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"I'm Not the Only Writer in The Room": A Framework for Co-Creating Confident Writing Classrooms

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Article abstract

This study is rooted in social cognitive theory, specifically Bandura's work on self-and collective efficacy. The authors explore self reported confidence levels with writing instruction from secondary teachers across subjects in Canada and the United States by pairing a self-efficacy scale developed by Locke and Johnston (2016) with semi-structured interviews conducted via Skype. 60 teachers participated in the survey, with 25 from Canada and 35 from the United States. Although teachers report relatively strong levels of self efficacy in writing instruction, the responses of participants regarding collective efficacy are more mixed. Based on these results, coupled with six interviews (split evenly between teachers in Canada and the United States), the authors propose a framework to help teachers of all subject areas increase their confidence in writing instruction while also helping students develop their own confidence as writers. This three-pronged framework of identity, context, and authority, relies on co-creating community with students. The potential of this framework is creative, offering teachers (and students) multiple ways into a conversation about writing that will not only enhance confidence, but will create a classroom culture in which diverse writing strategies and perspectives are valued.

"I'm Not the Only Writer in The Room": A Framework for Co-Creating Confident Writing Classrooms

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Abstract

This study is rooted in social cognitive theory, specifically Bandura's work on self-and collective efficacy. The authors explore self-reported confidence levels with writing instruction from secondary teachers across subjects in Canada and the United States by pairing a self-efficacy scale developed by Locke and Johnston (2016) with semi-structured interviews conducted via Skype. 60 teachers participated in the survey, with 25 from Canada and 35 from the United States. Although teachers report relatively strong levels of self-efficacy in writing instruction, the responses of participants regarding collective efficacy are more mixed. Based on these results, coupled with six interviews (split evenly between teachers in Canada and the United States), the authors propose a framework to help teachers of all subject areas increase their confidence in writing instruction while also helping students develop their own confidence as writers. This three-pronged framework of identity, context, and authority, relies on co-creating community with students. The potential of this framework is creative, offering teachers (and students) multiple ways into a conversation about writing that will not only enhance confidence, but will create a classroom culture in which diverse writing strategies and perspectives are valued.

Introduction

Writing in the secondary classroom—and beyond—can serve a variety of functions; to borrow the language often used to speak of assessment, we can write for learning, of learning, and as learning (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013). Despite the ease with which the language of assessment maps onto writing, many students and teachers continue to experience writing exclusively as a form of summative and final assessment. Students often express distrust, fear, or even loathing when asked about writing, and their teachers regularly feel ill-equipped to teach writing in a meaningful way (Lewis, 2009). In order to gain a deeper understanding of the areas of writing instruction that high school teachers feel most confident about, we designed a mixed-methods study open to current intermediate and secondary (I/S) teachers in Canada and the United States that centered on two core questions: How confident do secondary teachers feel about teaching writing? And, how can teachers leverage their confidence with individual aspects of writing instruction to support student learning?

Our decision to engage with teachers across the border stems from our experiences as learners and teachers. Jen learned to teach in the United States and spent the first decade of her career there, teaching intermediate and secondary English, before first moving to

Canada for graduate studies and then returning to the United States as a teacher-educator. Pamela has extensively taught primary and junior (P/J) students and future P/J teachers in Canada, specifically in Ontario. Our perspectives became even more nuanced throughout our collaborations, as Pamela shaped Jen's understanding of early literacy, and Jen's experiences with secondary students became a counterpoint in our conversations as we talked about what counts as writing across levels. Through our collaborations and conversations, we found ourselves wondering if the differences between writing curriculum in our two contexts would develop dramatically different teachers of writing. Jen began to realize that, despite her training and experience in the classroom, she had never been formally taught how to teach writing, certainly not the way Pamela had been with her P/J orientation toward literacy, and we began to wonder about similar experiences of secondary trained educators.

Theoretical Framework: Social Cognitive Theory

No single writing theory guides pedagogy when it comes to writing across secondary classrooms. The reality is that teachers are taking strategies from a variety of theoretical sources to create the unique blend of strategies that work for them in their particular classrooms (Hodges, 2017; Parker, 1988). Hodges (2017) highlights cognitive process, sociocultural, social cognitive, and ecological theories for their applicability in writing instruction, while Parker (1988) focuses on exploring the ways in which teachers develop their personal theories of writing instruction which may support or hinder their continued ability to teach writing. We acknowledge the role these theories, both personal and codified, play in helping teachers develop confidence in writing instruction. For the purposes of this study, we have chosen to root our work in social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986). The questionnaire at the heart of this study (Locke & Johnston, 2016) is built to measure social cognitive aspects of writing instruction, such as modeling various forms and processes.

Self- and collective efficacy research in education draws on the work by Bandura (1986) and has been used in a variety of different contexts (Klassen, Tze, Betts, & Gordon, 2011). According to Bandura, "Perceived self-efficacy is a judgement of one's capability to accomplish a certain level of performance, whereas an outcome expectation is a judgment of the likely consequence such behavior will produce" (1986, p. 391). Also pertinent to this study is the idea of collective efficacy, which Bandura describes as having the ability to "influence what people choose to do as a group, how much effort they put into it, and their staying power when group efforts fail to produce results" (1986, p. 449).

