their scores on four quantitative measures of self-efficacy – math skills, self-regulated learning in math, grade and for completing math courses. She conducted semi-structured interviews with each student, their math teachers, and their parents. In her analyses, she compared the heuristics that students used to describe their math experiences and self-efficacy information with the results from the quantitative components of the study. Usher’s (2009) findings provide detailed information about the importance of different sources of information for students with varying levels of self-efficacy. For example, she found that high self-efficacy students’ interpretations of mastery experiences were very important, and that, “strong academic performance seemed to go hand-in-hand with confidence” (Usher, 2009, p. 289). Class placement and messages from teachers were also extremely salient, particularly for highly efficacious students. Finally, Usher (2009) found that

physiological and emotional experiences could be either motivating or discouraging, demonstrating that the relationship between physiological and emotional experiences and self-efficacy is more complex than previously thought. This study provided detailed information about eight students' experiences with math that could not have been captured with quantitative methods. Usher's (2009) systematic qualitative approach to investigating the sources of math self-efficacy beliefs served as a model for the current study of writing self-efficacy.

2.6 Current Study

The current study replicated the work done by Usher (2009). By using her methodology in the area of writing self-efficacy, I hope to add to the literature on how self-efficacy beliefs are formed across domains. Qualitative research approaches are "rich in descriptions of people, places, and conversations, and not easily handled by statistical procedures" (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 2). In order to describe the phenomenon of developing self-efficacy beliefs for writing within the context of a school environment, this study combined multiple qualitative approaches; it can be best described as a phenomenological case study (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

Case studies describe a single context or "bounded system" in detail, and are particularly useful when a phenomenon is intricately connected to the environment (Merriam, 2009). Students' self-efficacy beliefs about writing are inherently connected to the context of their daily experiences within their writing class, as well as their teacher's instructional approaches, assignments, and expectations. Therefore, I chose a single teacher's class as the bounded system for this case study. Case studies are particularistic because they focus on a particular situation or phenomenon; in this case the

phenomenon is writing and writing self-efficacy. Case study is useful for research that is guided by a theoretical framework and propositions (Yin, 2013). This case study was informed by the theoretical framework of social cognitive theory, the concept of self-efficacy, and the four proposed sources of self-efficacy information (Zeldin & Pajares, 2000). Instrumental case studies seek to explain a specific issue, problem or concern and provide insight into an issue or draw a generalization (Merriam, 2009). Case study research includes a case description and develops themes by investigating multiple sources of information, generating a detailed account of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). By utilizing a single-site instrumental case study design, my goal was to produce a story of four students' experiences with writing in order to provide generalizable insights into how students form self-efficacy beliefs for writing.

2.7 Case Selection

The classes that served as the case in this study were purposefully selected based on several key features. A middle school was selected because research has demonstrated that students often experience a decline in motivation and self-efficacy during the transition from elementary to middle school (Klassen, 2002; Usher, 2009; Wigfield, Eccels, McIver, Reuman & Midgley, 1991). I selected gifted classes because gifted or academically advanced students are likely to have developed beyond basic compositional writing skills to more advanced writing skills. In their theory of composing processes, Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987) have proposed that as writers mature they transition from using a *knowledge telling* process to a *knowledge transforming* process. The knowledge telling process uses the writer's natural language competence and relies on the topic, discourse schema, and text already produced as cues

for content retrieval. In the more advanced knowledge transforming process, the writer goes beyond natural language competence to reprocess knowledge through writing. A knowledge-transforming task involves an interaction between the writer's developing knowledge and the developing text, and the writer's knowledge changes during the writing process (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987). Knowledge transforming writing require the deliberate use of strategies and the ability to set goals and reorganize one's knowledge to achieve those goals and research with gifted students has indicated that they are more likely to use strategies and set goals when writing (Bruning & Horn, 2000; Schunk & Swartz, 1993). Gifted middle school English classes were selected as the case in this study because these students are engaging in writing tasks that require knowledge transforming, such as thesis papers. Composing a thesis paper challenges the writer to integrate multiple ideas and perspectives, and requires the writer to plan and revise during the writing process. Therefore, a thesis paper assignment might lead students to engage in a knowledge transforming process in their writing (Bernardi & Antolini, 2007).

Research has demonstrated that self-efficacy predicts performance for both gifted and regular education students, but little research has investigated the importance of self-efficacy beliefs for writing in a gifted population (Pajares, 1996). Studies have shown that gifted students tend to have higher self-efficacy overall, perhaps due to the fact that being assigned the label of "gifted" has an inherent influence on students' self-beliefs (Dai, Moon & Feldhusen, 1998). Gifted students' self-efficacy beliefs may be more resilient and stable, unlikely to change due to poor performance or a setback. Additionally, researchers have found that gifted students' beliefs tend to be more accurately calibrated and their abilities tend to align with their self-efficacy (Dai et al.,

1998; Pajares & Kranzler, 1995). A qualitative case study approach to the question of how individuals develop self-efficacy beliefs will provide a detailed understanding of the phenomenon within the context of an instructional environment (Creswell, 2013). As Usher (2009) argued, “giving voice to middle school students who are old enough to reflect articulately on their own learning could provide new insights about how self-efficacy develops” (p. 278).

2.8 Study Purpose

The purpose of this study was to learn more about the sources of information that students use to form their self-efficacy beliefs in the area of writing. A group of students was surveyed in order to identify students with certain efficacy patterns. In order to discover how students with high and low self-efficacy for writing interpret information about their performance and ability, students with these efficacy profiles were selected and interviewed.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Participants and Research Site

Participants were recruited for this study through personal contacts. Pajares (2007) and others have indicated that middle school may be an important juncture at which students experience changes in their own self-beliefs, therefore teachers of middle school English classes were purposefully sampled. One teacher agreed to participate, and after the school principal granted permission for the study, the students in her 7th grade gifted English classes were invited to participate. I visited the classes to introduce myself, explain the study, and distribute student assent and parent consent forms. I returned a week later to collect the consent forms and to distribute the survey for the quantitative portion of the study. Consent was obtained from the teacher, students, and parents, and 38 students agreed to participate.

3.5 Data Collection Procedures

Data were collected in November 2015 from students in English classes at a public middle school in a Midwestern city. Survey participants (n = 39) completed a demographics questionnaire, a self-efficacy measure adapted from the Self-Efficacy for Writing Scale (SEWS) and the Liking Writing Scale (LWS) (Bruning et al., 2013). The SEWS is a 22-item questionnaire with items corresponding to a three-factor model of writing self-efficacy: conventions (“I can spell my words correctly”), ideation (“I can think of many ideas for my writing”) and self-regulation (“I can focus on my writing for at least one hour”). Reliabilities for each of these subscales have been found to be high; all above .8 (Bruning et al., 2013). Survey participants rated their self-efficacy on each item on a 1 to 100 scale ranging from no confidence to complete confidence. The LWS

is a simple measure of attitudes towards writing consisting of four items rated on a 5-point Likert-type scale, ranging from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*. The four items are “I enjoy writing,” “I don’t like to write” (reverse-coded), “writing is fun” and “I feel bad when I write” (reverse-coded). Previous studies using the LWS with high school students have found good reliability ($\alpha = .831$) (Bruning et al., 2013).

Survey participants were 14 boys and 24 girls; five self-identified as Asian, three as multiracial, and 30 as white. All survey participants reported English as their primary language, and two noted that they speak another language in addition to English in the home. Mean scores for writing self-efficacy and liking writing were calculated using IBM SPSS version 22. Scores on the SEWS ranged from 35 to 97 and scores on the LWS ranged from 1 to 5 (See Table 1). Students with the highest and lowest scores for both liking writing and writing self-efficacy were identified. Four students, two with high self-efficacy for writing and two with low self-efficacy for writing, were invited to participate in an interview with the principal investigator (See Table 2). Previous studies have found gender differences in writing self-efficacy (Pajares & Johnson, 1994; Pajares, Johnson & Usher, 2007); therefore, one boy and one girl were selected as interview participants for each category.

Table 1 – Self-Efficacy for Writing Scale (SEWS) and Liking Writing Scale (LWS) Scores for Survey Participants

	Mean	Standard Deviation
<i>SEWS^a</i>	80.07	12.94
<i>Conventions</i>	92.25	7.28
<i>Ideation</i>	76.04	17.34
<i>Self-regulation</i>	71.80	21.46
<i>LWS</i>	3.58	1.04

^aScores based on results from 39 survey participants

Table 2 – Self-Efficacy for Writing Scale (SEWS) and Liking Writing Scale (LWS) Scores for Interview Participants

	<i>High Self-Efficacy Students</i>		<i>Low Self-Efficacy Students</i>	
<i>Student's Name^a, Gender, and Age</i>	Kylie, Female, 12	Lawrence, Male, 12	Lauren, Female, 12	Graham, Male, 12
<i>SEWS</i>	97	96	61	35
<i>Conventions</i>	94.8	100	92.2	90
<i>Ideation</i>	90.8	92.2	43.2	14.8
<i>Self-regulation</i>	93.5	90	59.6	0.0
<i>LWS</i>	5.0	4.5	3.5	1.0

^aParticipants were assigned pseudonyms

3.6 Interview Protocol

The interviews were semi-structured and based on the interview protocol from Usher's 2009 study, *Sources of Middle School Students' Self-Efficacy in Mathematics: A Qualitative Inquiry*. The questions from this interview protocol were altered to reflect the domain of writing, rather than math (See Appendix G). In order to refine the interview questions, I completed a pilot interview with the participating teacher's daughter, also a 7th grade student. Data from this pilot interview were not used in the study. The four purposefully sampled students agreed to participate in one-on-one interviews with me. The interviews took place in December 2015 and were conducted after school in the English classroom. I conducted an interview with the English teacher (Mrs. Ralston; not

her real name) in January 2016 in order to gather more information about the participating students. All interview participants agreed to have their interviews audio-recorded and each was assigned a pseudonym.

3.7 Data Analysis Procedures

I transcribed the interviews using online transcription software (*otranscribe.com*). The interview transcriptions were printed and hand annotated during the first cycle of coding. Descriptive coding was used for first cycle coding of the data, guided by Saldana's book, *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers*. These qualitative codes consisted of "direct quotations from people about their experiences, opinions, feelings and knowledge" (Patton, 2002, p. 4). *A priori* codes were pre-determined based on Bandura's hypothesized sources of self-efficacy information and Usher's *a priori* codes. The original codes were: 'Mastery/Non-Mastery Experiences', 'Vicarious Experiences', 'Social Persuasion', and 'Physiological/Emotional States'. Usher added 'Self-Regulated Learning Strategies' in her study. Other codes that emerged from the present data during first cycle coding included: 'Gifted', 'Writing Topics', 'Class Subjects', 'Technology', 'Testing', and 'Types of Writing Assignments'. In order to ensure reliability, I created a database with all of the data from the first cycle of coding.

