THE WRITE CLASS: STUDENT SELF-EFFICACY IN A PILOT PLACEMENT PROGRAM AT BOISE STATE UNIVERSITY

by

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my sister, Rebecca, for inspiring me, when I'm tired, to take another step. I hope to repay the favor someday.

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There are many people who deserve acknowledgement for the support they have given me through this process. I want to thank my family for having faith in me and encouraging me to stick with it when things got rough. I promise, I will visit more! I want to thank my colleagues for their friendship and support through this process and for always pushing me to think more and work harder. I owe a great debt of gratitude to my committee for their guidance on this project. I especially want to thank Heidi Estrem for making this project possible and for keeping me on track. I could not have done this without her! Thank you to Hank and Penny for rolling with the interrupted walk schedule. Thank you to Adam for understanding how important this was to me and for loving me even when I made it hard to.

ABSTRACT

Placement into first-year college writing classes can have great impact on students, but student voices are rarely heard in the debate on which placement methods are best. In this thesis, I work to illuminate the student perspective on the placement process through an examination of a pilot guided self-placement program at Boise State University. Developed from existing directed self-placement models and scholarship on best practices for English placement, The Write Class placement program gives students a voice in how they are placed. With students taking a role as active agents in their English placement decisions, one of the main concepts for my study is self-efficacy. The obvious questions for me are; 1) How were students utilizing the resources provided? 2) Were students who participated in The Write Class placement program exhibiting signs of self-efficacy? The second question became important because of previous studies (Gore, 2006, and Chemers, Hu, and Garcia, 2001) which showed a correlation between self-efficacy and academic achievement.

Using scholarship on self-efficacy and directed self-placement as framework, I conducted a survey of incoming college freshmen during a series of 2011 summer orientation sessions here at Boise State University. The results of the survey provide a fascinating look into how students made their placement decisions, and demonstrate that students who participated in The Write Class exhibited signs of self-efficacy, as evidenced through high levels of confidence in their decisions and abilities. When asked

about their confidence levels in their placement decisions, their abilities to accomplish the goals they set for themselves in their English classes, and their level of preparedness for the coursework ahead of them, over 80% of the students responded that they felt confident and prepared. This result is significant because high levels of self-efficacy in previous studies have been shown to be indicative of future success.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

DSP	Directed Self-Placement
FYW(P)	First-Year Writing (Program)
GVSU	Grand Valley State University

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

This thesis explores student perspectives on the pilot writing placement program implemented at Boise State University during the summer of 2011. To understand student perspectives, I conducted a survey with a selected group of students who participated in the pilot placement program. The focus of this thesis is on how students utilized the resources provided through the pilot placement program and whether they exhibited signs of self-efficacy in their survey responses. Chapter one is an extended introduction to the project and an outline of the work I did at the summer orientation sessions. In addition to the information gathered through the surveys, I examine the interactions I had with students at orientation sessions to get a more complete view of how they made their placement decisions. The introduction chapter is intended to provide the necessary context with which to view my study. Chapter two is a review of literature, in which I explore placement methods and self-efficacy theories. Chapter three contains a discussion of the method of study and the results of the survey in detail. Chapter four is a discussion chapter that works to make the connections between the theoretical frameworks of this thesis and the survey data.

Introduction to Project

Placement into first-year writing classes has far-reaching effects both for students and administrators, which is why it is a much-debated subject among composition researchers and instructors. Ideally, placement should reflect the curriculum into which students are being placed; in turn, the curriculum should be informed by placement. Entering students should be made aware of what will be expected of them in their coursework early in the process. If entering students are well-informed about the courses they will take, they may be able to better design their schedules and have a good chance at success. Likewise, there is much to be learned from placement data in terms of what skills students bring with them and what they should be expected to do in their classes.

As a student who has gone through the placement process at Boise State University, I have concerns about the repercussions of the state-mandated methods for placement in English courses. The options given in the mandate are two standardized tests used for college admissions, the ACT and SAT, or COMPASS, a computerized test that evaluates aptitude in reading and grammar. Though these tests can show aptitude in certain skill sets or general educational performance, they are not reflective of the type of curriculum into which they are designed to place students. For placement in English courses specifically, the ACT and SAT are limited in scope. The SAT information page clearly states, "The SAT doesn't test logic or abstract reasoning" ("What Does the SAT Test"). This page outlines what the SAT does test in the two sections of the SAT used for college English placement. The two sections are the critical reading section, which includes reading passages and sentence completions, and the writing section, which tests for grammar and usage through short essay and multiple choice questions. On the ACT

website, the English test is divided into two sections: usage/mechanics and rhetorical skills. The ACT information page breaks the English test down into six elements: punctuation, grammar and usage, and sentence structure, which are grouped under the usage/mechanics category, and strategy, organization, and style, which are grouped under the rhetorical skill category.

There has been much debate on the validity of the SAT and ACT as predictors of college success (Sedlacek, Sternberg, Wainer). One major reason for debate is that these tests ignore an important set of factors involved in student performance, including apprehension, testing ability, scheduling issues, and external pressures. It is important to take student perceptions into consideration in terms of placement. If a student knows what lies ahead and feels that they can accomplish the task they are about to embark on, they may be more likely to do it. Standardized tests do not account for factors that could potentially stand in the way of student success, like time allotment, writer apprehension, or feelings of preparedness.

Even if students score well on a standardized test, they may not possess the confidence or habits necessary to succeed in the course they place in. Likewise, students who may not test well may have the determination and ability to succeed in a course above where they are placed. In either case, knowing what lies ahead could certainly help students prepare for their courses. In most cases, a person would not willingly enter into a contract without first examining the terms of agreement, but in many situations, college placement asks students to do just that. It was my experience as a student and I have heard the same from some of the students I teach: that their first-year writing course was not what they thought it was going to be. Placement tests such as SAT, ACT, and

COMPASS are not indicative of the coursework students will undertake, yet the state mandated use of these tests in Idaho sends the opposite message to students. Placing students in classes based solely on a standardized test score implies that the test provides a complete picture of a student's ability to succeed. However, as I have shown, these tests are incomplete in their assessment of student abilities. In reality, there is much more involved in determining a student's chance at success than analytical skill.

As a means of getting at some of these other measures, Boise State is currently undergoing a pilot placement process developed from directed self-placement (DSP) programs currently used at many institutions across the country. The pilot program is called "The Write Class." This program is different from the standard placement model in that it allows students to gauge their abilities through a combination of questions about reading/writing ability, informational resources for course options, and test scores. The students are given a recommendation based on the answers they provide and then they are able to choose whether to begin in English 90 or English 101. Students wishing to enroll in English 102 are asked to submit a portfolio consisting of a cover letter stating their interest and readiness for the course, and multiple pieces of research-based writing with proper citation and works cited pages. The Write Class program is very new to the university, but in the small pilot that was run during the summer of 2009, the data collected illustrates that students who participated in the program showed a significant improvement in performance, as evidenced by scores in their chosen English classes and overall GPA. This information alone proves the program deserves a closer look, and though the data is encouraging, what interests me is what changes for students through its implementation.

The quantitative data gathered in terms of student performance is essential to proving the effectiveness of the program and continuing into the future, but as an instructor, I am interested in how this type of program will affect students on a more individualized level. My study is geared toward getting a better look at the student side of the process. It was designed to gain a better understanding of how the Write Class program functions, how students utilized it, and whether there is evidence of perceived self-efficacy in students who participated. For the purposes of this study, I will be using Albert Bandura's definition of self-efficacy: "the belief in one's capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to produce given attainments" (*Self-Efficacy* 3). To apply this concept to placement, it seems intuitive that if students knew what to expect going into a course, that they could be better prepared. To take it back further, if students knew what a course looked like before they began, they could make a reasonable assumption of their ability to succeed in that course. That is the underlying principle behind DSP. This method of placement aims to provide students with more information about their course options and engage them in the decision-making process regarding which course best suits their needs.

There are multiple studies that show a positive correlation between levels of self-efficacy and success (Chemers, Hu, & Garcia; Elias & MacDonald; Gore; Zimmerman, Bandura, & Martinez-Pons). Based on that assumption, what I investigate in my study is whether and how students who participated in the Write Class exhibited signs of self-efficacy. Past studies investigating self-efficacy have used instruments that measure levels of confidence in specific areas (Gore). In my study, I wanted to find out if students felt prepared for the courses they chose, what kinds of goals they set for the course, and

how confident they felt in their abilities to achieve their goals. I wanted to see how students utilized the resources available on the Write Class website and whether the resources had any bearing on the decisions they made regarding their placement in English classes. Through my research, I was able to get a sense of what students experienced in the Write Class placement process, and what factors were most important to them in making their placement decision.

In addition to the research I conducted through readings and surveys, I was able to closely observe the placement process firsthand. I worked as a graduate assistant during the summer of 2011 and through my interactions with students, I learned a lot about how they make their decisions about placement. Assumptions are often made about the level of investment students have in their education. Young students are often labeled as lazy and uninterested. It is assumed that given the opportunity, they will choose the easier path. In terms of DSP, there is a fear that students will opt out of basic writing courses even if they need to be in them, simply to get done faster. I had that same worry going into the summer orientation sessions, but after working with students there and seeing how they responded on my study survey, I have a very different picture in mind. I realized that the students I worked with were deliberate and thoughtful in their placement decisions. They looked at their options, and really did take all necessary factors into consideration. This is important to consider because it reinforces the idea that students are not only capable, but likely better qualified to assess their abilities than are standardized tests.

Directed Self-Placement: Origins and Implications for The Write Class

The Write Class program at Boise State University was developed from the scholarship on both DSP and portfolio-based placement. There are many versions of DSP throughout the country, but here I describe the program at Grand Valley State University most thoroughly, as it is the most referenced DSP program implemented and serves as the model for most that followed. Though I explore the DSP program at GVSU as it is represented in the scholarship the literature review chapter, I am outlining it here as a means of understanding the underlying structures in DSP and how The Write Class has been informed by it.

In the DSP model introduced at GVSU in 1996, students are contacted via letter prior to orientation. The letter to students informs them of their option to choose an English course to start with and includes a brochure that outlines the procedure and provides resources on the course offerings. When students arrive at orientation, they are addressed en masse with a speech that outlines the reasons behind the decision to have students self-place, the expectations of them, the process by which they will place, and a reminder of the in-class writing they will be expected to do on the first day of class. The brochure students receive in the mail, and again at orientation, contains vital information for making a placement decision. Students complete questionnaires about their reading/writing habits, view information about the possible coursework they will encounter, see the expectations and grading procedures for coursework, and get a detailed outline of the first-day writing they can expect. This first-day writing is subsequently evaluated and recommendations are given to students as to whether they should remain in the course they initially chose, or move to a lower course. In this model, students are

given the option to choose a course, but the first-day writing sample serves as a method of assessment for the decisions they make. I find this model problematic because impromptu writing samples can carry the same fundamental issues as standardized tests. One of the differences in The Write Class is that at Boise State, students do not do the first day writing.

