PEDAGOGY AND IDENTITY IN THE DEVELOPMENTAL WRITING CLASSROOM: A DESIGN-BASED STUDY IN A COMMUNITY COLLEGE CONTEXT

A Dissertation
Submitted to
the Temple University Graduate Board

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

by
Monica D’Antonio
May 2018

Examining Committee Members:
Avi Kaplan, Advisory Chair, Psychological Studies in Education
Catherine Schifter, Emeritus, Psychological Studies in Education
Shanta Hattikudur, Psychological Studies in Education
Michael Smith, Associate Dean, College of Education
Eli Goldblatt, English
ABSTRACT

By many accounts, developmental writing courses in community colleges are failing to teach students the requisite skills needed to be successful in college-level coursework. In the current dissertation, I have adopted an identity-based approach to examining and intervening in students’ experiences and engagement in the developmental writing course. The PRESS model of promoting identity exploration assigns educators the role of “identity agents” who design activities that encourage students to reflect on the academic content and make connections between the academic content and the self, question identity aspects, and explore alternative identity commitments. I modified activities in my developmental writing course based on the PRESS model and investigated the identity exploration, motivation, engagement, and learning of students in the course, which I studied with the Dynamic Systems Model of Role Identity (DSMRI). The study took place in a mid-sized community college in the Mid-Atlantic region of the United States. There were 15 racially mixed participating students. Design of the course activities aimed to promote the students’ identity exploration (IdEx activities) through facilitating reflection, questioning, information gathering and processing, understanding, and development of their identities as writers, and as college students. Cross-case comparisons of six narratives of participating students selected to reflect diversity of students’ characteristics and experiences highlighted the unique role identities, identity exploration, and motivation for each student, as well as their varied dynamics depending on class activities and time period within the semester. The findings also suggested that students’ role identities could be characterized along a dimension of “sophistication”—richer content with higher alignment vs. thinner content with more fragmentation. In addition, the findings indicated that despite variability, students’ engagement with the activities involved identity exploration and development in many cases. This finding illustrates the potential of identity-based pedagogy to promote...
desirable identity change, motivation, and learning in community college courses, and specifically in developmental writing courses. The study has implications for theory, research, practice, and professional development in community college developmental writing courses.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

*And you may ask yourself, well, how did I get here?*

- Talking Heads

This journey would not have been possible without the support of some incredible people. First, I would like to thank my advisor and mentor, Dr. Avi Kaplan. Avi is a gifted instructor, knowledgeable advisor, and my guide and champion. Without Avi and his notorious “memos,” I would still be searching for ways to integrate my humanities and social science identities. Avi helped me to find a home within the field of educational psychology, discover my passions and research interests, and, most importantly, accept that, like Walt Whitman, I contain multitudes.

I am extremely grateful to my dissertation committee members – Dr. Catherine Schifter, Dr. Michael Smith, Dr. Shanta Hattikudur, and Dr. Eli Goldblatt - for their time, support, and feedback. Your insights and expertise were invaluable. I would also like to thank Dr. Jennifer Cromley, my original advisor in the College of Education, who provided a solid foundation for my doctoral work and managed to get me through three semesters of statistics.

I owe a debt of gratitude to the MCCC community, especially to my students who participated in this study. Thank you for allowing me to share your stories. Your impact on my teaching practice and on my identity as a professor and has been immeasurable.

I would be remiss if I did not recognize the doctors, nurses, and specialists who kept me healthy enough to finish my dissertation. There is no acknowledgement great enough to thank you for saving my life. Perhaps I can just leave it at #FuckCancer.

To my mother and father, thank you for always supporting me, believing in me, and encouraging me. You taught me the value of education, and I would not be here without you (literally). Finally, to my husband Hal, thank you for your patience, love, counsel, and comfort. You are my favorite person.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT....................................................................................................................... iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS................................................................................................. v
LIST OF FIGURES ........................................................................................................... viii
LIST OF TABLES ............................................................................................................. ix

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY.............................................................. 1

CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW.............................................................................. 8
  Understanding Developmental Writers................................................................. 8
  Pedagogical Approaches in the Developmental Writing Classroom..................... 12
  Theoretical Framework (DSMRI)........................................................................... 23
  Identity Exploration in Educational Settings (PRESS).......................................... 27
  Justification for Study and Research Questions.................................................... 31

CHAPTER 3 METHODS................................................................................................. 33
  Context for Study...................................................................................................... 33
  Participants............................................................................................................... 35
  Research Design...................................................................................................... 38
  Course Design......................................................................................................... 41
  Course Redesign with PRESS (Phase 1)............................................................... 43
  Course Redesign with PRESS (Phase 2)............................................................... 53
  Data Collection....................................................................................................... 56
  Data Analysis.......................................................................................................... 57
  Credibility, Transferability, Dependability, and Confirmability............................ 60
  Position Statement.................................................................................................. 61

CHAPTER 4 RESULTS................................................................................................. 63
  Anna............................................................................................................................ 63
  Elizabeth..................................................................................................................... 80
  Seojun........................................................................................................................ 98
LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Participant Demographic Information......................................................... 38
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Anna’s Image of Herself as a Writer.................................................... 73
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Developmental writing courses in community colleges are often criticized for their ineffectiveness in facilitating the writing skills needed for students to be successful in college-level courses (Callahan & Chumney, 2009; Grubb, 1999, 2013). Research on developmental writing instruction in community colleges has examined a variety of pedagogical approaches aimed at increasing students’ success in developmental writing courses. Each of these approaches is grounded in certain assumptions about the main source of students’ struggles in developmental courses, such as a lack of coherence between students’ social identities and the course content (e.g. Street, 2005; Young, 1996), perceived irrelevance between developmental courses and career goals or other college coursework (e.g., Goode, 2000; Perin, 2011), or ineffective writing strategies (e.g. Eves-Bowden, 2001; Macarthur and Philippakos, 2013; Perun, 2015). While it is likely that some developmental students’ obstacles for engagement and learning may lie in one of these domains, it is also likely that other students in the same context may experience different kinds of obstacles (i.e. work schedule, health issues). It is also likely that students could experience multiple obstacles at the same time (i.e. limited writing strategies and feelings of disenfranchise within the academic environment and a hectic work schedule). By reducing students down to one “problem,” it can be expected that each of these approaches will only be effective for some students, some of the time.
Moreover, it is also likely that several of these processes integrate in unique configurations to underlie students’ experiences and motivation, or lack thereof, in the course. Developmental students’ diverse backgrounds, interests, values, and goals in developmental writing courses necessitate addressing each student’s engagement, learning, and achievement within these courses. What is needed, therefore, is an integrative pedagogical approach that addresses developmental students’ diverse motivational processes. In the current research, I pursue one such way to better understand and address students’ diverse motivational processes in the community college developmental writing classroom: facilitating students’ identity exploration within the curriculum.

Recently, there have been calls to include identity exploration and identity development into school curricula as a means to understand and more fully engage students in their own learning and motivational processes. This pedagogical approach is sometimes referred to as Identity Education (IdEd), which can be defined as “the deliberate and active involvement of educators with the psychological processes and practices that are involved in students’ identity development” (Schachter & Rich, 2011, p. 223). In the IdEd environment, teachers not only attend to developing students’ skills, but also target identity processes that imbue these skills with meaning, such as self-definition, integration, cognition, and motivation.

There are many examples of incorporating students’ identity into school curricula. For example, in Lee’s (2007) cultural modeling, schools “design learning experiences and environments in ways that bridge the differences between school-based expectations and students’ funds-of-knowledge” (cited in Faircloth, 2012, p.188). Another example of integrating IdEd in the classroom is the third space/hybrid identities concept, which “blend[s] the official, traditional definition of experiences and expectations at school, and the unofficial space of facets of identity that students hold dear (e.g. from community, culture, family, interests) but are typically accorded less attention or respect at school”
In each of these examples, the goal of IdEd is to connect school curricula with the students’ self-aspects, beliefs, goals, and self-perceptions.

Research suggests that the incorporation of students’ identity into schools’ curricula has had some positive results on academic outcomes. For example, Faircloth (2012) conducted two studies in two high school classes that integrated identity work and class content by “(a) connecting learning with students’ lives and perspectives; (b) blending school culture/requirements with students’ identity/perspectives (i.e. creating a third space); and (c) aligning activities with traditional ninth grade English requirements (literature, writing, journaling, and discourse) as opposed to trading school norms for students’ preferences” (p. 189). The first study (connecting personal experiences to class content) was conducted with 83 ninth grade students in two remedial English classes in a public high school with the highest dropout rate in its county. The second study (individual inquiry project) was conducted with 34 students in the same high school. The results of the studies indicated that once students discovered the connection between their personal experiences and the class content, they became more engaged in the class (i.e. asking questions, completing assignments, attending class more consistently) and expressed enjoyment at completing some of the assignments. Additionally, the students’ sense of belonging changed. The new identity-based course content allowed students to “establish connections between school experiences and their developing sense of their own identities” (p. 192). Overall, student reports and classroom observations suggested that the integrated curriculum had positive benefits for both value and belonging, which could impact students’ overall sense of academic identification.

However, while these worthy IdEd activities connect academic content to the students’ current identity in meaningful ways, they stop short of intentionally aiming to support students’ transformation of their identities. Flum and Kaplan (2006) argued that teaching knowledge, skills, and even making content relevant to students’ current identities, are not enough as educational goals in current society; rather, educators should
aim to promote students’ agency and skills in exploring and developing their identities. They called to make identity exploration an educational goal. Recently, Kaplan, Sinai, and Flum (2014) proposed a set of principles to facilitate and promote students’ identity exploration within the curriculum, which they labeled the PRESS for Exploration model. Unlike other IdEd models (cf. Lee 2007, Faircloth, 2012), the PRESS model does not just connect students’ current identities to the academic content; instead, the aim is to purposefully enable students’ identity exploration through the academic content. The model guides educators to integrate four principles into the design of learning activities: Promoting self-Relevance, triggering identity Exploration, facilitating a sense of Safety, and Scaffolding identity exploration strategies. Kaplan, Sinai, and Flum (2014) collated research from three studies that utilized this conceptual model of facilitating identity exploration within academic settings in three different domains: environmental education, literature, and mathematics. The results were mixed, as not all students engaged in identity exploration, which highlights the complex and subjective nature of identity exploration and its facilitation. However, the findings did indicate that those students who actually engaged in identity exploration experienced greater perceived self-relevance between the course content and their own lives, demonstrated greater overall change in components of their identities through their exploration, and expressed higher interest, task value, self-efficacy, self-concept, and mastery-oriented achievement goals.

These examples, explicitly or implicitly, attempt to, first, strengthen students’ value for education by focusing on students’ beliefs, self-relevance, and interests, second, encourage students to reflect on and change their identities, and, last, promote connectedness by stimulating educators to familiarize themselves with their students and link course objectives to the identity processes that facilitate students’ motivation to succeed in school and learning of the material. Therefore, developmental writing courses that foster students’ identity exploration and development around the domain of writing can be expected to help students to transform the components of their identities, as well
as promote engagement and learning in the developmental course, positive attitudes toward writing, persistence in college and in applying learned academic skills beyond the developmental course, and healthy development of personal and interpersonal skills.

In this study, I employed the PRESS principles to design a curriculum in developmental writing courses with the aim of promoting the students’ identity exploration around the domain and skills of writing. To study the potential impact of this curriculum on students’ identity and motivational processes, I used the Dynamic Systems Model of Role Identity (DSMRI), an emerging meta-theoretical model of identity development and motivational processes (Kaplan & Garner, 2017). The DSMRI integrates aspects of identity and motivation from different theoretical perspectives into a comprehensive framework that allows examining the ways by which contextual processes relate to the dynamic role identity and motivational processes. The DSMRI comprises four contextually constructed, interdependent components that provide the foundation for motivated action: ontological and epistemological beliefs; purpose and goals; self-perceptions and self-definitions; and perceived action possibilities. Within the model, the four components are interrelated and reciprocal.

In the current study, the DSMRI was used as a means of conceptualizing and examining the connection between developmental writing students’ academic and writing role identities (RIs) and their change in the context of the course. Identity, in this case, can be defined as “a set of meanings that define who a person is in terms of their roles (role identities), group or category memberships (social identities), or as unique individuals (person identities)” (Stets, Brenner, Burke, & Serpe, 2017). This set of meanings is communicated to others through the exhibition of behaviors related to that identity. For example, individuals who inhabit a “scientist” role identity communicate that role identity to others by engaging in certain “science” behaviors, such as conducting experiments and presenting results (Stets, Brenner, Burke, & Serpe, 2017). In the case of this study, student and writer role identities are portrayed through the individual’s level of
commitment to being a student and writer, the exhibited behaviors associated with being a student and a writer, as well as how integral a part “student” and “writer” plays in his/her self-conception. Overall, the content of the identified RIs – beliefs, goals, self-perceptions, feelings, values and actions that comprise the foundation for being a student or writer – are the basis for understanding and examining a person’s RIs (Kaplan, Garner, & Semo, 2015).

The study examined students’ ontological beliefs and knowledge about what it means to be a writer and a college student, their perceptions of themselves as writers and college students, their purposes and goals for writing and for being college students, their writing and academic strategies and action possibilities, and how these may have changed during the developmental writing course at a community college that aimed to promote exploration of these two role identities and their connection. The research herein was guided by the following general questions: (1) How can faculty design a developmental writing course to promote students’ identity exploration and development around the domain of writing? (2) How does participation in such a course relate to diverse students’ identity and motivation for writing and for college learning more generally?

In the following chapters of this dissertation, I present the practical and theoretical rationale for the study, the data I collected on the design of developmental writing courses that aimed to facilitate students’ identity exploration and on students’ identity and motivation processes, and my analysis of these data in order to answer the research questions. I follow this introductory chapter with a review of the literature on developmental writing students in community college contexts. I continue with a distillation of the approaches that have been devised to address common challenges in teaching developmental writers, and then with a discussion of the limitations of these approaches. I then present the Dynamic Systems Model of Role Identity (DSMRI) as the conceptual framework I used to understand the complexity of developmental writing students identity and motivation, and then describe the PRESS model as the framework
from which I critique and highlight the limitations of the traditional approaches to teaching developmental writing students. I then provide details of the study itself, including the context, participants, methods, analysis, and the justification for using design-based qualitative research. I end the dissertation with a discussion of the findings, overall conclusions, and limitations of the research.
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter begins with an overview of the literature on students placed into developmental courses, specifically developmental writing courses. Second, it presents a distillation and critique of the current pedagogical approaches found in developmental writing courses. Next, this chapter details the Dynamic Systems Model of Role Identity, which is used to conceptualize and investigate the motivational, engagement, and learning processes elicited by the pedagogical approach designed for the study. Thereafter, Identity Education (IdEd) will be reviewed, specifically the PRESS model, which guided the curricular intervention aimed at facilitating identity exploration and development in developmental writing courses. Finally, this chapter will provide a justification for the research study and the research questions.

Understanding Developmental Students and Writers

The designation “developmental students” is traditionally applied to students who have placed into developmental college courses based upon a placement exam (i.e. WritePlacer, Accuplacer, Compass) that tests students’ knowledge and use of basic skills. If students score below a certain benchmark on the exam, they are typically advised or mandated to register for developmental courses because they are deemed “not college ready.” Though these types of tests are meant to group students in a homogenous way, the reality is that the results of these placement exams do not truly reflect students’ diversity skills, abilities, and needs. While this dissertation uses the terms “developmental students” and “developmental writers” for the sake of economy, it is important to note that these designations are problematic because of the implication of a homogeneity that does not exist among these students. It must be acknowledged that developmental students and writers, like all students and writers, are diverse in their skills, abilities, and needs.
Designing curriculum for developmental writing students’ identity exploration and motivation requires understanding the research on developmental writing students and their unique skills, abilities, and needs. Thus, it is important to examine established characterizations of developmental students and how these definitions play a role in shaping developmental students’ perceptions of themselves as both students and writers. Equally important is an exploration of developmental students’ identities, particularly their writing and academic role identities.

Common descriptions of developmental students are often couched in *deficit* language. For example, Grubb and Webb (1999) classify developmental students, in general, as “students who initially do not have the skills, experience or orientation necessary to perform at a level that the institution or instructor recognizes as ‘regular’ or college-level instruction” (p. 74). Developmental writers, specifically, are often designated in the literature as lacking basic writing skills, self-regulated writing strategies, and a knowledge of or capacity for planning, organizing, and drafting (Eves-Bowden, 2001; Macarthur and Philippakos, 2013). Furthermore, research has determined that developmental writers not only flounder in developmental writing courses, but also continue to struggle beyond the developmental sequence and are much less likely to pass subsequent college-level writing courses than students who were not assigned to take developmental English courses (Moss, Kelcey, & Showers, 2014). These characterizations may contribute to the pessimistic way in which faculty, administrators, and researchers view developmental students and developmental education in general, and these views may also impact developmental writers themselves in terms of how they understand themselves as writers and students within the academic environment.

While research on developmental writing students’ skills deficiencies has contributed to understanding of these students’ experiences and motivation, it is limited in its awareness of the complexity of developmental writers’ identities as writers and as students within the larger academic community. Much of the developmental writing
identity research shows developmental writers as having complex writing identities that are often muted due to the students’ marginalized role – as developmental students - within academic settings. The expectations of academic writing are limiting and often at odds with writing knowledge and practice in students’ social/cultural lives; as such, basic writers have difficulty aligning their personal, academic, and writing role identities.

For example, Bickerstaff (2012) interviewed nine developmental students and found that they have complex writing identities that differ depending on setting and expectations. She showed that developmental writers have strong out-of-school writing identities: they write poetry, stories, songs, and blogs; they believe in themselves as writers; they enjoy sharing writing with friends, family, and social media; and they admire writers in their communities. However, in academic settings, their writing identities are challenged by the formal expectations of academic writing, which causes them to struggle not only with meeting the requirements of their writing courses, but also with their writing identities. This shows that writing identity is complex and highly contextualized, which means it cannot be examined in a uni-dimensional way.

The marginalization of developmental students, as prompted by the “deficit” language described above, can lead them to construct a meaning of writing that is based in concrete skills and to feel insecure about their academic identity in general. This, in turn, can lead to identity formation strategies that avoid relying on academic writing. In a discourse analysis of student writing during a remedial summer bridge program, Colyar and Stich’s (2011) found that developmental students often relied on language that distances them from acknowledging or developing an academic identity. For example, when prompted to write about successful student behavior, developmental students often wrote in the second-person point of view and used passive voice when describing aspects of their college identities (i.e. ontological beliefs, goals, self-perceptions, actions). According to the authors, these techniques illustrate a lack of agency that places these students as the object, not subject, of their writing and academic experiences.
Research also suggests that yet another distancing tactic developmental students employ is to focus on skills and practicalities as the definitions of successful academic behavior. For example, Colyar and Stich (2011) found that students focus on the importance of time management skills or seeking support from a classmate, friend, or teacher. In essence, the students distance themselves from an academic identity by focusing on “‘doing’ college work rather than ‘being’ a college student” (Colyar & Stich, 2011, p. 131). In essence, the researchers suggest that by not exploring or developing an academic role identity, students can separate themselves from any potential failure that may occur.