Second cycle coding involved re-visiting the data to permit "reorganizing and reassembling the transformed data to better focus the direction of [the] study" (Saldaña, 2013, p. 187). I diagrammed the codes and combined several codes with the original *a priori* codes, which became the major themes. For example, the items under 'Testing' easily fit under 'Mastery/Non-Mastery Experiences'. 'Types of Writing Assignments' and 'Technology' seemed to fit together under a single theme. During the second cycle

of coding, I created two databases. One database consisted of direct quotes from the participants under the headings of the six major themes that emerged. The second database contained summarizing statements about the students' experiences that fit under the six themes. These two databases were used as a basis for writing the descriptions of each of the four students, their experiences with writing, and their self-beliefs.

Chapter 4: Findings

In this chapter, I will present my findings about the salient sources of self-efficacy information for the four interview participants. These data come from the interviews with the students and their English teacher, Mrs. Ralston. First, I will provide general background information on the classes that were the focus of this study, followed by an overview of the six relevant sources of information. I will then offer a description of each of the four interview participants, blending together information from their quantitative scores and qualitative data from the interviews. I will describe the sources of information that informed their self-efficacy beliefs for writing. I will describe the interview participants with high writing self-efficacy first, followed by a summary of the most significant sources of information for them. Finally, I will describe the interview participants with low self-efficacy for writing, followed by a summary.

4.1 Description of the Classes

The students who participated in this study were in Mrs. Ralston's two sections of 7th grade gifted English. In addition to teaching these two English classes, Mrs. Ralston is also the gifted coordinator for the school and was able to provide information about how each student was selected for the gifted program. About 28% of the students at the school are in the program and selection can occur based on intelligence testing, data gathering or recommendations by teachers. The typical path into the gifted program includes scoring above 130 on the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children (WISC); those who score above 145 are labeled "highly gifted". The four students who participated in the interview portion of the study took different routes to be placed in the gifted program. Kylie and Lawrence were identified as "gifted" by their WISC scores.

Graham was identified as “highly gifted”, and Lauren was recommended by a teacher in elementary school.

Kylie, Lawrence, Lauren and Graham are all talented students who are generally motivated to do well in school. In Mrs. Ralston’s English class, they read novels, worked on a variety of grammar and vocabulary activities, and engaged in different types of writing. All four of the students rated their confidence for writing conventions as high on the SEWS scale; their scores on the items about conventions ranged from 76 to 100 out of 100 (see Table 3). They were all confident about the basic tasks involved in writing, including spelling, punctuation, and writing complete sentences. Their level of maturity with writing seems to allow them to begin to think about their goals for writing, their audience, and using writing strategies. Mrs. Ralston reports that one of her goals for her classes is to help her students understand that writing is a process, and she provides a lot of feedback and opportunities for revision. This is a challenging new phase in adolescents’ writing careers, and Mrs. Ralston described some of the challenges they face, particularly when it comes to receiving feedback on their writing:

“They've been trained for 6 years to want praise. And, to know that... 'It's good, stop writing.' And so then they come [to my class], and we say, 'Oh it's good, but look what you could do here.' And the 'but look what you could do here,' is kind of a criticism, which it's not meant to be, it's just, like, 'let's make this better.' I try to reinforce that, but it doesn't always come across. That’s what's bad about having such an advanced 7D class - is that their skills are ready to go that way, but they're not emotional or socially developed to the point where they'll understand what I'm saying.”

Shortly after completing the writing self-efficacy questionnaire, Mrs. Ralston’s students wrote a thesis paper on a book entitled *The Other Side of Dark (OSOD)*. Mrs. Ralston

provided handouts that served as an outlining activity prior to writing the paper, and provided feedback on a draft before the students completed the final version of their paper. This assignment required students to provide a thesis statement and evidence from the book to support their ideas. Students needed to use planning, goal setting, and revision processes, and thus, the assignment represented a knowledge-transforming task (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987). In each of the interviews with the four students, I asked them about this writing assignment, as well as other writing activities from the current school year and previous years. My goal was to discover if and how engaging in knowledge-transforming writing assignments like the *OSOD* essay impacted their self-efficacy for writing.

4.2 The Sources of Self-Efficacy Information

The data collected in this study provide evidence that all four of Bandura's hypothesized sources of efficacy information are salient for young writers, as well as evidence that several other factors are influencing their confidence and motivation for writing. Bandura (1977) hypothesized that individuals gather efficacy information from their previous experiences, the vicarious experiences of others, social persuasion from others, and from personal physiological and emotional experiences. The data from this study also reveal that students' self-efficacy is informed by their use of self-regulated learning strategies and by the type of writing in which they are engaging. The six sources of self-efficacy information are described in Table 3. The examples provided come from statements the students made during the interview portion of the study.

Table 3 – Sources of Self-Efficacy Information

Sources of Self-Efficacy Information	Significant Statements from Participant Students
<p>Mastery or non-Mastery Experience:</p> <p><i>Previous experiences with writing that were perceived to be successful (mastery) or unsuccessful (non-mastery)</i></p>	<p>“I’m pretty confident...since I’ve gotten good scores before”</p> <p>“I was happy with it...it was 3 pages long”</p> <p>“Last year...I was having so much trouble with English and Language Arts because I could not write. It was so hard for me”</p> <p>“I barely wrote one page. I don’t even know if I wrote a whole page”</p>
<p>Vicarious Experience:</p> <p><i>Observations of others success or failure with writing; modeling</i></p>	<p>“It was kind of hard for a lot of people”</p> <p>“Most of my friends enjoy writing”</p> <p>“They’re so much better than me in writing”</p> <p>“They’ve been given the gift of writing, and that’s something that I haven’t”</p>
<p>Social Persuasion:</p> <p><i>Verbal or other feedback on one’s writing performance in the past; general statements or information about the importance and uses of writing</i></p>	<p>“A lot of my teachers, um, have said that I’m a good writer”</p> <p>“Most of my friends say my stories are good”</p> <p>“She makes me feel like I’m really good, cause, like, she encourages us”</p> <p>“I’ve been told that I was a bad writer in the past”</p>
<p>Physiological and Emotional Experiences:</p> <p><i>Feelings, emotions, or sensations experienced during or related to writing experiences</i></p>	<p>“No, I definitely was not happy. Nervous, because I want to get a good grade on it”</p> <p>“Well, I just, kinda really didn’t want to do it, too, cause, like, writing’s not my favorite”</p> <p>“I wasn’t really...um, like, dreading it or stressed out about it, I was just kind of fine with doing it”</p> <p>“I felt really proud, and I felt excited”</p>
<p>Self-Regulated Learning Strategies:</p> <p><i>Uses of strategies or approaches that informed one’s experience with writing</i></p>	<p>“Normally it’s just me closing the door to my room and re-reading the entire story out loud”</p> <p>“I don’t do it [outline] unless my teacher, like, tells me to”</p> <p>“I always try to get it done in school, but if I absolutely had to I would work on it at home”</p>
<p>Type of Writing Assignment and Mode of Writing:</p> <p><i>Fiction/creative writing vs. research/academic writing</i></p>	<p>“I love doing research, because...I think it’s more fun to learn about something than just to come up with it on your own”</p> <p>“I’m not very imaginative, I like to make real life things”</p> <p>“It’s kind of a little bit easier, since I’ve been able to have... practice... using creativity”</p>

4.3 Student Portraits

Each of the four student participants described being influenced by the six sources of self-efficacy information in some way. The importance of events, observations, persuasions and experiences differed for each student depending on their perceptions and interpretations. Therefore, I have chosen to individually describe each student, their experiences with writing, and their interpretations of self-efficacy information. These descriptions blend together information from the quantitative questionnaire about writing self-efficacy and liking writing, statements from my interview with the student, and comments from their English teacher, Mrs. Ralston, from her interview.

4.4 High Self-Efficacy – Kylie

Kylie is a mature and well-spoken student who seems happy to discuss her many interests and her experiences with writing. Kylie was selected not only because of her high scores on the SEWS and LAW, but also based on Mrs. Ralston's recommendation that she is "*the* writer of my group." Kylie is Asian American, excels in all of her classes, particularly math, and plays both the violin and piano. She told me that her interests are, "reading, typing stories on Google Docs, playing my instruments and acting." Kylie's high confidence for writing seemed to have been informed by many different sources. The most influential of these sources appear to be her previous mastery experiences, her social experiences with writing, and her physiological reactions to writing coupled with high self-regulated learning abilities. Messages from teachers, peers, and family, as well as interactions with different types of writing assignments seemed to have been secondary sources of self-efficacy information for Kylie.

Above and beyond the other three participants in the study, Kylie seemed to be exceptionally confident and excited about her writing abilities. When asked to rate her confidence, she said, “10 - I feel really confident about writing,” and Mrs. Ralston agreed, saying that Kylie “is on a level above the class when it comes to her passion for writing, her love for writing, her confidence in writing.” Primarily, this confidence was likely informed by her previous successful experiences with writing, both in and out of school. Kylie obtained a perfect score on the writing portion of the 4th grade Nebraska Statewide Assessment (NeSA) and was recognized in class, and she also won a district-wide writing contest in 4th grade. Kylie earns all top grades in English on her writing assignments, and she writes stories for fun after school for an hour or more a day. Mrs. Ralston stated that Kylie’s writing pieces are consistently so excellent that she doubts the papers she assigns are helping Kylie improve in any way. She lamented that Kylie is labeled “gifted” and not “highly gifted” because she could greatly benefit from working one-on-one with a writing tutor, an opportunity that is only awarded to “highly gifted” students.

Kylie views non-mastery or unsuccessful experiences as an opportunity to learn and improve her writing abilities. When asked if she has ever experienced setbacks with writing, interestingly, Kylie had a lot to say. She told me that her *OSOD* essay, “could have been more fluid...I could have been more fluent with the transitions sometimes, cause it’s kinda hard for me to do those.” She also told me that even though she gets positive feedback on her stories, “I think I can still be more descriptive in what I write.” Mrs. Ralston also informed me that Kylie is constantly looking for mistakes and areas for improvement, saying,

“She's very much in tune with the process, and not afraid to mark up her paper, or get her paper marked up. She wants more, she wants to know where the problems are, she wants to fix them. She wants to know what a reader didn't understand, cause she wants that out of there.”