Summer Orientation Sessions: Context for The Write Class

Students participated in The Write Class program across all 2011 summer orientation sessions. Sessions were broken down into two types: "Broncoventure," for entering first-time freshmen, and "TNT for transfer and non-traditional students. I was fortunate to have the opportunity to work directly with the pilot placement program as a graduate assistant. Through my involvement in the multiple stages of the orientation sessions, from planning to follow-up, I developed an intimate working knowledge of the orientation process and The Write Class pilot program. Through my work during the summer and my research, I was able to gain a better understanding of what these processes do for entering students.

The Write Class is similar to the GVSU model in that it offers students resources about their options for courses and asks them to consider their reading/writing experience, but the resources presented on the Write Class website are more comprehensive. The GVSU model gives short descriptions of each of the course options and lists of descriptors that are common to students in each. The Write Class also offers brief descriptions of each course and a reading writing history survey, and in addition, provides students with resources such as syllabi, course progression, instructor expectations, and student perspectives on each class. Another key difference in the two

programs is that Boise State does not require a first-day writing sample. The decision made prior to the semester is not reviewed by faculty after the fact. GVSU allows students to self-place and then administers an impromptu writing on the first day of class. That writing sample is then assessed and recommendations are made for students to either stay put or move to a different class. Students are given the final say on which class to take, but faculty members do have some influence over where students are placed.

What the Write Class program does is ask students to reflect on themselves and then it paints a comprehensive picture of what each of the first-year writing courses looks like. Students are given the opportunity to look at sample course progressions, syllabi, and course outcomes. They can watch videos where students outline the differences between the classes, and they can read statements from faculty members about what their expectations of their students are. Taken together, these materials offer students a realistic idea of what to expect from the class they choose. The Write Class is based on the idea that students who are well-informed of what will be expected of them will make realistic decisions about their placement. This idea is in line with Bandura's theories on self-efficacy, which are discussed in the literature review chapter. Bandura argues that people will not set goals for themselves that they do not think they can achieve, and that highly efficacious people will see challenges as positive and develop strategies to overcome them rather than feeling defeated and giving up ("Social Cognitive Theory" 10).

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

There is much debate over placement and which methods are best. My study does not aim to answer this question. What I hope to answer in my study is if students participating in the Write Class pilot program experience self-efficacy, and if so, how it is manifested. In this literature review, I take a closer look at traditional placement instruments and I focus on the scholarship surrounding directed self-placement because it informs the locally-developed Write Class program at Boise State. Additionally, I explore the self-efficacy literature because my research question aims to make connections between first-year writing placement and student self-efficacy, particularly in the placement "moment." I focus on self-efficacy because I feel it is representative of the student role in determining outcomes, an area of study that is easily overlooked in the pursuit of programs that are cost-effective, efficient, and successful in terms of desired outcomes.

Traditional Placement Methods

According to a study conducted in 2007 by Achieve Inc., the most common English and Math placement method is the multiple choice computer-based test such as the ACT, SAT, COMPASS, or ACCUPLACER. These tests, for the most part, measure reading comprehension and grammar. In their 1998 article, "Directed Self Placement: an Attitude of Orientation," Dan Royer and Roger Gilles talk about the computer-based

methods of placement such as ACT and SAT scores. They assert that "writing ability, at least as we conceive of it, is far too complex to measure so quickly and easily" (55). They suggest that measuring writing ability is not just a matter of looking at test scores or writing samples. There are other factors that come into play such as reading and writing habits, and student perceptions of themselves.

In a study conducted at College of the Canyons by Daylene M.Meuschke and Barry C. Gribbons, the researchers looked at whether students and instructors felt placement using the ACCUPLACER for English and math was accurate. They compared the survey results for placement between the ACCUPLACER, multiple measures, advanced placement/other, and exempt. The results of their study show that placement using the ACCUPLACER or advanced placement was viewed as less accurate than placement using multiple measures, or exemptions (18). Then, both students and instructors were surveyed about their perceptions of the accuracy of the placement tests for math and English. Though the results in some categories were inconclusive for the researchers, they were able to confidently say that instructors tended to agree with the placement results more than students. Students placed with the ACCUPLACER were the least satisfied with their placement—47% agreed with their placement. The other methods of placement showed larger numbers of students who agreed with their placement (exempt- 82%, multiple measures- 65%, and advanced placement/other- 63%) (20). Meuschke and Gribbons also looked at whether students felt that they should have been placed into a higher or lower English course. An overwhelming majority of students who felt they were misplaced felt they should have been placed in a higher course (42%) rather than a lower course (2%). The numbers for the instructor surveys were much

different—82% felt that students were correctly placed (16). The discrepancy between student and instructor perception does not surprise me because most instructors would not argue against additional instruction, while students generally do not want to take classes in addition to what they feel they need.

In a study conducted at Utah Valley State College in 2005 Richard N. Matzen and Jeff E. Hoyt looked at the accuracy of multiple choice placement tests at their school compared to placement that incorporated a holistically scored essay. They conducted the study as a way to better understand the correlation between varied placement methods and success rates. They outline existing research on placement using standardized tests, timed essays, and multiple measures. Prior research showed that there was disagreement as to whether standardized tests had a predictive relationship to final grades. In reference to previous studies, they assert, "when English teachers score (or rate) timed essays, scores have been found to have a predictive relationship with final grades and to be more indicative of students' writing abilities compared to multiple-choice test scores from the same students" (3). In the case of multiple measures, they argue that, "multiple criteria may improve not only placement but also assessing writing courses or programs" (3). Based on previous research, Matzen and Hoyt seem to be arguing that multiple measures offer the greatest chance for success. For their study, Matzen and Hoyt did a comparison between students placed using multiple-choice test scores and those placed using a timed essay that was holistically scored. In this particular study, 12 English teachers evaluated 431 essays, and the timed essay score served as a standard. They wanted to see if students placed with the timed-essay score would be placed the same with a multiple choice test. They report, "With the timed essay as the standard for placement . . . COMPASS only

correctly places 62% of students" (4). Their hypothesis was that students placed into a course based on their essay score would perform better than students placed according to a multiple choice test. That seemed to be the case. Students placed using the essay scores had an average group GPA of 2.8, while the students placed using multiple choice test scores had an average group GPA of 2.2 (6). This research shows that when comparing single-measure placement, the timed essay was a more effective measure for accurate placement. Ultimately, though, the researchers advocate using multiple measures for the greatest chance for accurate placement (7).

The timed-essay process does place evaluation in the hands of people who know more about the coursework and program than someone in a placement office, but it also places the additional time burden on English staff. This method of placement still does not account for what Royer and Gilles saw as one of the major problems of traditional placement methods; labeling students as remedial or advanced makes them passive rather than active participants. Active participation from students seems to be at the heart of the matter. When students have no role in the decision-making process for placement, they exercise little control over their success. When they are given the tools necessary to make an educated decision about their education, they exhibit greater levels of confidence and according to self-efficacy theories, will likely have a better chance at success. What I am arguing here is not that DSP is the best method for placement in every situation, but that it has the potential to foster higher levels of self-efficacy in students. Whether it be through DSP or other methods of placement that offer students a more active role in the decision-making process, I feel it is important to give them a say. As Royer and Gilles argue, no one knows students better than they know themselves, and who better to decide

if they are up for the challenge of their college coursework? ("An Attitude of Orientation" 61).

Though none of these studies examine why the multiple choice tests do not seem to be as accurate a measure as other methods, they do seem to agree that there is a problem with the tests as a stand-alone measure for placement. This assertion is supported by the Council of Writing Program Administrators. The NCTE-WPA "White Paper on Writing Assessment in Colleges and Universities" outlines some best practices for writing assessment, including placement. In this document, they make the following recommendations: The improvement of teaching and learning should be a priority of writing assessment. In placement, this means that administrators should take into consideration the "local classroom conditions" students will enter into after being placed, and the places from which they come. In placement testing, student performance should indicate a readiness for the curriculum of the course in which they are being placed. Writing assessment "should use multiple measures and engage multiple perspectives." Writing assessment should include input from and feedback for students ("White Paper"). These recommendations are in sync with some of the attributes of DSP.

Directed Self-Placement

Much of the work done on directed self-placement (DSP) looks at the kind of student involvement it offers. The premise of DSP is that students know themselves and their abilities best, and given that, they can offer a more accurate picture of how they should be placed. Royer and Gilles can be credited with much of what we know about DSP. Their groundbreaking work at Grand Valley State University paved the way for subsequent DSP programs across the country, including the pilot program being

implemented at Boise State. In their article, "Directed Self-Placement: An Attitude of Orientation," Royer and Gilles work to establish the legitimacy of this type of program. They discuss the placement methods that were in place prior to the implementation of DSP and outline the major flaw in those prior methods; that they were simply inadequate. Royer and Gilles write,

> our decision to give directed self-placement a try originated with wide-spread frustration over our traditional placement method. We knew of the well-documented limitations of placement tests—the artificiality of direct writing and the questionable reliability and validity of traditional direct assessment. (59)

After much work on trying to improve the current placement methods, it was clear a new model had to be built.

Traditional placement methods are centered around administrative concerns, but DSP differs in that it places students at the center. It allows students to construct a well-informed, complete picture of themselves rather than relying on an incomplete picture painted through test scores. Royer and Gilles felt that they needed to know more about students in order to accurately place them. By their estimation, the people who know the most about student performance and habits are the students themselves, so why not let them have a say in which course would suit them best?

The authors briefly describe student perceptions of their Eng 098 course, which is the basic writing course equivalent to Eng 90 here at Boise State. They said students who were placed in 098 through test scores or writing assessments "started the class with a chip on their shoulder after having been told during orientation that, despite their "B" average in high school, they were required to take a no-credit English class" (59). This

makes sense to me as a student. I don't think many students would be thrilled about paying for a class that is all too often deemed remedial, and having it not count toward their required credits.

One of the major concerns with letting students choose which course to take was that students would opt out of taking basic writing courses altogether. One of the surprising results of the implementation of DSP for Royer and Gilles was that 22% of students self-placed in English 098 (the not-for-credit basic writing course). This was a drop from the previous 32% of students placed in English 098 before, but it re-affirms the notion that students will not simply refuse to take a basic writing course if they are not forced to. Of the reasons students gave for taking English 098, the highest percentage (59%) was based on self-assessment (62). Though the number of students taking English 098 decreased with self-placement, the reality is that the students who placed themselves there genuinely wanted to be there. They felt that they needed extra help with writing and made the decision to get it. Royer and Gilles assert,

> when we place students, we take away from them a critical component in their educational lives. If we choose for them, they may think that the right thing is being done, but it is understandable that many take our choosing for them as an excuse to become either angry or defeated. The sense of the rightness comes to students who make their own decisions in a matter like this and when they vow to affirm through hard work that the right decision has been made. (65)

This argument goes beyond placement in non-credit-bearing classes. Students are likely to feel this same "sense of rightness" when they are given the chance to weigh in on decisions that affect them in such direct ways.

