Identifying the Nature of the Response in Teacher Evaluation of Students' Writing: A qualitative study of pre-service teachers' recollections of teacher role in their writing development

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Introduction:

I was able to take what I needed from every teacher andevery class, and I was able to disregard what I didn't needor what might have harmed me. I'm not sure what to name this quality--survival aptitude, perhaps...I'm still reacting to those academically inclined professors." (74-75) — David Huddle on "The Writer as Student and Teacher"

Given the opportunity, adult writers will expound upon their perceptions of the influences in their development as writers. Robert Pack and Jay Parini have given us an anthology of some of the best, established practitioners and their rhetoric in their text, Writers On Writing. David Huddle, an educator at the University of Vermont, wrote about the role teachers played in his writing development in his anthologized essay in Writers on Writing. Huddle's deliberate style can be traced to those early influences in his life, according to his recollection: "I have benefited a great deal from criticism I have received from my writing classes. But that doesn't mean that I don't walk out of such classes with my soul bleeding" (78). The responses teachers give their students through their written and verbal comments, as well as their actions, may have profound effects on students' writing development and, perhaps, their lives.

Proposed area of inquiry:

Exactly what constitutes an inspiring teacher response as opposed to a damaging or non-productive response to students' development as writers is not well defined in the research literature on this topic. Although articulated by professionals in Writers On Writing, influences on writing development is an area of educational research which is in need of more qualitative as well as quantitative study. The pedagogical area of teacher-as-reader research has helped to frame the questions; however, the questions remain largely unanswered. Identifying the nature of teacher responses and the social context in which they occur might help to move the research on this topic closer to practical application.

Through a study of State University College at Cortland preservice teachers' writing histories, videotaped interviews, and graduate, writing career surveys, I propose to examine, categorize, and quantify the preservice teachers' perceptions of the teacher-as-readers' influences on their writing lives. Specifically, I will look at the written and oral responses to prompts of sixty-two preservice teachers who have completed or are in the process of completing the Masters in Teaching (M.A.T.) in English program at Cortland College over a four-year period. My prediction is that, like the professional authors in Writers On Writing, the preservice teachers will identify specific teachers and incidents involving teachers from their past and present experiences in making determinations about the significance of those teachers on their development as writers and as individuals. What the nature of those responses to students' writing is may fall into one or more general categories that takes in a whole social context or dialogic exchange. I believe a generalized pattern of responses will be identified as either detrimental or helpful to writing development. Will specific patterns of responses be identified as challenging students, encouraging risk-taking behaviors or motivational? Will students identify detrimental commentary and actions taken by teachers in their writing histories or in the survey and interview process? Will a correlation between identified perceptions of teacher responses and subsequent changes in student writing, as identified by the student, appear causal, coincidental, or arbitrary? This research study is designed to provide answers to the first two questions and may show more than anecdotal data in answer to the third question. The design of this study necessitates use of both a reflective and retrospective lens.

The Purpose:

> In the beginning of the [writing] process there was the writer, her words, and her desire to communicate ideas. But after the comments of the teacher are imposed on the first or second draft, the student's attention dramatically shifts from 'This is what I want to say,' to 'This is what you the teacher are asking me to do.' (Sommers 150)

Nancy Sommers' quotation zeros in on one of the detrimental effects of teacher response to students' writing and the significance to the students.

This qualitative study begins with the assumption that, in spite of the commonly lodged complaint that they are unappreciated, undervalued, and often ignored by their students and communities, teachers are one of the most powerful influences in students' lives. The bias is not unfounded, however, as a great deal of educational research has been conducted, indicating a correlation between students' self-efficacy and positive reinforcement from teachers-as-readers of student work in the development of student writers. How student self-efficacy is enhanced by teacher response and the types of teacher response which promote self-efficacy have not been thoroughly researched. If we understand first the nature of teacher responses to developing writers and second the potential effects on those student writers, then teaching practitioners could receive training in the type and manner of responses that have been identified as promoting learning and the development of good writing. How teacher response and teacher influence are defined is critical to examining this area of inquiry. A definition of teacher response and other terminology relevant to this study follows.

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Defining the terminology:
Terminology used in this study is defined within the particular pedagogical framework as established by the contributing theorist or educator. Definitions are taken from several sources who acknowledge a debt to theorists A. Bandura, Mikhail Mikhilovich Bakhtin, or James Britton.