Correspondingly, the research indicates that these distancing techniques can also be seen in the ways developmental students view the act of writing and in the ways they describe themselves as writers (i.e. “doing writing” than “being” a writer). For example, in Eves-Bowden’s (2001) interview study of seven developmental writing students, one student said, “I know what works best for me, I just have to do it” (p. 77). Thus, the student expressed assuredness in knowing how to write but admitted that the problem is that he is not “doing” what he is supposed to do to write successfully. This research suggests that an emphasis on “doing” instead of “being” can lead many developmental students to neglect engagement in planning, organizing, drafting, or revising because “[r]eally trying hard, really showing interest, would also prove that the ability was just not there, or so they believe” (Eves-Bowden, p. 81).

Similarly, Adler-Kassner’s (1999) interview study with developmental writers at the University of Michigan-Dearborn showed that developmental writers discussed writing in general, and themselves as writers, in “performance” language. Of developmental writers, she states, “To them, it [writing] is about performance – producing so many paragraphs of so many sentences of so many words, doing so in a short period…When this doesn’t happen correctly the writing is ‘wrong’ and needs to be ‘fixed’” (p. 80). Thus, the research suggests that in focusing solely on (some of) the
specific actions that are associated with writing, developmental writers tend to view writing as something outside of themselves rather than embracing its ontological purpose or, more concretely, embracing its meaning in their lives as college students and as human communicators in general.

In summary, research points to similarities in the ways in which developmental students view writing, being a writer, and being a college student. In all of these cases, the research indicates that developmental students distance themselves from exploring, developing, or embracing academic and writing identities by establishing a set of ontological beliefs focused on “doing” (or not doing) versus “being.” While actions are one part of becoming a good student and a good writer, they are not the sole component. Thus, it behooves researchers and practitioners to find ways to encourage developmental students to see writing and academics as a part of who they are, not just what they are required to do at a given time. The question becomes: how best do we teach developmental writing students so that they make connections between writing, college, and their own lives without compromising the important concrete skills that students need in order to be competent as college writers and while facilitating the promotion of more conducive writer and college student identities?

**Pedagogical Approaches in the Developmental Writing Classroom**

Developmental students are diverse in terms of their ontological beliefs, actions, goals, and self-perceptions. However, the most common pedagogical approaches for developmental writing instruction are grounded in the aforementioned deficit ideology and have generally focused on targeting one specific aspect of developmental writers’ academic or writing deficiencies. While there are some benefits to targeting certain aspects of developmental students’ skills and abilities, there are also limitations to these pedagogical approaches.
Background: Against Skills-Based Approaches to Developmental Writing

Instruction. Despite its continued presence in many developmental writing classrooms today (Grubb, 1999, 2013), skills-based pedagogical approaches - defined by a narrow focus on strict grammatical correctness, unalterable paradigms (i.e. the modes of writing), puerile writing prompts, and a lack of emphasis on strategies and processes that encourage complex thinking and writing skills (Rose, 1983) - have been deemed ineffective in almost all of the research on developmental writing pedagogy over the past forty years (Bartholomae, 1979, 1986; Callahan and Chumney, 2009; Curry, 2013; Grubb, 1999; Goode, 2000; Rose 1983; Shaughnessy, 1976, 1979). For example, according to Rossen-Knill and Lynch (2000), while developmental writers do make more errors per 100 hundred words than more advanced writers do, developmental writers are not monolithic in the types of errors they make. Spelling errors tend to top the list, but other “serious” errors differ from student to student. Therefore, to spend entire semesters focusing on skills-based approaches that are not tailored to each student’s unique needs is an ineffective and inefficient use of time.

Secondly, research has consistently shown skills-based approaches to have negative impacts on students’ motivation to write in general and to improve their writing, and on their identity as writers and writing students. An uncompromising emphasis on correctness not only minimizes the complexities and inconsistencies of writing, but also eliminates students’ agency in the development of their own writing (Shaughnessy, 1976). Skills-based instruction has also been linked to student disengagement in remedial courses (Callahan and Chumney, 2009; Curry, 2013; Grubb, 1999).

In sum, skills-based instruction in the developmental writing classroom is ineffective in that it neither promotes development of a writing identity, nor enhances students’ motivation to write or write better. In fact, it seems to completely undermine any type of agency or motivation students might develop in less restrictive contexts.
**Transformative Approaches.** As a response to skills-based instruction, teaching strategies steeped in the critical or transformative pedagogy tradition emerged as a way of establishing meaningful writing experiences, promoting identity exploration and development, and enhancing motivation in developmental writing courses. Transformative pedagogy aims to address the disenfranchised role of developmental students within the sphere of higher education and their lack of confidence in their authority to write (or belong) in academic settings (Bartholomae, 1986; Gray-Rosendale, 2006). Overall, pedagogical approaches grounded in the transformative perspective encourage instructors to develop curricula based on critical literacy and student agency (Adler-Kassner, 1999; Reynolds and Bruch, 2002; Young, 1996). These approaches assume that if students explore and understand their identity, particularly their marginalized identity, this will lead to increased engagement and success in a writing course. Thus, curricular modifications and instructional strategies within developmental writing classes specifically focus on basic writers’ educational marginalization. The research tacitly links motivation and identity; however, there is little research that expressly discusses the interplay of these two constructs within the developmental classroom.

Young (1996) employed a transformative pedagogy framework in his basic writing course to encourage students to explore their views on literacy and writing. His curriculum involved first situating students in a literacy context by having them read texts about literacy written from “marginalized” perspectives, namely minority authors. He then asked students to “free write” in response to questions about writing, such as “What is a writer?” “What is writing?” and “Are you a writer?” (p. 55), all of which aimed to encourage identity exploration and development. From these exercises, Young found that while students typically define a writer as a person who engages in the act of writing, they did not necessarily connect a command of “Standard English” to the definition of being a writer. Instead, students believed writing to be a means of production that
allowed them to articulate that which is valuable to them. Young ultimately concluded that the process of locating students within a literacy community, and then participating within that community as producers of texts, imbued students with both knowledge and agency and helped to form personal and writing identities. Young suggested that by linking writing and identity formation, students could move beyond looking at writing as a task that they have to complete in order to be accepted into the academic and cultural community and, instead, view writing as the means for shaping that community. By focusing the course on marginalization, this pedagogical approach does incorporate identity exploration, but only in a limited, top-down way. Young’s learning activities did not necessarily situate identity exploration intentionally as a target of the course; rather, his pedagogical approach seemed to approach identity formation as a process of socialization, the result of which was promoting students’ more skilled participation in a community of practice. Instead of allowing students to define themselves and make their own connections between writing and the self, this approach provided an identity for the students, which could undermine the breadth of identity exploration and of motivation for writing within the course and in future courses.

Other transformative instructor/researchers did not necessarily focus specifically on marginalization in their classes. For some, transformative pedagogy can occur by simply giving students more autonomy in selecting writing topics and establishing more connectedness through group work and peer review. Street (2005) examined how autonomy-supportive classroom practices could affect identity development for developmental writers and impact their engagement with writing. He used one student’s experience in his course as the basis for his conclusions about how developmental writers develop confidence and a sense of self as writers, which ultimately leads to improved writing engagement and skills development. First, Street transformed his composition curriculum to give students more autonomy in their writing. Second, he abandoned literary analysis writing assignments and, instead, allowed students to pick topics that
were relevant to their lives. He also established peer review writing workshops. By the end of this reformed class, Street’s student John – the single participant of Street’s research – transformed from a disengaged student, who initially resisted improving his writing, to a student with increased writing potential and confidence in being a writer. Street concluded that a sense of autonomy, competence, and connection to classmates could help students develop better writing confidence, a better sense of a writing self, and improved writing skills. For Street, developing a writing identity is important because valuing one’s own identity within a community could lead to greater participation in that community – in this case, a writing community. Street ultimately concluded that classrooms in which students feel a sense of autonomy and competence, as well as inclusion in a “community of writers” (p. 639), allowed students to establish a sense of self as writers and enhanced their engagement with writing.

While instructor/researchers like Young and Street engaged in transformative education by focusing the entire writing course on marginalized identity or by developing autonomy and connectedness through the class assignments and workshops, others focused on prompting students to explore their unique identities through individualized writing activities. Cody (1996), for example, used “expressive language” – essentially, freewriting - in basic writing courses as a way for students to develop a writing identity and to feel more comfortable transitioning into and embracing academic writing. He used three of his students’ expressive writing samples to show the ways in which developmental writing students established a writing identity, which then helped transition them to more academic writing tasks – i.e. research papers - by helping them to find their style, their point of view, and, ultimately, their identities as both writers and students in general. From his analysis of his students’ work, Cody concluded that expressive language toppled the barriers that stood between his students and academic discourse. Additionally, he surmised that expressive writing should be a part of the entire writing process for developmental writers because it leads to self-awareness, which
enhances confidence and enthusiasm to become “prepared” writers. However, this approach alone could not help students meet the expectations necessary for success in college writing courses (i.e. writing a formal academic paper): One of the three participants in the study failed the course and then failed the subsequent college-level composition course. Of the other two students, only one turned an expressive writing assignment into the foundation for a formal academic writing assignment in another course. Simply aiming instruction at one facet of students’ struggles is unlikely to address the complexity of students’ writing struggles or explain why a certain approach works or does not work for certain students.

The aforementioned approaches clearly have identity exploration components and are certainly more student-centered than skills-based approaches. The freewriting activity, especially, could be used as a tool to foster exploration and motivation. Thus, these techniques could improve motivation in these courses. However, these approaches lack a theoretical conceptualization of identity promotion and processes, which limits their ability, first, to explain how and why certain practices work for some but not all of the students, some but not all of the time and, second, to understand and address diverse needs across different contexts. Additionally, these approaches lack appropriate and specific scaffolding aimed at prompting students to use the domain of writing to engage in the identity exploration and formation process in their own ways. Without some level of guidance, triggering, scaffolding, or established sense of safety, students may not understand how to connect the freewriting activity or the peer workshops to their identity exploration, motivation, or development as writers and college students. Finally, these approaches seem to neglect skills instruction altogether, which for many developmental students, is a barrier to their motivation, their overall academic success, and also to their potential exploration and development of a writing identity.

While it is difficult to dispute identity’s effect on educational experiences, the emphasis on identity exploration alone overshadows other important aspects of learning
to write, such as self-regulation strategies and development of motivational processes.

Simply focusing on the oppressed nature of the developmental writer’s identity, allowing students to write how they want about what they want, or creating identity-themed courses alone may not necessarily provide developmental writing students with the academic tools or strategies they need to succeed within and beyond their developmental courses. This could result in unintended, negative consequences, such as dismissing students’ anxieties about grammar, vocabulary, and spelling errors (Gray-Rosendale, 2006; Stenberg, 2002). It may also inhibit students’ individual identity exploration processes, which may undermine their motivation to write in general or to improve their writing.

**Process-Oriented Approaches.** In an effort to address students’ concerns about “doing” writing “right” and improving motivation to write, many teachers and researchers have examined a different pedagogical approach that focuses writing instruction on process and strategy development. Research on developmental writers suggests that many of their deficiencies stem from a lack of self-regulated writing strategies (Eves-Bowden, 2001; Macarthur and Philippakos, 2013; Perun, 2015). Thus, researchers have studied the impact of process-oriented instructional strategies on developmental writing students’ academic success and motivation to write and improve their writing.

Process-oriented approaches focus on writing in deliberate stages, wherein students develop their writing over time using a structured writing process. These approaches emphasize pre-writing strategies (i.e. freewriting, brainstorming, planning, organizing), drafting, proofreading, editing, feedback (i.e. peer review or teacher conferences), and revising (Eves-Bowden, 2001; Macarthur and Philippakos, 2013; Perun, 2015). This approach’s assumption is that emphasizing a process for writing could lead students to develop self-regulation strategies that, in turn, may enhance self-efficacy.
or overall competence, which could ultimately increase motivation to continue to write and develop writing skills.

The research on process-oriented instruction has had mixed results in terms of impact on skills development and students’ motivation to engage in writing or revision. For example, Macarthur and Philippakos’s (2013) process-oriented intervention in a developmental writing class indicated that the incorporation of process-oriented strategies positively impacted students’ writing quality and conventions; however, there was little to no impact on students’ motivation to engage in or improve their writing. Perun’s (2014) study on process-oriented instruction in a developmental writing class showed similar mixed results: Of the 17 students in the class, only 10 engaged fully with the instructor’s process model and, ultimately, passed the course, while the others did not. Neither Macarthur and Philippakos nor Perun’s research examines why students may or may not engage in planning, organizing, drafting, or revising, or why they may or may not be motivated to improve their writing in general. Along those same lines, the research also fails to address the complexity of students’ identities, which may impact their engagement with a process approach to instruction.

Much of the process-model research is similar to Macarthur and Philippakos and Perun’s studies above, wherein the outcomes are narrowly defined as successful academic performance (i.e. improved writing skills, passing the course) or improvement on motivation measures. More often than not, the literature on process-oriented approaches fails to look beyond performance measures to other desirable learning outcomes, such as identity exploration. The literature also fails to examine why students are not engaging in the assigned process and/or are not more motivated to write after learning the steps for planning, organizing, drafting, and revising their work. For some researchers, the answer to the why question may be related to the seemingly severed connection between writing as it is taught in developmental courses and students’ lives both inside and outside of school.
Contextual Approaches. A common complaint about developmental writing courses is that the content, expectations, and instructional strategies are often completely unrelated to the content, expectations, and instructional strategies found in other college-level courses and/or to the students’ perceptions of the expectations in the workforce that awaits them after college (Perin, 2011; Rose, 1983). Adler-Kassner’s (1999) interview study with developmental students showed that they believed that reading and writing skills are essentially only important to English teachers in English courses, and they did not see reading and writing skills as potentially benefiting them in courses outside of English or in their future careers.

The lack of coherence between developmental courses and developmental students’ lives - most notably academic and career goals - is often cited as a major reason for students’ low motivation to learn basic skills and a process for writing (Perin, 2011). This research suggests that if instructors want students to internalize a need for planning, organizing, drafting, and revising, then their instructional strategies have to go beyond simply giving students steps for writing and, instead, contextualize writing within students’ lives. Thus, contextualized approaches to instruction – i.e. approaches that attempt to connect writing to other relevant aspects of students’ lives, such as careers or other college courses - have gained increased attention as a way to mitigate the silo effect of developmental coursework.

The two most common approaches under this umbrella are contextualized basic skills instruction (Snyder, 2002 cited in Perin, 2011) and integrated basic skills instruction (Artis, 2008; Badway & Grubb, 1997; Perin, 2001 cited in Perin 2011). Contextualized basic skills instruction focuses on using college-level subject matter - i.e. philosophy, psychology - as the canvas for teaching basic skills within the basic skills classroom. Integrated basic skills instruction involves teaching basic skills within a college-level subject-matter classroom or within other common adult learning environments, such as a career exploration/development course. The assumption is that
by making the developmental content relevant to credit-bearing coursework or to students’ career aspirations, students will assign a higher utility value to these courses, thus increasing their motivation to succeed.

To date, there are only a few examples of studies that focused on contextualization in the college developmental writing classroom. Perin and Hare (2010) examined how the use of passages from a college-level science textbook in a developmental writing class impacted students’ summary writing skills. The findings indicated that the content-specific information may have helped students with summarization in general, but the findings did not explain the benefit to students’ writing performance, nor did the study examine the impact on students’ identity development as writers (or as students in general) or their motivation to write or improve their writing.

Goode (2000) highlighted a different type of contextualization within the developmental writing classroom. Instead of making writing relevant to other academic courses, Goode pointed to contextualization through meaningful “real world” experiences - in this case, a publishing house scenario. Students in a developmental writing class were informed from the beginning of the semester that their work would be collected, anthologized in a published document, and housed at the college’s library at the end of the semester. This raised students’ awareness that they would have to write thoughtful texts (based on the readings and activities assigned throughout the semester) and revise their work many times, as any published author would. Though there is no actual data in this article, Goode anecdotally reports that the students in her course were more motivated to write and improve their writing because of the contextualization of the content with the real-world goal of publishing.

Contextual approaches to teaching developmental writing attempt to address motivation and identity in terms of their emphasis on relevance and task value. However, the research to date is minimal, often unclear, and - as in the case with Goode’s research above - not actually supported by qualitative or quantitative data. Additionally, in both
The Limitations of Current Approaches. All of these approaches have strengths and weakness, and it seems possible to improve developmental writing students’ experiences in their courses by using one of the aforementioned methods or a combination of these approaches. However, these approaches attempt to “fix” or reshape students’ concepts of themselves, of writing as a discipline, and of academia in general, while also neglecting students’ agency in their learning and motivational processes. Thus, these approaches can be seen as merely “socializing” students into certain roles (Kaplan, Sinai, & Flum, 2014). In contrast, Kaplan et al. called for an identity exploration model that promotes students’ agency in engaging in their own understanding of themselves in relation to the academic content.

In addition to facilitating identity exploration in their classrooms, teachers also need a system by which to understand and respond to students’ experiences with those activities. Conceptualizing students’ identity exploration and development and their level of motivation allows teachers to make adjustments to their academic content and/or to their facilitation of identity work in their classes. However, much of the research on developmental students’ identities and/or motivation to engage in writing or positive academic behavior has focused on one or two constructs without providing a comprehensive understanding of students’ experiences. For example, researchers may focus on students’ self-efficacy for writing (Bruning, et al., 2013; McCarthy, Meier, & Rinderer, 1985; Pajares, 2003; Zimmerman & Bandura, 1994) without also examining students’ goals or actions. Researchers may focus on students’ writing actions (i.e. drafting, revising, help-seeking) (Eves-Bowden, 2001; Macarthur and Philippakos, 2013; Perun, 2015) without examining students’ perceptions of themselves as writers or their ontological beliefs about writing. Or, researcher may focus on students’ ontological
beliefs about writing (Adler-Kassner, 1999; Young, 1996) without also taking into account self-perceptions or goals for writing. What is needed, therefore, is a comprehensive framework that illuminates the complexity of students’ identities and motivations. The Dynamic Systems Model of Role Identity (DSMRI) - an emerging meta-theoretical model of identity development and motivational processes - is such a framework.