Drawbacks to DSP

Equally important as the positive results of DSP are some of the studies that have problematized this method of placement. These studies bring up information that directly factors into the idea of efficacy. The first is a study conducted by Cynthia Lewiecki-Wilson, Jeff Sommers, and John Paul Tassoni. These researchers examine the placement model at their institution against DSP. The model they use is called the writer's profile. It prompts students to think about their prior writing experience and through multiple drafts, compose a profile of themselves as writers (171). Though they do not disapprove of DSP entirely, they have found it problematic for their particular institution. Because of the low persistence rate and the unique backgrounds of their students, they feel that more input from faculty is needed in placement. One of the issues they see with DSP is that it opens up the possibility for students to misplace themselves based on damaged self-image. In their article, they assert, "For a variety of reasons, our students have a history of damaged self-image. Older returning students, for example, may have long histories of regarding themselves as deficient although once in the classroom these same students often become the strongest writers" (168). They continue with a discussion of how the differences in many underrepresented groups can affect their performance as first year writers. Of major concern for these researchers is the retention rate for incoming students. They feel that their students were not prepared to make placement decisions on their own. They say, ". . . at campuses such as ours where a 65% persistence rate is a fact of life, students have a greater, not lesser, need for the considered advice of experienced composition faculty when making self-placement decisions" (180). While these researchers do not see DSP as a viable option for their school, they are not discounting it

entirely. They are raising the concern for the level of guidance DSP offers in communities of at-risk students.

In a new study conducted by researchers at Michigan State, concerns for the validity of DSP were raised. The study covers the ten year span in which DSP has been used at the school. What the researchers found was that there were some major disconnects between their first year writing (FYW) program and their DSP program. They found the representation provided through DSP was not an accurate representation of FYW. The amount of time that passed between students completing the survey and selecting their courses was too long, the values implicit in the DSP were not the same as FYW, the scoring of the DSP survey did not line up with the ideas of writing in FYW, and students that could have benefited from a basic writing course were not led there through DSP (Gere, et al. 170). These are very serious concerns, and have to do with the design of the DSP model. In the limited experience I have with the program at Boise State, these issues do not seem to be present. In general, Boise State students should have only a two week span between the time they complete the Write Class website and the time when they register for classes. The Write Class offers students examples of the courses offered, as well as instructor expectations. The recommendation mechanism on the Write Class website was formatted by the FYW program director, and students were given multiple opportunities to discuss their placement decisions with experienced faculty members, and peer advisors. In its beginning stages, The Write Class seems to address some of the concerns raised by the researchers at Michigan State, but to get a good idea of long-term implications, it will require further inspection.

Self-Efficacy

One of the major underpinnings of DSP is self-efficacy. My understanding of the importance of self-efficacy stems from Albert Bandura's work on the subject, and from a variety of studies in which perceived self-efficacy was measured against various other factors, such as test scores (Gore) , parental influence and personal goal setting (Zimmerman, Bandura, and Martinez-Pons), and previous performance (Zimmerman, Bandura, and Martinez-Pons; Elias and MacDonald). Then, academic self-efficacy has been studied by Martin Chemers, Li-tze Hu, and Ben Garcia. In their article, they measure the effects of academic self-efficacy and optimism on students' academic performance, stress, health, and commitment to remain in school. This study will be looked at in more detail in the academic self-efficacy section.

As it is defined by Albert Bandura, "perceived self-efficacy refers to beliefs in one's capabilities to organize and execute the course of action required to produce given attainments" (*Self-Efficacy* 3). A person's self-efficacy doesn't hinge on the outcome of a situation, but rather, the level of confidence a person has that they will be able to complete a task. Although the actual outcome does not necessarily factor in, the expected outcome does. There are two parts to Bandura's concept: the belief in one's capabilities, and the expected outcome. In his examination of self-efficacy, Bandura explains the causal relationship between self-efficacy and outcome expectancies. He writes, "perceived self-efficacy is a judgment of one's ability to organize and execute given types of performances, whereas an outcome expectation is a judgment of the likely consequence such performances will produce" (21). In terms of decision-making, both of these factors play a role. As he explains, "in activities where outcomes are highly

contingent on quality of performance, the types of outcomes people anticipate depend largely on how well they believe they will be able to perform in given situations" (21). In other words, when considering which route to take, people will consider their abilities to perform certain actions and how well they think they will perform those actions. Bandura explains this in detail. He writes,

> It is because people see outcomes as contingent on the adequacy of their performance, and care about those outcomes, that they rely on efficacy beliefs in deciding which course of action to pursue and how long to pursue it. They avoid pursuits that they believe they cannot perform successfully and that they anticipate will invite trouble for them, but they actively pursue activities that they judge they can manage successfully and that hold promise of valued rewards. In short, people take action when they hold efficacy beliefs and outcome expectations that make the effort seem worthwhile. They expect given actions to produce desired outcomes and believe that they can perform those actions. (24)

In other words, we understand the connection between the outcomes of a situation and how well we perform. In general, we will not attempt a course of action if we do not feel that we can perform the tasks necessary to succeed. Self-efficacy goes beyond what we perceive, though. In his larger work, Bandura writes about how people deal with challenges. He writes, "people who have strong beliefs in their capabilities approach difficult tasks as challenges to be mastered rather than as threats to be avoided. Such an affirmative orientation fosters interest and engrossing involvement in activities. They set themselves challenging goals and maintain strong commitment to them" (39). According to Bandura, highly efficacious people tend to see difficult tasks in a positive way. They

look at them as challenges, but are willing to make the effort to complete them. This correlation between level of efficacy and attitude when approaching a challenging task is important. Bandura writes, "these findings offer substantial support for the view that beliefs of personal efficacy are active contributors to, rather than mere inert predictors of, human attainments" (39). If Bandura's findings are also applicable to the process of course selection and placement, we might predict that students will not willingly register for classes they do not feel they can succeed in. Given the opportunity to choose which classes suit them best, students will be more likely to choose classes they feel they will do well in, or classes in which they feel they can accomplish their goals. The literature on the correlation between self-efficacy and success, when applied to placement, indicates that if students feel confident about their abilities to succeed in a class at the onset, the chances that they will realize that success are greater.

Self-efficacy, then, is an important factor to consider in terms of placement. As a generalization, people consider the expected outcome of a situation and their perceived ability to execute a certain type of performance. If they do not feel that they will be able to successfully execute the performance necessary for success, they can be said to exhibit low self-efficacy. On the other hand, highly efficacious people believe they will be able to perform the tasks necessary to successfully complete an action. Though I am not looking at the long-term outcomes of self-placement in my study, the correlation between self-efficacy and both the effort given in a task, and human attainment cannot be ignored.

Academic Self-Efficacy

There have been many studies conducted to measure self-efficacy in academic settings. While I was hard-pressed to find much research on self-efficacy in DSP, there is

much to be gained by looking at the existing studies that build on the theoretical framework set forth by Bandura. What follows is an overview of four studies conducted on self-efficacy in differing academic settings.

In their study of self-efficacy, Chemers, Hu, and Garcia relied heavily on the challenge-threat model introduced by Blascovich and Tomaka. In this model, according to the authors, "threat occurs when the individual experiences resources as insufficient to meet demands, and challenge occurs when resources are felt to be adequate to demands" (57). The researchers outline three factors of demand evaluations that are present in the first year of college: "perceptions of the amount of required effort, danger, and uncertainty involved in the particular performance situation" (57). In their study, they hypothesize:

> . . . dispositional characteristics related to efficacy and optimism should have a very strong impact on resource perceptions. Students high in academic self-efficacy should see themselves as more able to meet the demands of the situation and should therefore be more likely to regard the 1st year of college as a challenge rather than a threat. (57)

This is important because when situations are seen as challenges, the likelihood of giving up is less than in situations that are seen as threats. The research conducted by Chemers, Hu, and Garcia is a longitudinal study that measures academic self-efficacy at the beginning of the semester through surveys distributed to first-year students, and at the end of the semester through a subsequent survey distributed to students who had taken the first survey. Through their analysis, the researchers conclude:

> As predicted, academic self-efficacy was significantly and directly related to academic expectations and academic performance. Also as predicted, academic expectations were related to performance. Students who enter college with confidence in their ability to perform well academically do perform significantly better than do less confident students. Likewise, students who have higher expectations for academic success show higher performance. (61)

These results echo findings from a 1992 study conducted by Zimmerman, Bandura, and Martinez-Pons on high school students, in which researchers look at students' perceived self-efficacy, personal goals, parental goal setting, and prior grades. The researchers found that personal goals play a major role in grade attainment (673). The students in this study took multiple factors into consideration in setting goals, including their past performance and their parents' goals for them. Echoing Bandura's previous research, this study shows that the higher the level of self-efficacy students showed, the higher the goals they set for themselves (673). In addition to having an effect on the types of goals students in the study set for themselves, self-efficacy also influenced their achievement of those goals (673). These studies show that academic self-efficacy can be positively correlated to academic success.

Past performance seems to be an important factor in these recent studies. A study conducted by Steven Elias and Scott MacDonald in 2007 shows a significant correlation between past performance and subsequent academic success. These researchers look at two separate assumptions from existing studies: that prior performance is a reliable determinant of self-efficacy beliefs; and that self-efficacy beliefs contribute to an individual's performance independent of past performance. Their findings seem to

support both views. They found that high school performance was a significant predictor of college students' academic self-efficacy beliefs (2527), but that as tasks became more familiar, efficacy beliefs became more important than prior experience (2526). The implication of this connection is important in looking at The Write Class placement at Boise State. It could be assumed that students directly from high school would base their placement decisions largely on their performance in English courses in high school, but there is the possibility that the resources provided through The Write Class website could familiarize them with the coursework enough that efficacy beliefs independent of past performance would be more highly determinant.

Paul Gore used the College Self-Efficacy Inventory (CSEI) and the Academic Self-Confidence (ASC) measures alongside ACT scores to determine if self-efficacy could be looked at as a determinant for college success. He conducted two studies, both with college freshmen. In each study, students were surveyed using the above measures both at the beginning of their first semester and again at the end of their first semester. In his analysis, Gore found that self-efficacy was a weak predictor of academic success when measured at the beginning of the semester, but there was a much stronger correlation when it was measured at the end of the semester. His conclusion was that "self-efficacy beliefs of experienced college students are more strongly related to college performance and persistence than are the efficacy beliefs of 'college-naïve' students" (110). Students who have no experience with college life and have no reference for coursework expectations are considered "college-naïve," while experienced students are those who have had exposure, even if limited to the college way of life. This complicates my own study because I am measuring self-efficacy in students entering their first

semester. It is important to remember, however, that I am looking at a group of students who have at least a beginning understanding of what their composition courses will be like. The very notion of The Write Class program is that students will be able to make an informed decision about their placement because they will have access to a number of resources to help them know what to expect.