Although Bandura draws a distinction between confidence (essentially, self-worth without specific parameters) and self-efficacy (the ability to perform at a certain level on a certain task), we have opted to use the terms "confidence" and "self-efficacy" interchangeably in this article, following the wording of Locke and Johnston's (2016) Teacher of Writing Self-Efficacy Scale (TWSES). The questions on the survey use the language "how confident are you" to frame each point, and since that is the language that we introduced with all of our participants, that is the language we have used throughout this manuscript. Corkett, Hatt, and Benevides (2011) used self-efficacy measures with students and teachers in Ontario to explore possible correlations between perceptions of self-efficacy and student ability related to reading and writing, while Ciampa and

Gallagher's 2018 study explores pre-service teachers' self-efficacy surrounding literacy by comparing two literacy methods courses in Canada and the United States. Their work found slightly lower self-efficacy reported around writing instruction than other literacy skills, but indicated little difference between the Canadian and American-educated teachers overall.

Daisey's (2009) study reports on the importance of writing development in teacher education, but also note that, according to the National Writing Project, or NWP,, writing methods courses are not a requirement for many teacher education programs (Daisey, 2009, p. 157). More than 20% of the respondents to Troia and Graham's (2016) survey indicated that they had received no formal instruction in writing pedagogy during their teacher education programs (p. 1725), and even after time in the classroom, the survey respondents indicated that they "do not feel that professional development efforts have been sufficient to achieve successful implementation" of the Common Core writing standards (Troia & Graham, 2016, p. 1738). The same dissatisfaction and sense of unpreparedness was reported by the middle grade educators surveyed by Graham and their colleagues in a 2013 study. And despite initiatives like the NWP to provide professional development in writing in the United States, teachers still express complicated emotions about teaching and practicing writing.

Peterson and McClay's (2014) cross-Canadian study focusing on 216 middle grade educators across content areas reveals a more process-driven approach. These Canadian teachers reported more confidence in their preparation to teach writing, with a quarter of participants specifically citing support from their colleagues as an important factor to their own readiness (2016, p. 36), than the American teachers in Troia and Graham's (2016) study. However, teachers in both Canada and the United States generally expressed confidence in their ability to teach writing effectively (Peterson & McClay, 2016, p. 36; Troia & Graham, 2016). Middle grade educators are an interesting category: in Canada, they fall under the P/J umbrella, whereas in many teacher education programs in the United States, the middle grades straddle elementary and secondary preparation courses. Because of this ambiguity, we felt that, although not strictly secondary, this article offers a valuable perspective to guide our work.

Confidence in writing instruction is nuanced, and as these studies indicate, such confidence does not always stem from formal teacher preparation or professional development, but is rather built over time, often with the support of colleagues. As with the multi-phased approach Peterson and McClay employed in their study, we decided that the best way to explore how confident secondary teachers feel about teaching writing and to better understand how these teachers might leverage their confidence with individual aspects of writing instruction to support student learning, was through the combination of survey and interviews, explained in the following section.

Methods

This study followed a sequential explanatory mixed methods design (Plano Clark & Creswell, 2015), with quantitative data collected during phase one informing the design of the semi-structured interview guide administered during phase two. This design was selected to offer both breadth and depth in participant responses, despite the limited size of this study: the quantitative component (n = 60) provided a numerical representation of the

survey data while the qualitative data (n= 6) contributed a deeper understanding of the topic by offering "an intricate fabric composed of minute threads, many colors, different textures" (Creswell, 2013, p.42). Participant sampling employed both convenience and snowball sampling via social media dissemination for recruitment for the TWSES component of the study. Links to the questionnaire were posted on social media sites including, but not limited to: Facebook, Twitter, blogs, LinkedIn, and Pinterest, in an effort to connect with teachers in both countries without the limitations of physical location. For the interviews, teachers who participated in the survey were able to self-select if they were interested in speaking with the researchers further. We contacted everyone who expressed interest and received replies from the six teachers featured here.

Data Sources

The Teacher-of Writing Self-Efficacy Scale. During phase one, teachers were asked twenty-five self-efficacy questions and 7 collective efficacy questions, with a Likert scale of four choices: (1) not confident at all, (2) not very confident (3) quite confident, (4) very confident. The TWSES developed by Locke and Johnston (2016), has been used with the original researchers' permission. This scale, which Locke and Johnston (2016) developed to address self- and collective-efficacy in secondary and post-secondary settings, includes questions such as "how confident are you that you can model a writer "identity" myself as an example to students?", and "how confident are you that you can establish a supportive writing community in my classroom?" This survey was an appropriate measure for this exploratory study since it is specifically designed for administration with secondary educators.