**The Dynamic Systems Model of Role Identity (DSMRI)**

The DSMRI (Kaplan & Garner, 2017) builds upon the principles of complexity science as it relates to psychological principles (Guastello, Koopmans & Pincus, 2009; Kunnen, 2012a). Integrating aspects of identity and motivation research, this model provides a comprehensive framework for examining the relationships between context, role identities, and motivational processes. The current study uses this model as a means of examining students’ identity development and motivation processes within the context of a developmental writing course that includes an identity exploration component.

The DSMRI is comprised of four contextually constructed, interdependent components that provide the foundation for motivation: ontological and epistemological assumptions; purpose and goals; self-perceptions and self-definitions; and perceived action possibilities. The influence of each of these components on human action has been examined in previous motivation literature (Kaplan, 2014b); however, little research has been done that incorporates all four components into a singular, meta-theoretical model.

The ontological or epistemological beliefs concern beliefs about the world that the person holds to be true. This component of the model is grounded in motivation theories, such as attribution or epistemic beliefs (Dweck, 1999). Within this component, researchers can examine students’ beliefs about the nature of writing, what it means to be a writer, and/or their understanding of the general reasons for failure or success within writing classes. As mentioned earlier, developmental writing students have complex
ontological beliefs about writing. Many believe that the nature of writing means producing error-free texts, showing that their ontological beliefs about writing are more procedural than conceptual. If they fail at writing, it is because they did not follow the correct steps or they did not try hard enough. These ontological beliefs can also be applied to the developmental students’ ontological beliefs about being college students in general. Identity exploration that encourages students to examine or challenge their ontological beliefs may be helpful in motivating students to engage more with effective writing and/or overall academic processes and strategies. However, a change in ontological beliefs is a necessary but insufficient condition for initiating change in action or motivation (Kaplan & Garner, 2017).

Self-perceptions and self-definitions are another important component in examining the relationship between identity and motivation. Within this component, researchers can understand how students view themselves inside and outside of the academic environment. For example, students may define themselves by sex, race, position in the family, or career (i.e. Latina, female, eldest child of three siblings). Furthermore, this component includes self-beliefs, such as self-efficacy (i.e. “I can do well on this essay assignment”) and task values (e.g., “Being a good writer is important to me”). Self-perception is an important component to examine when it comes to developmental writers. Their perceptions are complex and often contradictory. For example, developmental writers often have a poor outlook on their writing skills (Adler-Kassner, 1999); however, they also tend to overestimate their abilities (Eves-Bowden, 2001). They may engage in the act of writing both inside and outside of school, but they do not identify themselves as writers because their writing does not meet established academic expectations (Bickerstaff, 2012). These misalignments may contribute to some of the anxiety students feel about writing. Thus, using interventions that trigger or scaffold students’ identity exploration may help them to develop healthier and more aligned self-perceptions, which may improve the desire to participate in beneficial
writing and academic behaviors. Once again, however, students’ self-perceptions are not the only aspect driving their motivation to engage with academic content. Their purposes and goals for doing appropriate academic tasks need to be addressed as well.

Students’ purposes and goals can be defined as their identified reasons for executing certain actions or behaviors within the academic environment. One common framework for understanding purposes and goals in academic environments is Achievement Goal Theory. Within this theory, students may engage in certain academic actions to meet certain goals: performance goals or mastery/tasks goals (Dweck & Elliott, 1983). Mastery/task goals focus on “developing skills, gaining competence, and promoting understanding,” while performance goals emphasize demonstrating ability and “self-enhancing [through] social comparison” (Kaplan & Maehr, 1999, p. 330-331). Within the domain of writing, students who develop task goals seek challenges, focus on mastering the material, and learn for the sake of learning. These students often develop greater self-efficacy for writing because their focus is on their own learning rather than on their ability relative to others (Pajares, 2003). Writers who hold performance-based goals often want to do well to prove their ability; however, they are often more anxious and often exhibit lower self-efficacy for writing (Pajares, 2003). This is important to note because self-efficacy for writing has been linked consistently to positive writing performance (Bruning, et al., 2013; McCarthy, Meier, & Rinderer, 1985; Pajares, 2003; Zimmerman & Bandura, 1994). Thus, students’ purposes and goals for writing or for engaging in good writing practices (i.e. drafting, revising, editing) are important not only in understanding the resulting self-perceptions (i.e. self-efficacy beliefs), but also in understanding how and why students engage in certain academic actions.

According to Kaplan and Garner (2017), action possibilities refer to the range of actions people perceive as appropriate and possible for them to take in the effort to pursue their purposes and goals in light of their ontological and epistemological beliefs and self-perceptions and self-definitions. In the case of developmental writing students,
they may develop an outline, brainstorm with classmates, seek help from a tutor, or plagiarize a paper from a website. Such actions would be perceived as within the realm of possibility depending on the students’ purposes and goals for writing, their self-perceptions and self-definitions, and their ontological beliefs about the context. The issue for many developmental students is that their goals and actions are often misaligned. Students may claim to want to improve their writing, but they might not engage in the acts of planning, organizing, drafting, and revising (Perun, 2015). Thus, it is important to prompt students – through identity exploration activities – to reflect, first, on why they are writing and what their goals are for improving their writing and, second, on whether the actions they take help them actually meet those goals.

The DSMRI not only examines the dynamic nature of each of the components, but it also highlights the dynamic nature of role identity itself and the identity system that involves multiple role identities—in the current case, the focal role identities of “A Writer” and of “A College Student.” Each of these role identities can vary from student to student, and within a student across time, in terms of its content, structure, and process of formation. Variability in content is reflected by the type, amount, and complexity of the student’s knowledge, ontological beliefs, goals, self-perceptions, and action possibilities. It is also possible that dimensions within these constructs can change over time within a student depending on the relevance and importance to the student at a given time (Kaplan, & Garner, 2017). Students might be more likely to engage in certain academic actions if they see it as aligned with the content of their individual system of ontological beliefs, goals, self-perceptions, and action possibilities.

In addition to the content, role identity structure also varies. Structure refers to the harmony of the content within each component, the alignment between the components, and the integration between various role identities, such as between the writer and the college student role identities, as well as with other relevant role identities (e.g. parent, sibling, employee). Structural alignment and integration is important to students’
commitment, satisfaction and openness to change. Similarly, misalignment or fragmentation is likely to cause tension, uncertainty, and resistance or ambivalence to change (Kaplan & Garner, 2017).

Like its content and structure, the formation of role identity is complex and variable. Formation refers to the ways in which the content and structure of the role identity components and role identities themselves are shaped by students’ socio-cultural context and are constantly emerging and changing over time with the desired goal of self-organization. Connections between components are constantly created through positive and negative feedback loops that signal role identity alignment or misalignment within the cultural context (Kaplan & Garner, 2017).

The DSMRI allows us to see a comprehensive picture of students’ identity and motivation. Instead of isolating individual constructs, this model takes all aspects of a students’ identity into consideration and can provide insight into how those facets impact motivation to act within the academic environment. It also provides a framework for examining the particular processes that take place as students explore and form their role identities.

**Identity Exploration in Educational Settings**

Identity research has been conceptualized and studied from a variety of perspectives. One context that has received growing attention in identity research is schools. It is essential to examine the relationship between school and identity because “school experiences are fundamental building blocks in the development of contemporary youth’s identity components such as self-concept, personal values, interests, and career goals” (Flum & Kaplan, 2012, p.172). Considering this level of importance, it is no surprise then that scholars from a variety of fields have examined identity and academics in many ways, including the importance academic group identification (e.g. Gee, 2000), the relationship between identity achievement and academic engagement (e.g. Oyserman,
2014), and the role of identity exploration and development within academic curriculum (e.g., Faircloth, 2012; Flum & Kaplan, 2012; Schachter & Rich, 2011; Sinai, Kaplan, & Flum, 2012). While this line of research is important in understanding identity’s connection to academic outcomes, it is also important to examine ways in which to initiate students’ identity exploration in the classroom.

Kaplan, Sinai, and Flum’s (2014) conceptual model of identity exploration is one example of a pedagogical approach that puts teachers in the role of facilitating students’ identity exploration via academic content. To this end, teachers are responsible for “[l]egitimizing and encouraging students’ identity exploration within the curriculum…[by] supporting their autonomy, competence, and relatedness in ways that can be expected to contribute to their adaptive motivation, learning and development” (p. 248). This model encourages students to reflect on the academic content and the connection between the academic content and the self, to question identity aspects, and to explore other possible identity commitments. As the “identity agents,” teachers can facilitate identity work using four complementary and interdependent principles: **Promoting self-Relevance**, triggering identity **Exploration**, facilitating a sense of **Safety**, and **Scaffolding** exploratory actions. The authors labeled this set of principles the PRESS model of promoting identity exploration, and each principle is described below.

**Promoting self-relevance.** Students, in general, often fail to see the relevance of course content in their lives (Granit-Dgani, Kaplan, & Flum, 2011). As noted earlier, developmental writing students, specifically, tend to overlook the relevance of reading and writing beyond their English classes. Often, they do not relate reading and writing to other courses, to careers, or to their personal development as communicating humans. Thus, promoting relevance is a key principle in promoting identity exploration in educational settings, especially within the developmental writing classroom. More specifically, promoting relevance means encouraging students to find the connection between some facet of the course content and some part of the self. However, as Kaplan,
Sinai, and Flum (2014) note, teachers often use their position to determine what is important and how students should conceptualize the idea of relevance (i.e. “This class will help you get a job.”) rather than allowing students to connect content to an aspect of self that they have determined themselves. This does not work in the service of promoting students’ identity exploration by supporting students’ autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Instead, it promotes a monolithic notion of relevance, which takes away the subjectivity associated with the very nature of self-relevance. Thus, promoting relevance – in this model – is not necessarily grounded in a particular practice or activity but, instead, is a general encouragement for students to make their own connections between class content and self.

**Triggering identity exploration.** Promoting relevance is one important principle in facilitating students’ identity exploration; however, in order for students to truly explore their identities, they must also consider the sometimes conflicting ontological beliefs, values, self-perceptions, and other social roles that arise when reflecting on the connection between academic content and self. To this end, teachers can provide students with experiences that encourage them to question their previously held notions. These experiences – labeled exploration triggers – encourage students to reflect on the novelty in a new situation that involves discrepancies between their established identifications or identity commitments and new perceptions that may arise in the academic environment. Becoming aware of, or constructing, these discrepancies and examining them can become a motivating factor for students to explore new material or contexts in relation to the self.

**Facilitating a sense of safety.** Because triggering identity exploration involves challenging previously held identifications, students may feel threatened or confused. Therefore, it is important that instructors also develop a sense of safety for students within the academic environment. The goal of creating a safe environment is for students to feel free to examine their identities without judgment, to feel respected when exploring identity aspects, and to feel connected and related to other students who are undergoing a
similar exploration. To this end, instructors must show caring and compassion for students engaged in identity exploration, legitimize students’ emotions about identity exploration, and value students’ participation in identity exploration.

*Scaffolding exploratory actions.* Finally, students may need assistance in developing strategies to engage in deep and constructive identity exploration. As with learning any new skill, scaffolding is an effective technique that instructors can use to help students develop processes for exploring their identities in an academic environment. For example, teachers may require students to keep a reflective journal or may have students work in pairs or groups to discuss their identities and experienced identity discrepancies in relation to the academic content. There is no “one size fits all” approach to scaffolding, and teachers should feel empowered to use a variety of techniques to encourage students to engage in thoughtful identity exploration and development in the classroom.

Designing classroom activities with these four principles in mind does not, by itself, guarantee that students will engage in identity exploration or engage with academic material. Each of the principles targets students’ subjective experiences. For example, it is quite possible that one activity would serve to elicit an identity exploration trigger in one student but not in another. Instructors need to be vigilant in observing students’ responses to identity exploration activities and adjust their instructional strategies accordingly to apply the principles in ways that reach more diverse students. For example, some students may need different activities to construct self-relevance of academic content. Bored students may need more experiences of personal discrepancy triggering, as they may not be experiencing relevant differences that inspire them to think critically about themselves or the course. Shy or socially awkward students may not feel comfortable sharing their thoughts and feelings with other students, thus prompting the teacher to create a better sense of safety in the classroom before students will explore their identities further. Some students may find themselves reflecting on and discussing
the same aspects of their identities over and over again; in this case, the teacher may need to hone in on scaffolding additional identity exploration strategies. Overall, the PRESS model encourages teachers to get to know their students and, to the best of their ability, adapt the learning environment and activities to foster connections between students and the class material with the ultimate goal of motivating students to engage more proactively with the course content and its relation to their identities.

**Justification for Study and Research Questions.**

As detailed above, the current pedagogical approaches utilized in developmental writing courses have their own strengths that target a certain aspect of developmental students’ writing struggles; however, overall, they fail to understand or address dynamic nature of developmental students’ identities and motivations within writing courses. Additionally, these approaches lack a comprehensive evaluation system by which to understand students’ experiences within the developmental course. Thus, in the current study, I designed a developmental writing course curriculum that aims to promote students’ identity exploration, specifically of the role identity as a writer and a college student, and used the DSMRI to examine students’ experiences in this course. In using the PRESS model to facilitate the identity component in the class and the DSMRI model to examine students’ experiences in a developmental writing class with an identity exploration component the study hopes to shed light on developmental writers’ complexity, dynamism, and uniqueness. Specifically, the study herein aims to answer the following specific research questions:

1. How can the PRESS principles guide the design of a developmental writing course that promotes students’ identity exploration and development around the domain of writing?
2. What are the experiences of students with diverse backgrounds within a developmental writing course that promotes identity exploration, and how do these experiences relate to:

   a. students’ development of academic identities within the developmental writing course?

   b. motivation to engage with planning, organizing, drafting, and revising and to engage in adaptive academic behaviors in general (i.e. persistence, help-seeking, time management, self-regulation)?
CHAPTER 3
METHODS

This chapter details the methodology used to attempt and promote and examine students’ identity exploration and development in a developmental writing course. It begins with a context for the study and descriptions of the participants. It then offers a brief history of the developmental writing program at MCCC, an explanation for the initial changes made to the developmental courses, and a description of the two iterations of the IdEx intervention that followed the initial course redesign. Finally, this chapter describes the data collection and analysis methods, a personal positionality statement, and procedures for enhancing the findings’ trustworthiness (Guba & Lincoln, 1986).

Context for Study

Colleges across American are attempting to improve their developmental courses (Hodara & Jaggars, 2014; Smith, 2015). Montgomery County Community College is no different. Developmental faculty at the college have been experimenting with a variety of new modes of delivery over the past few years, such as learning communities, accelerated courses, and more relevant, student-centered curricula. As the “Developmental Specialist” in the English Department, I was charged with exploring new content and instructional strategies in our developmental writing courses. The study herein is a qualitative evaluation of students’ experiences in these courses.

Developmental writing courses at MCCC aim to help underprepared writing students learn the necessary reading, writing, and critical thinking skills needed to be successful in college-level coursework. The course is structured around an instructor-selected critical theme – gender roles and popular culture – which provides the foundation for all of the course reading and writing assignments throughout the semester. The new curriculum for this course includes academic content that is more consistent
with college-level expectations, as well as identity exploration (IdEx) activities aimed at facilitating connections between the academic content and students’ sense of self.

The academic content aims to help students develop more “cultural capital” (Callahan & Chumney, 2009) in the academic environment. To this end, the academic content promotes the reading, writing, and thinking skills, strategies, and processes needed to develop the clear and effective communication that will be expected and required in college-level coursework. This content also emphasizes higher order skills, such as critical thinking and reading skills, synthesis of source materials, and analysis, that are similarly important and necessary for success in college courses. However, simply providing students with the tools necessary to work at the college-level does not mean that they will use them, especially if the students do not see their coursework as integral to their lives. Thus, I added an identity exploration component to the course in order to encourage students to connect classwork to their lives in the hopes of increasing motivation to engage with the course materials, complete the course, and register for and complete other college courses beyond the remedial sequence.

In order to enhance students’ motivation to engage with, master, and ultimately use the academic content of the course, I added to the course IdEx activities that focus on promoting students’ identity exploration around the domain of writing. To this end, identity exploration interventions were included in each unit that use the course content to facilitate students’ reflection, questioning, information gathering and processing, understanding, and development regarding their identities as writers specifically and as college students more broadly. These activities aimed to specifically target and strengthen students’ role identities as writers and as college students; however, through creating relevance, triggering identity exploration, and scaffolding identity exploration via the academic content of the course, students could more thoroughly explore other RIs that are important to them in addition to the targeted RIs.
Participants

The study focused on students’ experiences in developmental writing classes at MCCC – a mid-sized community college in the Mid-Atlantic region of the United States. Out of 26 students over the course of the two semesters, 15 agreed to be participants in the study. Ten students (67%) participated in the study in the fall 2016 semester study, and 5 students (33%) participated in the spring 2017 semester. Students were racially mixed, with 27% Black, 27% White, 20% Latin(a/o/x), 7% Asian, and 7% mixed race. Two students (13%) did not report their race. Two students (13%) self-identified as ESL students who chose to take this class despite having an option to take the ESL version of the developmental writing course. 60% of the participants were female, and 40% were male. Students ranged in age from 18 to 27 years old, with an average age of 18.6 years old. Enrollment status at the college was a mix of part-time and full-time, with 13% of the students attending college part-time and 67% attending full-time. One student did not respond to the question about enrollment status. Of these 15 participants, 73% passed the developmental course with a grade of C or better.

The 11 students who did not participate were students in the spring semester iteration of the study. 73% were female, and 27% were male. 64% of the students were Black, and 36% were White. Three students (27%) stopped attending the course by Week 4 (mid-February) and did not pass the course. The other 8 students (73%) passed the course with a C or better. As can be seen from the participant information above, the spring semester in general had fewer overall students and fewer students who volunteered to participate in the study.

Over the course of the spring semester, students were asked if they wanted to participate in the study three times (Week 2, mid-semester, and Week 13). The students either declined outright or deflected the question in class. For example, one student said she had to ask her mother before she signed any consent forms. Upon my email and face-to-face follow-ups, she said that her mother did not approve of her participation in the
study. The other students who either declined outright or avoided my follow-ups never provided a response explaining why they did not want to participate. Anecdotally, many professors have complained that students in the spring semester are often not as engaged in class activities as fall semester students. This may be one reason for the lack of participation in the spring courses.