1. self-efficacy: James R. Lackey, in his paper entitled The effects of written feedback on motivation and changes in written performance, credits theorist A. Bandura (1986) with the definition of self-efficacy and context for the term: "[A]n individual's belief that he or she can influence the outcome of a situation" (13). Dr. Cynthia Bolton also defers to Bandura's terminology, quoting the theorist's definition of self-efficacy in her paper Preservice teachers' sense of efficacy and the influence of performance assessment (1997): "People's judgments of their capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to attain designated types of performances" (5).

2. writing apprehension: LaVona L. Reeves has constructed a wonderful definition of writing apprehension in her article Minimizing writing apprehension in the learner-centered classroom. In her definition, writing apprehension is not simply a fear of writing but a failure of courage: "As I wrote earlier, somewhere along my way to becoming educated, I lost my ordinary courage...It takes courage to write" (44).

3. teacher-as-reader: Melanie Sperling deals with constructing the parameters for looking at the teacher-as-reader in her 1994 study Constructing the perspective of teacher-as-reader: A framework for studying response to student writing. Sperling surrounds the term with social context in defining it: "the multiple aspects of reader perspective in a teacher's approach to writing instruction" (175).

4. dialogism: As defined by Mikhail Mikhilovich Bakhtin in Jerry Mirskin's summary discussion in Theorizing Composition, A Critical Sourcebook of Theory and Scholarship in Contemporary Composition Studies, dialogism "expresses the social or 'shared' nature of language use"
(85). In Bakhtin's words: "[It] is a two-sided act. It is determined equally by whose word it is and for whom it is meant" (Mirskin 85). Mirskin interprets the theorist's premise of dialogism as a "struggle" through the social act of discourse (88).

5. deficit models: Because teacher response to student writing has everything to do with prior assumptions, an introduction of the term deficit models is important to furthering understanding in this area. Stephen Tchudi provides the following definition in Exploring and Teaching the English Language Arts: "In effect, every child is seen, from the start, as a remedial adult; this is what educationists call a deficit model..." (53).

6. social epistemic rhetoric: Combining three separate terms, social epistemic rhetoric may be understood in terms first of epistemology or the nature of knowledge. Richard McNabb writes in Epistemic rhetoric

and theories that the terms of epistemic and rhetoric have come to be expressed nearly synonymously: "Studying rhetoric (i.e., the ways in which discourse is generated) is equivalent to studying the ways in which knowledge is constructed" (104). Further, McNabb asserts that theorist James Berlin adds to this constructed term: "[k]nowledge is posited as a product of the dialectic in which 'the observer, the discourse community in which the observer is functioning, and the material world conditions of existence' come together" (104).

7. heteroglossia: Bandura-coined term to refer to "the authentic environment of an utterance, the environment in which it lives and takes shape" (Mirskin 86).

8. teacher response: An operational definition of teacher response is an act of verbal, non-verbal, or written communication to the students. Teacher response frequently refers to written communication but may also refer to something as subtle as a facial expression (non-verbal) or as direct as an action.

9. teacher influence: A dictionary style definition would refer to a teacher's power or ability to affect others. Such a definition is not particular enough for this study, however. Melanie Sperling's paper Constructing the perspective of teacher-as-reader: A framework for studying response to student writing helps to create an operational definition for this study through her words: "the acts of writing and learning to write comprise social processes" (175). The term teacher influence takes in those social processes and, in a dialogic exchange, moves the student to some effect.

> ### Analysis of the existing research:
> [W]hat people do is often better predicted by their beliefs about their capabilities than by measures of what they are [actually] capable of accomplishing. (Pajares 329)

The quote from the Frank Pajares and Margaret Johnson study (1994) on the correlation between self-efficacy and writing performance lies at the heart of this research paper. It serves as a point of departure or a directional marker. The Pajares and Johnson paper Confidence and competence in writing: The role of self-efficacy, outcome expectancy, and apprehension indicates that high self-efficacy and high task involvement positively influence writing performance.