Semi-Structured Interview. Following the administration of the TWSES, a semi-structured interview guide was created to probe topics of teacher identity, academic literacy, and self- and collective efficacy. These questions were based on the competencies outlined in the TWSES, with an emphasis on experiences that led to self and collective efficacy, and initial analysis of the survey results informed the development of the interview guide (see Table 1).

Table 1

Semi-Structured Interview Guide

Connection to TWSES	**Possible Questions**
Background	• Can you tell me about your teaching background?
Background	• Can you describe your literacy program?
Self-Efficacy Collective Orientation	○ In your classroom? ○ In your school? • How would you define the term "academic literacy"?

Orientation	• How much experience do you have with academic literacy as a learner?
Motivational and Orientation	• How much experience do you have with academic literacy as a teacher?
Self and Collective	• How did you learn how to teach writing?
Motivational and Orientation	• How confident do you feel teaching writing?
Self and Collective	• What is the best thing about teaching writing in the secondary classroom?
Motivational	• Do you consider yourself a writer? o If so, in what way? o If not, why not?
Final Thoughts	• What relationship or tension (if any) do you see between creative writing and academic writing?
Final Thoughts	• Do you have anything further to add about academic literacy and teaching writing, or the interview or questionnaire?

Participants and Procedure

Intermediate and secondary [I/S] teachers (grade 7-12) of all subject areas were recruited for phase one and two through convenience and snowball sampling via social media sites including Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn. In the letter of information and consent form, participants were told that exiting the survey at any time before completion was their way of withdrawing permission. As such, only TWSES responses that are complete have been analyzed.

Although 88 participants began the survey, 60 participants completed the survey: 25 were in Canada and 35 were in the United States. These teachers represented a diverse range of subjects, years of experience, and grade levels, as shown in Tables 2 and 3.

Table 2

Subject Areas Taught, TWSES

Subject(s) taught	**# of responses**	**Subject(s) taught**	**# of responses**
English	40	Adult education	1
History	10	College Process	1
Advanced Placement (AP) and/or International Baccalaureate (IB)	10	Geography	1
Literature	5	Guidance	1

Writing Electives (creative, technical, writer's craft, etc.)	5	Indigenous Studies	1
Business and Careers	4	Music	1
Health & Physical Education	3	Mythology	1
Composition	2	Psychology	1
Foreign Languages/ ESL/ ELL	2	Social Studies	1
Family studies	2	Sociology	1
Math	2	Public Speaking	1
Science	2	Support Staff	1
Special education	2	Technical Courses	1

Table 3

TWSES Demographics

Grade(s) Taught	**%**	**Years of Experience**	**%**
Grade 7	3.47%	<1 year	3.23%
Grade 8	6.94%	1-5 years	22.58%
Grade 9	20.83%	6-10 years	20.97%
Grade 10	21.53%	11-15 years	20.97%
Grade 11	23.61%	16-20 years	12.90%
Grade 12	23.61%	More than 20 years	19.35%

Teachers who completed the TWSES were invited to provide contact information to participate in the phase two interviews. After following up, seven teachers agreed to be interviewed. Three were in Canada, while four were in the United States. For the purposes of this article, we focus on the 6 high school teachers who were interviewed, with 3 from each country. As with the TWSES, the interview participants represented some diversity of subjects and grade levels taught (see table 4).

Table 4

Interview Participants

Pseudonym	**Descriptor**	**Location**	**Years Teaching**	**Subject Area(s) Taught at Time of Interview**
Frank	Second Career	US	>10	HS English

Mark	Published Author	US	>20	HS English, College Composition
Sue	AP Teacher	US	>20	AP Courses and Drama
Anne	History Department Head	Canada	>10	HS History
Lauren	Early-Career	Canada	<1	HS English
Brendan	Early-Career	Canada	< 1	HS Math and History

Analysis

In order to answer our first question, how confident do secondary teachers feel about teaching writing? We first approached the survey data. Using a 2 x 2 contingency table (cross tables), Pearson's chi-square tests of independence (chi-square test) were used to determine if there were any significant associations between location and collective or self-efficacy on the TWSES responses. A chi-square test using z-test of column proportions with Bonferonni adjustments to significance level (α= 0.05) was employed to identify significant differences between teachers in Canada and the United States.

Building on the examples of the strongest and weakest areas of confidence that emerged from the survey analysis, we turned to the interview data for a deeper understanding of the ways teachers leverage confidence with individual aspects of writing instruction to support student learning. Following Boeije's (2002) explanation of five steps of the Constant Comparative Analysis method, we determined that the nature of the interview data lent itself to the first three steps: "comparison within a single interview" (p. 395), "comparison between interviews within the same group" (p. 397), and "comparison of interviews from different groups" (p. 398). In order to focus first on the individual statements teachers made, the transcripts were broken into units of thought—discrete statements which contain a complete thought, which are usually bounded by a pause in the participant's speaking and indicate a new or different idea from the thought unit before and after it (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Using NVivo 12 software, we then uploaded the "unitized" transcripts and coded them inductively, allowing codes to emerge from the text (Saldaña, 2016). Finally, we returned to the transcripts with a wholistic orientation, exploring the statements of each teacher and then considering these complete transcripts in relation to each other.