The studies I have looked at here show a definite correlation between self-efficacy and performance. There is also evidence that efficacy is increased as familiarity with a situation is increased. In their book, *How College Affects Students*, Ernest Pascarella and Patrick Terenzini show a similar correlation between goals and persistence. They suggest that as a student becomes more integrated into the community, their commitment to their personal goals and the goals of the community is strengthened. This is supported through rewarding experiences. However, negative experiences can cause a person to become withdrawn from that community (54-5). In some regards DSP may allow students to experience greater efficacy both through level of preparedness (students may be more likely to see their composition course as a challenge than a threat) and through a sense of familiarity and belonging (students may be more familiar with the coursework they will be doing and have an easier time integrating). Because of the limitations of my current research, I cannot assume to definitively make these connections. However, I can infer that positive correlations with future success could be expected if students begin their coursework with high levels of academic self-efficacy. If high levels of self-efficacy are present in students participating in the DSP pilot program, there could be a greater chance for success.

CHAPTER THREE

Method of Study and Results

Background

When I first started the work for my thesis, I came at it from a personal stance. I knew that the student perspective was something in the current English placement system at Boise State that had been overlooked. As a student who was unhappy with my own placement experience, I was thrilled to learn about The Write Class pilot placement program and was fortunate enough to get an opportunity to work directly with the program during the 2011 summer orientation sessions. My initial thinking on this project was that The Write Class started to get at some of the issues that frustrated me as an incoming freshman. In the limited information I had about the program to begin with, it sounded like a promising alternative to the standardized testing model used at Boise State. I thought about studying it from a validity standpoint to see if this program actually worked better than the traditional model, but with as new as the program was, that kind of data would be difficult to gather and even more difficult to prove. I was really interested in how students saw this alternative. After all, my interest in the program stemmed from my experience as a student. I wanted to know if students felt better about the way they could place using this program. Self-efficacy became the term that helped shape my research.

In addition to looking at self-efficacy, I wanted to know how students were using The Write Class website. I hoped to gain more insight into how students made their decisions and if that decision-making process led to more confidence, or in other words, a measurable level of self-efficacy. My instinct was that self-efficacy would be evident in the students I studied. I originally planned to conduct a few small discussion groups to collect data on students' viewpoints after they had been in their classes for a short time. In the survey, I included a question at the end prompting respondents to provide contact information if they were willing to participate in additional research. Of the survey respondents, 16 students provided contact information. After emailing those 16 students twice, only 3 students responded. I did set up a meeting time for a small focus group, and when the day came, only 2 students showed up. After talking with those two students, I learned that neither of them was enrolled in an English class. Since the purpose of the focus groups was to find out if students were still confident in the placement decisions they had made after they had begun their coursework, it became clear that the focus group portion of my research would not be viable.

Method of Study

When making considerations for my study, I knew I wanted to use a data collection method that would allow for identifying larger patterns, and I knew that I wanted to employ a similar measure of confidence as previous studies on self-efficacy. In previous studies, researchers employed Likert scale measures (commonly a seven point scale) that measured students' level of confidence in their abilities to accomplish a given task (Zimmerman, Bandura, and Martinez-Pons; Zimmerman and Bandura; Chemers, Hu, and Garcia; Gore; Elias and MacDonald). In her study on self-efficacy and directed self-

placement, Erica Reynolds employed a similar Likert scale measure to look at levels of percieved self-efficacy in students who participated in DSP. I looked to Reynolds's survey as a model for my survey design. My study was conducted using a web-based survey that was distributed to 744 students who attended Broncoventure orientation sessions during the summer of 2011 and participated in The Write Class pilot placement program. I targeted four of the later orientation sessions for my survey so the time that passed between the students completing The Write Class placement and taking the survey would be minimal. The students' names were aquired from RSVP lists for four orientation sessions made available through the New Student and Family Programs Office. Initial contact was made with students in the form of an email that explained the study and contained a link to the survey. Based on a low initial response rate, students were sent the same email a second time. The total number of participants in the survey was 90; however, because there were no parameters set that required participants to complete all questions, response rates to different questions varied. Participation was voluntary, and to ensure proper consent, no one under the age of 18 was allowed to participate.

The survey questions are a mix of Likert scale questions about confidence and preparedness, short answer questions about how students made their placement decisions, and multiple choice questions about the resources available to them during the placement process. I chose the Likert scale format for the confidence and preparedness questions because it is a common instrument in studies on self-efficacy and because I wanted to be able to measure different degrees of confidence and preparedness without the cloudiness of an open-ended question. In the instances where I did use open-ended questions, I did

so to accommodate for a multitude of possible factors. (I didn't think it was possible to provide ample choices for every respondent). The multiple choice questions were related to the Write Class website, so there was a finite number of options. The survey consisted of 14 questions total and took, on average, ten minutes to complete. Students were solicited via email and provided a link to complete the survey (see Appendix A for full survey).

For the survey, I decided it would be best to target students who had recently completed the Write Class website and had been through the orientation session and registered for classes. I decided to target only Broncoventure sessions for traditional incoming freshmen to increase the likelihood that students surveyed would be enrolling in a first-year composition course.

Summer Orientation Work

As the First Year Writing Program (FYWP) geared up for orientation, I was able to sit in on planning meetings for The Write Class pilot. In the meetings, we looked at the data gathered on success rates from the previous summer, and discussed issues that needed to be addressed for the summer of 2011. We addressed logistical issues and decided how the pilot program would be implemented before, during, and after the sessions.

In addition to the interdepartmental planning meetings, I worked with the FYWP director on analyzing the Write Class website. I ran test scenarios on the website and addressed any found issues in its functioning. We talked about the parameters for the English102 portfolio submission and I was given the task of being a reader for the submissions. My tasks for the orientation sessions were as follows: send reminder emails

out to RSVP lists for orientation sessions, attend all orientation sessions to act as representative for the FYWP, and read and assess submitted portfolios for English 102 application.

Two weeks prior to each camp, students received an email drafted by the FYWP and distributed by the New Student Programs office. The following week, I coordinated with the New Student Programs office and sent a reminder email to students who had not yet completed the Write Class website. I also fielded emails from students addressing any questions and concerns they had after initial contact. At the orientation sessions, students attended advising breakout sessions, where they were given the opportunity to sit down with advisors from their respective departments to help them plan their courses. The First-year Writing Program was provided a table in these sessions to address any questions about the Write Class, and I was there to answer questions from students and advisors and provide information on the Write Class placement process. After the breakout sessions, I worked as an advisor in computer labs where students were registering for classes.

These advising sessions gave me the chance to talk with students about their perspectives on the Write Class and on their roles as new students. Though the information I got from students is anecdotal, it is indicative of the experience new students have and what they are faced with as they enter the college setting. Because of logistical issues, my exposure to students during orientation camps was limited, but in the opportunities I had to talk with them, I learned a lot.

As an advisor, if a student was seeking a permission number to enroll in a course they did not place in by traditional methods (state mandated test scores), it was my job to

talk to them about their experience with the Write Class and help them decide which class was right for them. I had the ability to review their results from the Write Class website and offer advice accordingly. I was both surprised and pleased with the level of thought students put into their course planning. Students who were seeking permission numbers were able to articulate their reasons for requesting courses above where they placed by traditional methods. Most commonly, they looked at the course materials and compared them against their writing experience to determine what level of work they felt prepared for. Students who submitted portfolios for English 102 were very thoughtful in their cover letters. They took the time to look through the resources provided on the Write Class website, and the work they submitted was on par with the work they would be expected to complete in English 102.

Analysis Methods

Due to the nature of my survey, the analysis and coding of data was fairly simple. When it came to the Likert scale questions, I grouped responses into positive/negative categories as a way of showing trends across large groups of students, but I also looked specifically at the levels of positive and negative responses to see if students responded largely at the extremes. For the questions that allowed for short answer, I approached the data a little differently. Three questions required further coding. Questions seven and eleven allowed for text entry responses, and question nine allowed students to pick multiple answers. For question seven (How did you make your decision about which English class to take for Fall 2011?) I looked for commonalities among the answers and identified eight categories (see appendix B). For Question eleven (What are your goals in your English class?), I grouped responses into five categories based on commonalities

(see appendix C). Since question nine allowed for multiple selections from a group of options provided on the survey, I broke down the responses based on the combinations of options (see appendix C).

When I initially started analyzing my survey data, I was happy to find that at first glance, it appeared students did exhibit signs of self-efficacy. This was encouraging. As I worked through the data more closely and started looking at how the students made their placement decisions, it became very clear to me that the decision-making process was by no means standard. Students were considering a number of factors in order to make their placement decisions, including input from multiple parties. When it came down to analyzing the data about how students utilized the pilot placement program, the waters got a bit muddied. It was difficult to draw definitive conclusions about the responses students provided. There were times when the responses from one question seemed to be in utter conflict with responses from another. I set out initially to find a generalizable set of responses that would paint a clear picture of how students make placement decisions. What I found was that each student is different. Each student comes from a different background and has different types of support and/or pressures in terms of their college careers. Each student has a unique way of measuring their own abilities. I struggled with this portion of my data until I realized that even if it wasn't easily categorized, it still told a story. What became clear to me though this data was that students are unique individuals, so a one-size-fits-all approach may not be the right option for placement. I knew from my experience working with students at the summer orientation sessions that they were making thoughtful choices with their schedules, and I knew from my survey that they were, in one way or another, utilizing the resources provided through the Write

Class website. The specific ways in which students ultimately made their placement decisions became less important as a generalizable data field. The image that was emerging was one of students who were careful in their decisions, who considered multiple factors, and who felt confident in the decisions they made. This data shows that students can be, and I believe they should be, active agents in their college English placement. Of course, this stance is limited by the scope of this project.

Results

One purpose for doing this study was to find out how the DSP pilot program functioned from a student perspective. I wanted to know if students were carefully considering their options and how they felt about the decisions they made. My study was designed to better understand how students made their placement decisions and if they felt confident in their choices and abilities to succeed. Results gathered from the first few questions show that of the 61 respondents, 35 enrolled in English 101, 24 enrolled in English 102, and 2 enrolled in English 90. What follows is a breakdown of survey questions by type and observations of particular students in summer orientation sessions.

The Write Class Resources

One area of interest was if and how the students in the study used the resources provided on the Write Class website. I was interested in which resources held the most weight in their decision making process because I wanted to know if students were considering what the work load in the class might look like, or if they were making decisions based on the recommendation the computer program generated, or based on other factors. The following is a breakdown of the survey questions addressing the Write

Class resources. Question 4 on the survey was: Did the resources on the Write Class website help you make an informed decision about which English class to take? Of the 64 respondents, 32 replied yes, 19 replied somewhat, and 13 replied no. This means that 79% of respondents reported that the resources on the Write Class site, in at least some capacity, helped them make an informed decision. The resources on the Write Class website were designed to give students the most complete picture of the first-year composition options possible. The numbers show that in large part, the resources provided were influential for students making their placement decisions. In addition to finding out if the resources were used, I felt it was important to look at which of the resources were most heavily relied upon. Question five on the survey (How important were the following resources from the Write Class website?) allowed students to report a level of importance for each of the resources on the website. The table below shows the responses.