Before we consider the student's self-efficacy, however, a look at the teacher-as-reader is helpful. James Britton first raised the issue of the teacher as a reader of students' writing in The Development of Writing Abilities 11-18. (Purves 259). This reader exists separately from the "inferred audience" of a text (Purves 259). Britton classifies different types of approaches to a student's writing which brings about a number of studies on the role of teacher as audience (Purves 259). Alan Purves creates a chart which identifies eight categories of the teacher as reader from four major classifications in his paper (1984) The teacher as reader: An anatomy (261).

Purves' four classifications of readers of student writing include: receive and respond, receive and judge, receive and analyze, and receive and improve.

Nancy Sommers also began her studies on teacher-as-reader of student writing with the teacher comments. In her 1982 study Responding to student writing, Sommers' research indicates: "that most teachers' comments are not text-specific and could be interchanged, rubber-stamped, from text to text" (152). The findings of Sommers' research study (1982) point to an "overwhelming similarity in the generalities and abstract commands given to students" (153). Analysis of the data indicates:

> The problem here [in an example of a teacher's comments on a student paper] is a confusion of process and product; what one has to say about the process is different from what one has to say about the product. (154).

One of the difficulties faced by teachers providing a helpful response to student writing is in the writing of the response. The teacher as well as the student must be able to communicate clearly, comprehensively, and substantively in writing when responding to student papers.

Catherine Lynch and Patricia Klemans explore the territory of how the teacher's response is crafted in Evaluating our evaluations, a paper which appeared in an issue of College English in 1978. Lynch and Klemans find that there is a burden on teachers to perform as writers not simply evaluators of others' writing:

Writing comments with these qualities [detailed, clear, factual, positive] places great demands on the instructor. She must be able to analyze the student's writing and clearly communicate this analysis. (177)

The number of variables incorporated in the teacher's comments is alluded to by Lynch and Klemans in their study which includes specific comments from both students and their teachers. An analysis of both teachers' and students' comments is provided in the text of the Lynch and Klemans paper. In several examples, teachers had written the comment vague next to the students' written work without giving the students indications of how or what was not precisely defined. As a result, students rewrote sections of their paper adding to the word count but not the substance of their topics. The direction was, in fact, vague and frequently misinterpreted by the students. With many written comments made by the teachers, a variety of interpretations could be made by the students. Klemans and Lynch note the importance of teachers using precisely written comments with directional language in response to students' writing. As an indicator of variables in communication/miscommunication processes, Lynch and Klemans write:

Obviously, these responses indicate a communication gap between instructor and student, no doubt compounded if there is a personality clash between the two. (177)

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The idea that teachers in their roles as evaluator, critic, and judge may not be impartial or even correct raises another series of questions. There is also a zone of confusion created around comments which are approached from different orientations by the student and the teacher. Lynch and Klemans record students' comments on grading, noting that teachers "encouraging [written] comments combined with a 'C' grade [were] not useful" (175). In these instances, the teacher's rationale for including the positive comment and the students' interpretations were miles apart.

A review of the literature on teacher-as-reader of student writing originates from more than one theoretical base but the majority of recent research is grounded in the prior theoretical studies of Bakhtin, Bandura, or Britton. The perspectives of the theorists and educators used in this research study are labeled with the orientations the educators provide themselves.

To understand how to affect students' writing, we must look to the role of teachers-as-readers and beyond--to the classroom as a social dynamic. Bandura's work in social cognitive theory, cited by many of the current research studies, discusses the central role of perception in human motivation (Bolton 5). Bakhtinian theory introduced heteroglossia and the importance of dialogue in learning to write (Mirskin 89). The dialogue is more multifaceted than the word implies outside of this field, however. Jerry Mirskin interprets Bakhtin's theory to promise a "dialogic 'struggle'" (88). According to Mirskin:

Adopting Bakhtin is adopting the hope that heteroglossia will become a dialogic force in the classroom as members of the class infuse the conversation with their different voices. The belief is that different perspectives will animate the conversation, and in the push and pull of a multitude of perspectives a writer's language will develop." (89).