Findings and Discussion

To return to the questions of this study, we sought to explore the aspects of writing instruction that high school teachers approach with confidence, as well as the elements of writing instruction that they feel less confident about. When we speak of teacher confidence, we are referring to teachers' self-reported sense of their ability to do certain tasks related to writing instruction, as well as to teachers' responses to interview questions such as, "how confident are you that you can teach writing effectively?" With the exception of three aspects of writing instruction, teachers who responded to the survey expressed high confidence in their own abilities to teach writing. However, their feelings of confidence in their colleagues were more mixed, as explored below.

In the following section, we explore the results from the TWSES and the interviews in greater detail, focusing on the emergent themes of community, context, authority, and identity as they relate to writing instruction. We have opted to integrate these two sets of data, since the interviewees shed specific light on questions from the TWSES in their conversations. Before we can proceed, however, we would like to introduce you to the six teachers whose voices are featured here. Frank, Mark, and Sue offered their voices from their classrooms in the United States, while Anne, Lauren, and Brendan hailed from Canada. Their teaching careers span one year to more than two decades, with Lauren and Brendan having spent the least amount of time as classroom teachers, and Mark and Sue having spent the most. They brought a range of experiences into our conversations; from the diversity of subject areas they have taught over the course of their careers to their individual experiences with writing. Only one, Mark, is a published author, but Frank has written grants in his work prior to becoming a high school teacher. Sue has taught theater arts courses as well as writing-intensive Advanced Placement courses, while Anne has served as the department chair for history in addition to teaching ELA. Brendan has a background in history and math, a combination that surprised us when he expressed a desire to participate in this work. All told, these passionate teacher-writers offer a range of insights into their classroom practices in the sections that follow.

The Importance of Community

One major theme that emerged from both the TWSES and the interviews is the interconnected role of community and identity in writing. Teachers in both Canada and the United States had mixed responses when asked how confident they were that their colleagues saw themselves as teachers of writing, in direct contrast to the high rates of self-efficacy surrounding questions of writerly identity.

Although many of the participants in this study ranked themselves with high levels of self-efficacy, the collective efficacy scores were more evenly distributed. Results were statistically significant regarding the question "Teachers at this school know how to make writing meaningful for their students." ($X2$ [1, N=58] = 4.079, p = .043). Specifically, teachers who worked in Canada were more likely to mark this statement "true" or "mostly true" (80%) than teachers in the United States, who were more split in their assessment of collective efficacy: 45% of U.S. respondents answered this statement as "false" or "mostly false". Two participants opted not to answer this question. All other collective and self-efficacy questions showed no statistical significance in the difference between teachers in Canada and the United States. Because of the divergence in the collective efficacy questions from the scores of the self-efficacy questions, a section of the interview was developed to probe issues of collective efficacy. As in the TWSES, responses to this question in the interview were diverse. Two of the interview participants expressed confidence in their school communities. Both participants were from Canada. One participant (also from Canada) was noncommittal. The participants in the US spoke of the struggle to get colleagues engaged in writing instruction with frustration, lack of trust, and a sense of solitude in their pedagogy and practices. Most of the interview participants could not articulate a shared school or district level vision for writing instruction. In general, the teachers in this study reported lower collective efficacy than self-efficacy.

Interestingly, Lauren, one of the early career teachers from Canada, expressed a great deal of confidence in her colleagues, primarily because, as she said, "there's a lot of support from the administration and a very strong push for the students to do well and succeed both in school and in their lives outside. It's a really supportive school environment." Even as a brand-new teacher, Lauren presented herself as generally confident in her ability to teach writing, but particularly confident in the strength and support of her colleagues.

Conversely, Frank, an experienced teacher who came to teaching as a second profession, expressed a great deal of confidence in his own abilities, but was frustrated when considering his colleagues, specifically due to attrition: Frank spoke as someone who has been in his current position for 11 years, which he said was rare for his school:

> I'm confident in certain individuals' ability, but if you're asking about our school as a whole, my confidence goes down, because on any given semester, it might be different; new teachers, or substitutes and long-term substitute teachers. It makes it tough, tough for the students.

However, despite the shaky confidence he feels in his school as a whole, Frank works to create a community of writers within his classroom, emphasizing the value he places on dialogue: "Sometimes, students think it's cheating to talk about an essay prompt before they start writing it, and I'm trying to convince them that there is no answer, we're just coming up with stuff right now."

Like Frank, Mark explicitly works to create a writing community in his classroom. Because of his experiences as a published author, he focuses on a workshop approach to help students see themselves as writers:

> When a student says, 'I don't really understand how to do this part', I can empathize and I can say, 'I've reached that same point and this is how I overcame it.' Or I can open it up to the class as a writing community… because I'm not the only writer in the room.