Because she is interested in mastering skills, seeking challenges, and becoming a better writer (Pajares, 2003), Kylie could be described as having a task goal orientation for writing (Pajares, 2003). Her comments also indicate that she has what Dweck (2006) would call a “growth mindset” when it comes to writing, seeing it as a skill that one can improve with effort and she sees non-mastery experiences as opportunities to get feedback and learn.

Kylie's confidence for writing is also affected by her social interactions with friends and an online writing community, which provide her with vicarious experiences as well as feedback on her writing abilities. Kylie described regularly sharing her stories with four or five friends on Google Docs, who also greatly enjoy writing and provide ideas and feedback on her stories. She reported that this is a fun and enjoyable experience, and that “most of my friends say my stories are good.” Mrs. Ralston additionally pointed out that Kylie spends time at school writing with her friend Becca, and that both of them are working on novels. In Mrs. Ralston's words:

“Becca encourages [her writing] because the two of them, when given time, sit there and they talk about reading and they talk about their stories. Becca is one of the girls that Kylie let's read her stuff, and, it's like they have a little writing clique.”

Kylie also participates in an online collaborative writing website called ‘Chicken Smoothie’ and says it’s really fun to “write stories with other people from around the world.” Kylie has noticed that the people she admires and is close to also enjoy writing, like giving and receiving feedback, and want to improve their writing abilities. These social interactions and vicarious experiences appear to have had a strong impact on her self-efficacy beliefs for writing. This finding contradicts previous research that has found no relationship between vicarious experience and writing self-efficacy (Pajares et al, 2007; Usher & Pajares, 2006). Clearly, in Kylie’s case, there is a connection between her observations of others, and her interest in and confidence for writing.

Positive physiological and emotional experiences while writing have also informed Kylie’s confidence. Writing is an emotional experience for her; she told me that compared to her classmates, “I’d have to say [I’m] more, um, energetic about it, I have more feeling towards it, so I really want to write more than them.” Writing is an enjoyable, fun, not stressful experience for her. In her words:

“I mostly enjoy English. It’s just a really fun subject, cause it’s not, like, really technical....you don’t have, like, this equation you have to follow, like, there’s grammar, but most of English is just...they’re words and you put them together and you can make fun things.”

She has particularly strong positive emotions about creative writing and gets excited about using her creativity. She told me several times that she likes “going crazy” in her writing, by which she means letting all of her creativity flow out onto the page. Although Kylie prefers creative writing, she also “enjoys” writing academic papers, and found the *OSOD* writing process to be “quite easy...cause I had all the notes next to me, and it

wasn't really stressful and I enjoyed it." Kylie used words like "happy", "proud", "excited", "fun", "enjoyable" and "confident" when discussing her experiences with writing. Her physiological experience seems also to be tied to the physical environment; she is most comfortable writing at home in her room in a cozy spot with music playing, and stated that she will often put aside writing in class if she feels it is too noisy. Furthermore, Kylie has made writing a personal, enjoyable experience, and this is due in part to her strong self-regulated learning skills.

Kylie uses self-regulated learning strategies for both school writing assignments and her personal creative writing, and this strength also seems to be an important factor for her confidence. She understands that writing is a process and easily goes through the steps, whether she is working on a story at home or a research paper at school. She does not mind drafting an outline because it helps her organize her thoughts, and has even outlined one of her stories before. Kylie organizes her story ideas on separate documents in Google Docs and uses the comments feature to make notes to herself about revisions. She enjoys revising and improving her writing, and utilizes strategies that she has been taught in school for her stories, such as reading the piece out loud to identify areas to revise or re-word. Mrs. Ralston commented,

"she is one who matches that reading to her writing, she'll look for strategies.

She'll say she found something in a book, I've heard her telling Becca...or she'll even tell me, 'I saw the use of this word,' and she doesn't say to me, 'I'm gonna use it in my writing,' but I can tell that what she's reading and what she's writing are connecting."

When prompted to recall a time she faced a setback during writing, Kylie remembered that she “kinda felt a bit nervous,” when she realized she had not done enough research for a speech project, but she “calmed down by just putting the notes away and reading, so I did it at home to finish it.” She also mentioned asking her friend and Mrs. Ralston for help at several points throughout the *OSOD* essay writing process. Kylie’s successful use of self-regulated learning strategies seems to boost her confidence, because she knows that she has multiple approaches available to her if she gets stuck or nervous.

The type of writing assignment or project did not seem to have a huge impact on Kylie’s self-efficacy. Although she clearly prefers creative writing, she is just as confident when working on academic writing assignments, such as book essays, research papers, and argumentative or opinion papers. Kylie remembered getting nervous while working on academic writing, but she used her store of self-regulated learning strategies to get organized and calm her nerves. Reflecting on a research paper she wrote in 6th grade, Kylie said, “sometimes it got a little tedious because I couldn't, like, go creative and create unicorns in the middle of it. You had to stay on the topic, it had to be realistic, it had to have facts...when I don't normally write like that.” However, she seeks and finds opportunities to involve creativity even in academic papers; for example, she included an extra “alternative ending” writing piece with her *OSOD* essay for Mrs. Ralston. These opportunities for creativity help Kylie enjoy the process of writing even if she finds the assignment tedious.

Praise from others, such as her peers, teachers and family members, did not have a huge impact on Kylie’s confidence for writing. Unlike several of the other participants, teacher praise was not crucial to Kylie’s sense of herself as a writer. When prompted, she

remembered her teachers giving her positive feedback and praise, but also stated, “I feel confident enough, but, [Mrs. R’s] always there if I ever need her to judge [my writing], or to compliment it, she’s just always there.” Rather than seeking affirmation or praise, Kylie views her teachers as sources of feedback and constructive criticism. Mrs. Ralston noted, “She’s a revision queen. She *desires* feedback, I mean, she is like a sponge for feedback.” Similarly, rather than seeking her peer’s admiration, she stated that, “you shouldn’t try to judge how well you do by others, you’re supposed to do it against yourself, so you can always try harder.” Her friends in her writing clique were more importantly a source of feedback and ideas rather than praise and admiration. Finally, Kylie’s family members’ persuasions did not have an impact on her self-efficacy for writing. In fact, she stated that her family members, a mother, father and sister, had never read her writing. Mrs. Ralston attributed this disconnect to a cultural difference. In her words,

“I don’t know where her parents’ interests rest, toward her writing. Because, as an Asian student, the focus is a great deal upon math and science, typically. At conferences, I really praised her writing, and the fact that she loved to write, and I said, ‘Someday she’s gonna be an author and I’m gonna say I knew her when,’ and there was not a lot of excitement at the table; there was a nod and a smile. And so that for me, told me that might not be what they want her to do.”

When asked if her family members enjoy writing, Kylie sardonically told me, “Um, no, most of them do programming, my mom plays Candy Crush a lot, my sister watches Netflix - I’m the only one who actually writes.” This proud statement affirms Mrs. Ralston’s suspicion that Kylie’s love of writing sets her apart from her family members

and even possibly goes against their desires for her. Kylie has learned how to make accurate self-appraisals of her abilities, and therefore her self-efficacy is not tied to others' judgment of her ability (Usher & Pajares, 2006).

Kylie's view of writing typifies a mastery approach to learning (Dweck, 2007). She only mentioned grades when directly asked to comment on them, and she prefers to focus on what she has learned from her experiences and where she can still improve. She understands that writing is a process that often takes many revisions. As Mrs. Ralston put it,

“She's a revision queen - I mean, her view is so more worldly that just this paper that we're writing. I mean, she puts things together, the connections, she'll use her writing for the reading and the reading for the writing...she's kind of lovely to watch, because out of everybody, she stands out as very much a writer.”

4.5 – High Self-Efficacy – Lawrence

Although Lawrence stood out as the boy with the highest writing self-efficacy on the two quantitative measures, in person he is a quiet, self-conscious boy who seems to overthink his answers in the interview. He is clearly uncomfortable speaking with me and constantly interrupts himself with frequent ‘um's’, ‘like's’, and ‘well's’. Lawrence is involved in numerous after-school activities, including playing the violin in orchestra, swimming, tennis, acting and dance. He also tells me that he likes to read and write, and that he occasionally writes skits to act out with his cousins. Lawrence seems deeply concerned with getting good grades and doesn't like to “mess around” in class. He doesn't express deep interest or excitement for any of his subjects or activities, but states that it is important to him to do well in school. Lawrence's self-efficacy for writing has

been highly influenced by grades and praise from teachers, as well as his own mastery experiences informed by his high self-regulated learning abilities. The type of writing assignment also appears to influence Lawrence's self-beliefs. Less important sources of information are his vicarious experiences that allow him some amount of social comparison and his physiological experiences with writing.

Lawrence interprets deep meaning from the grades and scores he has earned in the past. He rates his confidence for writing as an 8 out of 10, "since I've gotten good scores before." When asked about what kind of student he is, Lawrence stated, "I really want to get...I really like to get good grades." He told me he is happy when he earns good scores on writing assignments because, "then I don't have to really worry about...like, about, like, tests, cause, like, I still have to study but I don't have to worry that much cause I, cause, like, I know that I probably won't, like, fail." Unlike Kylie, who places emphasis on mastering skills and improving her talents as a writer, Lawrence clearly experiences some anxiety about achievement and is more concerned with the grade he will earn than the skills he will master when working on writing. This finding is consistent with Pajares' (2003) assertion that performance approach achievement goals are associated with writing confidence for boys. However, Lawrence does not appear to have strong emotional reactions or describe physiological sensations associated with writing. For example, reflecting on being recognized for the NeSA writing test, he said he felt, "pretty good." Pajares et al. (2007) found that only very high or low anxiety was correlated with self-efficacy; Lawrence's concerns about achievement are modest and therefore do not have the effect of decreasing his self-efficacy for writing.

Another major source of information for Lawrence is teacher praise and recognition. When I asked Lawrence to describe himself as a writer, the first thing he said was, “a lot of my teachers have said that I’m a good writer.” He cited his second grade teacher’s praise as influential for his confidence, as well as Mrs. Ralston’s. Remembering a story he wrote recently, he said, “Mrs. R said I did really good and that I was a really good writer.” Mrs. Ralston noted that he is, “very motivated by compliments, or encouragement...Lawrence needs a lot of affirmation that things are going right.” Unlike Kylie, who seeks her teachers’ constructive criticism mostly in order to learn and improve her skills, Mrs. Ralston interpreted Lawrence’s reliance on teacher feedback as seeking praise, saying again that he, “wants to know that he's done it right.” However, according to Lawrence, his interest in feedback from his teachers is both for reassurance and constructive criticism. He cited several teachers’ “tips” from previous years that helped him “make my writing better,” such as “descriptive words” and help with transitions. The social persuasion he has received from teachers, including grades, comments, “tips”, and praise, has had a large impact on his concept of himself as a writer.