In Sharing words: The effects of readers on developing writers, Martin Nystrand examines social constructionist and social interactionist approaches to discourse studies. Nystrand moves beyond identification of causal relationships in a dialogic classroom to establishing a framework for further study and moving the research closer to practical application. The stated purpose of Nystrand's article in the January, 1990 issue of Written Communication is:

[T]o examine the premises and some of the research emanating from these two schools of thought concerning the relationship of writers and readers, and, by focusing on their respective promise and problems, evaluate their possibilities for understanding the effects of readers on writers' development. (4-5)

Nystrand is concerned with differentiating between assessments of student confidence within specific frameworks. Nystrand's study also looks at false assumptions under which teachers respond to student writing (7).

Nystrand and other theorists are concerned with learning as negotiation. The work of Melanie Sperling,

whose works are referenced in this study, is equally concerned with learning as constructed through dialogism. In her 1994 study, Constructing the perspective of teacher-as-reader: A framework for studying response to student writing, Sperling states the problem of trying to conduct research and examine questions relating to teacher influence on student writing without a framework for understanding the perspective of the teacher-as-reader. Grounded in the sociocognitive studies of theorist Louise Rosenblatt (177), Sperling begins her paper with the assumption that student writing and the concept of learning to write are social processes (176). In a discussion of the limitations of her study, Sperling notes that her research does not examine how student writing and the process of writing are affected by teacher comments. The study does, however, demonstrate the ways in which student writers and their teacher-readers are linked. One limitation of the Sperling study is that it was conducted with a teacher using impressionistic scoring of student writing. It would be interesting to duplicate the Sperling study using rubrics in the teacher evaluation process and compare the results to the 1994 Sperling study.

Sperling's research closely parallels that of Olga Dysthe, whose study The Multivoiced classroom: Interactions of writing and classroom discourse seeks to provide a dialogic framework for discussions about the effect of writing and talking on student writers (387). In Dysthe's two-year, broad-based case study, the work of Bakhtin, as well as Nystrand, is referred to. Dysthe's case study involves students in three schools and two counties. Her definition of multivoicedness as the coexistence and juxtaposition of many voices is also a "central aspect of Bakhtin's dialogism" (391). Dysthe's contribution to the evolution of the theory of multivoicedness or the dialogic interchange is in extending the parameters to incorporate written text (395).

There are several different terms for similar orientations of rhetoric in this field of study. James Berlin refers to expressionistic theorists such as Donald Murray and cognitive psychologists such as Flower and Hayes in his article The major pedagogical theories which appears in Victor Villanueva's Cross-Talk in Comp Theory (233). While placing Flower and Hayes within the cognitive psychology orientation framework was a non-controversial identification eighteen years ago; it is misleading today. Linda Flower's work in composition theory has moved into discourse construction and closer to dialogism within the social-epistemic orientation of educators such as Sperling and Dysthe. With the advent of postmodernism, identifying the orientations of theorists has become even more complex with overlapping pedagogical frameworks. Although no consensus has been reached between educators with opposing orientations, studies of the effect of teachers' response to student writers seems to increasingly use social epistemic rhetoric.

James Lackey, however, cites the social cognitive theories of Bandura in grounding his research for his co-authored study on The effects of written feedback on motivation and changes in written performance (1997). Both Pajares and Lackey et al. list (among their findings) that various types of teacher feedback correlate with various types of motivational orientations in students. The Lackey et al. study is more extensive than many of the studies discussed up to this point in this paper, and the findings are more specific. Among the results Lackey et al. relate in their study are:

> The primary source of self-efficacy comes from perceptions of past experiences with an action... [S]uccess attributed to uncontrollable factors (i.e., luck, preferential treatment, easy task, and so on) fails to improve self-efficacy... [P]erformance goal orientation motivates people to seek external praise by performing well... (19) Different types of feedback promote different types of motivational orientation...Grades and praise induce ego-involved perceptions. (38)

The Lackey et al. study finds that grades are a predictor of changes in writing self-efficacy for writing skills (3); yet, finds the correlations between grades, ego involvement, and teacher praise is suspect (4). The best predictor of improvement in student writing performance, according to the Lackey study is "the number of task specific comments that the students received" (4). The Lackey et al. study contradicts findings from several earlier studies, among them Butler's 1987 and 1988 studies on the correlation between high grades and "an increase in task involvement" (4). Suggesting further study, the Lackey et al. paper recommends research on the "impact of feedback on student motivation" (12) and "determining which types of teacher feedback are most likely to foster an orientation toward learning rather than performance" (12).