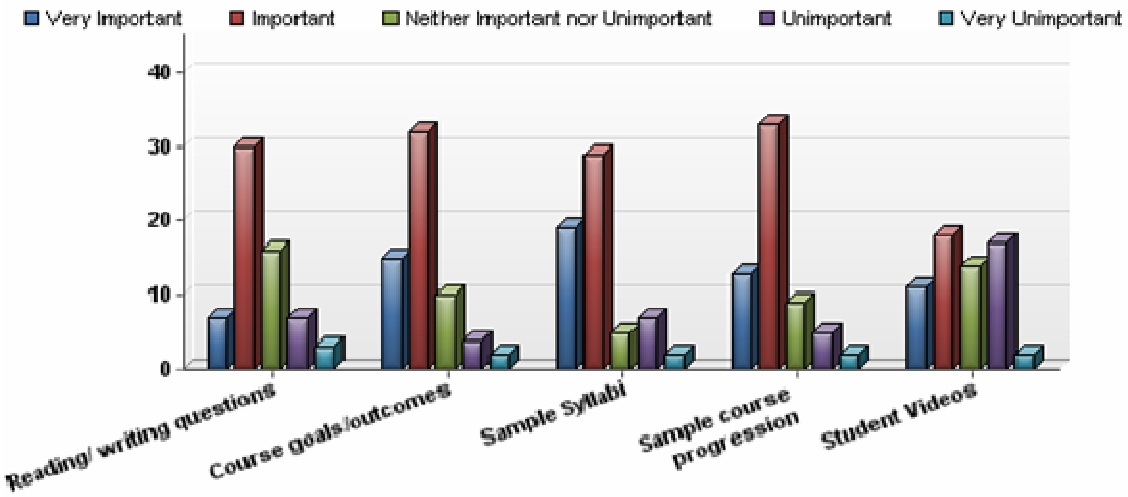

Figure 1. Importance of Write Class Resources

To get at another level of analysis, I categorized the resources by type: recommendations, which include the reading/writing survey and student videos; and course materials, which includes course goals/outcomes, sample syllabi, and sample course progression. In every instance, the majority of respondents reported that the course materials were important to them. When making their decisions, students felt it was necessary to look at the kind of work that would be expected of them in the classes. Though there were no questions to directly address this finding, it could be argued that the respondents made their decisions, at least in part, based on their perceived ability to complete the work required in the class. The category that had the lowest number of positive responses was student videos. This was a bit surprising to me, because I assumed that peer advice held a lot of weight in students' decision-making processes. Though none of the options show the majority of responses in the very important category, in most cases, they show a higher representation than the responses that show negative importance. The following table shows the responses from table 3.1 grouped by positive or negative response.

Table 3.1 Positive/Negative Responses for Write Class Materials

Materials	Very important/important	Neutral	Unimportant/very unimportant
Reading/Writing questions	37 (58.7%)	16 (25.4%)	10 (15.9%)
Course goals/outcomes	47 (74.6%)	10 (15.9%)	6 (9.5%)
Sample Syllabi	48 (77.4%)	5 (8.1%)	9 (14.5%)
Sample course progression	46 (74.2%)	9 (14.5%)	7 (11.3%)
Student videos	29 (46.8%)	14 (22.6%)	19 (30.6%)

For the course goals and the sample syllabi, the important and very important categories account for over 70% of responses, while the neutral category accounts for less than 15% and the unimportant and very unimportant categories account for less than 15%. This shows that the overwhelming majority of the respondents took the Write Class resources into consideration when making their placement decision and the resources that were indicative of coursework were the ones they found most important. What this shows for me is that students placed more emphasis on the resources that gave them real examples of what to expect. This could indicate that students are evaluating the kinds of work expected of them and projecting ahead based on their perceived abilities to complete the work.

The resources that students found least important, according to the responses, were the reading/writing questions and the student videos. There was an expectation held by those who built The Write Class that students would rely heavily on the advice of their peers, so the fact that the student videos had a low positive response rate was intriguing to us. Since students rated the sample course materials so highly in their decision-making, it brings into question what those materials offer that is different from what the videos and reading/writing questions offer. The low positive response for the reading and writing questions is also evidenced in the following response. When asked if they followed the recommendation provided on the Write Class website, 56% of respondents said they did not while 44% said they did. While the margin is slight, the fact that so many students reported not following the recommendation brings up some interesting questions as to why. Because this program was run as a pilot and students were able to place using their test scores, it is possible that students were privileging the state-

mandated placement methods over the pilot program. It is also possible that students were making a distinction between their past experience and their perceived ability to accomplish tasks in the future. Perhaps students were looking more toward the products of the courses, rather than the processes involved. The videos of students and the reading and writing questions are based more in how students write, rather than what they will produce, and the course materials, such as syllabi, course progression, and instructor expectations speak more to the products. It is possible that the tangible examples of what students can expect are easier for them to assess than the processes by which they will complete given tasks. There is no definitive answer for why students favored certain resources over others, but this result shows that further research is needed here.

Beyond the Website

In addition to looking at if and how the study participants used The Write Class website, I wanted to know what other resources they utilized in making their placement decisions. The next section explores which outside resources students used in making their decisions. Question 9 on the survey (Which of the following did you consider when making your placement decision?) moves the options beyond the website and takes outside influences into consideration. The question was presented as a multiple choice option, with the ability to choose more than one answer and an option for a write-in response. I structured the question this way to see how The Write Class resources would compare to common external factors. I used factors that were studied in previous research on academic self-efficacy to create the answer options. In many studies, parental and instructor influence were examined. As my results show, students do take the opinions of authority figures into account. The table below shows the responses to this question.

Table 3.2 Considerations for Placement Decisions

Answer	Number of responses	Percentage
My writing experience	45	76%
Resources from Write Class website	27	46%
Advice from family	20	34%
Advice from peers	19	32%
Advice from orientation advisor	18	31%
Advice from teacher	15	25%
Other	6	10%

It is interesting that the majority of responses fell in writing experience, but that the reading/writing survey at the beginning of the website was reported as one of the least important aspects of the site. Perhaps there is a difference in how students think about reading and writing experience and how the reading writing history on The Write Class prompted them to think. It could be that if students performed well on writing assignments in high school, they correlate it as an indication of the ability to perform well in college. This would support the hypothesis that students might be looking more toward the products of composition classes rather than the process by which they were created. The questions on the Write Class survey were geared more toward reading and writing habits in relation to the types of projects students had experience with. When considering the resources from the website, students may have been looking mostly at the type of writing assignments that were required. Resources from the Write Class website were also strongly represented here, and in other questions on the survey, they seem to hold value for students who participated in the study. The fact that advice from family,

teachers, and orientation advisors played in here is not surprising to me considering the conversations I had with students at orientations. Because entering college students occupy more of a novice perspective, opinions of those who may be seen as experts could hold weight. Perhaps that could be a reason why the student advice videos were not as influential. If students are looking for the opinions of so-called experts, fellow students may not be seen as possessing as much knowledge as a teacher or parent.

As a snapshot, this shows us that the overwhelming majority of respondents took their writing experience into consideration when making their placement decision, but students are multifaceted and they rely on more than one factor to make important decisions. I thought it would be interesting to see how many factors students were considering when making their placement decisions, so I coded the responses by how many and what combinations of answers students gave. The majority of respondents (21) reported relying on three factors, with a variety of combinations. Respondents relying on two factors showed the next highest response (17). Single answer responses were the next lowest (12) with “writing experience" accounting for five of the twelve responses. These results are shown in the table below. The single highest combination of responses (8) was writing experience and advice from a teacher. The breakdown of the combinations can be found in Appendix D.

Table 3.3 Results for Survey Question 9

Number of Factors Identified	Number of responses
Single Factor	12
Two Factors	17
Three Factors	21
Four Factors	6
Five Factors	2
Six Factors	0
All Factors	1

Question 7 on the survey (How did you make your decision about which English class to take for Fall 2011?) provided some insight as to how students came to make their placement decisions. The table below shows a breakdown of the responses.

Table 3.4 Answer Type for Survey Question 7

Answer Type	Number of respondents/ percentage of total
Advice from Peers	5 (16.7%)
Test Scores	12 (40%)
Self-evaluation	6 (20%)
Course materials	3 (10%)
Previous experience	2 (6.7%)
Teacher recommendation	3 (10%)
Write Class recommendation	2 (6.7%)
Expediency/low consideration	2 (6.7%)

For the categorization of these answers, peer advice included the student videos from the write class website, which accounted for two of the five. Expediency/low consideration included the following answers verbatim.

- English 101 seemed to be the 'happy medium' to all the classes offered.
- When i found out English 90 gave no credits, I didn't take it.
- Desire for credit in english 101.
- It's just what I decided to take.
- i chose the class in the middle.
- desire to take the minimal number of unnecessary classes.

The figures in the chart above include combination answers. In cases where students reported a combination of answers, they are represented in multiple categories. A breakdown of all combination answers follows.

- Advice from peers/course material (2)
- Advice from peers/self evaluation (1)
- Advice from peers/ prior experience (1)
- Advice from peers/write class recommendation and test scores (1)
- Test scores/self-evaluation (1)
- Test scores/ teacher recommendation and expediency (1)
- Test scores/ prior experience (1)

Clearly, the most common answer is test scores. This is not surprising because The Write Class placement program was run as a pilot during the summer of 2011. As hypothesized above, it is possible that students went through the materials on The Write Class website but still enrolled in the course they placed in by traditional methods.

Confidence

Confidence is something that is important in measuring self-efficacy. An overwhelming majority of respondents reported that they felt confident in their decision for which class to take.