Mark's willingness to cede control to his students echoes not only the structure of writing workshop, but also the idea of the impact of learning within a community of practice (Lave & Wegner, 1991), where the hierarchy of the classroom gives way to a community in which student voices are given weight.

Given the mixed nature of teacher responses when asked about their communities of writing at the professional level, it is not surprising that, according to the TWSES, teachers leaned heavily into motivating student writers to participate in a community of writers, as shown in table 5.

Table 5

TWSES Confidence Level: Individual and Collective Writer Identity

How confident are you that you can…	**Confidence Level**
… Model a writer "identity" myself as an example to students.	78%
… Establish a supportive writing community in my classroom.	80%

The complicated, social nature of writing instruction, whether as a writing community or in the one-on-one interactions between students and teachers, was a strong thread throughout the interviews, as teachers expressed their (sometimes frustrated) desire to co-create supportive writing communities in their classrooms and schools.

Developing an Authentic Context for Writing

Another area that emerged from both the TWSES and the interviews was the participants' overall confidence in establishing authentic contexts for their students, and the importance of doing so. In terms of collective efficacy, teachers in both Canada and the United States reported mixed feelings about their colleagues' abilities to "make writing meaningful". However, on an individual level, all six of the interview participants stressed the importance of providing students with opportunities to write in authentic contexts, and many of them linked authenticity with creative expression. For example, Mark approached his writing instruction with an eye toward the possibilities of publication afforded by blogging and other multimedia platforms as a way to cultivate authentic context. He also emphasizes the reality of revisions for published writers, telling them that "revision is how the real world works. When an editor sends something back to you, it's not because they hate it, it's because they saw something that you didn't see that needs to be corrected." In pursuit of helping his students shift their mindset to considering what writing looks like in "the real world", Mark emphasizes the importance of writing for a context that reaches beyond the classroom:

> You [students] don't turn this into me because I'm the teacher and I'm going to give you a grade. You are writing this for an audience, and I'm someone outside who'd going to help you craft this message for them.

The importance of audience and purpose to inform the context of writing in the secondary classroom, while complicated, was still an area in which the teachers in this study felt relatively confident, even beyond the English classroom. Anne, Brendan, and Lauren, the Canadian history teachers, emphasized that their classrooms provided a different context than English classes, discussing the importance of context when reading historical documents in preparation of a written response. Lauren in particular drew attention to the range of creative writing that occurs in secondary classrooms:

> Depending on the grade and depending on the subject, we do traditional essay writing and short paragraph writing, but we also do some more creative things, like writing in character or trying to write from a particular time and place.

Frank echoed Lauren's statement, speaking from the context of his own classroom about the ways in which he ties creativity to authentic writing by asking students to put themselves in the minds of different fictional characters:

> There's a written assessment on the book, but students are also doing a project where they're writing a eulogy from different characters' perspectives […] They'll be doing projects as creative as I can come up with but keeping the rigor of the standards.

Stepping beyond the curriculum, Frank also actively sought opportunities for his students to write for audiences beyond the classroom: when we spoke, he had just wrapped up a poetry project that culminated in an open-mic night at a local coffee shop. That experience,

of helping students use their voices beyond the classroom context, was his favorite in the current school year, which he described as "a breathtaking experience."

Developing the Authority to Write (and Teach Writing)

We refer to authority as the permission and confidence to tackle a writing task. In the interviews, authority manifested in two distinct ways: some teachers spoke about empowering their students to claim their individual authority as writers, while others spoke about their own authority to teach writing. When it came to helping students claim their authority as writers, the teachers we spoke with were incredibly confident not only in their ability to do so, but in the perceived value of such authority for their students, an interesting contrast to the survey results where teachers expressed high confidence in empowering their students, and more mixed confidence when it came to perceiving themselves as authorities on writing, as shown in Table 6.

Table 6

Canadian and American Collective Efficacy Surrounding Context and Identity

	Question: Teachers at this school know how to make writing meaningful for their students.			
	(1) false	**(2) mostly false**	**(3) mostly true**	**(4) true**
Canada	4%	16%	72%	8%
United States	12%	32%	47%	9%
	Question: Teachers at this school see themselves as teachers of writing.			
	(1) false	**(2) mostly false**	**(3) mostly true**	**(4) true**
Canada	0%	56%	32%	12%
United States	15%	29%	47%	9%

Mark spoke at length of the ways in which he wants his students to claim their authority as writers:

> Too many times, students turn in papers to me like, 'I'm done, here it is, I don't care.' And that attitude! Would you like it if your chef did that to you? 'Gee, thanks, I can't wait to consume it.' Too often, students are like that […] so a challenge we have as high school English teachers, as teachers of writing, is to get students to care because it shows up in the product.

Sue has faced that challenge by pushing students "to go deeper into their thoughts", as she puts it, encouraging students to return to their work and dig into their textual interpretation

and analysis. She has found it helpful, in part because of the student population she works with: "At the AP level, the desire of the students to be successful has made teaching writing that much better."