How a methodology is viewed is informed by theory. If the research is to do more than quantify, the orientations become critical to further discussion.

With orientation terminology as a preface, what does the current research on the effect of teacher feedback on student writing indicate? Alan Frager asks the simple but direct question in his 1994 article Teaching, writing, and identity: "Can a teacher's self-image as a writer change?" (277) The literature on this subject indicates that individuals can and do change their perceptions of themselves as writers. How those changes are precipitated is still unanswered.

Cynthia Bolton writes in her 1996 paper on Preservice teachers' sense of efficacy and the influence of performance assessment: "For research, this means that failing to take readers into account as a factor in writing development may well obscure the path of development" (21).

James Lackey provides the definitive indefinite answer on the paper he delivered to the American Educational Research Association in Chicago in March, 1997:

> While current research indicates that different types of feedback exert different types of influence on performance (Hogarth, Gibbs, McKenzie, & Marquis, 1991), no standard way of thinking about feedback exists. (11)

Questions left unanswered:
Professor David R. Olson's findings, in his brief history of the origins and development of a theory of "autonomous texts" (1995), indicate that one of the questions current research leaves open-ended is:

> "Although we found that attitudes and epistemologies did not interact in their influence on writing grades, it may still be the case that instruction that promotes certain beliefs about knowledge will also affect attitudes toward learning." (326)

Olson recommends further study and research on the "mutability of students' attitudes and epistemologies and whether instruction in one influences the other" (326).

Much of the research done on the effect of teacher feedback on student writing has been related to quantifying grades and analyzing changes in students' number or letter grades. James Lackey notes a limitation in the research on self-efficacy as related to teacher feedback in the paper he presented to the American Educational Research Association in Chicago in 1997: "[N]one of the research indicates exactly what constitutes effective feedback for certain specific skills" (11). Lackey et al. acknowledge the difficulty of "attempting to determine the effect of written feedback on an abstract concept like writing" (12). The Lackey paper draws the conclusion that "no standard way of thinking about feedback exists" (11). It is a theoretical problem as well as a practical problem with ramifications for education: "The same student writer might receive praise from some teachers and condemnation from others" (41).
Suggesting that students might learn to manipulate the situation and earn a desired grade based upon their understanding of the teacher's preferences, attitudes and personality, Jill A. Hatch, John R. Hayes, Jr., and Charles A. Hill printed their research findings in an article titled When the messenger is the message: Readers' impressions of writers' personalities" (1993).

Moving from students' self-efficacy in relation to their writing and teacher feedback to a specific population of teachers and pre-service teachers, Alan Frager writes about "why teachers should, even must, be writers in order to teach writing" (274). Attempting to add to the construction of a framework for examining teacher feedback to student/teacher writing, Frager looks at methodology in his article Teaching, writing, and identity: "By identifying the indicators, we are identifying the concept" (275). Frager grounds his procedure in Lazarsfeld' (1958) "theory of the interchangeability of the indicators" (275). By attempting to identify the concepts, Frager is seeking to provide substantive data for change.
Susan Tchudi, Heidi Estrem, and Patti-Anne Hanlon raise a question about what teachers are looking for in student writing in their paper Unsettling drafts (1997):

> Helping students see new possibilities in their writing What we need to become sensitive to as teachers, then, is not only the changes in students' writing that might occur between drafts but changes in students' attitudes, processes, and thinking as they struggle to become more confident knowers." (33)

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Restating the Question:

In summary, the research literature on teacher response to and influence on student writers indicates that further research is needed on: the "mutability of students' attitudes...and whether instruction" influences those attitudes (Olson 326); what constitutes effective teacher feedback for specific skills (Lackey 11); a standard way of thinking about teacher feedback (Lackey 11); the impact of teacher response on student motivation (Lackey 12); and how self-image as a writer changes with feedback (Frager 277). Condensed into one question: How and in what way does teacher response to student writing factor into writing development? Through analysis of the data provided by the subjects in this study, this paper will examine that question and provide the answers given by the students as well as correlational analysis of students' responses. Reiterating the hypothesis of this study--students will identify specific teachers and incidents involving teachers from their past and present experiences in determining the nature of the influence on their development as writers.