Lawrence has experienced success with writing assignments in the past, and these previous mastery experiences have impacted his confidence. One of the only extended answers Lawrence provided during our interview was when asked to describe a writing assignment he was proud of; he stated, “I really liked my, um, realistic story last year,” and launched into a long description of a story about a boy who goes to baking school and runs into a conflict with a fellow student, ultimately resolving with a baking contest win and a new friend. Like Kylie, Lawrence was also recognized for earning a top score

on the NeSA writing test. Lawrence also felt that he had done “pretty well” on his *OSOD* essay, because Mrs. Ralston had provided clear directions and he found the steps of outlining and preparation before writing to be helpful. Unlike his lukewarm description of his ability in Mrs. Ralston’s class, she was quick to describe him as a skilled writer. According to her,

“He is very good at...synthesizing ideas, and combining ideas, and sometimes, it comes across on his papers and sometimes it's a little more rough, but um, he'll see, like, the bigger picture, like, it won't just be, 'I need a statement of my own, I need a quote, and then, I need a conclusion statement.' He kind of has a way to blend that all together. And so, he, I would say, is a little advanced in that area.”

These are sophisticated skills for a 7th grader, but Lawrence does not seem to fully recognize his own abilities yet. His interpretation of his skills is tied to the type of writing he is engaging in.

Lawrence strongly prefers creative writing assignments and experiences more doubt about his ability to engage in academic writing, such as thesis papers or argumentative essays. Lawrence demonstrates more confidence for creative writing, which he says he is better at because acting has allowed him to practice being creative and coming up with ideas. He enjoys writing stories and skits, and he said he sometimes participates in Kylie’s Google Docs “writing clique.” Lawrence rated his ability for academic writing lower than creative writing, but his comments about the process of writing academic papers demonstrate that he has a strong grasp of how the process works and how to regulate his writing experience. He discussed the outlining process Mrs. Ralston led the class through before they wrote the *OSOD* essay, saying, “the outline

helped, so I didn't have to stop and think about what I needed to put next.” He described using a similar process when preparing for a research paper, and even mentions using a structure for outlining his creative stories. Mrs. Ralston also noticed that Lawrence seems to gain confidence from using a structure when writing, and sees this as a good sign for his future success. She said,

“I foresee him being - he's good at the structure...cause he likes the structure, and soon he'll, not this year probably, but soon in his writing career, he will move away from, 'I need your confirmation that this is okay,' cause he'll have it down and then he'll manipulate it a little bit.”

Different types of writing appear to have a slight influence on Lawrence's confidence.

Finally, vicarious experience and social comparison are not essential to Lawrence's sense of himself as a writer. He does not mind peer revising and sharing his work with his classmates, and Mrs. Ralston stated that he will even request to read his work aloud for the whole class. While “he is motivated by being looked upon in a good light,” by his teachers, according to Mrs. Ralston, Lawrence does not seem to be affected by his classmates' input. He feels confident enough to share with them, but does not compare his own worth as a writer to them. Lawrence does note that when he was in a mixed level English class in a previous year, he felt that his skills were slightly more advanced than some of his classmates. Lawrence feels that being a good writer is an inherited ability, noting that because he and his cousins enjoy writing, his younger siblings will, too. This indicates that he has a fixed mindset toward writing abilities (Dweck, 2006).

4.6 Summary of High Self-Efficacy Students

My findings about Kylie and Lawrence, the high self-efficacy students, confirm several previous findings about the sources of self-efficacy, as well as introduce several new sources that have not been previously considered. Both students' confidence was highly influenced by previous mastery experiences, confirming others' findings that this is the strongest source of self-efficacy information (Pajares et al., 2007; Usher & Pajares, 2006). I also found that their confidence for successfully regulating their writing experience was connected to their overall self-efficacy for writing. These students had many writing strategies and used them effectively for organizing their ideas, revising their work, and keeping their anxiety at bay. Usher and Pajares (2006) found that self-efficacy for self-regulation correlated with overall academic self-efficacy.

Vicarious experience was not important to Lawrence; this supports others' findings that this is a weak source of self-efficacy information (Pajares et al., 2007). However, Kylie was highly influenced by her participation in social writing activities, which inherently lead to vicarious experience. Her Google Docs and 'Chicken Smoothie' writing groups provided her with models who enjoy writing, see it as valuable, and enjoy receiving constructive criticism and feedback on their work; these experiences had an impact on her self-efficacy and her self-concept as a writer. This finding perhaps indicates that the measures currently used to assess the importance of vicarious experience are missing an aspect of the writing experience that has developed recently due to the new uses of technology.

Another interesting finding for the students with high self-efficacy was that social persuasions were far more important to Lawrence, the male student, than Kylie, the

female student. Previous research has indicated that social persuasion is more crucial to female students than male students (Usher & Pajares, 2006). Perhaps the difference in these students' interpretation of social persuasion information has more to do with their learning and goal orientations than their gender. Kylie appears to have a mastery orientation and a growth mindset towards writing; she looks for areas of improvement and sees her teachers' and friends' feedback as an opportunity to continue improving her skills. Therefore, it makes sense that her confidence is not dependent on praise. Pajares (2003) found that holding tasks goals in writing is positively related to writing self-efficacy. Lawrence, on the other hand, is highly concerned with grades and receiving praise, indicating that he may have a performance orientation and a fixed mindset. His comments about his family members indicate that he sees writing ability as an inherited ability that cannot be improved with practice. Lawrence's confidence is dependent on his teachers' feedback and praise because he wants to know that he is inherently a good writer.

Finally, Kylie's description of her physiological and emotional experiences with writing adds to the literature on this source of self-efficacy information. Previous studies have used anxiety or apprehension as a proxy for this fourth source of information, which clearly disregards any positive physiological experiences (Pajares et al. 2007; Usher & Pajares, 2006). Kylie repeatedly told me she "enjoys" and "loves" writing and describes her experiences with pride, pleasure, and happiness. These emotions clearly impact her self-efficacy for writing. This finding indicates that future studies should include measures of positive physiological and emotional experiences in addition to negative.

4.7 – Low Self-Efficacy – Lauren

Lauren is an energetic and giggly girl who seems happy to talk with me, but is easily flustered. She asked me a lot of questions throughout our interview and seemed curious about my work. Lauren is a swimmer, and describes herself as athletic and competitive. She has one best friend and tells me that they like to be “wild” and tease each other a lot. Lauren has a younger brother in the grade below her and she says he influences her athleticism and competitive nature. Lauren works very hard in school and is proud to earn straight A’s, and is also proud of her status in the gifted program. Her placement was not based on IQ scores, like 70% of the gifted population at the school, but rather on a teacher’s recommendation that she could handle the workload. Lauren says math is her favorite subject, but states that her interest in her subjects depends greatly on the teacher and how “fun” they make their classes. She is a strong student in English, as well as the rest of her classes, but her confidence for writing fluctuates and seems to be situation-dependent. Lauren’s self-efficacy for writing has been highly influenced by her own experiences and social persuasion from teachers and her family. She also gleans information about her own abilities from different types of writing assignments and her ability to use self-regulated learning strategies. Lauren’s confidence for writing is less impacted by vicarious experience and physiological and emotional experiences.

Lauren has had both successful and unsuccessful experiences with writing, which have shaped her self-efficacy. She gets A’s on her papers, but she finds English and writing very challenging, and remembered struggling in previous years, saying, “I was having so much trouble with the English and Language Arts because I could not write. It

was so hard for me cause I couldn't remember anything, and it was really hard.” When asked about her writing assignments, she stated that she is often lost or confused and that she, “didn’t know how to do it.” She stated that English is “tricky” for her, that she “struggles” with writing and that it’s “not my favorite.” Although Lauren said she typically does not enjoy writing, she recalled one assignment that she did like, a biography project on her father, which was, “really fun” and she “wanted to do it.”

Lauren’s low confidence for writing has to do with the type of writing she is working on. Despite having the lowest scores for writing self-efficacy and liking writing out of all the girls who took the questionnaire, her overall score was not that low – her mean score for the SEWS questionnaire was a 61 out of 100 and her LWS score was a 3.5 out of 5. Lauren feels confident for writing conventions, but has trouble coming up with ideas and putting her ideas into writing. Lauren’s low self-efficacy primarily emerged when asked about creative writing assignments. In her interview, she rated her ability for writing creative as a 6 out of 10, compared to a “7 to a 9” for academic writing assignments. She prefers to work on research assignments because “it’s more fun to learn about something than to just come up with it on your own.” Mrs. Ralston attributed this to the fact that when it comes to writing assignments, Lauren is, “worried about if what she did is ‘right’” and further stated, “I think she feels more comfortable with a structure.” However, Lauren is not confident about the process of writing, and she became flustered when trying to explain to me how she goes about starting and completing an assignment, saying, “it's hard for me to figure out how to format it.”

Lauren’s lack of confidence in her ability to use strategies and regulate her writing process seems to inform her general low self-efficacy for writing. Lauren is a

hard working student and, as Mrs. Ralston put it, “there's no way that she's gonna let that paper slip,” but she does not use strategies skillfully the way Kylie and Lawrence do.

When I asked Lauren about her writing process for creative assignments, she stated, “Uh, it's not really a process, I just find out what I'm gonna do, and just start writing [laughs].”

We discussed her *OSOD* essay and the outlining process Mrs. R required them to do.

This structure seemed to help her, but she stated that she does not outline her essays and research papers unless required to. She expressed concern about her ability to find reliable research sources, to summarize resources without plagiarizing, to organize her ideas into separate paragraphs, and to write conclusions to her papers. Lauren does not have confidence in her ability to navigate the necessary steps in the writing process, and Mrs. Ralston thinks that this impacts her sense of herself as a writer:

“I don't think it's her favorite activity, and I think part of it is because she's so not confident right now, that she seeks that constant, 'Can you look at this, can you look at this?' And I don't think she likes that either. Cause she doesn't say, 'I don't like to ask you questions,' but I don't think she likes the fact that she can't be as independent as she wants.”

Lauren's lack of confidence leads her to seek approval and feedback from outside sources, such as her teachers, parents, and friends.

An important source of self-efficacy information for Lauren comes from praise and encouragement from her teachers and parents. Lauren gains self-confidence from her parents, who encourage her and her younger brother to practice writing at home. She measures her success by feedback from important adults in her life, and as Mrs. Ralston put it, “Lauren is a teacher pleaser. She wants to do what you want her to do.” Lauren is

beginning to develop an understanding that writing is a process, but is still highly dependent on her teachers' input. Mrs. Ralston noticed that during the revision process "Lauren will expand. She will develop, and sometimes she needs a little handholding...she'll just need more encouragement." Lauren's self-efficacy is dependent on grades and compliments. As she told me, she gets "straight A's, like, not meaning to brag." She also recalls several teachers who "pushed [her] up to diff" (differentiated/gifted classes) and helped her get into the gifted program by giving her extra work.