Frank takes a different approach to helping students claim their authority in his teaching. For him, authority is tied tightly to context and identity, and he cultivates opportunities for his students to share their writing in real-world ways, including writing letters to political officials and sharing their poetry publicly at a slam event. For Frank, context feeds authority:

> You can't measure that boost of confidence. You can't measure that kind of finding a voice that wasn't there before. That, for me, is the most important thing about learning to write, rather than can I talk about two short stories. When a student is motivated to express an idea and they know how to do it, **that** is important. [Emphasis in audio]

Despite the confidence these teachers expressed in the ways in which they guide their students to claim their own authority as writers, when it came to their own authority as writing teachers, the teachers we spoke with expressed feelings that were less confident. For example, Anne spoke about her distant experiences as an undergraduate student feeling a lack of authority as a writer, and the impact that experience had on her teaching:

> One of the things I've noticed when I teach now that has sort of stuck in my mind, I felt that as a first year student or second year student, I came to this realization that I did not write well, or did not write as well as I thought I did […] That has impacted my practice when I teach students.

Later in our conversation, when she was speaking about how she learned to teach writing, she linked her own lack of authority to the support she received from colleagues, echoing Lauren's experiences that led her to lean on her school community to co-create her authority as a writing teacher:

> A lot of it came from my own past experience, my own confidence and lack of confidence, and then reaching out to colleagues who had been doing it for awhile and building up what I wanted to do, how I wanted to go about doing it, in the best way that I could.

Anne, like Sue, struggled with her authority as a teacher of writing, but unlike Sue, Anne's confidence in her authority increased through collaboration with her colleagues. For Sue, however, despite feeling confident in her ability to help her students develop their own authority, her sense of her own authority as a writing teacher was shaky at best:

> There was a long time I felt like I'd missed the memo. I was alone in my room. It's a really weird, terrible feeling now. We're wholescale teaching this crucial skill set, and yet, I felt very qualified to talk about textual interactions and reading literacy, but I don't feel that about writing.

Not all of the teachers felt uncertain about their own authority. Drawing on his past career as a grant writer, Frank told us how his previous writing informed his pedagogy:

> I didn't know how to be effective [with writing] until I was in the workplace and writing for grants, and people were depending on my writing and it was getting critiqued in a real way. So, I took that experience and I started thinking systematically about how you build a text, whether it's a paragraph or an essay. And this is how I teach it. I try to scaffold each step from point A to point Z, and

> try to get them to follow a map of how to get there, and then to transfer that skill so they're creating that map in their own minds, in their own writing.

Like Anne, Frank's early experiences with writing taught him that there was more he needed to learn, and he leveraged those experiences to empower both himself and his students by approaching writing in a systematic way.

Mark also spoke openly about the relationship between past experiences with writing and the authority to teach writing, although he framed this relationship in general terms, rather than personal:

> If you don't have confidence in your writing, and that can be anchored back to your middle school experiences as a student—if you're not confident in your own writing, it will impact the degree to which you are influential or impactful as a writing teacher. It will alter your instruction and your effectiveness as an instructor. We can only really teach what we know.

For many of the teachers in this study, questions of empowering their students to claim their individual authority as writers was tangled up with their own experiences with writing as students, and Mark, Sue, and Frank all spoke about teaching writing as a quest to help their students (and themselves) reclaim a time when writing was enjoyable, playful, and filled with possibility.

Developing a Writerly Identity

The question of what it means to be a writer is complex, and no clear answer emerged from the teachers we spoke with. For example, Mark's writerly identity was inextricably tied to both his pleasure in the written word and his experiences with publishing, both of which inform his teaching practice:

> The more I saw that personalization and flexibility I had in my craft, the more I loved it. […] So, I'm growing and trying to identify as a writer, and now I've got some life lessons that I can share with students because I've been on the other side of publishing.

But Mark's perspective as a published author was unique among the teachers in this study, and yet all of the other participants we interviewed told us that they did consider themselves to be writers. Frank even qualified his response by telling us that "Even when I wasn't a good writer, I kind of considered myself a writer, but I'm not a published writer. But I do really enjoy writing, crafting." That tension between enjoying writing and feeling that publication is a certain mark of writer identity is intriguing, but not something we delved deeply into with these participants. However, it presents an interesting seed for future research.

Sue linked her writerly identity to "journals and journals and journals and terrible teenage poetry", while Brendan emphasized short stories as his chosen genre, telling us that because "writing is a common form of expression for me, I think it does inform my teaching. Lauren also expressed confidence in her writing, rooted primarily in her enjoyment of it and her view that writing is ubiquitous:

> There are so many different aspects of writing that you don't necessarily consider yourself a writer until you think about it, but then you realize, I write daily emails to my boss, so in that sense, you're a writer. It's very much a part of your daily life.

Although Anne only tentatively claimed a writer identity for herself in our conversation, she did say that she felt more like a reader than a writer, primarily because

> in my personal life, I feel like I wrote more and now I don't have time to do that, and I feel like generally speaking in my work life, it's more that I read a lot rather than write specifically.