Research Design
Subjects:
The subjects of this study are sixty-two teachers and pre-service teachers who have completed or are in the process of completing their Master's degrees in either the M.A.T. in English program at State University College at Cortland. These subjects were chosen because of the likelihood of their ability to articulate and precisely define teacher influences on their development as writers. From the sixty-two teachers and preservice teachers in this study, fifteen will fill out a graduate career writing survey and five will be interviewed and videotaped on the subject of teacher influences on their writing development. The rationale for the numbers of subjects in this study are based on the practical matters outlined below:

1. Fifteen students in the fall, 1998 English 502 Rhetoric and Composition class are available to the researcher and have volunteered to participate in this survey portion of this study. There are fifteen students in the Cortland College graduate level class.

2. The sixty-two subjects are represented through four years of writing histories completed as a course assignment in English 502 Rhetoric and Composition class at State University College at Cortland.

3. Five students in the fall, 1998 English 502 class were willing to be interviewed for this study. Although students serving as subjects in this study will be given pseudonyms, the gender of the subjects will be provided as the information may be of importance in the correlational analysis of the data.

Timeline:
The time frame for this study will incorporate four years of writing histories written by the students in the English 502 class, including the fall, 1993 semester students, the fall, 1996 through the fall, 1998 semesters students in English 502. The reflective survey will involve 15 students from the fall, 1998 English 502 class. The videotaped interviews will be conducted in the fall and winter semesters during 1998 and 1999.

Data:
Data will be compiled from graduate students' writing histories, which were completed as a required assignment in Dr. Mary Lynch Kennedy's English 502 graduate-level course. The writing assignment involved peer interviews of preservice teachers on the topic of their writing histories. The assignment is designed to enable students to reconstruct their past and present experiences with writing and to provide "an experiential base on which to ground critical readings of composition theory and research, ease [students] into thinking of [themselves] as [writers] who teach writing..." (Kennedy course web page). Any reference to teachers and/or evaluation of the students' writing found in the data represents a spontaneous response to the generic prompts about writing history. For this reason, any response involving teacher influence on student writing is a significant one.

All of the sixty-two writing histories will be read and perceptions of teacher responses to the students' writing codified into general classifications and then into specific areas of response. Responses which remain outside the pre-determined areas will be tallied and classified as such, following initial review. Triangulation will be achieved through a seven question survey on the graduate career writing histories of the fifteen preservice teachers in the fall, 1998 semester English 502 class at State University College at Cortland. The graduate writing history survey will specify teacher evaluation and response in the prompts as opposed to any spontaneous references to teachers and teacher influence in the sixty-two writing histories. The survey prompts will be focused on graduate students' recent writing history and represent a different type of data than the writing history assignment in that the survey is more immediate and specific to this paper's research topic. The survey is included in Appendix A of this paper. The videotaped interview format involves ten questions specifically focused on this paper's research topic. The interview

questions are outlined in Appendix B of this paper.

For purposes of interrater reliability, a random sampling of writing histories and surveys will be read by a second reader. The codes assigned to the sampling will be compared to the first reader's codification for the identical sampling. Overlapping codes will be tallied with those assigned the remaining histories. Any discrepancies between coders will be noted and tallied separately for notation in the study's findings.

Methodology:
All student references to teachers will be coded initially with a TR (teacher response) notation in the writing histories, surveys, and interviews. The teacher responses will be additionally coded as either V for verbal or W for written. The perceived nature of the response will be coded as either P for positive or N for negative, as the student perceives the response relates to the writing product. Positive responses will be further coded into sub-categories as the data is compiled. Likewise, negative responses will be further divided into sub-categories. Responses which can not be readily classified as either positive or negative will be coded O for outside the parameters of negative or positive. Students who identified teacher praise in combination with an award given with be coded with an A, and students who identified teacher response with a letter or number grade will be coded with a + for a good grade or a - for a poor grade on their writing product. Depending on the nature of the responses, additional codes may be necessary. All codes will be considered indicators and those indicators will be identified with particular concepts as used in the Frager study.

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Analysis of data:
Data from each of the instruments will be analyzed conceptually as well as by code/classification in tabular format. A comparison of the data from the written histories with the data from the surveys will be made in writing.

Correlations between data from each of the three instruments will be noted in writing and tabular format. Unusual findings will be written up separately and included in the analysis section of this study.