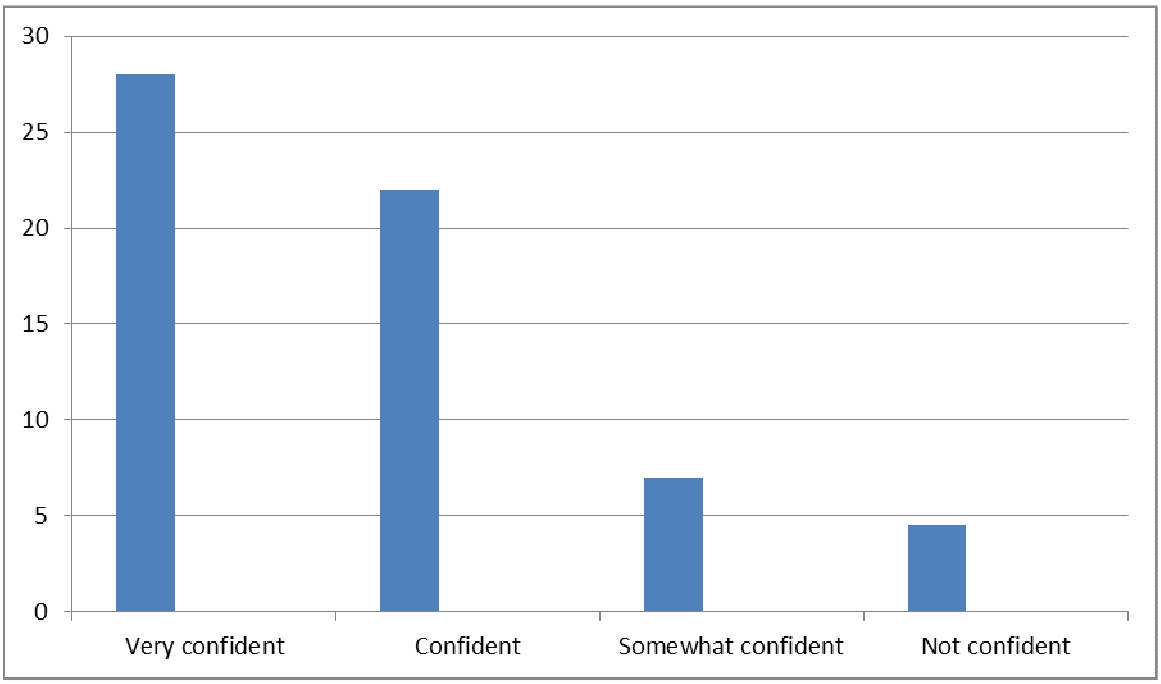

Figure 2. Confidence Level in Course Decision

Only 3.39% reported that they were not confident in the decision they made, while 84.7% reported that they were either very confident or confident. Responses of somewhat confident accounted for 11.9% of total responses. This question in particular is geared toward determining if students who participated in the Write Class program showed signs of self-efficacy. Because measures of confidence are common instruments in determining self-efficacy, the responses to this question are especially important to my study. Based on the results here and the results of the question about confidence in

achieving self-set goals, I am confident in saying that students who participated in The Write Class program do show signs of self-efficacy. The high level of confidence reported here also corresponds to the level of self-efficacy. Highly efficacious people tend to exhibit higher levels of confidence, so the students represented here could be said to be highly efficacious.

Preparedness

High levels of preparedness also indicate that self-efficacy is present. Referring back to Bandura's definition of self-efficacy as "beliefs in one's capabilities to organize and execute the course of action required to produce given attainments," the connection between preparedness and self-efficacy becomes clear (*Self Efficacy* 3). As evidenced in the results, a large majority of respondents reported feeling prepared to complete the coursework ahead of them. Responses to question ten on the survey (How prepared do you feel to complete the work in your selected English course?) show that an overwhelming majority of the respondents felt prepared for the coursework. There was a total of 59 responses and the breakdown is shown below.

Table 3.5 Level of Preparedness for Coursework

Response	Number of respondents	Percentages
Very Prepared	23	39%
Prepared	25	42%
Somewhat Prepared	9	15%
Unprepared	2	3%
Very Unprepared	0	0%

If we break this down into categories of prepared/unprepared, it shows that 81.4% of respondents felt prepared to do the coursework, while only 18.6% felt unprepared. There are a number of possible explanations for these figures, but one likely possibility that is supported by my data is that students were looking at the course materials, but still relying on their test scores for placement. It could also be that the students who reported feeling unprepared did not take the time to look at the resources on the Write Class website. It is also possible that students may not have felt prepared for the coursework, but that they still felt confident that they had chosen the right class to take.

Goals

Another major factor of determining self-efficacy is goal setting. Zimmerman, Bandura, and Martinez-Pons' study on academic self-efficacy shows a positive correlation between self-efficacy and the setting and subsequent attainment of goals. In my survey, when asked what their goals for their English class were, respondents' answers fell into four basic categories: confidence building, skill set improvement, passing the class, and high grade attainment (categorized as B or higher). A large majority (about 50%) of students responded that they wanted to improve their skill set. Responses in this category also included things like, be a better writer, improve on my writing and reading skills, learn how to write a college paper. High grade attainment was next (13.6%) followed by confidence building and passing the class (11.9% each). There were a few instances where respondents reported a combination of goals. The most common combination was skill set improvement along with high grade attainment (10.2%). The reason for soliciting goal setting is to establish a measure of success. What we can see here is that the measures of success for students in this cohort are

improvement of skills and high grade attainment. This is important in thinking about the level of confidence reported by these students in regard to their goals. The following chart illustrates the high level of confidence reported in regard to ability to accomplish reported goals.

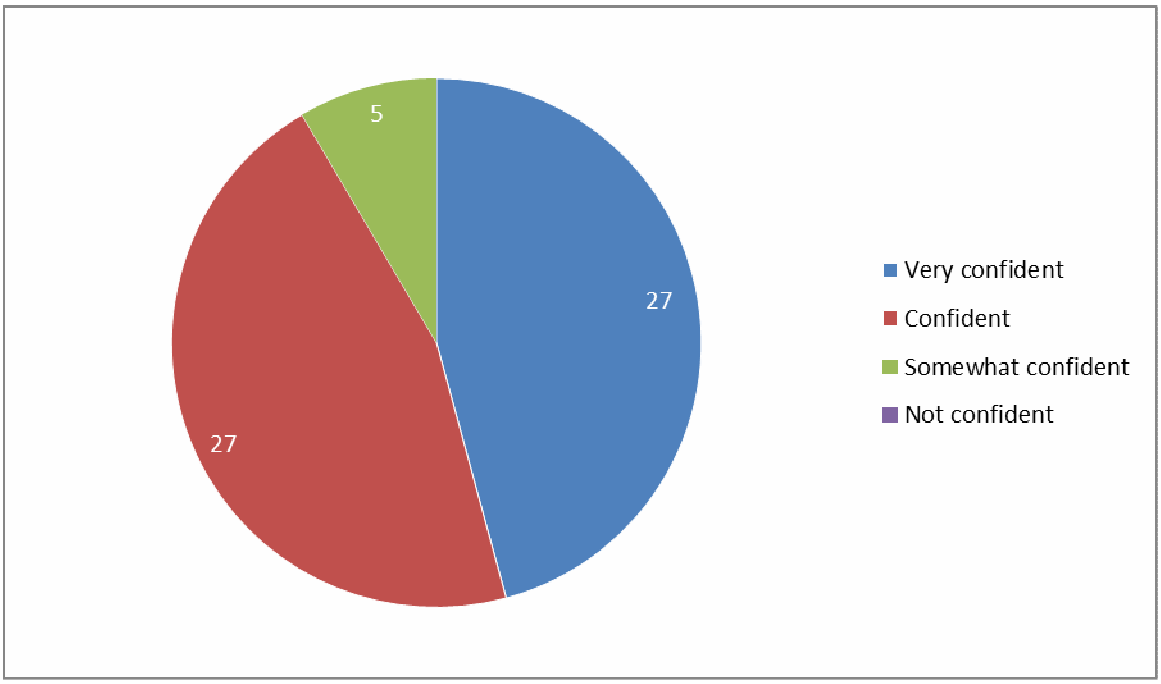

Figure 3. Confidence in Attaining Reported Goals for English Class

What is really fascinating here is that no students reported a lack of confidence in their ability to accomplish their goals. This reporting correlates with Bandura's theories on self-efficacy. Those who exhibit high levels of self-efficacy are more likely to feel confident in their abilities to achieve their goals. As established in the literature review, there is also a correlation between high self-efficacy (evidenced here through measures of confidence) and ability to accomplish goals. Relying on the theories explored in the literature review chapter, it could be argued that students who participated in the Write

Class program may have a better chance at reaching their goals in their English classes. Though the responses here paint a somewhat complicated picture, it is clear through the survey results that students who participated in The Write Class examined numerous factors in making their placement decisions and that they did exhibit signs of self-efficacy. The considerations students made in their placement decisions are shown in my experiences as an advisor as well.

Student Stories

There were a few instances that stood out to me as I interacted with students during the orientation sessions. In one of the early advising sessions, I was approached by an advisor who asked me to talk to a student she was working with. The student was a traditional college freshman. She was probably around 18-19 years old and looked really nervous. She wanted to make sure she had done everything right on the website and that she wasn't missing anything. When we sat down, I asked her if she had gone through the entire website, if she had looked at the provided course materials and if she had watched the student videos. She said she had, and I asked what the recommendation from the site was. She said it was English 101 and when I asked if she felt that was an accurate suggestion, she said it was. She felt confident that she could do the work described in the English 101 course materials. She was worried, though, because her parents were paying for her tuition and they were pushing her to try and test into English 102. I informed her of the portfolio application process for English 102 and asked her if she felt she was ready for the class. She said she would be much more comfortable starting in English 101, but was afraid that her parents would be unhappy with the decision. My suggestion to her was to take her parents through the Write Class website and show them the course

materials, the reading/writing survey, and the recommendation she received. I suggested that she could use the website as a way to talk to her parents and show them that she was making an informed decision. I also reminded her that if she enrolled in English 102 and did not pass it, she would have to take it again since it is a required class, and her parents would still be paying for an additional course. After we talked, she seemed much more optimistic. She had not considered the Write Class website as a tool she could use to talk to her parents about her choice. She seemed to be more comfortable with her initial decision after we talked.

This student is representative of a lot of incoming freshmen. Parents are paying for college and in many cases, they want to have a part in the decision-making process to ensure that they are getting the most for their money. That is an understandable position, but as evidenced with this student, it puts a lot of pressure of the students. Having a tool like the Write Class website gives students a way to start an informed conversation with their parents about their decisions for coursework.

Many of the students I spoke with in advising sessions and in the computer labs approached their educational choices with caution. As I worked with students to choose classes and put together their schedules, I was continuously surprised. They were thinking about what their lives would look like and how much time they would have to devote to their coursework. In some of the more competitive programs on campus, students are encouraged to take up to 16 credits in their first semester. In one of the computer lab sessions, I came across a nursing student, and she asked me to look at her schedule. She was enrolled in 12 credits of core classes. She wanted to know if she should enroll in additional credits. We talked about her schedule outside of school, her

proximity to campus, her study habits, and her feelings of preparedness. She said she didn't really want to enroll in more classes than she had, but she was concerned with finishing her core classes, so she could apply to the nursing program. We talked about the reasons she had for wanting to stick to 12 credits, and in the end, she decided that it was better to start the first semester with 12 credits, so she wouldn't be overwhelmed. She seemed relieved and even happy when she made her decision and printed out her schedule. She knew there was pressure to get through her core classes and get to work on her nursing courses, so she could apply to the program, but she decided it was more important to start from a manageable course load and have a better chance at success than it was to try and rush through to meet a deadline.

CHAPTER FOUR

Discussion

The work of this thesis, in examining student perspectives on the pilot placement program from the FYWP at Boise State University, complicates the notion that accurate placement can be achieved through a standardized test. It shows that placement into writing classes is complicated, and academic success likely has to do with more than the types of analytical skills measured by such tests. The aim of this work is to look more closely at how students navigate the pilot model and whether the pilot placement program at Boise State University results in student self-efficacy. As outlined in this thesis, a correlation between self-efficacy and academic success has been established through the work of multiple researchers. Definitive correlation between self-efficacy (as evidenced through measures of confidence here) and success cannot be established in this study, but because of the established relationship between the two, the level of confidence reported by students here is worth noting. In this chapter, I explore my study findings in light of the following: the limitations of state mandated placement mechanisms and the need for multiple measures; the intricate relationship between student perceptions and placement decisions; and the correlation between self-efficacy and academic success. The purpose of this examination is to show that students are not one-dimensional, and placement processes should reflect that. The careful work that students do in making their placement decisions suggests that they can and should be agents in the placement process.