Based on these responses, time spent writing is one factor that might lead to a writerly identity, as well as taking pleasure in writing. But as we mentioned at the beginning of this section, the idea of who counts as a writer is complex and individualized, as shown by these responses. However, for all of the teachers we spoke with, their identities as writers played an important role in their approach to writing instruction, regardless of how they defined themselves as writers.

Implications

Tellingly, the importance of creativity or ownership of the students paired with writing for authentic purposes, contexts, and audiences appeared in all the conversations. As Mark noted,

> I think technology has helped; it can make everybody an author (hashtag blog), but the more you do that, the more you get feedback from your audience or not, there's a little bit of confidence boost of knowing I'm not hiding this in a notebook in the bottom of my dresser; it's out there. There's a little bit of risk, a little bit of play. And the more you get that, the more confidence you have to keep going.

Many of these participants spoke of their non-academic writing experiences as being foundational to the way they approached writing instruction in their classroom contexts. Based on the overall high levels of teacher confidence with most aspects of writing instruction on the TWSES, it seems that teachers across curricular and cultural contexts are well-positioned to develop confident writing communities in their classrooms. Putting this confidence to work in the service of creating a classroom community of writers may also boost collective efficacy, as teachers share their strengths with their colleagues and work toward a shared vision of authentic writing instruction in their schools and communities. For teachers who may not feel quite as confident, we offer the following framework as a place to grow from.

A Framework for Supporting the Co-Creation of Confident Writing Communities

Considering the ways in which confidence transcended teacher context in this study, we focus our recommendations on working from that confidence in order to cultivate writing classrooms that recognize the interplay between confidence, context, and authority. And, since teaching writing occurs within classroom, school, and professional communities, our framework is oriented toward a co-creation of confident writing practices, rather than expecting teachers to grapple alone, as Sue has done. That co-creation will look different in each context, and could apply to the community built among students and one instructor, the collaborations between teachers in the same school, or the wider conversations that occur within professional learning networks as teachers continue to explore what teaching writing looks like for them. We propose three overlapping facets of writing instruction that teachers can focus on in order to increase confidence with writing for both teachers and students: context, authority, and identity (Figure 1). These facets may

be approached in any order, but we suggest teachers start with the area they feel most confident with.

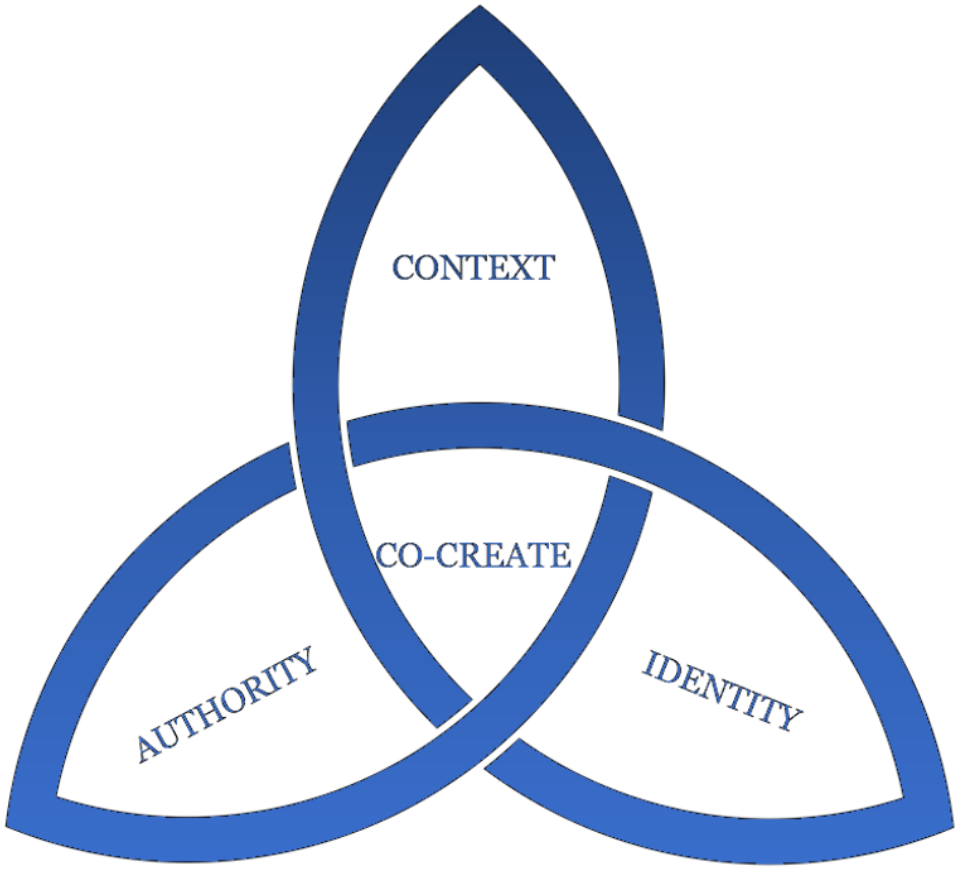

Figure 1. A Framework for Co-Creating a Confident Writing Community, McConnel and Beach, 2020.