However, using the students’ IdEx assignments, we might be able to draw some different conclusions about the lack of participation beyond the “spring slump.” Many community college students are juggling multiple responsibilities both inside and outside of school and, therefore, may not have wanted to make time for the two required interviews for this study. For example, in their IdEx journals, many of the non-participant students wrote about feeling stressed trying to maintain balance between work and school. Many of these students lamented working over 20 hours per week while trying to complete their course work. In addition to concerns about life/school/work balance, many of the non-participants were concerned predominantly with meeting their educational goals, almost all of which were couched in the performance language. For example, students often wrote about getting good grades, making their parents happy, or keeping up with their friends who attend 4-year colleges and universities.

It is clear that many community college students have limited time and are driven by performance relative to others (i.e. wanting to graduate with friends) and by external rewards (i.e. getting A’s). Therefore, it could be argued that some students did not participate in this study because there was no reward for participation (i.e. no grade, no extra credit), the study did not help them reach their graduation goals, and it possibly interfered with their desire for more balance in their lives (i.e. they did not want to add another activity to their already-full plate). Therefore, we could assume that some of the students who did not participate might be students who were motivated by performance goals and/or did not see the value of participating relative to the perceived cost of participating.
As mentioned, three students stopped attending the course by Week 4 and never returned. Several attempts were made not only to ask them to be in the study but also to encourage them to return to class. Unfortunately, those students never responded. The remaining students were only moderately engaged in the class in terms of participation, submitting assignments, and completing the IdEx assignments throughout the semester. In terms of the IdEx assignments, one student only completed 4 journals (28.5%), and the other student completed 8 journals (57%). For both students, the journals they did complete did not really show any sophisticated exploration. Thus, it could be argued that there might be a relationship between a lack of engagement with the IdEx assignments and with the class in general, which could explain not wanting to participate in a study that will ask them to elaborate on their experiences in the very writing class that they are not all that interested in to begin with.

In this dissertation, I present six cases among these participating students. These six were selected purposefully to reflect diversity of students’ demographic characteristics on age, races/ethnicity, and sex (see Table 1); but, more importantly for the current study, we selected these six cases since they collectively reflect the diversity of experiences and processes manifesting across all of the participants. The comparative analysis of these six cases allowed for comprehensive and meaningful conceptualization of the identity exploration and motivation processes in the entire set of data (i.e., data saturation).
Table 1
Participant Demographic Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Race</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anna</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elizabeth</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seojun</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Asian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jason</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jessica</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Latina</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deja</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Black</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Research Design

Design-Based Research. The methodological approach undertaken in this dissertation is design-based research. Recently, many education researchers have taken to conducting design-based (iterative) research in real time and real contexts with the goals of contributing simultaneously to both improving practices and to developing theoretical knowledge in the field (Holter & Frabut, 2012; Mills, 2011 cited in Hine, 2013). For example, Kaplan, Katz, and Flum (2012) argued that motivation research in educational settings needs to extend beyond the traditional methods (i.e. experimental design, correlational research) typically associated with psychological and educational research, and that educational settings are complex systems that lend themselves to research “integrated within the educational practice itself” (Kaplan, Katz, and Flum, 2012, p. 181) such as design-based research and action research in order to investigate the relationship between those practices and people’s motivational processes, while addressing theoretical, methodological, practical, and moral challenges.
Design-based research works to develop deeper theoretical understandings of a practice-oriented educational issue. It does this by investigating and trying to intervene through specific actions in particular processes within an authentic educational context. The investigative process is iterative. The findings in one iteration of the study lead to a deeper theoretical understanding of the issue, which leads to redesign of the practice and then to further investigation of the process. Most importantly, perhaps, is that design-based research is “practice-based.” That is, the results of design-based research have immediate practical implications and applications for practitioners (Kaplan, Katz, and Flum, 2012).

Specific to research on instructional practices in developmental writing courses, there is support for the use of design-based research. For example, one of the most frequently cited studies in developmental writing research is Macarthur and Philippakos’s (2013) work on self-regulated learning strategies in a community college developmental writing course. In this study, the researchers used design-based research to create a self-regulated learning curriculum in the writing course. After gathering feedback from instructors and students, the researchers modified the curriculum and added more professional development for faculty and, for students, more time spent on writing in the classroom. Action research is noteworthy for its inclusion of all stakeholders in the research and implementation processes as a means of affecting practical change in real time and in real contexts.

Because this research study focuses on identity and motivation in educational settings, it is appropriate to use a methodology that captures individuals’ experience in situ when researching these complex and contextualized constructs. In this case, in situ is in my developmental writing courses. Because MCCC does not offer many sections of developmental writing courses, often I am the only professor teaching developmental courses in a given semester. Therefore, in order to get an accurate picture of developmental students at MCCC, my courses had to be included in the research. Since
my aim as a teacher/researcher is to improve educational experiences for all students at MCCC, particularly developmental students, it is important for me to conduct research within the specific developmental classroom context.

*Qualitative Research.* This study aims to understand students’ specific, subjective, and unique experiences within a developmental writing course that includes an identity exploration component. In order to capture students’ complex and contextualized motivational and identity processes through their subjective experiences, qualitative methods are necessary. In this study, I followed the essential characteristics of qualitative research (Creswell, 2014) that are needed to conduct a study such as this: I observed students in their educational environment (i.e. the developmental writing class), used multiple sources of data (i.e. observations, interviews, and documents), and reported data as a “holistic account” or a “complex picture” (Creswell, p. 186, 2014) of the salient issues that students experience in the developmental writing classroom. The study employed the DSMRI constructs as an organizing framework to describe and evaluate students’ phenomenological experiences in this course.

There is substantial support for using this methodology when studying developmental writing students. Research on developmental writing students and courses, particularly on pedagogical approaches in the developmental classroom, has often used a qualitative approach (e.g., Callahan and Chumney, 2009; Macarthur and Philippakos, 2013; Perun, 2015; Street, 2005). This research approach has been used to gauge developmental students’ motivation in a developmental course (e.g., Macarthur and Philippakos, 2013), students’ identity development within a developmental course (e.g., Street, 2005), and students’ experiences with different types of instruction (e.g., Callahan and Chumney, 2009; Perun, 2015). As can be seen in the literature and in the current study herein, this methodology allows us to see the complex and unique experiences of these students without reducing students to uni-dimensional variables.
Course Design

Developmental Writing at MCCC – The Early Years. When I first started teaching at MCCC, the developmental courses were taught strictly using the aforementioned skills-based approach. The courses focused on basic sentence and paragraph writing, with emphasis on grammar, punctuation, spelling, vocabulary, and basic organizational principles (i.e. transition words). The courses did not include any reading or research components. The writing prompts were strictly personal and did not encourage much critical thinking or synthesis of sources (i.e. Who is your best friend and why? Describe your favorite room in your house. If you were a superhero, what would be your superpower and why?).

Not only were students bored by the “kill and drill” of grammar, spelling, and vocabulary lessons, but many were insulted by the writing prompts themselves. Upon getting the “Who is your best friend and why?” prompt, one student said, “I wrote about my best friend in the third grade.” I knew I had to change the course to engage students’ interests but also facilitate authentic and meaningful writing experiences that students would find useful in an academic setting.

Thus, I developed a new iteration of the developmental writing course. First, I instituted a theme for the course (gender and pop culture) and added an analytical component that prompts students to think critically about the world around them via textual analysis. I also changed the course activities and assignments so that students read more and worked on essay writing and grammar together, instead of merely memorizing grammar rules that often seem inapplicable in isolation. These initial curricular changes were designed to make the course more aligned with college-level expectations, which would also enhance students’ cultural capital, as they would have the “assets” deemed necessary for academic success in post-secondary education (Callahan & Chumney, 2009).
I also changed the goals of the course to enhance students’ self-efficacy, sense of safety, and connectedness to other students, all of which are important components of motivation processes (Bruning, Dempsey, McKim, & Kauffman, 2013; Ryan & Deci, 2000; Kaplan, Sinai, & Flum, 2014). To that end, I taught the first unit as a supervised, collaborative unit wherein the class read and wrote together in small groups and as a whole class for the first four weeks of the semester. Students were grouped randomly, and the students had new partners for each part of the essay writing process. I also modeled writing practice for students that began with class discussion/brainstorming, selecting the best evidence, organizing evidence, drafting, reviewing each other’s work, and revising. This change was designed to scaffold for students an approach for writing with the aim of helping them to develop or enhance their own self-regulated writing strategies.

I taught the course in this way for several years, and the student success outcomes did improve: The success rate for the developmental courses increased from 60% to 66%, and the students who completed the developmental courses were passing the college-level writing course at approximately the same rate as students who placed directly into college-level courses (~60%). While the success outcomes improved, many students continued to drop out of the course midway through the semester; others failed the course; and those who did pass did not always register for English 101 or, in some cases, any other college courses in the subsequent semester. Developmental students in general continued to be the group least likely to register for future courses, complete a program or certificate, graduate from the college, or transfer to a four-year institution. Thus, it was clear that curricular change alone would not be the panacea for all developmental students’ writing and academic struggles. Students needed to be motivated to use these curricular tools. They had to see these tools as relevant to their lives and experiences, and they need agency to make these tools their own.
With the help of my advisor – an expert in motivation and identity research - I redesigned the class yet again. The course content remained the same generally, but an identity exploration component was added to facilitate connection between the academic content and students’ sense of self. This most recent curricular redesign underwent two iterations described below as Phase 1 (fall 2016) and Phase 2 (spring 2017).

The study herein examines students’ experiences in three developmental writing courses - one course in the fall of 2016 and two courses in the spring of 2017 - that underwent redesign to combine the aforementioned curricular changes with an identity exploration component. The fall developmental course served as a “pilot.” From the research gathered on the pilot semester, the identity exploration activities were adjusted in a second iteration in the spring semester. The following sections explain the academic content for the three units of the course, the identity exploration interventions within each unit, and how the interventions apply the PRESS principles of promoting identity exploration in the curriculum.

**Course Redesign with PRESS Intervention (Phase 1)**

*Unit 1 – Learning General Essay Structure to Discuss Representations of Women in Fairytales.* This unit spanned the first six weeks of the semester. The academic content of this unit involved an introduction to the course’s critical theme, lessons on essay structure, readings and discussions related to the first gender topic within the larger theme (the presentation of female gender roles in fairytales), distribution of the first essay assignment (analysis of the portrayal of female gender roles in a Disney princess movie), in-class collaborative writing, writing workshops, and student-teacher conferences. To enhance student engagement with the academic content, students completed identity exploration activities that applied the four principles of the PRESS model before, during, and after the unit. These activities aimed to facilitate self-relevance by allowing students to engage in thinking about and expressing in writing an important self-aspect; promote
sense of safety by working together as a class to tackle difficult reading assignments, allowing students to choose what to write about, and share their ideas with their peers; trigger identity exploration by encouraging students to think about their gender identity in ways they most likely have not; and scaffold identity exploration by guiding them in such thinking and reflecting.

Prior to instituting the PRESS model in my classes, I did not encourage students to think about their gender identity before we began the first unit. Thus, students did not have the proper scaffolds in place to make connections between their own lives, experiences, and ontological beliefs and the assigned course readings and writing assignments. Since gender analysis is a new topic for many students, I realized that it would benefit students to engage in their own gender identity exploration before they embarked on the academic content in the first unit.

Using the components of the PRESS model as a guide for the activity, students were asked to write a short paragraph explaining their own gender identity (i.e. Which - if any - gender do you most identify with? By what criteria do you define or characterize that gender? How does your gender enable or hinder what you can do in your life? How did you come to formulate these ideas about your gender?). This activity aimed to create a sense of safety by using a short, low-stakes writing assignment as a way to connect the academic content and course theme to their own lives, experiences, and ontological beliefs while also providing a scaffold for upcoming reading and writing assignments. Considering that gender could be a sensitive and controversial topic for some people, students were encouraged to share their writing with each other in order to further develop a sense of safety within the class. In turn, the class discussion aimed to trigger identity exploration by having the students engage with a diversity of experiences and ontological beliefs around gender and consider their meaning to themselves. In facilitating the discussion, I provided scaffolding to students’ identity exploration through reflective social interaction.
The students then read Marcia Lieberman’s “Someday My Prince Will Come: Female Acculturation Through the Fairytale,” which is a feminist critique of fairytales. The article is difficult for many developmental writing students who tend to have weak reading skills. The article’s main argument is complex, and many students are unfamiliar with gender analysis. Thus, to create a sense of safety, I used a “jigsaw” technique for reading this article. First, we read the article’s introduction and first two body paragraphs as a class, and we discussed important aspects of the article as we read (i.e. thesis, evidence, transitions). Once I modeled how to read this type of article, I assigned students to groups, and each group was responsible for reading two paragraphs, analyzing those paragraphs in accordance with the model we established in class, and then teaching the other groups about their assigned section of the essay.

After they read and discussed the essay, they were instructed to write a short paragraph that asked them relate the author’s argument to their own ontological beliefs about gender roles articulated in the previous writing assignment (i.e. How does the author’s views about gender roles align with or diverge from your own beliefs? Did the article make you think differently about your own gender or about your own beliefs on the ways gender roles are constructed? Were there any specific ideas that you found interesting, disturbing, difficult, thought-provoking? ). As a class, students shared their writing as well as their opinions on the jigsaw activity. In having students discuss both their written thoughts on the article and the learning process involved in reading this first article, I aimed to create a sense of safety in the class through group discussion, trigger identity exploration via discussion of the subject matter with diverse peers, and scaffold exploration of the targeted identities of writer and student.

Students then watched the Disney movie Frozen and were assigned an essay prompt that asked them to examine the female gender values in the movie relative to the values described in Lieberman’s essay on fairytales that they had just read. Prior to using the PRESS and DSMRI models, I did not include any activities that explored students’
ontological beliefs or self-perceptions before we started the first writing assignment. Asking students to think about themselves as writers before beginning the first writing assignment was an important step in scaffolding exploration around the domain of writing. Thus, before beginning the first essay assignment in this iteration of the course, students were asked to explain/describe their identities as writers (and writing students) in similar ways as described in the activity above (i.e. What do you think it means to be “a writer”? By what criteria do you define or characterize “a writer”? What are your beliefs about writing? What are your goals for writing? What do you do to be “a writer”? Do you think of yourself as a writer? Why or why not?) Again, students shared their writing with the class. Similarly, this activity aimed to trigger identity exploration by encouraging students to think about their own writing identity in ways that they have likely not done before, scaffold identity exploration by providing prompting questions that give them a framework by which to analyze their writing identity, promote self-relevance by having students think about and explain salient self-aspects regarding their role as writers, and facilitate a sense of safety by acknowledging all students’ views about writing and encouraging students to share their thoughts about writing with their peers.

For the first essay assignment, students worked in small groups to brainstorm, outline, and write the essay. Groups wrote one paragraph per class period, and after each paragraph was submitted, we would conduct in-class writing workshops so that students could offer feedback to each group. After each workshop, we would debrief on what we learned about writing that day and how the class workshop shaped our ontological beliefs about writing and being writers.

Since the initial course redesign several years ago, I have always incorporated collaborative writing into the first unit. However, I rarely asked students to reflect on this activity in relation to their identities as writers or students. In order to connect course content to students’ lives, experiences, and ontological beliefs, I instituted the post-workshop debrief. This created a sense of safety in the classroom since students were
able to explore their writing identities by discussing writing together as a class in a low-stakes situation (i.e. no grades). The workshops aimed to scaffold identity exploration in that students used these in-class writing discussions like role-playing activities wherein they could think about and modify their ontological beliefs, goals, self-perceptions, and actions in relation to writing and being an engaged student in class.

Prior to instituting the PRESS and DSMRI models into my classes, I often assigned post-essay reflective assignments that simply asked students to explain their writing practices and how they would apply those practices in future assignments. While that type of reflection asked students to examine actions and goals for writing, it did not address students’ self-perceptions or ontological beliefs about writing, which are integral components of students’ role identity and motivational processes. In this iteration of the course redesign, students completed a reflective writing assignment that asked them to explain their writing practice for the first essay assignment guided by the four components of the DSMRI model. This reflective assignment aimed to target students’ writing and college students’ identities with the long-term goal of scaffolding identity exploration that they could apply to other role identities that are important to them. Additionally, this writing activity aimed to trigger identity exploration by having students reflect on their own writing practice and their own ontological beliefs about writing in ways that will likely be novel to them, scaffold identity exploration by providing students a four-component model with which to examine their identities, promote self-relevance by encouraging students to think about their views on the current writing assignment while also prompting them to look forward to other writing assignments and other courses that will be important to them and their lives as students, and promote a sense of safety by acknowledging all students’ views on the first essay assignment and encouraging sharing of those views with instructor and peers.

In this reflective assignment, I used DSMRI to create a scaffold for students’ identity exploration by asking them to explain at least one salient belief about writing,
one salient self-perception of themselves as writers, one salient writing action they have taken or will take in the future, and one salient goal for writing. Some elaborated on this reflection by also explaining writing practices that were most meaningful to them, what they learned about gender roles from these writing practices, what they learned about themselves as writers through these practices, what they learned about themselves as students, and how this unit could help them with the second essay and writing for other courses.

In addition to the short writing assignments that relate to specific aspects of the unit, students were instructed to keep a daily reflective journal that asked them to explain what they learned about reading and writing that day, how the lessons relate to their lives (i.e. other classes, careers), and what they learned about themselves. These journals encouraged students to move beyond relating the course content only to the targeted identities (writer and student) and reflect on the course content in relation to any relevant aspect of their lives that they deemed important. This daily activity aimed to promote self-relevance by asking students to examine aspects of the course in relation to their own self-perceptions, goals, ontological beliefs, and action possibilities; trigger identity exploration by having students wrestle with multiple, evolving, and, sometimes contradictory, perspectives on issues salient to their self-aspects; scaffold identity exploration by providing students with an way of examining and connecting their various role identities; promote a sense of safety by fostering relatedness through students engaging and sharing their thoughts and writings with the teacher and other students.

Unit 2 – Using General Essay Structure to Discuss Representations of Masculinity in Superhero Films. This unit spanned four weeks. The academic content of this unit involved a review of the essay structure and writing principles and strategies established in the first unit, an introduction to the next topic within the larger critical theme (male gender roles in superhero films), readings and discussions that deal with masculinity broadly and portrayals of masculinity in films more specifically, distribution
of the second essay assignment (presentations of masculinity in a Marvel superhero film), independent in-class writing, and student-teacher conferences. Similar to modifications I made to the first unit, I added or adjusted previously developed class activities for Unit 2 based upon the principles of the PRESS and DSMRI models.