Just as students are multifaceted, so should be placement in FYW. The WPA White Paper on Assessment, as outlined in the literature review, suggests that assessment should take into consideration the classroom environment students will enter into and the multiple backgrounds from which they come, that student performance should indicate a readiness to complete the coursework, and that assessment should include multiple measures and take multiple perspectives into consideration (NCTE-WPA White Paper). The state-mandated placement instruments at Boise State (ACT, SAT, COMPASS) do none of these things. Placement into composition courses at Boise State work from one measure: analytical skill as measured through computerized tests. In a somewhat analogous situation, admissions offices work from the idea that to determine how well students will perform in college classroom settings, they must look at students from a variety of angles, including past performance as evidenced through a variety of application materials, and measures of aptitude through standardized testing. Why then, are students placed in their composition courses using only one measure? The same factors at play in admissions are also at play in placement.

By relying solely on standardized tests, Boise State is using an incomplete measure to determine which composition classes students are best suited for. Instead of relying on such incomplete measures, it makes more sense that we should broaden our lens to include factors outside of aptitude in grammar and usage. That is where the pilot placement program comes in. I do not intend to argue that DSP is the best or only option for more accurate placement, but I will contend that it offers another layer in working toward placing students in classes where they will have the best chance for success. The Write Class pilot program prompts students to make placement decisions based on

multiple factors. The online process students go through prior to orientation provides them with sample materials from each course option, instructor expectations, and student perspectives, it asks them to consider their reading and writing history, and to report their test scores. Students are given a recommendation from the website based on the information they provide and are given a chance to decide if the recommendation is right for them. Students are also given the chance to speak with advisers at orientation sessions before making their final decisions. This model prompts students to consider their options from an informed and supported position. I believe this kind of work goes further and offers a more comprehensive view of student abilities than a single test can. The types of thinking students are doing in terms of placement is evident in the results of this study.

As my study shows, there is a myriad number of factors at work when it comes to making placement decisions. My work at the summer orientation sessions provided me with a different perspective on how students prepare to enter college. The students I interacted with were careful in their decisions. They utilized the resources on The Write Class website to make informed decisions about their coursework, and they considered more than just the end goal when plotting their courses. The behavior students were showing was in line with Bandura's writing on self-efficacy. If students did not feel that they could succeed in certain classes, they did not sign up for them. They considered all contingent factors and did not overload themselves so as not to set themselves up for possible failure. Even when students were factoring in the opinions of others, such as their parents, they still felt most comfortable with their own estimations of their abilities. It also seemed that students were more at ease when they felt that they could accomplish the tasks they had before them. Between the work I did during summer orientation

sessions and the responses I saw on my survey, I saw evidence that students put thought into their placement decision and that they experienced feelings of confidence and preparedness. Based on these observations, my assertion is that students participating in the Write Class directed self-placement pilot experienced self-efficacy in a way that is especially productive for new college students.

My work with the orientation sessions over the summer allowed me to gain perspective into how students approach registration and course selection. I found that students were doing a lot of forward thinking when they were building their course schedules. They were thinking about how many classes they were taking, what the work load for each of those classes was, what their comfort level with each of the classes was, whether they were working outside of school, and how they needed to structure their course loads in order to finish their degrees in the amount of time they wanted. In addition to these considerations, however, students were also faced with outside pressures that tended to weigh in their decisions. Students whose parents were paying for their education were thinking about how they could get the most out of their schedules while working toward an efficient and cost-effective route. Students who were entering into competitive programs faced the pressure of finishing core classes quickly while maintaining a high GPA. The most surprising thing to me was that even those students who were dealing with external pressure to finish quickly were still putting their success at the forefront. They were not willing to risk failure by overloading themselves with too many classes, or by signing up for classes they did not feel they would be able to pass.

The survey shows that placement is a messy undertaking. One thing standardized testing does well is streamline the process. By creating cut-off points, the results are

clear-cut and difficult to argue. Students are neatly categorized and identified as either proficient or remedial. When given the option to decide for themselves, students paint intricate and sometimes tangled pictures of themselves. The students I surveyed did not have clear-cut or easy answers for how they made their placement decisions. They thought about their pasts, the advice of their peers, their parents, their teachers, and the additional resources they were provided on the Write Class website. As the data chapter shows, students considered multiple factors in different ways depending on their individual situations. This tells me that placement should not be a one-size-fits-all endeavor. Based on the complicated results of my survey, I would argue that Royer and Gilles are correct in their assertion that students are the best judge of their own abilities and needs. Standardized tests simply cannot account for all the factors that determine a student's ability to succeed in their classes. Though test scores can be a factor for consideration, they should not be the sole determinant for placement.

Beyond looking at the limitations of standardized tests in predicting success, the purpose of my study is to look for measures of self-efficacy in the students surveyed. The work done by Albert Bandura and subsequent researchers shows there is a correlation between self-efficacy and success. With that framework in mind, this study implements confidence measures similar to those utilized in previous studies to illustrate that the students surveyed do exhibit evidence of self-efficacy. Though the limitations of my study did not allow me to follow up with students I surveyed to see if they did indeed achieve success in their coursework, I contend that the level of confidence they report in their abilities to succeed in their English courses may be a predictor of the eventual outcome. As shown in the data chapter, students who participated in my survey reported

high levels of confidence and preparedness in all areas where these factors were measured. In the measures of confidence in their decision and feelings of preparedness for the required coursework, over 80% of the students surveyed reported high levels. Students felt prepared to take on the course work in the classes they chose, and they felt confident in their decisions. This translates to high levels of self-efficacy in the students surveyed. They may not have arrived at their decisions easily, but once the decision was made, they felt good about the probable outcome.

In looking at previous studies on the correlation between academic self-efficacy and performance, Paul Gore found that the relationship between the two was dependent on a number of variables, including when the measures were taken, what aspect of self-efficacy was being measured, and what outcome the researcher hoped to predict (Gore 112). His own study suggested that self-efficacy was a greater predictor of outcomes in second-semester college students than in first semester students. While this could be used as evidence against the assertions I have made here, it is important to note that the study was designed to look at whether self-efficacy was a better predictor of success than ACT scores. The difference in the predictive value of self-efficacy between first and second semester students was attributed to the fact that the second semester students had a better idea of the expectations of them in their college courses. Because my study looks at students who have been provided with multiple resources that create a fairly comprehensive picture of the composition classes they are placing in, I would argue that the predictive value of self-efficacy here is more closely related to that of the second semester students in Gore's study than to the first semester students. Again, this assertion

is based on a theoretical framework and is not definitive, but it offers an interesting lens through which to view placement at Boise State.

The fact that students in this study reported high levels of confidence in their placement decisions and in their abilities to succeed indicates that the student perspective deserves more attention. As a student who was not given the opportunity to weigh in on my placement decision, I think it is vital. I was told that I was ready to take a course I knew nothing about based on a score that measured my proficiency in grammar. I performed well on the test, but had I known what I would be expected to do in the class, I would have taken a different route. Based on my study and my experience with students in orientation sessions, I believe they made careful decisions about their placement.

This area of study requires much more research and longitudinal study to confirm whether there is indeed a correlation in the levels of self-efficacy amongst students participating in directed self-placement and their subsequent performance in their classes. Though this study is limited in scope, it does something that is necessary in developing workable strategies for successful placement. It takes the student perspective into consideration and offers a glimpse of what students are going through in the early stages of their college careers. As I reflect on my work here, a few things become clear. I realize that placement is much more complicated than I originally thought. I also realize that my area of study needs far more attention. While this thesis starts the conversation, there is more work needed to carry it on. As a researcher, I know now how difficult and surprising data gathering can be, and how just when you think you have gotten somewhere definitive, another door opens up and changes your thinking. As I conclude this thesis, I am looking forward to further research on this topic.

The idea behind the focus groups is something I am still very interested in pursuing. I feel it will add validity to my study to see if confidence levels at the front-end of the placement process translate to success in the chosen courses. I think it would be interesting to see if confidence levels change as the students become more familiar with their classes and have a better idea of what is expected of them. Having read previous research on academic self-efficacy, I would like to see if, as Paul Gore saw in his study, the time at which students are studied has any effect on their level of self-efficacy. In addition to my personal interest in this study, I believe further research could potentially inform and improve the way students are placed into English classes at Boise State. Though my thesis research offers some insight into the student perspective on English placement, without looking at The Write Class longitudinally, it is hard to establish validity. I would like to move forward from this research and conduct a longitudinal study with students participating in The Write Class program during the 2012 academic year. I have the opportunity to work again with the pilot over the summer of 2012, and plan to continue this research and follow up with students as they move through their English classes.

I have learned through my research for this thesis that careful planning is essential, and having a back-up plan is important. The method of contact also seems to have a major impact on the response rate from potential subjects. I experienced some difficulties in this study that I think could be avoided in future research. Of the large number of students I contacted with my recruitment email, only a small percentage participated in the survey. Of that number, an even smaller percentage agreed to participate in additional research, and when that group was contacted, only a few

responded. I think perhaps if my recruitment methods would have been more personal, perhaps soliciting students in person at orientation sessions, I may have gotten a better response rate. Looking back on my study now, I realize it would have been helpful to have an alternative strategy for forming my focus groups. In future research, I will try to make a more personal appeal to possible subjects, and I will have multiple options for contact.

It is clear to me after doing this thesis project that there is a need for more research. My plan for the future is to design additional studies that have a more longitudinal approach. I believe there is a need for more comprehensive placement mechanisms at Boise State, and my hope is that through continued research, I can have an impact on a policy I feel very strongly about.

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APPENDIX A

Survey

Thesis Survey

Greetings! This survey is designed to gather more information about how you arrived at your placement decision for your first-year writing course. Participation in this survey is voluntary, and all results are anonymous and for research purposes only.

Risks and Benefits: If you choose to take this survey, risks are minimal. Responses from all participants will be treated with the utmost respect and will be combined to search for overall patterns. Unless you choose to identify yourself on the last screen, your survey results will be completely anonymous. There are no direct benefits to you as a participant. However, current and future students will benefit greatly from your input. Program directors and instructors on campus are particularly interested in your thoughts and feedback on the pilot placement program.

Confidentiality: The data in this study will be confidential. Any work quoted in research studies will be quoted anonymously. You may also choose to leave questions blank if you believe your answers to them may reveal your identity. The online survey results are password-protected, and will be destroyed within one year. All copies will be destroyed after 10 years or after the data in them becomes irrelevant, whichever comes first.