Although Lauren clearly cares about grades and is not as focused on mastering writing skills as Kylie, indicating that Lauren has a performance orientation towards writing, there is also evidence that she is beginning to see writing as a process (Blackwell, et al., 2007). Reflecting on her struggle to summarize sources in her own words, Lauren commented, "That's hard for me sometimes, so that's why I always have to...watch, like, get better at it, and review, just to see if I'm doing it all right." Mrs. Ralston remembers that when she handed back the rough draft of their *OSOD* essays, Lauren was enthusiastic about completing revisions. Mrs. Ralston said, "she'll keep working on it, because she kinda gets the idea of, 'I could make this better'...she realized that the things she had done are still good and she could expand." When asked if there was anything Mrs. R could do to help build her confidence for writing, Lauren said,

"she might be able to like give me a lot of, like, more feedback about it and tell me this is what you have and we could maybe take this away and we could bump this up a notch, in, to improve it and to get it 110%...Mrs. R] makes

me feel like I'm really good, cause, like, she encourages us, and if it's not very good, like, she'll explain how we can make it better.”

Vicarious experiences and physiological reactions were less important sources of information for Lauren. Although she is clearly proud of her status in the gifted class, she rarely compares her ability to her classmates. Mrs. Ralston stated that although Lauren appreciates positive feedback, for Lauren, “it's not a, 'I'm gonna brag to the rest of the class,' it's just an internal, like, 'I want to know.’” Lauren did lightly note that her friends are “so much better than me in writing cause they’re so much more creative,” but her sense of her own abilities does not seem to rest upon social comparison. She also commented that, “it’s funny that my brother and I have trouble with writing,” – like Lawrence, she may see writing as an inherited skill. However, persuasions and encouragement from her teachers and her parents seem to be sending her the opposite message: that writing skills can be worked on and improved.

Lauren did not report strong emotional or physiological experiences when working on writing. Throughout our conversation, she repeatedly stated that her engagement has to do with how fun the teacher and class are, and she enjoyed writing the biography book on her dad because it was fun and she learned some funny things he did in his youth. When asked about her emotional experience with writing, she simply stated that she often feels that she just doesn’t want to do it, or tries to just “get it done.” She states that writing is hard for her, but does not express any strong negative or positive emotional experiences.

4.7 – Low Self-Efficacy – Graham

Graham is “highly gifted” and an excellent student. Graham comes across as a serious boy, and he takes time after each of my questions to consider his answer before he speaks. Mrs. Ralston states that despite his high intelligence, he struggles socially, and Graham describes himself as introverted. He tends to stay focused in his classes and expresses annoyance with “screw heads” who sit near him and distract him in English class. Of the four students, Graham expresses the strongest negative reaction to writing. He does not enjoy it, never works on writing outside of school, and when given writing assignments, he said, “I will try to do the least amount of writing that I can...I am not a strong writer, because I have good ideas, I just can’t get them down onto the paper, that’s my problem.” Mrs. Ralston noted that Graham is a verbal student who “doesn't like to write things down – he will – but it will be a minimum.” Similar to the other three students, Graham is confident for the conventions of writing, but he rated his self-efficacy for the ideation and self-regulation items of the SEWS extremely low and he had by far the lowest overall score out of the 38 participants (35 out of 100). Graham’s confidence for writing seems to have been strongly influenced by the types of writing assignments he has done in the past, and these experiences have informed his idea about what it means to be a “writer.” Graham struggles with the process of writing, but has gained some confidence from past mastery experiences. He has also been highly influenced by social persuasions from his teachers and his own physiological experiences with writing. Less important sources of self-efficacy information for Graham came from social comparison with peers, messages from family members and friends, and self-regulated learning strategies.

Graham's self-efficacy for writing is highly dependent on the type of writing he is asked to do. He has had success with both academic and creative writing pieces, but his confidence for creative writing is much lower than for academic writing, such as research papers and essays. When asked to rate his abilities, he told me,

“On a research paper, I would rate myself a 10, because I love research. Because research, they give you a long period of time, you get to go on the computer, write everything down, then go write a paper, which is...fun. Or not fun, but good. I'm always happy with my research papers; I try to make them as best as I can.”

This statement indicates that he feels that he knows the steps involved in this type of writing assignment, giving him confidence that he could complete it successfully.

Graham prefers writing research papers because he can find the information in sources and, he said, “I don't have to think of it.” Mrs. Ralston attributed Graham's preference for academic writing to his overall learning style and preference for structure. She said, “I would think he would be in favor of the academic writing. In my mind, his mind...works very logically and sequentially, and for him, the creative writing is not a favorite.” When asked about creative writing, Graham said, “that's *more* of the ideas part, and that's because I just...can't do it. And, I'm also, I'm not very imaginative, I like to make real life things.” When asked to work on creative writing, Graham no longer focuses on writing as a process, and instead fixates on the perceived pressure of coming up with ideas. This has led Graham to develop a mental framework for “being a good writer.”

Graham has not developed an understanding that writing is a process, and his fixed mindset appears to have hurt his confidence for writing and his willingness to put

forth effort. Despite the fact that Graham does know how to write, he does not see himself as a “writer.” Graham argues that in order to be a writer, one must have an innate ability; according to him, good writers have “been given the gift of writing.” Graham has a fixed mindset toward writing; he doesn’t see it as a skill that one can build on and improve (Blackwell et al. 2007; Dweck, 2006). Despite being an intelligent and advanced student, Graham is not strategic when it comes to writing. Unlike Kylie, he doesn’t recognize that writing requires “legwork”, organization, and revision. Graham’s attitude affects his success in Mrs. Ralston’s class because he is reluctant to engage in the revision process after he has completed a piece of writing. Of the four students, Mrs. Ralston noted that Graham is the most resistant to the idea of revising his writing once he has completed it. According to her, Graham is the type who “likes to get it done and check it off,” so engaging in an assignment that requires him to revisit, rethink, and revise causes him distress. In her words:

“He won't talk about his own writing like it's horrible. He knows he's done what's required and he knows he has a good vocabulary and good ideas, and so he doesn't hate what he's produced, but he hates the task of doing it.”

She recounted talking with him about revising his *OSOD* essay, saying, “you go...over to him and say, ‘You could go back to paragraph one and let's see how we could build on it.’ It's not an option. It was assigned, he's done with it, he's moving on.” Graham has what Pajares (2003) would call a performance-avoidance achievement goal for his writing assignments; his goal is simply to complete the bare minimum requirements and “avoid showing a lack of ability” (p. 148). This type of orientation is correlated with low writing self-efficacy (Pajares & Valiente, 2001; Pajares et al., 1999). In our interview,

Graham expressed confidence that he can produce an acceptable writing piece, but also demonstrated that he has doubts and discomfort with the process of working on writing. At times, he seemed to contradict himself: “I’m...good at writing...so I would rate myself at about a 7.7 being that I’m good at it, I just can’t proficiently do it.”

Graham’s low confidence for the process of writing has been reinforced by the physiological experiences he has when working on writing. Research on writing self-efficacy has demonstrated that anxiety is negatively correlated with self-efficacy, and Graham’s interview provides further evidence that anxiety is crucial for developing self-efficacy beliefs (Pajares, 2003). Graham stated that he often gets worried about writing, especially when starting an assignment. Mrs. Ralston commented that Graham will protest when she first assigns a new writing assignment, but notes that if she, “explain(s), ‘Well, you know, you’re gonna get the framework, I’m gonna tell you what to do,’ he’ll calm down a little.” Graham is very concerned about grades, and even though Mrs. Ralston says he has never received a grade below a B+, when they were working on the *OSOD* essay, he felt, “nervous because I want to get a good grade on it, I’m that type of person that wants to get good grades on everything. And then when you fail, it’s not good.” Graham stated that, “only when I’m in the right mindset can I write,” and expressed dislike for timed writing situations for this reason. He also gets overwhelmed if the classroom environment is too noisy or his tablemates are distracting him. The experience of feeling nervous holds Graham back from fully engaging in writing, but he is able to use several strategies to calm himself down and persevere through his nerves. He told me that when this happens, he will, “Take a break, maybe take a 5 minute break and go get a drink. Or I just kind of sit there and...close my computer screen or just sit

down, or, like, lay my head down on the table.” However, unlike Kylie, who chooses to complete her work at home when the environment at school is too distracting, when I asked Graham what would have happened if he waited to finish it at home, he said, “Um, nothing, cause I wouldn’t have worked on it.” Graham’s physiological experiences with writing are closely tied to his fixed mindset and his refusal to see writing as a process. He feels nervous throughout the writing experience and only feels relief when he can turn it in and cross it off his mental checklist.

Although Mrs. Ralston has complimentary things to say about him as a writer, and has expressed praise to him for his writing abilities, early messages Graham received from other teachers seem to have stuck with him and influenced his idea of what makes someone a writer. Mrs. Ralston told me that, “he has an excellent vocabulary” and his writing always meets the requirements. However, Graham’s view of himself as a bad writer was shaped by early messages from elementary school teachers. He mentioned his 2nd grade teacher several times, saying, “2nd grade I had a horrible teacher... I didn't like writing class cause she *made* us write... she didn't let me be in the right mindset.” He also noted that this teacher told him he was a “bad writer.” This message has stuck with him throughout the following 5 years of school, despite the fact that he has had many successful experiences with writing and received different messages from his teachers. He noted that, “last year, I was told that I was a good writer,” but this has not erased the negative persuasion that seems to be engrained in his sense of self. As Pajares et al. (2007) noted, negative social persuasions tend to have a stronger effect than positive persuasions.

Vicarious experience and social persuasion from family members and friends were not important sources of information for Graham. He reported that his friends don't ever write for fun or discuss writing. He does not compare himself to his classmates in writing because he views writing ability as something you have or you don't have, so he just works hard to do well. Even his "highly gifted" status has not boosted Graham's confidence; he stated that he believes many of the non-gifted students are probably better writers than him. Graham also noted that his family members don't talk to him about writing, although he stated that he believes his mother also does not like writing. Despite Graham's gifted status, his supportive teacher, and his many successful experiences with writing, he continues to maintain a negative impression of his own abilities and a dread of writing. When asked how he felt he did on his *OSOD* essay, Graham glumly reported,

"Probably a B, because it wasn't a great paper, but at the same time, it wasn't bad. It was correct and everything, but it didn't have great stuff in it...I barely wrote one page. I don't even know if I wrote a whole page."