To facilitate and enhance student engagement with the academic content, students engaged in identity exploration activities that applied the four principles of the PRESS model before, during, and after the unit. Students engaged in identity exploration activities that aimed to facilitate self-relevance by encouraging students to think about and express in writing their own personal views of gender identity, prompt sense of safety by allowing students to consider their own ways of understanding masculinity and share and compare those perspectives with their peers, trigger identity exploration by encouraging students to think about how they interpret gender roles and expectations in ways they most likely have not, and scaffold identity exploration by guiding them in thinking and reflecting with the homework prompts. Prior to starting the second unit, students were asked to find an image that represents their personal view of masculinity. From those images, students were prompted to pick one and write a short paragraph about why that image represents their definition of masculinity. Students discussed their responses in class. After reading the three assigned articles about masculinity, the students wrote a short paragraph that asked them to relate the authors’ definitions of masculinity to their own definition based on the previous activity (i.e. Are the authors’ views of masculinity similar or different from your own? Did the articles make you think differently about masculinity? Was there any specific sentence(s) that you found interesting, disturbing, difficult, thought-provoking?). Students shared their writing with the class.

Before beginning the second essay assignment, students were prompted to think about their identities as writers and writing students, which aimed to trigger identity exploration by encouraging students to think about their own writing identity in ways that
they have likely not done before (i.e. through a visual representation), scaffold identity exploration by providing a creative process by which to analyze their writing identity, promote self-relevance by having students think about and explain, both visually and in writing, salient self-aspects regarding their role as writers, and facilitate a sense of safety by providing students multiple ways to express themselves (i.e. visually, in writing, and in class discussion), acknowledging all students’ views about writing, and encouraging students to share their thoughts about writing with their peers. Similar to the aforementioned activity, students were asked to bring in an image that represents their perception of themselves as writers/writing students (note: this assignment is intentionally vague to see how students interpret the assignment and what students will actually bring in as the representative image). Students wrote a short paragraph explaining the image and how it relates to their perception of themselves as writers and writing students. Students were asked to share their images and writing with the class.

Once students finished their essays, they completed a reflective writing assignment that asked them to explain their writing practices for the second essay assignment guided by the four components of the DSMRI model. This reflective assignment aimed to trigger identity exploration by having students reflect on their own writing practice and their own ontological beliefs about writing in ways that will likely be novel to them, scaffold identity exploration by providing students a four-component model with which to examine their identities, promote self-relevance by encouraging students to think about their views on the current writing assignment but also prompting them to look forward to other writing assignments and other courses that will be important to them and their lives as students, and promote a sense of safety by acknowledging all students’ views on the second essay assignment and encouraging sharing of those views with instructor and peers. In their post-essay reflective assignment, students were asked to explain at least one salient belief about writing, one salient self-perception of themselves as writers, one salient writing action they have taken or will
take in the future, and one salient goal for writing. Some elaborated on this reflection by also explaining which writing practices were most meaningful to them, what they learned about gender roles from these writing practices, what they learned about themselves as writers through these practices, what they learned about themselves as students, and how this second unit could help them with the final essay and writing for other courses.

Similar to the previous unit, students were also asked to keep a daily reflective journal that detailed what they learned about reading and writing, how the lessons relate to their lives (i.e. other classes, careers), and what they learned about themselves. This daily activity aimed to promote self-relevance by having students examine course material in relation to their self-perceptions, goals, ontological beliefs, and action possibilities; trigger identity exploration by asking students to wrestle with multiple, evolving, and, sometimes contradictory, perspectives on issues salient to their self-aspects; scaffold identity exploration by providing students with an way of exploring, examining and connecting their various role identities; promote a sense of safety by fostering relatedness through students engaging and sharing their thoughts and writings with the teacher and other students.

Unit 3 – Choose Your Own Adventure: Using Essays to Write A Gender Analysis on a Self-Selected Film. This unit spanned the last four weeks of the semester. The academic content of this unit involved a recap of the overall themes and discussions in the previous two units, review of essay structure and writing strategies, distribution of the third essay assignment (a gender analysis of a film of your choice), in-class writing, and student-teacher conferences. To facilitate and enhance student engagement with the academic content, students completed identity exploration activities that applied the four principles of the PRESS model before, during, and after the unit. Similar to the first two units, I maintained most of the academic content from the initial course redesign; however, I enhanced the content by including identity exploration activities guided by the PRESS and DSMRI models.
The following two writing activities aimed to facilitate self-relevance by encouraging students to use their own writing to think about and express in writing their own personal views of gender identity, promote sense of safety by providing students with a space in which to share their work and views with the instructor and peers, trigger identity exploration by encouraging students to think about how their own writing could be used to think about gender identity and writing identity in ways they most likely have not, and scaffold identity exploration by guiding them in thinking and reflecting. In the first activity, students were asked to think about their two previous essays and write a short paragraph explaining which of the two essays had the most impact on their views about gender identity and why. Students shared their writing with the class. In the second activity, students were asked to think about their previous two essays and write a short paragraph explaining which essay had the most impact on themselves as writers and why. Again, students shared their writing with the class.

Once students finished the final essay assignment, they completed a reflective writing assignment that asked them to explain their writing practices for the final essay assignment guided by the four components of the DSMRI model. This assignment aimed to trigger identity exploration by having students reflect on their own writing practice and their own ontological beliefs about writing in ways that will likely be new to them, scaffold identity exploration by providing students with a specific framework with which to examine their identities, promote self-relevance by encouraging students to think about their views on the current writing assignment but also prompting them to look forward to other potential writing assignments and future courses, and create a sense of safety by acknowledging all students’ views on the final essay assignment and encouraging sharing those views with instructor and peers. For the final reflective assignment, students were asked to explain at least one salient belief about writing, one salient self-perception of themselves as writers, one salient writing action they have taken or will take in the future, and one salient goal for writing. Some elaborated on this reflection by also explaining
which writing practices were most meaningful to them, what they learned about gender roles from these writing practices, what they learned about themselves as writers through these practices, what they learned about themselves as students, and how this third unit could help them with writing for other courses.

In accordance with the previous units, students were asked to keep a daily reflective journal in which they explained what they have learned about reading and writing, how the lessons relate to their lives (i.e. other classes, careers), and what they learned about themselves. This daily activity aimed to promote self-relevance by asking students to examine aspects of the course in relation to their own self-perceptions, goals, ontological beliefs, and action possibilities; trigger identity exploration by having students wrestle with multiple, evolving, and, sometimes contradictory, perspectives on issues salient to their self-aspects; scaffold identity exploration by providing students with an way of examining and connecting their various role identities; promote a sense of safety by fostering relatedness through students engaging and sharing their thoughts and writings with the teacher and other students.

Course Redesign with PRESS Intervention (Phase 2)

Debriefs with students in class and in end-of-semester interviews, professional conversations with other English faculty, personal reflections on the fall semester, and discussions with my advisor – a theoretical expert with experience in applying the PRESS model in academic contexts - led me to redesign some of the content and data collection methods in the spring semester. While the primary objectives for the course, the course theme, and the reading and writing materials remained the same in the spring semester, the Identity Exploration activities and the data collection procedures changed to enhance both the student and faculty experience in the developmental writing course.

The fall semester students explained that the daily journal exercises and some of the IdEx assignments overlapped with each other. Students said they felt that they were
repeating themselves in journals and in IdEx assignments, and they did not feel as though completing two types of reflections encouraged them to explore their identities any more or less than if they had only completed the journals or the IdEx assignments by themselves. Therefore, I eliminated the daily reflective journals in the spring semester, and increased the number of IdEx assignments (weekly). This change was an attempt to enhance the triggering principle of the PRESS curriculum. According to this principle, students engage in deeper identity exploration when they experience relevant differences in their beliefs and/or novel experiences in the course. If students feel as though they are repeating the same in-class activities and same IdEx assignments, then it is likely that their sense of novelty, difference, or even interest will wane, potentially resulting in a decrease in identity exploration and change or their motivation to engage in the course altogether. Therefore, in an effort to improve exploration and change, it was important to revise the IdEx assignments to occur less often and to be unique each week.

The second modification came from a discussion of my research with one of my colleagues. From our conversation, I realized that my IdEx assignments did not properly scaffold identity exploration in terms of encouraging students to think and write about the connections between being a college student, being a writer, and other important role identities in their lives. Therefore, I changed all of the IdEx prompts to include more pointed questions that prompted students to think about their ontological beliefs and values, as well as what it means to be a student and a writer. If the goal of the intervention is to enhance students’ motivation to write, participate in class, and engage in positive academic behaviors, the IdEx assignments should, first and foremost, target the specific role identities that are most relevant to the writing course and to the academic environment in general: writing role identity and student role identity. However, through facilitating relevance, triggering identity exploration, creating a sense of safety to explore, and scaffolding identity exploration of the targeted identities via the academic
content of the course, students can use these tools to more thoroughly explore other RIs in addition to the targeted RIs.

The final modification was made mostly for my benefit as the instructor/researcher. In the fall semester, students completed their reflective journals and IdEx assignments in physical notebooks. Thus, I was burdened by carrying around students’ notebooks (one student kept his journal in a 5-subject notebook, which weighed about two pounds by itself!) to and from class every day. Also, at the end of every class, I read their journals and then transcribed their responses (often fighting to understand subpar handwriting) into my notes to read and analyze later. It also took a significant amount of time to not only write up my class observations but also transcribe reflective assignments into an Excel spreadsheet every day. By mid-semester, I was exhausted. I also realized that no faculty would want to do this kind of work every day in addition to their regular faculty responsibilities, and without faculty buy-in, new initiatives are unlikely to work. Therefore, I decided to develop a less cumbersome approach to both the IdEx assignments and to the data collection methods in the spring semester. Therefore, I moved the IdEx assignments and reflective writing assignments to Blackboard.

Using Blackboard’s journal capability allowed me more flexibility in data collection. First, I was able to post all journal prompts at the beginning of the semester and open each one on a given date; this saved me time and energy throughout the semester. Additionally, students could complete the Blackboard journals on their own time and on a platform of their choosing (i.e. computer, phone, tablet), and I did not have to use class time for students to complete these assignments. Another benefit was that students could actually type their responses, which meant that I did not have to interpret handwriting, and they could use spell check and grammar check to help themselves if they chose to (though many did not). The journal function also has a comment capability, so I could post a response directly on their journal entries; students could read my comments and, similarly, would not have to fight to read my messy handwriting. Last, the
technology allowed me to copy and paste students’ responses into my Excel spreadsheet so that I did not have to transcribe their work. All of this made data collection much easier in the spring semester.

In the second iteration, I assigned grades to the Blackboard journals. The journal responses were not graded on content: students earned two points for completing the journal each week and zero points if they did not complete the journal. I assigned a point value to the journals as an incentive to complete the journals. Even if students elected not to participate in the study, I still wanted ALL students to complete the journals because these journals are beneficial for me as an instructor. Thus, I used points as a way of holding students accountable for completing this task. However, the assigned point values were not large enough to significantly positively or negatively affect students’ overall grade in the course.

As mentioned previously, the course materials did not change in Phase 2; however, adjustments were made to the content and frequency of the IdEx assignments throughout the semester. In Phase 2, students completed an IdEx assignment at the end of each week. These assignments focused more on synthesizing students’ identities as writers and college students, as well as encouraging students to connect class content to their lives both inside and outside of college. Appendices B and C contain the IdEx prompts from both fall and spring iterations.

**Data Collection**

Data on the design for promoting students’ identity exploration and on students’ experiences with this curriculum were collected in four ways: (1) instructor’s planning and design notes, (2) students’ writing, (3) instructor-researcher participant-observations of educational occurrences and students’ social interactions within the classroom, and (4) interviews with students at the end of the semester and in the subsequent semester.
In terms of participant data, I collected students’ writing (i.e. identity exploration writing assignments, reflective journal writing, and their formal essay assignments), in-class participation, and their responses within the two scheduled interviews. The participant interviews took place on the MCCC campus at the end of the fall and spring semesters. Prior to each of the interviews, students were reminded of the project’s objectives and provided with a copy of the consent form for their review. Interviews were recorded using a digital recording device that was downloaded into a secure, password-protected computer. Appendix A contains the Interview Protocol.

I conducted in-class observations throughout the semesters. In terms of instructor data, class design and research journals were used. Throughout the semester, I took notes on general education occurrences in the classroom (i.e. class participation, collaborative work), students’ engagement with writing and writing-related tasks (i.e. writing workshops, peer review), and discussion of identity exploration assignments. I recorded observation notes after each class meeting.

To insure confidentiality, I stored all signed consent forms in a locked file cabinet, and they will remain there for five years. I removed all identifying information from the IdEx assignments, interview transcripts, and researcher notes. Participants were identified only by a numElizabethl code I created. Participant names and assigned codes were initially recorded in a locked Excel file stored on a password-protected computer and have since been moved to a thumb drive stored in a secure location and deleted from the computer. All additional data was coded and likewise saved on a thumb drive and immediately deleted from the computer. In the event of publication of this research, pseudonyms will be used for the names of both the institution and the subjects.

**Data Analysis**

Data were transcribed and coded according to the components in DSMRI models. The DSMRI is comprised of four contextually constructed, interdependent components
that provide the foundation for motivation: ontological and epistemological beliefs; purpose and goals; self-perceptions and self-definitions; and perceived action possibilities. In addition to the four categories of the DSMRI, codes were generated for structural elements of the participant’s role identity (e.g., harmony, tension), for emotions, and for manifested change in content and structure of the role identities.

Data was analyzed inductively and deductively, using Kaplan’s (2014) “Analyzing Oral or Written Narratives with the DSMRI Codebook.” First, I read each text (i.e. students’ writings, teacher’s design notes, teacher’s observations, and interview transcripts) several times to become comfortable with the contents and look for emerging themes. From these texts and transcripts, I identified the role identities expressed, beginning with the targeted role identities of writer and student.

I also noted any other prominently featured role identities (i.e. mother, sibling, dancer). According to the DSMRI, each person has many role identities that are variably related to one another and to the targeted role identities of student and writer. Some participants, in fact, made conscious connections between their student and writing RIs and other meaningful RIs (e.g., mother, sibling, dancer). Nevertheless, not all participants did this; thus, I do not have data from those participants who may have made connections across role identities but did not express them in their IdEx assignments, journals, class discussions, or interviews. However, I analyzed connections between participants’ writing and student RIs and other meaningful RIs only when the participants directly referenced these relationships.

I conducted an analysis of each role separately, starting with the targeted roles of writer and student. For each role, I focused on examining the indicators of the four components of the DSMRI model for each participant (see Appendix D for code scheme). I also examined the level of sophistication of the exploration and alignment/misalignment between components. In a narrative, I summarized the content (i.e. ontological beliefs, perceptions, goals, and actions), structure (i.e. alignment/misalignment between
components; sophistication of exploration; level of commitment to the content), and process (i.e. change, questions, exploration) for each role identity and across role identities for each student.

In addition to analyzing students’ identity exploration, I also evaluated each participant’s final essay assignment for the course. The final essay assignment was chosen for analysis specifically because it was the assignment in which students worked most independently (relative to the other two essay assignments), and it was also the only formal writing assignment in which students could select their own topics. In terms of analysis, I considered the final essay assignment to be part of the “action possibilities” component of the DSMRI model. To this end, I examined students’ writing decisions as actions that illustrate one component of their writing/academic identities. I used Hyland and Tse’s (2004) metadiscourse model to evaluate students’ writing behavior in two ways: interactive and interactional. Interactive discourse is concerned with the writing decisions an author makes to help the reader move through a text (transition words, evidentials, frame markers, endophoric markers, code glosses). Interactional discourse is how the writer develops a relationship with the reader (hedges, boosters, attitude markers, self-mentions, and engagement markers). Both interactive and interactional discourses are strategies that are important in academic writing, as they represent ways in which writers establish, synthesize, and communicate knowledge to others (Dehkordi and Allami, 2012). Additionally, I used word count as another measure of students’ writing behavior. Word count has been found, in some instances, to predict exam performance, course performance, and overall level of “conscientiousness” (Carroll, 2007, p.235).

Students’ essays were coded for these components (see Appendix E), which further illuminated the ways in which the students manifest their writing role identity through their engagement (or not) with the reader.

Using the data gleaned from both the identity and essay analyses for each student, I then conducted cross-case comparisons. In looking at students’ experiences relative to
one another, I derived overall themes and insights to address the research questions regarding the students’ shared and unique identity and motivation processes in the context of this course and the role of the pedagogy in these processes.

Trustworthiness: Credibility, Transferability, Dependability, and Confirmability

The current study was guided by the interpretivist/constructivist paradigm, which holds a foundational assumption that research is a constructive process that aims to generate consensual understandings about the meaning of the data between researcher and audience. Since the data in this study are qualitative—students’ writings and interview narratives—the trustworthiness of the data, the analysis, and the interpretation is established through indicators of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1986).

Credibility is established through extensive engagement with the research context and participants, consistent observation of the context participants, peer debriefing, negative case analysis, and member checks (Lincoln & Guba, 1986). All of these criteria were used within my study. Because the study is situated in my own classes, I had consistent and deep interactions with the participants throughout the study. I also maintained an observation journal that was updated at the end of each class meeting. My observation notes, as well as participants’ journals, writing assignments, and interviews, were shared with my advisor, who is an expert in the areas of motivation and identity, throughout the research process. We consistently debriefed on the data throughout the research process, and my advisor served as an auditor of the data, their collection, the analysis, and the interpretation. Additionally, the analysis involved an intentional negative case analysis, which is particularly crucial in design-based research, as it is essential for improving the practice through the design iterations. The study also incorporated triangulation and member checking. The study contained multiple data types and points for each participant that allowed us to check the findings across different
sources and time. Finally, I conducted a version of member checks through discussing the findings with the participants as they emerged as part of the research-teaching process, and in the end-of-semester interviews, in which I sought to insure that I was accurately capturing their experiences in the class.

Establishing transferability entails providing thick descriptions of the methods and results (Lincoln & Guba, 1986) that can be understood and adapted by researchers who may want to replicate the study in the future in a different context. To meet this objective, the data contained herein was described in detail in the following ways: the history of developmental writing at MCCC was explained to create context for the course redesign; each iteration of the course redesign was explained in detail; and, the data were provided in descriptive narratives for each participant.

To establish dependability and credibility, interpretivist researchers use an external audit system. In the case of this study, I relied on my adviser as my external auditor. He was a consistent presence throughout the research process. My adviser helped to develop both the identity intervention iterations, guided my data collection, and provided consistent feedback on my coding, results, and interpretation to insure quality and accuracy.

**Position Statement**

There are two main concerns that arise from my positionality in this study. First, I am including my own developmental writing students in this study. This may influence my ability to objectively analyze the data. However, working under the supervision of my advisor helped to insure accuracy and honesty in analysis. Second, I have established ontological beliefs about the way developmental courses should be taught. I am opposed to the skills-based model of developmental education, and I see the limitations of using the critical approaches, process-oriented, and contextualized approaches in isolation.
Thus, I am biased toward my own pedagogical approach as the “right” one. Again, my advisor helped to keep these preferences in check.
CHAPTER 4
RESULTS

This chapter provides detailed analysis of six participants’ experiences in developmental writing courses that included an identity exploration intervention. The first three cases include participants from the initial course redesign implementation, and the final three cases include participants from the second iteration of the course redesign.