The context of writing. Based on the data presented here, one entry point for the teachers in the study might be the context of assigned writing. Context, as has already been discussed, matters a great deal in individual writing work, but it is also a vital component to building an authentic writing community: "when we write for others, we engage in conversation with our readers. When we write with others, we work with colleagues toward a common product. And when we write among others, we create a community of writers" (Sword, 2017, p. 135). When students are made aware of the context of their writing, whether it is within the classroom writing community or intended for a wider audience, students' confidence increases.

Emphasizing the context of any writing that occurs in the classroom can help students approach the work with passion and authenticity. And Thaiss and Zawacki (2006) remind us that writers develop confidence and skill "by *writing to a variety of assignments under the guidance of a range of committed teachers"* (p. 140, emphasis in original): the role of the teacher to shape students' confidence in writing cannot be overemphasized, and,

as this study indicates, many teachers already feel comfortable guiding students through an understanding of the various contexts that will inform their writing.

The authority of a writer. Working with students (or professional colleagues) as a community of writers, the next area of emphasis might be on authority in texts and authority in the writing community, where all members work to co-create and strengthen their individual and collective understandings of what it means to write with authority. When teachers and students approach writing with the attitude that "I'm not the only writer in the room", as suggested by Mark, all parties may develop the confidence and creative problem solving needed to pursue writing from a more authentic space. As Sword points out, "a flourishing writing community can inspire creativity and embolden individuals to follow their own instincts rather than bowing to disciplinary convention. Paradoxically, writing among others can give you the courage to stand out from the crowd" (Sword, 2017, p. 144). Developing a sense of authority of a writer includes understanding the skills, styles, and content that are appropriate to any given task, and choosing between the various tools of the writer's toolbox in order to approach the task from a place of ownership and confidence. Developing authority as a writer (and a teacher of writing) is closely linked to the third aspect of the framework: identity.

The identity of a writer. As the community shifts its attention toward issues of identity, they might begin by exploring the ways in which identity is enacted and developed through writing. In her exploration of her work with various writer's groups, including with adolescent women, Luce-Kapler notes, "Engaging in writing practices together, raising our critical awareness of texts, and feeling the confidence to speak out offered new possibilities for writing, new ways of understanding our subjectivity, and perhaps changed the color of our future" (Luce-Kapler, 2004, p. 166). The value of identity work in our classrooms cannot be ignored. As the second career teacher in the US told us, "getting to work with young people who are coming into their own is a treat…a real treat."

The potential of this framework is creative, offering teachers (and students) multiple ways into a conversation about writing that will not only enhance confidence, but will create a classroom culture in which diverse writing strategies and perspectives are valued. Work that "is concerned with meaning making, identity, power, and authority, and foregrounds the institutional nature of what counts as knowledge in any particular academic context" (Lea & Street, 2006, p. 369) is at the heart of academic literacy, regardless of the confines of the local or national curriculum, and this framework is one way to encourage students to engage more deeply with their own writing practices in any context. And that sense of liberation can work both ways: following this framework, a teacher who may not feel confident in all aspects of writing instruction still has multiple ways to approach writing with students. If we can co-create our writing practices, we can also co-create our confidence as writers and teachers and learners.

Limitations

The relatively small sample size for this study is a limitation, particularly when considering the quantitative phase of the study. Future research might seek a larger quantitative sample in order to explore possible correlations between instructor location

and self- and collective efficacy. We acknowledge that learning to write, and, more pertinent for this article, learning to teach writing cannot be distilled into an overly simple set of instructions. A myriad of factors is at play throughout a teacher's career, and there is no "one size fits all" way to become a teacher of writing. However, exploring the ways contemporary teachers learn to teach writing bears further investigation. Another area for additional research is to ask students what areas of writing *they* feel confident in; due to the focus of this study, we recognize that the student perspective is absent, and we would encourage future research that bring together student and teacher voices related to the co-construction of confident writing communities. Future studies that integrate both the teacher and student perspective on writing instruction at the secondary level are necessary to help us build a more complete understanding of the complexities at play when we (and our students) sit down to write.

Conclusion

Teachers develop confidence in writing instruction through individual and collective experience, and as the voices in this study show, the power and potential of writing in secondary classrooms is vast when approached with an eye toward authentic contexts, authorial power, and writerly identity. There is great power in writing within our classrooms, and teachers and students who explore their own relationships with writing may develop deeper confidence with what, exactly it means to write (and teach writing) together. It might be easy to dismiss such a suggestion as the particular bias of English teachers, but all of the teachers we interviewed spoke passionately about the importance of writing, regardless of their disciplinary differences. This work reminds us that it is important for all members of an educational community to nurture writing in a myriad of forms, and to build writing spaces where students and teachers can co-create their power as writers together.

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