He fixates on the grade and is unable to reflect on the learning that undoubtedly occurred during the writing process.

4.9 – Summary of Low Self-Efficacy Students

My conversations with and about the two students with the lowest self-efficacy for writing revealed detailed information about the sources of evidence that they use to inform their self-efficacy beliefs. Social persuasion is important for both Lauren and Graham – she relies on praise and encouragement to bolster her self-efficacy, while he fixates on early negative messages about his abilities. This finding supports the idea that students who are not able to accurately self-assess their abilities tend to depend on others

to provide evaluative information (Usher & Pajares, 2006). Both students demonstrated that they have minimal self-regulated learning strategies for writing; they are beginning to understand that writing is a process but don't see the steps as clearly as their peers with high writing self-efficacy (Kylie and Lawrence). Lauren and Graham struggle to use self-regulation skills, such as the outline portion of the *OSOD* essay, successfully.

Reflecting on this process, Mrs. Ralston compared Graham's approach to Lawrence's, saying,

“[Lawrence's] legwork to prepare for the writing [is] very nicely done. Very strong. And so when he gets to the writing, unlike Graham, who doesn't like to write things down and maybe has three or four quotes on a 20-quote page,

Lawrence will have 25. And so, he's ready. He's got what he needs to go into it.”

Similarly, Lauren admits that she does not “get” the process and struggles to regulate her writing experience. These students are not confident in their ability to self-monitor and implement strategies, and this affects their overall sense of efficacy for writing, confirming previous findings that these two constructs are related (Usher & Pajares, 2006; Usher, 2009; Zimmerman, 2000).

Graham and Lauren reported fewer obvious mastery experiences, such as being recognized for their writing the way both Kylie and Lawrence had; but interestingly, neither one remembered any obvious failures either (non-mastery experiences). Both students are ‘A’ students in a gifted class, but they still struggle to have confidence in their own abilities. As Pajares et al. (2007) noted, the influence of a writing experience depends on how the individual interprets the experience. Even if a piece of writing receives praise and a high grade, the essay might not meet the writer's standards.

Graham, who always produces a satisfactory paper at the end, experiences so much discomfort and anxiety during the writing process that it seems to cloud his entire experience and he does not recognize it as successful. Although mastery experience is a crucial source of efficacy information, other sources of evidence can be equally powerful, and the importance of these sources appears to vary for each individual.

As with the high self-efficacy students, Lauren and Graham's goal orientations seem to be intricately related to their confidence for writing. Lauren is beginning to develop a mastery orientation, demonstrated by her interest in her teacher's feedback and revising her writing. Graham, on the other hand, has a stubbornly fixed mindset; he has not been, as he states, "given the gift of writing," and therefore, he believes he cannot improve his skills through practice. Usher (2009) noted that praise and comments from adults can have unintended effects, such as reinforcing the idea that certain skills are inherent or fixed and cannot be improved with practice. Mrs. Ralston commented on this phenomenon, noting that a teacher might say, "'Oh, you're just not a good writer', in a joke, or trying to allow the kid to feel a breath of relief for just a second, but it stays with them" and the "the subtle message they might send" has an impact on their self-beliefs.

Vicarious experience did not appear to have a strong influence on Lauren or Graham's self-efficacy for writing, confirming previous findings that vicarious experience may not be a strong source of information (Pajares et al., 2007). This is interesting because other research has demonstrated that vicarious experience and comparisons may be more important for students who are uncertain about their own abilities than those who are confident (Usher & Pajares, 2006). Perhaps Lauren and Graham's status as "gifted" buffered their dependency on social comparison. As Usher

(2009) pointed out, a gifted or talented designation can have an evaluative or reinforcing effect on self-efficacy beliefs. This may be particularly true for Lauren, the only interview participant who did not have the label of “gifted” but was promoted to the gifted program due to a teacher recommendation.

Chapter 5: Discussion

This chapter will summarize the findings of the study, and comment on the implications of the findings, limitations of the study, and recommendations for future directions for research.

5.1 Summary of Findings

The findings of this study confirm that Bandura's hypothesized sources of self-efficacy information are salient for middle school writers. Mastery and non-mastery experience was a relevant source of information for all students, particularly the students with high self-efficacy. Vicarious experience was also found to have an influence on the students' self-beliefs, particularly for one of the high self-efficacy students, Kylie, who gleaned information from social writing networks. Bruning and Horn (2000) noted that the social role of writing has been largely unexplored in motivation research. The findings reported here indicate that further research about vicarious experience from social networks is needed.

Social persuasion was also influential, especially for the students with low self-efficacy who relied on encouragement, praise and messages from teachers, in particular, to fuel their sense of confidence. Although previous research (Klassen, 2002) has indicated that social persuasion from peers may be particularly important for middle school students, these four students were not concerned with social comparison or the appraisals of their peers. Perhaps their status as gifted students keeps them from relying too heavily on social comparison, because the effect of being labeled "gifted" inherently gives them a sense of value.

Finally, physiological and affective states were informative for these students' sense of self-efficacy for writing. They evaluate their abilities based on how the experience of writing feels for them. Physiological experiences were particularly informative for Kylie and Graham, which confirms the finding from Pajares et al. (2007) that anxiety has a quadratic relationship with self-efficacy because only high and low anxiety were found to be predictive of efficacy. Graham's high anxiety about writing influences his sense of confidence because the powerful emotions that he feels while working on writing cause him discomfort that he seems to interpret as incompetence. Kylie, who experiences very low anxiety for writing, appears to be influenced by the intensely positive emotions and physiological experiences she has while working on writing. Future studies of the sources of self-efficacy information should include measures of positive emotional and physiological experiences in addition to negative.

These findings also point to other salient sources of information beyond Bandura's hypothesized sources, particularly self-regulated learning strategy use and different types of writing. The participants had varying abilities for planning, monitoring, and implementing strategies while working on writing. Their comfort with regulating their own experience appears to influence their overall confidence for writing. This finding extends Usher's (2009) finding that self-regulated learning strategies informed math self-efficacy. These skills appear to be influential in the area of writing as well. Additionally, the types of writing these students engage in also influences their self-efficacy. Kylie and Lawrence strongly preferred to engage in creative writing and got a sense of enjoyment from this experience. Graham preferred academic writing, and Lauren felt equally uneasy about her abilities for both creative and academic writing.

Their efficacy varies depending on what type of writing they are doing, and their comfort or discomfort with particular writing styles appears to be connected to their self-regulation abilities. Finally, goal orientations were closely related to these students' self-efficacy for writing. Graham and Lawrence saw writing as a fixed, inherited skill. Kylie and Lauren saw writing as a skill that can be learned and improved. This view appears to have been informed by messages they received from parents, peers, and teachers. More research investigating the constructs of self-efficacy and goal orientations and mindsets is needed to further understand how they are connected.

5.2 Implications

In order for students to experience success with complex writing tasks, they must be motivated, they must believe that the task can be accomplished with an appropriate amount of effort, and they must see value in the task. Writing is a powerful tool for not only communicating understanding and learning, but also for developing, organizing, and expressing thoughts (Bruning & Horn, 2000). Writing has the power to serve as a knowledge-transforming process (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987). However, the majority of students in the United States are not able to adequately demonstrate their ability to write complex texts (Bruning & Horn, 2000; National Center for Education Statistics, 2012). The current study reveals findings about the motivational construct of self-efficacy that can be used to inform the instructional environment in order to maximize student motivation. These findings are particularly relevant to teachers of middle school students because, as Bruning and Horn noted (2000), “although...beliefs and attitudes ultimately fall clearly within the realm of intrinsic motivation, their development is in the hands of those who set the writing tasks and react to what has been written” (p. 26).

The first and possibly the most crucial implication for teachers is that they should provide opportunities for students to experience success with writing tasks and to help students notice their successful performance. Teachers can help students have mastery experiences if they provide appropriately challenging writing assignments, break complex writing tasks down into manageable parts, encourage goal setting, and provide writing strategies for students to practice. Additionally, teachers can help students notice their own mastery experiences by encouraging them to reflect on their experience and their goals, and monitor their own progress. Bruning and Horn (2000) provide more detailed recommendations for practices teachers can use to provide a supportive context for writing.

The finding that social persuasions from teachers were detrimental to Graham's sense of self-efficacy should not be taken lightly. As Mrs. Ralston noted, even comments made in jest such as "Oh, well, this is good enough" and "You just must not be as good at writing as you are at science," can have a lasting impact on students' sense of confidence and how they value different subjects and skills. In addition to providing mastery writing experiences, teachers should show that they value writing and that all students are capable of improving and excelling as writers. This can be accomplished in part by demonstrating that writing is a process, not an inherent skill, and recognizing the value of revision. Again, Mrs. Ralston commented on her students' reaction to the revision process, saying:

"This applies to many of the students: they've been told so long that they're *really* good students and then when you go to correct their work, it's like, 'Well, this has never happened before.' And, so, up until recently...they've focused on writing as

a product, like an end result, rather than the process. It's new for them, for some, to hear about the process and to know that parts of their process could be... improved.”

Teachers should support students' understanding that writing can be improved through revision. This is particularly important as students are transitioning from using writing for knowledge telling to knowledge transforming.

Another implication of these findings is that students benefit from having positive physiological and emotional experiences while writing, and this helps them see the value in working hard on this challenging task. Mrs. Ralston regretted that, “somewhere along the line, [her students have] been allowed to hate writing.” Teachers can support positive emotions towards writing by providing authentic audiences for students to share their work with, encouraging students to find personal connections to writing topics, and link writing with other disciplines (Bruning & Horn, 2000). Teachers should also help students notice their physiological and emotional reactions to writing through reflection and provide strategies for calming nerves during the writing process.

Technology can play an important motivational role in the future of writing instruction. There is a concern among educators that using technology in the English classroom might “dumb-down” the writing experience for developing writers and encourage a “140-characters or less” mentality (Withrow, 1997; Tomita, 2009). However, evidence from Kylie and Lawrence's interviews demonstrates that using technology can help make writing an authentic experience that is motivating and engaging. Kylie's intrinsic motivation for and love of creative writing was inherently tied to her introduction to GoogleDocs in school, and her use of this technology as a

social platform for collaborative writing. Lawrence also participated in similar collaborative writing networks. When taught and used appropriately, technology can introduce new ways to experience writing and to share it with an authentic audience.