The participants’ narratives are divided into sections based on the components of the DSMRI: ontological beliefs, goals, action possibilities, and self-perceptions. Two time points within the course further structure these sections: The four DSMRI components are analyzed in the first half of the semester (Weeks 1-7) and in the second half of the semester (Weeks 8-16), with analysis provided at the mid-term and end-of-semester to identity exploration, manifestation of the PRESS principles, and transformations (if any) in components of the targeted RIs across time. Finally, each narrative includes analysis of the participant’s final essay from the course in order to illustrate the ways in which identity exploration and development over time can manifest in the writerly decisions and actions made within a formal writing assignment.

Anna

Anna was a 19 year old, white female who engaged in fairly sophisticated identity exploration throughout the semester and underwent a significant and positive transformation in her writing identity from defining writing in strictly performance/procedural terms to construing it as a symbol of authority, freedom, and self-expression, and relating it to other aspects of her life. Analysis of Anna’s IdEx assignments, daily journals, end-of-semester interview, and final essay assignment

---

1 Pseudonyms have been used to protect students’ privacy
2 The direct quotations included in the results section are copied verbatim from students’ journals, IdEx assignments, and final essay.
indicated that Anna’s exploration of her writing identity was complex. She often had conflicting ontological beliefs, goals, and self-perceptions, but throughout the semester, she worked through these vacillating components of her role identity and experienced positive change that manifested in adopting constructive writing action possibilities. Prompted by the academic content in the course, the IdEx interventions, and her journal writing, she had, by the end of the semester, developed new ways of perceiving herself as a writer and developed new actions as a writer. Her academic work showed marked improvement, illustrated by her final essay assignment, in which she displayed appropriate and sophisticated academic writing actions that aligned with the other components of her writing RI.

**Analysis of data from course weeks 1 - 7**

*Ontological beliefs.* Anna’s early IdEx assignments and reflective journals illustrated ontological beliefs about writing and writers that are similar to those found in the research literature on developmental students’ writing ontological beliefs—that writing means producing error-free texts and that bad writing is due to failing to follow the correct steps or not trying hard enough (Adler-Kassner, 1999). Anna’s ontological beliefs about writing at the beginning of the course were couched in foundational skills and procedural, rather than conceptual, terms. Accordingly, she believed that these foundational skills and procedures had to be mastered before she could consider herself a writer. These ontological beliefs manifested in the analysis of her journal, where, following an early class discussion on how to read and write well in college, she wrote, “I learned that in order to write well you need to read well such as understanding what your reading about…I just need to do it better” (Journal, 9/2/16).

Analysis of Anna’s IDEx assignments from the beginning of the semester corroborated her emphasis on general procedures and effort as the core of good writing. For example, in the third week assignment, she wrote, “Being a writer you must fully
understand what you wanna write about [and] are capable of transporting it into a paper. It means to not fail at grammar and spelling. My beliefs about writing is you need to understand American english and the questionable rules before you write or be a writer” (IdEx#3, 9/14/16).

Thus, analysis of both the IdEx assignments and the journals from the beginning of the semester illustrated Anna’s ontological beliefs about the importance of mastering the foundational skills (i.e. reading, grammar rules) for being a writer. Her belief that she just “need[s] to do it better” (Journal, 9/2/17) emphasized effort level as the reason for not being a good writer, which is a vague yet common refrain when developmental students are asked about their successes and failures in writing courses (Adler-Kasser, 1999).

However, Anna’s ontological beliefs about writing started to shift after the group writing activities. For example, by mid-semester, Anna’s ontological beliefs about improving her writing evolved from her previously held skills-based ontological beliefs to more sophisticated ontological beliefs concerning the development of writing strategies: “By brainstorming and outlining with the class it helped me to believe that outlining before writing the essay, that it can help to improve the class essay by identify the good points of the ‘soon to be’ essay” (Journal, 9/16/16). In this case, it appeared that Anna’s shift in ontological beliefs was the result of the socialization process of collaborative writing, not necessarily the result of deep exploration.

Goals. Anna acknowledged that she was “trying to be a writer” (IdEx #3, 9/14/16); but, that vague and general goal was almost the only explicit statement she made about purpose and goals. The only other goal-like statement that Anna made in her assignments or the journals early in the semester seemed to be aligned with her rudimentary ontological beliefs about good writing: “I would like to spill all of the things I think in my head unto a piece of pice” (IdEx #3, 9/14/16). While Anna did not share any specific goals for writing at the beginning of the unit, she did set a goal by the end of the
unit: “A goal of mine as a writer is to get stronger at my wording” (IdEx #4, 10/24/16). However, this relatively vague yet tangible goal did not appear to be aligned with her stated ontological beliefs within this same assignment concerning the importance of planning, organizing, drafting, and revising or about the need for increased effort to become a good writer.

**Action Possibilities.** Considering Anna’s lack of specific goals in the first half of the semester, it was not surprising that she did not articulate any clear action possibilities – general or otherwise – in her assignments or journals at this early time of the semester. The only action possibility that she stated was in reference to the role of reading in her development as a writer. Regarding this belief about becoming a better reader in order to be a better writer, she vaguely stated a general action: “I just need to do it better” (Journal, 9/2/16).

However, after the collaborative writing unit, Anna developed new action possibilities that aligned with some of the newly added ontological beliefs that she adopted at the mid-term. For example, in her reflection on the collaborative writing activity, Anna gained insights from the experience that aligned new ontological beliefs and action strategies with her goal of becoming a good writer: “This process made me knowledge that to become a good writer, I need to come up with the ideas step by step” (Journal, 9/16/16). Similarly, she elaborated on specific writing action possibilities that were triggered from the experiences of working on the first essay collaboratively: “[the activity] helped me to know how to organize my essay by finding the evidence and conclusion of each topic. This experience really helped me to identify what might be a good strategy to use for my upcoming essays” (Journal, 9/16/16). Thus, it appeared that the collaborative writing activities and reflection upon them did seem to work as an exploration scaffold, at least in terms of Anna’s exploration of her writing actions, which compared to the very beginning of the semester, evolved from little to no stated actions to actions that focused specifically on strategy.
Self-perceptions. Throughout the beginning of the course, Anna’s self-perceptions seemed to have been aligned with her stated ontological beliefs about writing, and not necessarily in adaptive ways. She perceived that she had not, to date, mastered foundational skills; thus, it was not surprising that she also did not consider herself to be a writer. Analysis of her assignments indicated that she had low self-efficacy: “but it just comes out wrong” (IdEx #3, 9/14/16). More comprehensively, Anna related her self-definition as “not a writer” to her low procedural knowledge and skills:

I don't think I'm a writer because I'm not capable of putting my words into clear sentences and coming from another state english isn't my best subject do to the complication and strategies it comes with such as rules in writing, grammar and why things are spelled the way they are (IdEx#3, 9/14/16).

Similar to the other components of Anna’s writing RI, a shift occurred in her self-perceptions following the collaborative writing unit. She headed into the mid-term with a positive self-perception: “I learned about myself that I'm not a bad writer after all” (IdEx#4, 10/24/16), which seemed to indicate that the course activities and reflections effectively prompted Anna to reconsider her thinking about writing in general and her self as a writer. As the other components evolved, so too did her self-perceptions.

Mid-term analysis of identity exploration and development. Early in the semester, Anna’s role identity as a writer involved the ontological beliefs that writing is a procedural process based in concrete skills, self-perceptions that she was not a writer as she had little ability in these procedures and skills, and the simple goal and vague action possibility to do better. However, by mid-semester Anna started to change components of her writing RI. Analysis of her journals following the group writing activities, for example, suggested that these particular social activities triggered consideration of different and more sophisticated ontological beliefs, goals, and action possibilities about
good writing that centered on developing and using certain action possibilities to achieve certain objectives in her writing practice.

The analysis of the journals also suggested that the collaborative writing activities in the first half of the semester, as well as reflecting on the collaborative experience itself, also facilitated greater alignment – at least, initially - between Anna’s ontological beliefs and her action possibilities. While she did not establish any specific goals for writing or self-perceptions about her identity as a writer during the beginning of the semester, her ontological beliefs about writing, as well as her stated future actions, became more rooted in strategies scaffolded through class activities and discussions and solidified through her journaling about this process.

However, the analysis of the journals also indicated that prior skills-based ontological beliefs about good writing were not replaced by her experiences in the group activity nor her new ontological beliefs that collaborative writing can be helpful, and were continuing to manifest in Anna’s exploration of herself as a writer. The analysis suggested that as the class moved beyond brainstorming and planning/organizing to drafting the essay in small groups, she still maintained some of her initial ontological beliefs about writing, manifesting the dynamics of her identity exploration that involved tensions between established and yet unchallenged and new ontological beliefs, and the alignment with self-perceptions as Anna was reevaluating herself as a writer after some conscious and subconscious struggles within her writing RI. The dynamics of new experiences underlying change in ontological beliefs, sometimes back and forth, was illustrated in the analysis of the journal, wherein she articulated negative feelings about the small group writing activities and positive feelings about full class writing workshops: “The class workshop helped to see our mistakes and what we could do better. The group activity is not as helpful as I thought” (Journal, 9/23/16).

Data from her journals indicated that Anna was not the only student who held these ontological beliefs, nor was she the only student who was more inspired by the
class workshop than the small group writing; thus, I decided to address this matter with
the class in a full class discussion. This discussion aimed, first, to trigger identity
exploration by having students reflect on the tensions between their ontological beliefs
about writing and their writing practice and, second, to scaffold identity exploration by
encouraging students to discuss their ontological beliefs, goals, self-perceptions, and
actions, and the alignment of these components, in relation to their writing. This
pedagogical process was captured in my instructor observational journal:

Before we started, I addressed their journals from Friday wherein many of
the students stated that the class workshops (where we give feedback and
revise) are more helpful than the group writing tasks. I asked them WHY
they thought so many people valued the workshops more. Student 101 said
that the group work is not as helpful because ‘Not everyone participates.’
Student 114 [Anna] said that the workshops were more helpful because
‘We like to know what’s right and wrong’ [my emphasis]. I asked the class
to stay on her point for a minute. Do we like the workshop better because
there seems to be more focus on ‘right and wrong,’ whereas the group
work feels a bit more confusing and debatable? I said that my hypothesis
was that we feel more like writers when we’re editing rather than actually
writing. We’re less comfortable with constructing a text than we are with
critiquing a text. So, I reminded them that editing is just PART of the
process. Constructing a text is a very important part in the process of being
a writer. You need to build something first before you can revise it
(Instructor Observation Journal, 9/24/16).

Following this discussion, Anna modified - though not necessarily in a specific or
refined way - her ontological beliefs about being a writer. Facilitated by the class
discussion, activities, and journal prompts, she circled back to the belief that
writing is a process (“step by step”), and moved away from the belief that good
writing is being able to fix mistakes:

The one big advice I'd give to ‘new’ essay writers would be don't worry if
you think your not a writer because eventually you learn all the stuff you
do in class is what makes you a writer. I believe to be a good writer just remember write down your honest ideas and then take it step by step… (Journal, 10/3/16)

Anna’s IdEx assignment following the completion of Essay #1 further corroborated the complexity and tensions she was experiencing in her identity exploration and development at this point in the semester. While Anna’s experience with the collaborative writing activities led to some change in her ontological beliefs, she still held previous ontological beliefs about effort as the main avenue toward better writing. For example, in her IdEx assignment following the completion of Essay #1, she initially emphasized an ontological belief in engaging in planning, organizing, and revising when she stressed the importance of “making that outline and revising it [the essay] to make it even better” (IdEx #4, 10/24/16). However, within the same writing assignment, she reverted back to a belief in “effort” as the mechanism by which she would become a better writer. She wrote, “put[ting] time and effort into an essay is the one thing that's going to build you to become a better writer” (IdEd #4, 10/24/16). This showed a certain incongruity between her ontological beliefs in what good writing actually is: strategic process or effort. Though these entities are not mutually exclusive, one shows a belief directly related to writing (process), while the other is a vague belief that is difficult to measure or analyze, and may or may not actually help her meet her goals for improving her writing (effort). Despite these inconsistencies, the data indicated some marked transformations from her self-perceptions and self-definitions at the beginning of the unit.

Thus, at the end of the first half of the semester, Anna’s IdEx assignments and journals indicated that Anna was questioning and considering alternative ways of thinking about her writing RI, which illustrated exploration of her writing RI, which seemed to result in development of the components within her writing RI. While she
transformed a few of her writing RI components, she was still grappling with some inconsistencies and potential tensions, especially within the ontological beliefs component of her RI, that seemed to be blocking her from committing to a writing identity.

The data, especially the tensions and conflicts Anna details in her IdEx and journal assignments, suggested that Anna’s did indeed undergo identity exploration in the first half of the semester. While it appeared that some of Anna’s exploration was facilitated by socialization, particularly the act of working in groups, the IdEx assignments, and class discussions that complemented the IdEx work, also played a role in facilitating her exploration. The IdEx assignments, journals, and class discussions seemed to trigger Anna’s exploration in terms of prompting, and then addressing, some of the tensions she was feeling as a writer, particularly those tensions in her ontological beliefs stated above. The discussion about the in-class writing workshops, for example, seemed to facilitate a mental debate for Anna concerning her ontological beliefs about group work in general and about the roles of drafting versus editing/revising more specifically. Additionally, the IdEx assignments, journals, and class discussions, also seemed to scaffold Anna’s identity exploration in terms of providing her with questions and prompts that facilitated her consideration of her writing identity in more complex ways. The also data indicated that Anna experienced a sense of safety in the class. This was manifest in the class discussions in which she was a prime participant and in her eventual embrace of the group writing activities. However, it did not appear that the pedagogical approach, at this point in the semester, encouraged Anna to see the relevance of writing in other important aspects of her life.

**Analysis of data from course weeks 8 – 16**

During the last half of the semester, the data suggested that Anna engaged in deeper identity exploration and developed a more cohesive writing RI than indicated in
the first half of the semester. She continued to fluctuate on her ontological beliefs about writing and her perceptions of herself as a writer. However, as she worked to resolve these tensions, her identity components continued to develop and she began to show more alignment between them.

**Ontological beliefs.** The data from the second half of the semester indicated that Anna’s ontological beliefs developed from her initial focus on the logistics of writing (i.e. grammar, spelling) toward a more sophisticated understanding of writing and writers. Whereas Anna previously held ontological beliefs that writers are those individuals who have command of the English language, she now believed that writers are those who have the authority to write what they want, how they want. This change in ontological beliefs was illustrated in her response to IdEx #5 wherein she defined a writer as “someone who's creative in their writing” (IdEx#5, 11/2/16). Her belief in writing as a form of creativity and means of expressing authority was furthered in her reference to Stephen King who, according to Anna, “doesn't give a fuck what he says through his pages” (IdEx# 5, 11/2/16).

Anna also expanded her ontological beliefs to include writing’s role beyond the English classroom. In her interview with me at the end of the semester, Anna expressed even more sophisticated ontological beliefs about writing, making explicit connections between the developmental writing course, her other courses, and other activities in her life:

> You don’t use it [writing] once. You use it throughout your whole entire life. You use it multiple times. I would use it all the time. Even in a power point. You still need organization so I would definitely use it (Interview, 12/15/16)

**Goals.** The data from weeks 8 -12 intimated that Anna was starting to develop more ambitious and specific goals for writing, which focused on being
creative, connecting with audiences, and expressing herself. These goals were much more sophisticated than her goals in Unit 1 and are much more highly regarded in academic writing in general (cf. interrelational writing, Hyland and Tse, 2004). Her developing goals and purpose for writing were also illustrated in her response to the IdEx #5 prompt, which asked students to find an image that represented them as a writer and explain how that image illustrated their perceptions of themselves as writers. Instead of finding an image, Anna - who displayed a passion for art - drew her own (see Fig. 1).

Fig. 1 Anna’s image of herself as a writer

Within this assignment, Anna expressed some interesting and personal goals of creativity and personal expression for writing. For example, the goal of wanting to write like Stephen King indicated a move away from the vague goals of Unit 1 (“I would like to spill all of the things I think in my head unto a piece of [paper]” (IdEx #3, 9/14/16)) to writing goals that centered on creativity and agency:

I don't wanna limit myself to writing boring essays that stick to the normal but be someone who's creative in their writing. I wanna express myself through the sentences I write. Make it as though I'm actually talking to you… I wanna be the next Steven King (IdEx#5, 11/2/16).
Importantly, she also stated a goal for writing that focused on being able to apply what she learned to other aspects of her life. She stated, “My goal is use this [writing practice] to my full advantage for work, job, speeches, essays and even studying” (Journal, 12/12/16). This indicated an alignment with her newly developed ontological beliefs about writing’s importance outside of the classroom.

Action possibilities. In the second half of the semester, the data suggested that Anna expressed more action possibilities for her writing than she had earlier in the semester, which may be attributed to the development of more articulated goals and an expanded set of ontological beliefs about writing. Most of her action possibilities involved getting feedback and continuing to revise her work, which illustrated her understanding of writing as a process, as opposed to a set of discrete skills. For example, in IdEx #6, she wrote, “as a writer I do make mistakes and I do need a second opinion” (IdEx #6, 11/18/16). In class, Anna manifested this action. Not only did Anna acknowledge that getting feedback was an important action possibility in the quest to improve her writing, she actually engaged in this activity in class even when she was not required to do so. For example, I noted in my observation journal,

Other students found ways to continue to work with their classmates and run their ideas by each other. A group of women in the class (111, 114 [Anna], 100, 101) still engage in the act of brainstorming together and they show each other their work for peer review on their own. They have remained fully engaged and continue to work the process they learned even when the requirements for the assignment are different (Observation Journal, 11/21/16).
Anna also included action possibilities that aligned with her ontological beliefs about writing’s purpose beyond her English courses. These action possibilities also aligned with her newly developed goals to use her writing skills and process in other contexts:

I’ll use this [writing practice] in my other classes. I think I used it for my human services class where I was trying to organize it like how we do in class. And I was like ‘I can do this’…We’re doing the same thing in your class, so why not organize it this way? Some classes will want 17 paragraphs, but it’s all going to be the same (Interview, 12/15/16)

 Additionally important was Anna’s embrace of writing on a more personal level. In her interview, she moved beyond academics entirely and extended her writing action possibilities to include writing just for herself. She ended her interview by stating, “I would use it [writing] just for fun. Why not? Just write a little paragraph about me...I think it would be fun” (Interview, 12/15/16). This particular action possibility suggested in an alignment with her newly developed ontological beliefs about the role of writing in expressing creativity and authority.