Participation: Your participation is voluntary, and you may discontinue the survey at any time and for any reason. If you decide not to participate or if you withdraw from the study, there is no penalty and your student status will not be impacted in any way.

Contact: This research is being conducted by Samantha Sturman; a graduate student in the M.A. in Composition and Rhetoric program. Samantha Sturman may be reached

through the English Department, Boise State University, 1910 University Drive, Boise ID 83725, for questions or to report a research-related problem. You may also contact the Institutional Review Board, which is concerned with the protection of volunteers in research projects. You may reach the board office between 8:00AM and 5:00PM Monday through Friday by calling 208.426.5401 or by writing: Institutional Review Board, Office of Research Compliance, Boise State University, 1910 University Dr., Boise ID 83725-1138.

Q2 I have read the introductory material, I am at least eighteen years old, and I am voluntarily continuing with this survey.

- ❍ Yes (1)
- ❍ No (2)

Answer If I have read the introductory material, I am at least eigh... Yes Is Selected

Q3 Which English course did you choose to enroll in for Fall 2011?

- ❍ English 90 (1)
- ❍ English 101 (2)
- ❍ English 102 (3)

Answer If I have read the introductory material, I am at least eigh... Yes Is Selected

Q4 Did the resources on the Write Class website help you make an informed decision about which English class to take for fall 2011?

	Yes (1)	No (2)	Somewhat (3)
Please choose one (1)	❍	❍	❍

Answer If I have read the introductory material, I am at least eigh... Yes Is Selected

Q5 How important were the following resources from the Write Class website in making your decision?

	Very Important (1)	Important (2)	Neither Important nor Unimportant (3)	Unimportant (4)	Very Unimportant (5)
Reading/ writing questions (1)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Course goals/outcomes (2)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Sample Syllabi (3)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Sample course progression (4)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Student Videos (5)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

Answer If I have read the introductory material, I am at least eigh... Yes Is Selected

Q6 Did you follow the course recommendation from the Write Class website?

- ❍ Yes (1)
- ❍ No (2)

Answer If Did you follow the course suggestion from the Write Class... No Is Selected

Q7 How did you make your decision about which English class to take for fall 2011?

Answer If I have read the introductory material, I am at least eigh... Yes Is Selected

Q8 How confident do you feel that you made the right decision about which English course to take for fall 2011?

	Very confident (1)	confident (2)	somewhat confident (3)	not confident (4)
please choose one of the following (1)	❍	❍	❍	❍

Answer If I have read the introductory material, I am at least eigh... Yes Is Selected

Q9 Which of the following did you consider when making your placement choice?

- ❑ My writing experience (1)
- ❑ Advice from family (2)
- ❑ Advice from teacher (3)
- ❑ Advice from orientation advisor (4)
- ❑ Advice from peers (5)
- ❑ Resources from Write Class website (6)
- ❑ Other (7) _____

Answer If I have read the introductory material, I am at least eigh... Yes Is Selected

Q10 How prepared do you feel to complete the work in your selected English course?

	Very Prepared (1)	Prepared (2)	Somewhat Prepared (3)	Unprepared (4)	Very Unprepared (5)
Please choose one of the following (1)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

Answer If I have read the introductory material, I am at least eigh... Yes Is Selected

Q11 What are your goals in your English class?

Answer If I have read the introductory material, I am at least eigh... Yes Is Selected

Q12 How confident are you in your ability to accomplish your goals in your English class?

	Very confident (1)	Confident (2)	Somewhat confident (3)	Not confident (4)
Please choose one of the following (1)	❍	❍	❍	❍

Answer If I have read the introductory material, I am at least eigh... Yes Is Selected

Q13 If you would like to offer any additional information about your experience with the Write Class pilot placement program, please do so here.

Answer If I have read the introductory material, I am at least eigh... Yes Is Selected

Q14 I would like to reach you in the fall semester to gain further insights from you on what you are experiencing at Boise State University as a first-year student. If you are interested in being contacted for further follow-up research, please enter some contact

information here. A note: this contact information will not be linked with the survey responses you have just given.Yes! I am interested in participating in further follow-up research. Here is my name, email address, and phone number:

APPENDIX B

Coding for Survey Question 7

Question 7 : How did you make your decision about which English class to take for Fall 2011?

I heard a student who had taken English 101 talk about how it wasn't too difficult if you feel you're confident in your own work.

my SAT score allowed me to get credit for english 101, so i enrolled in 102, even though i originally planned on taking 90, which was recommended for me

I tested out of English 101

SAT scores

based on my act scores

ACT score placement

I looked at my test scores and saw that Englisg 102 was the reccomended class for me.

I already had 101 and 102 credits from AP courses, so I chose a more advanced class.

Test scores

I decided to start with 101 because I feel like I am a decent writer, but I need more help before I'm ready to move on to 102.

Although I feel I'm a very good writer naturally, I never had college writing assignments (other than a few for Psychology 101) that helped much with understanding formatting, citations, etc. This is why I chose 101, to ease into things.

I'm pretty good at english, but wanted to make sure I had a feel of it for college, so I choose english 101

I decided to go into 101 because I felt secure in my writing abilities, but not totallu confident that they were where they should be.

English 101 seemed to be the 'happy medium' to all the classes offered.

When i found out English 90 gave no credits, I didn't take it.

Desire for credit in english 101

It's just what I decided to take.

i chose the class in the middle

I am not taking a class for the fall, but in the spring I will understand more of which class I should sign up for because of the Write Class explanations of each class.

Talked to a former english teacher

teacher recommendation

I did well in High School English but didn't get into honors English so I took 101.

I had the ACT scores necessary to get credit without enrolling in an English course, and I had too many other courses in my schedule to do so for experience; however, had I enrolled, I would have chosen 101, as recommended by Write Class

By reading the syllabus and listening to the student videos on the advantage and disadvantages.

Example syllabus and student video

i decided based on what i learned from previous graduates and what i felt would be best for my own goals and pace

I chose what I felt comfortable with based on my ACT scores for English and my prior experience writing papers in high school.

I analyzed my AP scores and talked to students on campus during orientation, utilizing the tools supplied by "The Write Class".

ACT scores, advice from English teachers, desire to take the minimal number of

unnecessary classes.

Legend: 30 Total Responses

Advice from peers 1 + 2 w/course material +1 w/self evaluation +1 w/write class recommendation and test scores: 3.3%/ 16.7%

Test scores 8 + 1 w/self evaluation +1 w/teacher recommendation and surface +1 w/ advice from peers and write class recommendations +1 w/ prior experience: 26.7%/ 40%

Self evaluation 4+ 1 w/peer advice +1 w/ test scores: 13.3%/ 20%

Surface-level consideration 5 + 1 w/test scores and teacher advice: 16.7%/ 20%

Course materials 1 + 2 w/ peer advice: 3.3%/ 10%

Teacher recommendation 2 + 1 w/test scores and surface: 6.7%/ 10%

Previous experience 1 + 1 w/ test scores: 3.3%/ 6.7%

Write Class recommendation 1 + 1 w/ peer advice and test scores: 3.3%/ 6.7%

APPENDIX C

Coding for Survey Question 11

Question 11: What are your goals in your English class?

To become a more confident and consistent writer.

I hope to show that I'm still writing well and hope to gain more confidence in my writing style and skills.

I'd like to be able to write a paper and not second guess my abilities.

To learn to be more confident in my writing and to help take research so lower and prepare for Eng. 101 &102.

To get into the swing of things and not regret leaping right into 102. I want to help as a writing tutor, so I might as well be concrete with what I know.

Become more comfortable with writing

I would like to be able to finish a paper without doubting it's quality.

To learn how to write at a college level.

To become a stronger writer overall and become accustomed to the standards expected of college writers.

To become a better writer.

Become a better writer.

To become a better writer and reader.

To gain a firm understanding of how to write a proper college essay.

Becoming stronger in forming essay's and achieving a high grade.

My goals are to improve my writing skills, learn to peer edit better, and incorporate my research in my writing.

To achieve a better understanding of how to write, read, and learn effectively.

Become a better writer and use better english

To improve on my research essay skills.

To learn new writing styles.

To improve my writing skills.

Develop my research paper writing skills

become a better writer

To improve my writing and comprehension skills further and learn these in a different classroom environment

Improve my writing and independent editing skills.

To write better

Gain the English skills necessary for whatever my eventual career will be.

Get a better understanding of writing for my college professors and learning how to properly site sources better.

To get what I can out of my service learning project and create a solid research project.

To heighten my research skills

To understand how to write in depth and with purpose.

Become a better writter

Improve my writing skills

To pass

My goals are to get the English credits necessary to graduate.

To pass.

pass

Get through this one and move on to the next

move on to the next english class

to pass the class.

to complete it with a B or better

I suppose to pass with an A or higher

receive at least a B

pass woth a B

One of my goals was to do well on all my papers.

I hope to pass with an A.

get a B or an A

I hope to receive an "A" in the class.

Nursing

Tested out

To not take one. :)

I don't really have any

not applicable

I want to learn a thorough understanding of all the material presented in class and get grades to reflect that, as well as build up a good rapport with my professor.

to hone my skills as a writer and receive a high grade in the class

to complete it with an A and keep my gpa up while improving my writing skills

to get an A and improve my writing ability

To get an A in the class and to learn to improve my writing skills.

To pass the class with a decent grade and understand writing more in depth.

To get a good grade and be more comfortable with my writing.

Legend: 59 Total responses

Confidence 7 + 1 w/ high grade: 11.9% / 13.6%

Skill set 25 +6 w/ high grade: 42.4% / 52.5%

Pass the class 7: 11.9%

Attain a high grade 8 + 6 w/ skill set + 1 w/ confidence: 13.6% / 25.4%

Other 5 + 1 w/ skill set & high grade: 8.5% / 10.2%

APPENDIX D

Breakdown of Survey Question 9

Breakdown of Survey Question 9: Which of the following did you consider when making your placement choice?

Single Answer Responses

1: 5

2: 1

3: 0

4: 3

5: 1

7: 2

Two Answer Responses

1,2: 3

1,3: 3

1,4: 1

1,6: 8

(2,5): 1

(5,7): 1

Three Answer Responses

(1,2,3) : 1

(1,2,5) : 1

(1,2,6) : 3

(1,3,6) : 3

(1,4,5) : 3

(1,4,6) : 1

(1,5,6) : 3

(1,6,7): 2

(2,3,4) : 1

(2,4,5) : 1

(3,4,5,): 1

(4,5,6) : 1

Four Answer Responses

(1,2,3,4) : 1

(1,2,3,5) : 1

(1,2,3,6) : 1

(1,2,4,6) : 1

(1,2,5,6) : 1

(1,3,4,5) : 1

Five Answer Responses

(1,2,4,5,6) : 1

(2,3,4,5,6) : 1

All Answer Responses

1

Legend: Responses by number

1- My writing experience

2- Resources from Write Class website

3- Advice from family

4- Advice from peers

5- Advice from orientation advisor

6- Advice from teacher

7- Other