5.3 Limitations

This study was based on a strong theoretical foundation from Bandura's social cognitive theory. The methods used in this study replicated Usher's (2009) investigation of the sources of self-efficacy for mathematics. The study design, methodology, and analyses were carefully selected in order to contribute to an understanding of how middle school writers form self-efficacy beliefs. Despite these strengths, the present study had several limitations that are worth mentioning.

The sample population selected for this study was purposefully chosen in order to access adolescent writers who are developmentally able to engage in knowledge-transforming writing. However, this sample selection limits the generalizability of the study findings because it was a gifted population. These findings are representative of students in a specific context and do not represent all middle school writers. Additionally, this study only reported on the experiences of students with high and low efficacy, and did not account for the students with mid-level self-efficacy for writing. These students may have reported different sources of information that informed their efficacy, and the findings of this study only report on students with extreme efficacy profiles.

Limitations due to time constraints deserve mention, as well. Usher (2009) included data from interviews with eight middle school students, as well as their math teachers and their parents. I was only able to interview four students due to time

constraints, and I was unable to interview their parents. Usher's (2009) inclusion of the parents' perspectives on their child's experiences with math provided global information about their experiences throughout childhood and previous school years that I was not able to include.

5.3 Recommendations for Future Research

There is a need for more research about how students develop their self-efficacy beliefs and the sources of information that they use to interpret their own abilities. Qualitative studies with larger and more representative samples than the present study can add to this understanding. Future qualitative studies should include interviews with the parents of participants, because they can provide more global information about the child's experiences and information they have received about writing. Additionally, focus group interviews with groups of students or parents could lead to more in depth conversations about sources of information that did not emerge because of the students' apprehension about discussing their emotions with someone they didn't know well.

Future studies of the sources of self-efficacy information should include measures of positive physiological experience, social networks that lead to vicarious experience (such as, apps, computer programs, and social media), self-regulated learning strategies and goal orientations. Future studies should also investigate how engaging in different types of writing assignments impacts writing efficacy. These additional sources of self-efficacy information can be explored with both quantitative and qualitative methodologies. The SEWS scale could be adapted to investigate self-efficacy beliefs for specific types of writing assignments. For example, it could be used to specifically evaluate efficacy beliefs for creative writing or academic writing. Quantitative studies

could include measures of self-regulated learning strategy use and efficacy for self-regulation, as well as measures of goal orientations and mindsets.

Finally, more research is needed to investigate how instructional techniques influence the development of self-efficacy beliefs. The findings from this study indicate that explicitly teaching writing and self-regulation strategies may help improve efficacy for writing. Future studies should examine the educational environment and teachers' instructional techniques in order to develop an understanding of how instruction impacts self-efficacy for writing. Bruning and Horn (2000) described the ideal qualities of classrooms and instructional environments that maximize students' engagement with writing according to cognitive and motivation research. By identifying master writing teachers whose classrooms meet the conditions outlined by Bruning and Horn (2000), future studies could use mixed method inquiry to identify students with different efficacy profiles and investigate which aspects of the instructional environment are most salient for their writing self-efficacy. Further investigation of the conditions and environments that foster positive and adaptive beliefs about writing can reveal information that will help improve the educational experiences of adolescent writers.

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Appendix A

IRB Approval Letter



Official Approval Letter for IRB project #15301

October 16, 2015

Mary Holmes
Department of Child, Youth and Family Studies

Kathleen Rudasill
Department of Educational Psychology
221 TEAC, UNL, 68588-0345

IRB Number: 20151015301 EP
Project ID: 15301
Project Title: Sources of Students' Self-Efficacy for Writing: A Qualitative Inquiry

Dear Mary:

This letter is to officially notify you of the approval of your project by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the Protection of Human Subjects. It is the Board's opinion that you have provided adequate safeguards for the rights and welfare of the participants in this study based on the information provided. Your proposal is in compliance with this institution's Federal Wide Assurance 00002258 and the DHHS Regulations for the Protection of Human Subjects (45 CFR 46).

You are authorized to implement this study as of the Date of Final Approval: 10/16/2015. This approval is Valid Until: 10/15/2016.

- o Review conducted using expedited review categories: 6 & 7
- o Date of Approval: 10/16/15
- o Date of Expedited review: 10/16/15
- o Date of Acceptance of Revisions:
- o Funding: N/A
- o Consent waiver: N/A
- o Review of specific regulatory criteria (contingent on funding source): N/A
- o Subpart B, C or D review: D

1. Your stamped and approved informed consent form has been uploaded to NUgrant. Please use these documents to distribute to participants. If you need to make changes to the document, please submit the revised document to the IRB for review and approval prior to using it.

We wish to remind you that the principal investigator is responsible for reporting to this Board any of the following events within 48 hours of the event:

- * Any serious event (including on-site and off-site adverse events, injuries, side effects, deaths, or other problems) which in the opinion of the local investigator was unanticipated, involved risk to subjects or others, and was possibly related to the research procedures;
- * Any serious accidental or unintentional change to the IRB-approved protocol that involves risk or has the potential to recur;
- * Any publication in the literature, safety monitoring report, interim result or other finding that indicates an unexpected change to the risk/benefit ratio of the research;
- * Any breach in confidentiality or compromise in data privacy related to the subject or others; or
- * Any complaint of a subject that indicates an unanticipated risk or that cannot be resolved by the research staff.

For projects which continue beyond one year from the starting date, the IRB will request continuing review and update of the research project. Your study will be due for continuing review as indicated above. The investigator must also advise the Board when this study is finished or discontinued by completing the enclosed Protocol Final Report form and returning it to the Institutional Review Board.

If you have any questions, please contact the IRB office at 402-472-6965.

Sincerely,

Becky R. Freeman

Becky R. Freeman, CIP
for the IRB



Appendix B

Teacher Informed Consent



Title: Sources of Students' Self-Efficacy for Writing: A Qualitative Inquiry

Purpose: The purpose of the proposed project is to further understand how students interpret sources of information about their own abilities in writing and how these sources of information affect their self-efficacy beliefs for writing. You have been asked to participate because you are a teacher of middle school students.

Procedures: You will be asked to complete an interview with the principal investigator, which will take approximately 1 hour to complete. This interview will be audio recorded, and later transcribed. You will also be asked to allow the lead investigator to visit your classroom three times: once to distribute consent forms, once to collect consent forms, and once to administer a survey to participating students. You may also be asked if you would be willing to allow the researcher to observe your class for one 50-minute period.

Risks and/or Discomforts: There are no known risks for discomforts associated with this research.

Confidentiality: Any information obtained during this study which could identify participants will be kept strictly confidential. The data will be stored in a locked cabinet in the investigator's office and will only be seen by the investigator during the study and for 3 years after the study is complete. The information obtained in this study may be published in scientific journals or presented at scientific meetings but the data will be reported anonymously.

Opportunity to Ask Questions: You may ask any questions concerning this research and have those questions answered before agreeing to participate in or during the study. Or you may contact the investigator(s) at the phone numbers below. Please contact the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Institutional Review Board at (402) 472 - 6965 to voice concerns about the research or if you have any questions about your rights as a research participant.

Freedom to Withdraw: Participation in this study is voluntary. You can refuse to participate or withdraw at any time without harming your or their relationship with the researchers, or the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, or in any other way receive a penalty or loss of benefits to which you or they are otherwise entitled.

Consent, Right to Receive a Copy: You are voluntarily making a decision whether or not to participate in this research study. Your signature certifies that you have decided to participate having read and understood the information presented. You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep.



Name & Signature of Research Participant:

(Name: Please print)

(Signature)

(Date)

Please check this box if you consent to have your interview with the Principal Investigator audio recorded

Name and Phone Number of Investigator(s):

Molly Holmes, Principal Investigator: (440) 759 – 0202 Email:
Mholmes@huskers.unl.edu

Kathleen Rudasill, Secondary Investigator: (402) 472 – 2455 Email:
krudasill2@unl.edu

Appendix C

Parent Letter



Dear Parent,

My name is Molly Holmes and I am a graduate student in the Educational Psychology Department at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. My advisor, Dr. Kathleen Rudasill, is a faculty member in the Educational Psychology Department. With Dr. Rudasill's assistance, I am conducting a study of teenager's experiences with writing, and how they develop confidence and self-efficacy for difficult writing tasks.

I would like your permission to include your child in this study. If your child participates, s/he will be asked to fill out a questionnaire during their English class. The questions are designed to assess your child's confidence for writing. After the questionnaire has been completed, several students will be invited to participate in an interview with me. The purpose of the interview will be to gain more information about the sources of students' self-efficacy and confidence for writing.

I will be sharing the results of the study with your child's teachers and administrators. Individual information about students' responses will be shared with teachers but will not affect their grades. This information will help educators understand how students form self-efficacy beliefs about their own writing abilities. I believe that understanding how these beliefs are formed can help teachers foster their students' confidence for writing.

Will you be willing to let your child participate in the study? Your child will also be given an opportunity to agree to participate or decide not to participate. Any information with your child's name as a participant in the study (i.e. consent forms) will be kept separately in a locked file cabinet in Dr. Rudasill's office at UNL, and destroyed upon completion of the study.

Attached, you will find two copies of a consent form. If you are willing to let your child participate in this study, please read and sign one copy of this consent form and return it to your child's teacher. The other copy is for your records.

Your child has also been given an assent form to sign and return to his/her teacher to confirm his/her agreement to participate in the study.

Thank you for considering this request. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at (440) 759 - 0202 (mholmes@huskers.unl.edu) or Dr. Kathleen Rudasill at (402) 472 - 3455 (krudasill2@unl.edu).

Thank you! Molly Holmes

Appendix D

Parent Informed Consent



Title: Sources of Students' Self-Efficacy for Writing: A Qualitative Inquiry

Purpose: The purpose of the proposed project is to further understand how students interpret sources of information about their own abilities in writing and how these sources of information affect their self-efficacy beliefs for writing. Students in middle school English classes are invited to participate.

Procedures: The lead researcher will observe 1 class session, and will record general observations about the classroom environment and writing instruction. No identifiable information about students will be recorded. Students will be asked to fill out a questionnaire during their English class, which will take approximately 15-20 minutes to complete. A small number of students will be asked to participate in an interview with the lead researcher, which will take approximately 1 hour. This interview will be audio recorded, and later transcribed. The identity of interviewees will be replaced with a pseudonym, and all identifying information will be removed from the interview. Students who participate in the interview will volunteer their free time during lunch, a study hall, or after school, and will not miss any instructional time.

Benefits: Students who complete the questionnaire will have an opportunity to reflect upon their writing experiences and their own beliefs about their writing abilities. Self-reflection is a powerful tool for building metacognitive awareness. Additionally, the students who will be selected for the interview portion will receive another opportunity to think about their own skills and challenges in writing.