Self-perceptions. Analysis of the data from weeks 8 - 16 showed that Anna held fairly positive self-perceptions in the second half of the semester. These positive self-perceptions seemed to correspond with the changes that she underwent in her goals, ontological beliefs, and action possibilities in terms of embracing a more holistic view of writing in general. For example, she expressed positive self-perceptions of her writing competence, relating said competence to a newfound “freedom” and confidence that she developed over the course of the semester: “I think I'm well prepared toward moving forward towards my 3rd essay because I fully feel free to truly being confident in myself” (IdEx #6, 11/18/16). This sense of “freedom” may be related to the many transformations she made in the other components her writing RI: the change in her ontological beliefs about writing from mastery of skills to exercise of creativity and agency; the
development of action possibilities centered feedback and revision; and the adoption of writing goals, including using her writing as a means self-expression and possibly becoming the next Stephen King.

**End-of-semester analysis of identity exploration and development.** The data from the last half of the semester suggested that Anna transformed or updated all of the components of her writing RI in some way. Most of the additions or modifications in the components emphasized the connections between what she learned about writing in the developmental course and other relevant aspects of her academic life. This indicated an integration of the components of her writing RI, such as the action possibilities she learned in class with her student RI in various courses, and perceiving writing strategies to be transferable and applicable in almost all writing situations, no matter the length of an assignment.

The data indicated that Anna more thoroughly explored her writing identity in the second half of the semester. This was illustrated, foremost, by her development and, ultimately adoption, of ontological beliefs about writing as a means of expressing one’s creativity, authority, and, surprisingly, pleasure (i.e. “fun”). Through the IdEx assignments, journals, and class discussions, Anna questioned – maybe more subconsciously than explicitly - her previous procedural ontological beliefs about writing and created an alternative ontological belief system about her writing. She also seemed to develop these new ontological beliefs after making connections to other relevant self-aspects, such as her role as a student in other courses.

In the second half of the semester, the data suggested that the course’s pedagogical approach seemed to facilitate some of the exploration and development of Anna’s identity, especially those exploration activities that were more “creative” (i.e. her drawing of herself as a writer). It appeared that the assignments and discussions in the second half of the semester prompted Anna to make more connections between herself and other relevant aspects of her identity (i.e. other courses; her artistic side), which did
not occur in the first half of the semester. Additionally, Anna’s creative expressions as well as her use of words like “freedom” to describe her writing RI showed a sense of safety in the class wherein she felt “free” to explore and develop her writing RI. Finally, the pedagogical approach in the last half of the semester also seemed to trigger Anna’s writing identity exploration in that the assignments prompted Anna to consider her writing identity in ways both academic and creative. Along the same lines, the assignments and discussions also appeared to scaffold exploration by providing a creative framework for her to explore her writing identity.

**Analysis of final essay assignment.** Analysis of Anna’s final essay assignment indicated a very meaningful change in her writing action possibilities that corresponded with the change in her writing RI towards ontological beliefs about and the purpose of writing as exercising agency, self-expression, creativity, and relevance to other important aspects of her life. Her final essay indicated active engagement with planning, organizing, drafting, and revising and a seemingly expanded set of action possibilities as illustrated through her sophisticated decision-making regarding her content and organization of ideas. Anna chose to write her final paper about the portrayal of masculinity in the movie *High School Musical*. This choice exemplified Anna’s willingness to move outside of her comfort zone. As a student who expressed a strong feminine identity throughout the semester, it might have been easier and more self-relevant for her to write about presentations of female gender roles in a media text; however, she chose instead to write about the presentations of masculine gender values in film. Additionally, she selected a movie that was not on the instructor-suggested list of films - a list that contained movies with fairly straightforward gender stereotypes (i.e. fairytales/romantic comedies and superhero/action films). Thus, Anna’s actions in choosing her own topic, and writing about a gender different from her own, illustrated her confidence and agency, which could be attributed to her shifting ontological beliefs about writing in general and her perceptions of herself as a writer throughout the semester.
Once Anna selected her film, she actively engaged with her newly developed writing strategies. She brainstormed ideas, discussed those ideas first with me and then with two of her classmates, organized her evidence, and shared two drafts of her work with me (including one draft for student/teacher conference) before submitting the final draft (Observation Journal, 12/15/16). The final draft of her assignments was 860 words long (class average = 933.3 words). These actions aligned with her ontological beliefs in planning, organizing, drafting, soliciting feedback, and revising.

Anna’s writing actions within the essay itself showed some sophistication, as she engaged in both interactive and interactional discourse throughout the text. In terms of interactive discourse methods, Anna relied most heavily on evidentials, or references to outside sources. Her essay utilized two main texts in order to establish and support her arguments about masculinity: the film High School Musical and an article “How to Use Superhero Films To Talk about Masculinity” by Andrew Smiler. Though she only referenced the article in the essay’s introduction, she used it in a fairly complex way: Her essay topic was not about superhero film, yet she found a way to connect the content of this article to her own topic, which exhibited a fairly mature synthesis of source materials.

Anna’s most commonly used evidentials from the film, and she consistently incorporated detailed examples from scenes, character descriptions, and direct quotations in every paragraph, despite the fact that use of sources is not required in developmental writing courses at MCCC. These actions were consistent with her ontological beliefs that good writers provide audiences with appropriate detail and evidence to support their claims. For example, in body paragraph one, Anna integrated both a paraphrase and a direct quotation into her writing, followed by her own analysis, showing a fairly mature use of evidentials in her writing:
In *High School Musical*, Troy’s father only sees him as a leader towards his basketball team. His father states, “What you do doesn't only affect the entire team but your entire school”. Therefore, Troy's father shows that men are seen as leaders, and if a leader fails as being a leader, then they automatically fail at being a “man” (Final Essay, 12/5/17).

Anna also used interactional discourse methods in her writing, though not as often as she used interactive discourse methods. Because, at that time, I did not permit my students to use first or second person point of view in the final essay assignment, the number of interactional discourse methods used – most of which are direct references to self or the reader - was limited. However, Anna managed to incorporate some interactional discourse methods, particularly the use of boosters and attitude markers, which indicated, respectively, a certainty in her claims as well as her attitude toward those claims. Often, Anna often began her analysis of evidence with definitive phrases, such as “This shows…” or “It teaches…” as opposed to “hedge” statements like “This seems…” or “It could be argued that…” For example, at the end of her second paragraph, Anna concluded the paragraph with the following analysis of her evidence: “This shows the young audience that being interested in theater is considered feminine” (Final Essay, 12/5/17). Her use of boosters showed certainty in the claims she presented to her audience. Anna also did not shy away from inserting attitude markers as a mode of interactional discourse in her essay. For example, in one paragraph, she wrote: “Others think Ryan’s flamboyant, *but believe it or not* [my emphasis], he's just as masculine as the guys on the basketball team” (Final Essay, 12/15/17). The attitude marker of sarcasm here seemed to serve two functions. First, it intimated her personal feelings to the reader, which established a connection between her and the reader. Second, it represented her workaround for the restriction on first-person point of view. Both decisions illustrated a level of savvy in her writing and could be seen as examples of her creativity and agency, which would be aligned with the ontological beliefs about writing that she expressed in the last half of the semester.
Conclusion. Overall, Anna’s journals, IdEx assignments, and interview exhibited identity exploration by illustrating her continual reflection on and reevaluation of her ontological beliefs about writing and writers, appropriate and mature writing actions, her perceptions of herself as a writer, and her goals for writing. Through her identity exploration over the course of the semester, she moved away from procedural language and discussed writing in more mastery-oriented terms. She embraced writing as relevant not only to her academic life but also to her personal and professional life as well. While she never committed to calling herself “a writer”, she developed more confidence in herself as a writer, perceived herself to be “not a bad writer after all” (IdEx#4, 10/24/16), and came to believe in writing as an important source of power, creativity, and self-expression. In doing so, Anna developed a more coherent and committed writing identity than she started the semester with, and this commitment manifested itself in the sophisticated writing actions she displayed in her final essay assignment.

Elizabeth

Elizabeth was a white, Canadian, non-traditional student (27 years old), wife, and mother of three daughters. She had spent almost a decade in the workforce after finishing high school before coming to MCCC in the fall of 2016 to pursue a nursing degree. Over the course of the semester, Elizabeth articulated the importance of the academic content, the IdEx assignments, and her journals in her personal development as a writer. She engaged in cursory identity exploration and underwent some meaningful change in her writing RI, exhibiting some basic transformations within her ontological beliefs about writing, perceptions of herself as a writer, and her perceived action possibilities as a writer. Despite these changes, the data still indicated some disharmony within the components of Elizabeth’s writing RI, as well as some misalignments across the components of her writing RI, at semester’s end. These tensions may have interfered with
Elizabeth’s ability to develop more sophisticated ontological beliefs about writing’s importance in her life and her ability to establish more master-oriented goals for writing.

**Analysis of data from course weeks 1 - 7**

*Ontological beliefs.* Similar to Anna, Elizabeth held highly procedural ontological beliefs about writing and writers at the beginning of the semester. The data from IdEx assignments and journal entries suggested that Elizabeth believed that good writing was exemplified by grammatical correctness: “I would say that most important lesson to learn is grammar” (Journal, 10/3/16). The data also indicated that she believed good writers were those who write well with little effort. For example, she wrote, “A writer is someone that you can give them one word (topic) and it just comes to them. They start writing and it just leads to tons of paragraphs” (IdEx#3, 9/9/16). Elizabeth, like other developmental writers, expressed a belief in foundational skills (grammar) as the most important component of writing and a belief in effort – in this case, ease of effort – as the defining features of true writer.

Elizabeth started to broaden her ontological beliefs about writing at the mid-semester point; however, she never fully moved away from her emphasis on grammatical correctness and effort as her key ontological beliefs about good writing. During the collaborative writing unit in the first half of the semester, she mentioned a cursory belief in the importance of getting feedback and engaging in writing workshops: “Once it came time to write the essays I would say try and work in groups because it's nice to get other people's feedback” (Journal, 10/3/16). However, immediately following this statement, she circled back to her earlier ontological beliefs about effort level and grammatical correctness as the keys to writing success: “After learning what I have in this class, I would say that most important lesson to learn is grammar” (Journal, 10/3/16).

Elizabeth’s IdEx assignments from this point in the semester indicated disharmony within the ontological beliefs component of her writing RI. For example,
Elizabeth articulated ontological beliefs about the importance of developing her planning, organizing, drafting, and revising skills; however, within the same assignment, she expressed ontological beliefs about effort as the key to earning higher grades on her essays. Importantly, however, the class activities—particularly the collaborative writing activities—journals, and IdEx assignments may have triggered some change in her ontological beliefs, as she expressed action possibilities that did not center on grammar, but on focused, step-wise work, and imagining success:

Now that we have finished essay one, one belief that I have about writing is to stay focused. Have everything together at all times. Also try and stick to one paragraph at a time. As well as to work hard on upcoming homework and believe I can get higher than a 90% on the next one (IdEx #4, 10/24/16).

*Goals.* Unlike Anna, Elizabeth did articulate some goals for herself early in the semester, but the goals centered on improving grammar. This showed alignment with her ontological beliefs about writing, but also illustrated a fairly rudimentary understanding of writing and writers. Early in the semester, Elizabeth articulated the following goals, all of which focused on sentence-level skills and/or reducing mistakes: “With this writing class I am hoping that by the end of it I will be able to write full essays with min to no errors. Get good with grammar and watch my fragment sentences” (IdEx#3, 9/9/16). She did not, however, articulate any goals in her journals from the first half of the semester.

At the mid-semester point, the data suggested that Elizabeth’s goals for writing remained aligned with many of her ontological beliefs about good writing—particularly the procedural aspects of good writing—and did not show much transformation. She continued to couch her goals in performance terms, such as improving grammatical skills and achieving higher grades on writing assignments. For example, after completing the first essay, Elizabeth’s goals for the subsequent assignments were as follows: “My goal is to work on my grammer for essay 2 and 3…get higher than a 90% on the next one” (IdEx
Thus, the data suggested that while some aspects of Elizabeth’s writing RI may have evolved slightly, her goals remained static. The class activities, journals, and IdEx assignments did not necessarily move Elizabeth toward mastery-oriented goals by mid-semester.

**Action possibilities.** The data from early in the semester indicated that Elizabeth’s action possibilities were general and vague and focused on improving her skills and increasing her effort. These action possibilities aligned with her ontological beliefs about writing, her perceptions of her writing abilities, and her goals for writing. Early in the semester, she wrote, “I believe that if I work hard thru this class and try my hardest, I am hoping I can be a good writer (IdEx#3, 9/9/16). She repeated these same action possibilities a few weeks later: “I’ve learned that if i try my hardest and put my 100% into something then I do a lot better (Journal, 9/23/16). She also emphasized the need to improve her skills: “One thing i’ve learned today that I really need to work on my grammer and run on sentences” (Journal, 9/26/16).

The data at mid-semester suggested that Elizabeth’s action possibilities did undergo some elaboration and transformation within the actions possibilities component of her writing RI. Where Elizabeth’s action possibilities in the beginning of the semester focused on grammar improvement, her mid-semester reflections suggested that she was evolving her action possibilities from grammatical improvement to self-regulation strategies, pre-writing strategies (i.e. brainstorming, planning, organizing), feedback, and revision. For example, when asked to reflect on the actions she plans to take for future essays, she wrote,

I will look thru all my other work, as well still use my RFW [*Rules for Writers*] handbook. I will double check everything thru that…Doing one paragraph at a time…Doing my own outline first…Look thru Essay 1 and follow those steps…have you give me feedback…advise it with me (Journal, 10/14/16).
Elizabeth also articulated a new and important action possibility at midterm that corroborated and elaborated on the action possibilities stated in her journal. In her IdEx assignment following Essay #1, she described using the writing lessons – particularly the “steps” for writing - from our English class to write papers in her other classes. She stated, “I have already taken alot of this class in my other class. I use the steps that I have learned in this class and use it towards any writing I do” (IdEx #4, 10/24/16). This action was important, as it showed that she generalized her action possibilities within her writing RI—specifically those dealing with pre-writing activities and strategies—to her role identity as a college student in at least in one other class, which is an uncommon practice for developmental writing students who, according to the literature, do not often transfer their learning from the writing course to their other college courses (Adler-Kassner, 1999).

Self-perceptions. Because Elizabeth’s ontological beliefs were so narrow at the beginning of the semester, it was no surprise that she did not perceive herself as a writer. Early in the semester, the data illustrated Elizabeth’s poor self-perceptions of her writing skills and herself as a writer, which she aligned with her ontological beliefs:

I believe that I am a poor writer. Only because I think you have to have good grammar and punctuation. I believe I struggle with that…not being in school for so long and not using as much as i should have has made be feel insecure with writing (IdEx#3, 9/9/16)

Her journals corroborated these negative self-perceptions, as she consistently focused on her lack of grammatical skills. Not only that, but she projected her perceived lack of skills outward toward her abilities to succeed in her other course work. For example, she wrote, “I learned today that I really need to study more and focus on the grammar and details…if I am having trouble in these classes how am I ever going to make it once I start nursing” (Journal, 10/5/16).
Elizabeth’s self-perceptions did show improvement at mid-semester. Following the class discussions, collaborative writing activities, and in-class writing workshops, she did perceive herself, if only slightly, more as a writer. For example, in her journal, she wrote: “The most meaningful thing I learned today in class when Ms. D said that no is perfect and that we are all good writers in our own way. I need to start believe in myself and realizing that I can do whatever I put my mind to” (Journal, 9/16/16). While this change in self-perceptions was important, her IdEx assignment following Essay #1 showed that this expression and potential trigger to her identity was based primarily on external feedback, and did not necessarily lead to the development of new ontological beliefs about writing, action possibilities, or goals for being a successful writer or for writing in general. In IdEx #4, she wrote: “I find that now we have finished the first essay, it has built myself up, because overall I have graded better then I thou- thought it this class. So it shows that I can do it” (IdEx #4, 10/24/16). Thus, while her journal and IdEx assignments from this point in the semester corroborated a change in her self-perceptions, they - like her goals, ontological beliefs, and actions - were grounded more in performance-based standards than in mastery-based standards.

Mid-term analysis of identity exploration and development. Like Anna and many other developmental writers, Elizabeth began the semester by holding rudimentary ontological beliefs about grammar’s role in her success or failure at writing and misguided ontological beliefs that true writers are successful with little to no effort. The data at mid-semester suggested that Elizabeth had made some minor transformations in the components of her RI, namely to her ontological beliefs, perceived action possibilities, and self-perceptions. However, she did not make any substantive changes to her goals. While the components of her RI remained fairly aligned, they were aligned in their emphasis on procedural writing that limited more substantially adaptive potential transformation within her writing RI.
In terms of identity exploration, Elizabeth engaged minimally in this process in the first half of the semester, though not necessarily in adaptive or sophisticated ways. For example, the data indicated that she questioned her skills (or lack thereof) and her ability (or lack thereof) to transfer those skills to assignments in other courses. Her exploration at this time appeared to manifest itself mostly in uncertainty and self-doubt.

The data also suggested that Elizabeth’s exploration, minimal as it may have been, was facilitated, at least in part, by the course curriculum. For example, the data indicated that Elizabeth, via IdEx and journal assignments, related the class activities to her role as a student in other courses and her nursing major (self-relevance), though not always in positive ways. It also appeared that the class activities scaffolded identity exploration in that Elizabeth used the identity assignments about her writing RI as a framework to explain her perceptions of herself as a student (transfer across RIs and scaffolding). Again, her perceptions were not necessarily positive, but they did indicate that she was using the exploration assignments as tools with which to explore her other RIs. While it did not appear that the assignments and activities triggered Elizabeth to consider any relevant difference or conflicts within her writing RI, the activities did appear to trigger exploration of her writing RI in relation to other aspects of RI, particularly her role as a student in the highly competitive nursing program. Finally, the data from this point in the semester indicated that the activities did not truly facilitate a sense of safety for Elizabeth. In fact, it appeared that quite the opposite occurred: the activities themselves seemed to prompt exploration filled with anxiety and doubt.

**Analysis of data from course weeks 8 – 16**

In the second half of the semester, Elizabeth continued to engage only minimally in identity exploration. Despite this, Elizabeth made some additional changes to her writing identity, particularly in terms of ontological beliefs and self-perceptions. Though she still had some anxiety about her writing skills, she focused her ontological beliefs and
actions more on planning, organizing, drafting, and revising, as opposed to grammar and effort. The data from this point in the semester did not really indicate that the exploration curriculum specifically facilitated exploration; instead, the data seemed to suggest that any manifested change in Elizabeth’s writing RI was the result of socialization.