Results/findings:

> **Limitations of the study:**
> I hope to pass on to my students, both in and out of workshops, through example, through mental telepathy, through having these values inform everything that I say about writing. These are elements of a writers' code, and though I can't articulate them all, I can nevertheless convey an idea of what I'm talking about...Write for the good of the work--as opposed to writing for others or writing for yourself. (Huddle 85)

Professor Huddle eloquently describes the inherent difficulty of quantifying social responses when he writes that he will pass values of good writing on to his students "through mental telepathy." To some degree, the influences of teachers-as-readers on their student writers may prove to be unquantifiable. Further, the tabulation of codified responses is only as accurate as the students' abilities to recollect and identify a causal agent to their writing development and writing product. For this reason, the survey answers may be of greater value to this study than the writing histories in that the data is more recent and students' recollections are likely to be more detailed. Students who are unable to make such identifications or mistakenly identify a teacher response, when, in fact, other factors were more directly involved in the development processes, represent an unknown. To a great extent, this research study depends upon graduate students' abilities to see connections in their development as writers. This sampling of students, however, is more equipped in many ways to make such connections than a number of possible variations in the subject population.

Students' behavioral responses to the teacher-as-readers of their writing products present variables which may not be known by the researcher. In addition, relying on writers' memories to determine significant and causal relationships is, to some degree, problematic. However, the large number of samples read and codified, in addition to the prior research which grounds the inquiry, should lessen the impact of incorrectly identified responses. Videotaped interviews of writers discussing their writing histories will also provide the element of immediacy and lessen the recollection/confusion factor in this study.

Implications/significance:

Identification of a pattern of teaching response which correlates with increasing a students' self-efficacy or engaging the student in knowledge construction through dialogism could be submitted for hypothesis testing studies. A proven correlation could be documented and incorporated into the training and education of pre-service teachers. If we have both an implicit and explicit understanding of how and why students are able to improve their writing, we can share that knowledge with teachers who may utilize the knowledge in the classroom. The results of the research become another tool in a teacher's repertoire, as stated by Bolton in her study on preservice teacher's sense of efficacy:

> Often teachers teach as they are taught, and assess skill and knowledge as they themselves were assessed. By expanding the assessment tools that teachers are familiar with, as well as have personally have been assessed by, will only serve to facilitate a wider use of these methods. (3)

Conclusions:

> Writers are vulnerable. That's the writer, there, on the page. Our essential selves are laid bare for the world to see. Writers want response that gives help without threatening our dignity. Every adult remembers at least one waking experience comparable to Chute's [Carolyn Chute, the novelist] nightmare, when an English teacher's response took the form of an attack: red ink bled all over a piece of writing that represented the writer's level best. (Atwell 217)

Nancie Atwell's text In The Middle, New Understandings About Writing, Reading, and Learning is filled with practical suggestions for teachers to use in responding to student writing in such a way that fosters development and improvement. Atwell manages to walk the fine line between critiquing student papers and being critical. Without mentioning the word self-efficacy, she is cognizant of it in her writing and teaching. Because we do not all have Atwell's sensibilities, the educational community moves more slowly. The research challenges assumptions, prods with new questions, hypothesizes new theories, and self-renews.

A review of the literature and the data from the student papers has caused me to examine my own responses to teacher response to this paper. Oddly enough, the comment that was most effective in terms of substantive revision to this paper was not a written or verbal teacher comment but an action. The professor reviewing my prospectus for this paper included two additional pages of reference citations with a brief written review. There was not a word of command included, not a comment, such as: "Perhaps these references would be better sources than the ones that you have included," etc. The inclusion of additional pages of references without comment allowed me to make whatever determination I wanted--to explore or to ignore. My initial response was to ignore [I had already read so many articles and theorists that their words and language began to swim in my head as well as on paper]. When I read my paper over, however, I knew there was something that was not working. I went to the additional sources and made discoveries. A wall came down and substantive revision began. It was an exciting moment. How do you thank a teacher for that moment? How do you quantify that type of response to student writing? For that is the trick, the magic, of teacher-as-reader of student writing--to know the student well enough to understand what works for one student may not work for another--to guide and challenge without removing students' ownership of their words.

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