Risks and/or Discomforts: There are no known risks or discomforts associated with this research.

Confidentiality: Any information obtained during this study which could identify participants will be kept strictly confidential. The data will be stored in a locked cabinet in the investigator's office and will only be seen by the investigator during the study and for 3 years after the study is complete. The information obtained in this study may be published in scientific journals or presented at scientific meetings but the data will be reported anonymously. The investigator will discuss the results of the survey with the students' teacher, but this will not affect the students' grades. The investigator will also share general findings from the study with the teacher and administrators.

Opportunity to Ask Questions: You and your child/legal ward may ask any questions concerning this research and have those questions answered before agreeing to participate in or during the study. Or you may contact the investigator(s) at the phone numbers below. Please contact the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Institutional Review Board at (402) 472 - 6965 to voice concerns



about the research or if you have any questions about your child's/legal ward's rights as a research participant.

Freedom to Withdraw: Participation in this study is voluntary. You and your child/legal ward can refuse to participate or withdraw at any time without harming your or their relationship with the researchers, their teachers, the school which has provided permission for the research to be conducted, the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, or in any other way receive a penalty or loss of benefits to which you or they are otherwise entitled. Also, their grades will not be affected by their participation or withdrawal from the research.

Consent, Right to Receive a Copy: You are voluntarily making a decision whether or not to allow your child/legal ward to participate in this research study. Your child/legal ward will also be asked to provide their assent to participate. Your signature certifies that you have decided to allow them to participate having read and understood the information presented. You will be given a copy of this parental/legal guardian consent form to keep.

Please check this box if you consent to have your child/legal ward's interview with the Principal Investigator audio recorded

Name of Child to be Included:

(Name of child: Please print)

Name & Signature of Parent/Legal Guardian:

(Name of parent/Legal Guardian: Please print)

(Signature of Parent/Legal Guardian)

(Date)

Name and Phone Number of Investigator(s):

Molly Holmes, Principal Investigator: (440) 759 - 0202
Email: Mholmes@huskers.unl.edu

Kathleen Rudasill, Secondary Investigator: (402) 472 - 2455
Email: krudasill2@unl.edu

Appendix E

Student Introduction

My name is Molly Holmes. I am a former English teacher and I am back in school learning more about teaching and about teenagers. I am interested in learning more about how students like yourselves feel about academic writing; that is, papers and essays that you are asked to write for school, usually on a particular topic. Previous researchers have found that students' feeling and beliefs can profoundly impact how well they perform on tasks, how long they are willing to spend on tasks, and their willingness to repeatedly try difficult tasks. I am interested in finding out not only how students feel about writing, but also how they form their beliefs. Peoples' beliefs can be impacted by others perceptions and what they say, but also by their own experiences. I think that by learning more about how students form their beliefs about writing, we can the process of learning to write academic papers more enjoyable and rewarding for students in general. I hope that you will be willing to share your thoughts on writing with me. All of the answers you provide will be kept confidential. I will share some of your answers with your teacher, but this will not affect your grade.

If you decide to participate, you will fill out a short questionnaire about your beliefs about your own writing abilities and your writing habits. A few weeks after you complete the questionnaire, I will approach several of you and invite you to participate in an interview with me so that I can learn more about your answers to the survey. If you don't want to do the interview, that is fine, you can just let me know, "No, thanks." The interview will take about 1 hour and I will ask that you meet with me after school.

Name and Phone Number of Investigator(s):

Molly Holmes, Principal Investigator: (440) 759 – 0202

Email: Mholmes@huskers.unl.edu

Kathleen Rudasill, Secondary Investigator: (402) 472 – 2455

Email: krudasill2@unl.edu

Appendix F

Student Assent Form

**Youth Assent Form - Sources of Students' Self-Efficacy for Writing**

We are inviting you to participate in this study because you are a middle school student who is learning how to write in your English class. We are interested in learning more about how teenagers feel about writing papers in school.

This research will take about 15-20 minutes to do. You will complete a questionnaire in your English class.

Several students will be asked if they would like to participate in an interview with one of the researchers. If you decide to participate, you will spend about one hour during a study hall, free period or after school talking with the researcher about writing. This interview will be audio recorded.

Your responses will be confidential. The researcher will share general findings from the research with your teachers but this will not affect your grade in any way. We will select a pseudonym for the researcher to use when they write about your responses.

We will also ask your parents for their permission for you to do this study. Please talk this over with them before you decide whether or not to participate.

If you have any questions at any time, please ask one of the researchers.

Please check this box if you consent to have your interview with the Principal Investigator audio recorded

Signature of subject

Date

Signature of investigator

Date

Name and Phone Number of Investigator(s):

Molly Holmes, Principal Investigator: (440) 759 - 0202
Email: Mholmes@huskers.unl.edu

Kathleen Rudasill, Secondary Investigator: (402) 472 - 2455
Email: krudasill2@unl.edu

Appendix G

Self-Efficacy Questionnaire

Writing Self-Efficacy Questionnaire:**1. Confidence About Writing**

Students differ in how confident they are about doing various assignments and activities in school. **In relation to writing**, rate how confident you are that you can do each of the following by indicating a probability of success from 0 (no chance) to 100 (complete certainty). The scale below is for reference only; you don't need to use only the given values. You may assign **any number** between 0 and 100 as your probability. (These questions will show up on the computer with a slider)

0	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100
No Chance		Very Little Chance	Little Chance		50/50 Chance		Good Chance	Very Good Chance		Complete Certainty

_____ I can spell my words correctly.

_____ I can write complete sentences.

_____ I can punctuate my sentences correctly.

_____ I can write grammatically correct sentences.

_____ I can begin my paragraphs in the right spots.

_____ I can quickly think of the perfect word.

_____ I can think of many ideas for my writing.

_____ I can put my ideas into writing.

_____ I can think of many words to describe my ideas.

_____ I can think of a lot of original ideas.

_____ I know exactly where to place my ideas in my writing.

_____ I can focus on my writing for at least one hour.

_____ I can avoid distractions while I write.

_____ I can start writing assignments quickly.

_____ I can control my frustration when I write.

_____ I can think of my writing goals before I write.

_____ I can see where I need to revise my writing.

_____ I know when and where to use writing strategies.

_____ I can keep writing even when it's difficult.

_____ I can write a good story.

_____ I can write a good report.

_____ I can do what it takes to be a good writer.

2. How I Feel About Writing

Students have different attitudes about writing. Please read the following and circle the number 1-5 that best describes your overall feelings about writing.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
I enjoy writing.	1	2	3	4	5
I don't like to write.	1	2	3	4	5
Writing is fun.	1	2	3	4	5
I feel bad when I write.	1	2	3	4	5

Appendix H

Demographic Questionnaire

Your Name: _____ Date of birth:

Your gender (circle): Male Female

Your race (circle): White Black Asian Multi-racial

Are you Latino/a? Yes No

Your school: _____

Language spoken at home? _____

Appendix I

Student Interview Protocol

Student Interview Protocol (from Usher, 2009)

1. Background
 1. Tell me about where you have previously gone to school.
 2. Tell me a little bit about yourself.
 1. What sort of personality do you have?
 2. What sorts of things do you enjoy doing outside of school?
 3. Tell me about your friends.
 4. Tell me about the people you most admire.
 3. Tell me a little bit about your family.
 4. Describe yourself as a student.
 1. What would you say is your best subject in school? Why? What is your favorite subject? Why?
 2. What subject do you feel is your weakest? Why? Which subject is your least favorite? Why?
 3. Tell me about the grades you typically earn in school. Do you agree with the grades you are given?
2. Writing experiences and self-efficacy
 1. I am going to ask you several questions about a specific skill you are learning in school. I want you to think hard about all the writing experiences you've had in English classes you've ever taken as well as other experiences you've had involving writing.
 1. First, tell me about yourself as a writer.
 1. Narrative and fiction
 2. Essay writing
 3. Do you like to do any writing outside of school? [mastery experiences]
 2. What sort of work habits do you have when working on writing an essay (for example, the assignment you just got from Mrs. Ruisinger)?
 3. If you were asked to rate your ability to write a great essay on a scale of 1 (lowest) to 10 (highest), where would you be? Why?
 4. Tell me about a time you experienced a setback when writing an essay. How did you deal with it?
 1. Tell me about a time when you wrote an essay you felt really great about.
3. Writing learning environment
 1. Tell me about the writing you do in English class.
 1. How would you say you compare to the rest of your classmates in your writing abilities?
 2. How about to the rest of the students in your grade? (gifted vs. non-gifted)
 2. Tell me about the writing you do in other classes (social studies, science, electives)
 3. Tell me about the writing teachers you've had.

1. What sorts of things do your teachers tell you about your performance on writing assignments?
2. What do you think your teacher(s) would tell your parents about how you do on writing assignments?
3. How does your teacher make you feel about your ability as a writer?
4. Describe the best teacher you've had for writing. What made her (or him) so good?
5. What could your teachers do to help you feel more confident in your writing abilities?
4. Under what conditions do you perform well on writing assignments? Under what conditions do you perform less well? Why?
4. Writing and others
 1. Have you ever been recognized for your ability for writing? Explain.
 2. Tell me about your family and writing.
 1. What do members of your family do that involves writing?
 2. What do your parents tell you about writing?
 3. How are you siblings as writers?
 4. What would your parents tell your teachers about you as a writer?
 3. Tell me about your friends (not necessarily your classmates) and writing.
 1. Describe how most of your friends do on writing assignments.
 2. What do your friends say about writing? What do they say about those who do well?
 3. How do you think your friends would describe you as a writer?
 4. Do you think the people you admire would be good at writing? Why?
5. Affective and physiological response to writing.
 1. I want to ask you to think about how writing makes you feel. You probably haven't been asked to think about that before. When you are given an essay writing assignment, how does that make you feel? How do you feel when you sit down to write?
6. Earlier you rated your writing ability on a scale of 1 to 10. How would you rate your *confidence*? Why? What could make you feel more confident about yourself as a writer?

Appendix J

Teacher Interview Protocol

1. Name: _____
2. Age: _____
3. Gender: _____
4. Number of years teaching: _____
5. School: _____

6. Tell me about yourself as a writer.

7. Tell me about yourself as a teacher of writing.
 - a. What is your approach to teaching writing?
 - b. Approximately what percentage of your time teaching your English classes is spent on writing?
 - c. What types of writing assignments do your students complete?
 - d. How do you provide writing feedback to your students?

8. Please tell me about _____ (student) as a writer.
 - a. What types of grades does s/he typically receive?
 - b. How would you describe his/her approach to writing assignments?
 - c. How does s/he react to feedback on his/her writing assignments?