**Ontological beliefs.** After the mid-semester, Elizabeth made some changes in her ontological beliefs about writing. The data showed that she moved away from her firmly held ontological beliefs in grammatical correctness and generic “effort” as the pathways to successful writing toward more process-oriented ontological beliefs in the last half of the semester, even going so far as to express ontological beliefs in writing as form of pleasure. The data provided some indication that the change could be attributed to her success following the highly structured pre-writing activities, collaborative in-class writing, and the concomitant IdEx assignments and journals that asked students to reflect on their writing practice. For example, following Essay #2, Elizabeth indicated how her experiences in preparing for and writing the second essay related to a change in her action possibilities for achieving her writing goals. She wrote, “Now that I have finished essay #2, one belief that I have about writing is that brainstorming and outlining is what keeps me on task while writing” (IdEx #8, 11/16/16). Similarly, at the end of the semester, when asked to discuss her ontological beliefs about writing as she prepared to move into the college-level course in the subsequent semester, she stated an alignment between ontological beliefs and action possibilities that focused on strategies instead of mechanics: “Essays in ENG 101 are going to be a lot longer. So you need to plan them out” (Journal, 12/12/16).

Perhaps most indicative of the potential change in Elizabeth’s overall ontological beliefs about writing was her adoption of the belief that writing can be enjoyable: “I truly believe that writing has given me a different outlook on writing. For example, I think it can be a lot more fun” (Journal, 12/12/16).
Goals. The data from the last half of the semester showed Elizabeth embracing broader goals about writing that did not have to do with grammar improvement at all. Instead, she developed goals about writing strategies and gathering evidence. For example, when asked to write about her goals for the final essay, she wrote, “One goal I have for writing in the future is still sticking to one paragraph at a time, make sure you have a lot of evidence to back up your storyline” (IdEx #8, 11/16/16). Throughout the semester, Elizabeth typically stated goals for herself that emphasized either grammatical improvement or maintaining a process. However, at the end of the semester, Elizabeth stated a simple but important goal that showed a commitment to continuing to develop writing RI: “My goal is to keep writing” (Journal, 12/12/16).

Action possibilities. While Elizabeth adjusted her ontological beliefs about writing from a procedural to more strategies-based approach to thinking about writing, the action possibilities component of her RI lacked alignment with her newly developed strategies-based ontological beliefs about writing. For example, after Essay #2, Elizabeth still couched her action possibilities in terms of improving her foundational skills, which aligned with her ontological beliefs from the beginning of the semester, but did not align with her transformed ontological beliefs at mid-semester: “One huge action I will take with me while writing in the future is keeping the essay present tense and not past tense. Another one is always look through my RFW [Rules for Writers] book and keep on top of my grammar” (IdEx #8, 11/16/16). Not only was there misalignment across components, but there seemed to be disharmony within the action possibilities component as well. For example, her perceived action possibilities toward the end of the semester focus more on utilizing strategies for writing – i.e. “Plan everything out, stick to an outline, and do the backward planning” (Journal, 12/9/16) - as opposed to improving her foundational skills. While improving grammar and developing writing strategies are both necessary actions involved in good writing and are not mutually exclusive for most seasoned writers, Elizabeth rarely discussed these actions simultaneously in her journals or IdEx
assignments. Often it was the case that if she wrote about grammar, she did not discuss strategies; if she wrote about strategies, she typically did not discuss grammar. This shift in action possibilities seemed to indicate that at this point in the semester, Elizabeth was, indeed, developing the components of her writing RI; however, this development also suggested fragmentation within her writing RI, which seemed to impede her ability to self-regulate and align her actions with her ontological beliefs about writing and her goals for writing.

*Self-perceptions.* In the second half of the semester, the data suggested that Elizabeth’s self-perceptions had shifted from expressions of insecurity concerning her writing abilities to more positive perceptions of herself as a writer. While she still articulated poor perceptions of her grammar abilities - “I still need to work hard on my grammar” (Journal, 12/12/16) - she also articulated perceptions that indicated she felt more comfortable and confident as a writer in general. For example, in her final journal entry, she wrote,

> For instance, with essay number two we were on are own a lot more which built myself as a writer. Some of the reasons why is because we had to do the outline, brainstorming, as well as each paragraph alone. I find using the steps you have given me has helped me come a long way with my writing. Making me feel a lot more independent with writing (IdEx #10, 11/28/16).

She connected these perceptions of feeling “built” and “independent” as a writer to her focus on pre-writing strategies, which showed alignment with her new ontological beliefs in the importance of planning, organizing, drafting, and revising. The data here seemed to suggest that a change in her ontological beliefs from a narrow focus on foundational skills to a broader understanding of writing as a process could be attributed to the positive change in her self-perceptions. However, these changes appeared to be the result of
participating in the class (i.e. socialization) and not necessarily from deep identity exploration via the course curriculum.

***End-of-semester analysis of identity exploration and development.*** By the end of the semester, the data indicated that Elizabeth had made some transformations in her writing RI. However, she continued to be caught between her skills-based and process-oriented ontological beliefs about writing. Unlike Anna, who abandoned the narrow skills-based ontological beliefs she held at the beginning of the semester in favor of a more holistic, creative, and process-oriented view of writing, Elizabeth never fully made that commitment, nor did she find a way to harmonize both sets of ontological beliefs into a coherent system that she could use as a resource to scaffold her goals and actions for writing.

While the data showed some disharmony within the ontological beliefs component of her RI, as well as some misalignment between components of her writing RI (i.e. action possibilities and ontological beliefs), the data also suggested that there was some integration between Elizabeth’s relevant RIs, particularly for the ontological beliefs and actions that focused on planning and organization. This integration could explain why Elizabeth adapted her writing ontological beliefs and actions to be more focused on strategies as opposed to skills in the last half of the semester. In her end-of-semester interview, Elizabeth made a sophisticated connection between her ontological beliefs and actions as a student and writer and her ontological beliefs and actions as a wife and mother, which were two additional meaningful RIs (likely *more* important than her roles as student and writer). For example, she related her family’s daily routines to the type of planning and organization needed to be a successful student and writer:

> Like what you taught us the other day the backwards planning. I took a screenshot of that on my phone. That’s definitely for me. I need a plan or I’m out of sorts. Even at home, we eat at the same time every day. We do baths the same time every day. Once I get out of that routine, I just find that I’m all over the place
until I get back into it. Even HW wise, I need to stick to a plan (Interview, 12/12/16)

Despite this mature insight, it seemed that because Elizabeth did not make this association until the end of the semester, she was unable to fully realize these ontological beliefs or align them with the other components of her writing and student RIs into a coherent system to scaffold the actions and goals need to further develop her writing.

This need for planning and organization was exhibited in her assessment of the final essay assignment. Elizabeth wrote her the first draft of her essay without planning or organizing her materials. Writing without planning and organizing ultimately failed her because, as she admitted in her interview, she needed to approach her writing “like a puzzle and do each one [paragraph] at a time” (Interview, 12/12/16) in order to be successful:

I tried to think of the whole thing in my head at once and it was too much. I had to go back and rewrite pretty much the whole thing and do it step by step the way you taught us at the beginning because when I tried to just throw it all in there it did not go well” (Interview, 12/12/16)

The interview data suggested an underlying dispositional need for a planning scaffold that undergirded some of the components of Elizabeth’s various role identities of wife/mother and writing/student, which possibly explained why she exhibited more confidence as a writer when she employed a writing strategy instead of focusing on writing skills.

Though Elizabeth gained some confidence and transformed some of the components of her RI, she never fully viewed writing as important to her personally, as Anna did when she equated writing with creativity and agency. Additionally, Elizabeth only seemed to value her writing success when it was rewarded - i.e. good grades - or when she could connect it to her other important RIs (i.e. wife and mother). Data from
Elizabeth’s in-class journals and IdEx assignments consistently referenced grades as markers of success: “Just need to relax and remember I can do it, I got a pretty good grade on the last essay” (IdEx#7, 11/2/16). In addition to her grades, Elizabeth also used her husband’s feedback as an indicator of her writing progress. In her interview, she recalled a conversation with her husband that she found particularly motivating:

> My husband said, ‘You’re not in school; you don’t need to use your grammar when we’re texting.’ And I said, ‘No! Ms. D said use it all the time so you don’t forget it’ [laughs]. So now we laugh because he has perfect punctuation and grammar, and he’s like ‘Finally I can make sense of what you’re saying.’ He’s been bugging me for it, but he’s quite proud (Interview, 12/12/16)

On the one hand, this anecdote suggested that Elizabeth’s development as a writer extended beyond the work she did in class; she transferred these skills to other areas of her life (i.e. texting with her husband) and was pleased when her husband noted her improvements. However, the data also suggested that Elizabeth - unlike Anna, who wanted write in order to express herself - thrived on performance-based praise. This was not surprising considering Elizabeth’s predominant ontological beliefs about writing and goals for writing throughout the semester. Though Elizabeth showed some transformation in the components of her writing RI throughout the semester, her central ontological beliefs about writing remained fairly procedural, and her goals for writing focused more on passing the course than on developing creativity, self-expression, or agency. Thus, her external motivations, while not completely ideal, were fairly aligned with the other components writing RI.

The data from the second half of the semester suggested that Elizabeth again engaged in only minimal identity exploration in the second half of the semester, and it did not appear that this exploration was a result of the curriculum. However, in her final interview, the data suggested that Elizabeth did engage in exploration but only when
prompted by the interview questions. This could suggest that identity exploration occurs in different ways, in different contexts, and at different times.

Elizabeth’s exploration, minimal as it may have been, manifested itself in her consideration of alternative ontological about writing (i.e. importance of planning and organization), which continued to bump up against her skills-based ontological beliefs. Though she did not quite reconcile these ontological beliefs, she used the IdEx assignments, journals, and class discussions as a means by which to question her initial beliefs and adopt new ontological beliefs. Similar to the first half of the semester, Elizabeth also used the class content to explore other self-aspects (i.e. her mother and wife RIs).

Though the changes in Elizabeth’s writing RI seemed to be the result more of socialization than exploration, there was some evidence to suggest that exploration curriculum in the second half of the semester appeared to trigger and scaffold Elizabeth’s identity exploration in some ways, as it did in the first half of the semester. For example, the group writing activities, IdEx assignments, and class discussions seemed to trigger a conflict within the ontological beliefs component in Elizabeth’s writing RI. From the course content, Elizabeth seemed to realize that grammar and sentence-level skills are not the only aspects important in writing or in becoming a good writer. This positive realization seemed to encourage Elizabeth to wrestle with her belief system regarding her writing. Additionally, the course content scaffolded Elizabeth’s identity exploration in that she used the writing prompts to explore her other relevant RIs (i.e. wife and mother). This also illustrated that Elizabeth found ways to connect the course content with other aspects of her life, thus indicating a facilitation of self-relevance via the course activities. In the second half of the semester, Elizabeth’s sense of safety to explore her identity via the class content seemed to improve. The data suggested that the class activities and discussions seemed to facilitate a sense of safety by which Elizabeth could express her thoughts and feelings about her writing, her family life, and her role as a student. This
sense of safety also manifested itself in the evolution of Elizabeth’s ontological beliefs, goals, perceptions, and actions in that Elizabeth seemed to be much more open to alternative writing ontological beliefs and goals, even if she did not fully commit to those new goals.

*Analysis of final essay assignment.* Elizabeth’s final essay could be seen as evidence of alignment between her overarching ontological beliefs about writing and her goals for writing at semester’s end. Where Anna showed a broader range of action possibilities in terms of her writing decisions in the final essay assignment and used some sophisticated writing techniques in her final essay, which could be the result of the transformations made within her writing RI throughout the semester, Elizabeth did not make substantive changes in her writing actions in the final essay. Essentially, she did just enough to earn a decent grade on her paper, which could be attributed to her vacillating ontological beliefs about writing, goals for writing, and perceptions of herself as a writer. Elizabeth’s essay contained 794 words - almost 200 words shorter than the class average on this assignment.

She also chose a safe and easy topic for her essay, albeit one that she could integrate with her important RI as a mother to three daughters. She elected to write an essay on the female gender values in *The Princess Diaries*, which was fairly comfortable choice for her: The movie was on the instructor-suggested list of options for the third assignment, she had already watched the movie several times with her daughters, and the gender values in the film were virtually the same as those we discussed in the first unit of the semester. She could, in essence, copy the exact essay structure and gender topics that we had used and discussed in the first unit and simply add in relevant evidence from *The Princess Diaries*.

Unlike Anna, Elizabeth’s action possibilities appeared constrained regarding her writing decisions in this final assignment, which is no surprise considering the differences in the components of each woman’s writing RI. Where Anna embraced
ontological beliefs about the agentic power of writing, Elizabeth did not believe writing to be much more than a series of procedures and skills. Where Anna set goals for writing that were lofty, yet creative, Elizabeth did not have many goals for her cultivating her writing beyond what was necessary to pass the writing course. Where Anna expressed pride and confidence in her development as a writer, Elizabeth typically perceived herself to be a weak writer. Thus, the “safe” writing decisions and actions that Elizabeth took in her final essay, while not necessarily ideal, did correspond to other components of Elizabeth’s writing RI as described above.

In terms of the content and quality of the writing itself, Elizabeth did not show much sophistication in her writing. She relied more often on interactive discourse methods - specifically transitions, framemarkers, endophoric markers, and code glosses - rather than interactional discourse methods throughout her writing. This action indicated an adherence to principles of organization in writing, which aligned with her stated ontological about her need for planning and organization in both her domestic life and her schoolwork. For example, with her first paragraph (comprised of seven sentences), she used two code glosses (i.e. “For instance” and “As an illustration”), one transition (i.e. “However”), and one endophoric marker (i.e. “Given these points”). Elizabeth consistently utilized these organizational interactive markers in almost every sentence throughout the paper even if they were not necessarily vital to the content.

While she focused on clearly providing transitions to connect her claims, the claims themselves lacked substance and support. The use of evidentials is particularly important in supporting claims in academic writing, and while Elizabeth used evidentials throughout her essay, her references to her outside sources were weak and underdeveloped, which seemed aligned with the other components of her writing RI, considering that providing evidence and creating strong arguments were not writing ontological beliefs that Elizabeth held dear, nor were they writing goals that she planned to meet. In terms of evidence, she only utilized one direct quotation from Marcia
Lieberman’s “Some Day My Prince Will Come” article in her essay’s introduction; however, she did not contextualize the quotation or integrate it smoothly into the paragraph:

Classic Disney fairy tales are teaching young girls that being beautiful means you will be rewarded. Similarly, like the article “Some Day My Prince Will Come” by Marcia Lieberman, she states that “beautiful girls are never ignored”. The Disney movie *Princess Diaries* also shows many traditional female gender roles (Final Essay, 12/15/16)

Keeping in line with her reliance on organizational interactive discourse methods, Elizabeth used the transition “Similarly” but did not explicitly examine the similarity between these ideas for the reader; thus, the evidential itself ultimately lacked substantive meaning to the reader. In terms of her use of the film as evidence within her paper, she referenced the film in every paragraph, but her examples often lacked detail or context for a reader who may not be familiar with the film. For example, Elizabeth used fairly detailed evidence early in the paragraph but then drifted into generalities:

For instance, Mia Thermopolis is a perfect example of the “ugly girl”. As an illustration, Mia has long curly frizzy hair, thick bushy eyebrows, she does not dress well, and she is not a social person. As a result, she is made fun of by her classmates and has maybe two friends. However, that all soon changes once she finds out she is a princess. Mia changes her looks, clothes, and her personality changes quickly (Final Essay, 12/15/16)

In an effort to contrast the impact of Mia’s makeover, Elizabeth used explicit details to explain Mia’s “before” appearance and the concomitant effects related to that appearance (i.e. “long curly frizzy hair, thick bushy eyebrows, she does not dress well, and she is not a social person. As a result, she is made fun of by her classmates and has maybe two friends”). However, Elizabeth offered no specific details on Mia’s “after” appearance (i.e. “Mia changes her looks, clothes, and her personality changes quickly”) and did not at all
address the consequences related to Mia’s appearance, as she had done in the previous example. Ultimately, Elizabeth did not develop a keen, sophisticated, or consistent use of evidentials in her work, which, as stated earlier, was not surprising consider Elizabeth’s emphasis on grammar and organization as her primary writing ontological beliefs, goals, and actions illustrated in the data from the second half of the semester. Thus, the data from the final essay seemed to suggest that by semester’s end, Elizabeth was still more focused on improving singular, foundational aspects of her writing than she was on improving the broader, more complex aspects of writing. These writerly decisions and actions seemed aligned with her previously stated actions and goals for writing, both of which were predominately procedural and skills-based throughout the semester.

Conclusion. Overall, Elizabeth’s journals, IdEx assignments, and interview exhibited minimal identity exploration and transformation in the components of writing RI. Over the course of the semester, she adopted some broader and healthier ontological goals, action possibilities, and self-perceptions; however, she never fully embraced writing as a part of her life, and she never really adopted a mastery approach toward writing. Even when Elizabeth shifted ontological beliefs about writing from foundational skills to writing strategies, it seemed as though she was just trading one set of procedures for another. Because of Elizabeth’s goals were focused on performance above all else, it was more important for her to use action possibilities that focused on writing “correctly” and earning good grades than it was for her to find self-relevance in writing or commit to a writing identity. This seemed to have been the case in her final paper.

While Elizabeth’s final essay met the basic writing requirements for the course, it did not exhibit any real sophistication, creativity, or expansion of action possibilities as displayed by her writing decisions. By choosing an easier topic, using fewer words in her essay, and keeping her evidentials fairly simplistic, she could more easily avoid making errors, which seemed to be her most important stated goal throughout the semester. Though Elizabeth stayed engaged in the class throughout the semester, earned a passing
grade on the final writing assignment, and satisfactorily completed the course, she never fully internalized writing as a significant part of her life, which may have impacted her development of new and more ambitious goals for writing, as well as her perceived action possibilities in terms of topic selection, sophisticated use of evidentials, and development of more individualized writing strategies.

**Seojun**

Seojun was a South Korean male, age 20, whose level of identity exploration waxed and waned throughout the semester, ending with little identity exploration or substantive change in his writing RI overall. Seojun immigrated to America from South Korea as a teenager, and while he had learned some English before his arrival, he was anxious about his writing and speaking skills in an English classroom. Upon the start of the developmental writing course in the Fall 2016 semester, he had a fairly committed writing identity and had a much more complex view of writing than some of the other students in his class. Though sometimes he expressed poor self-perceptions of his English skills and some anxiety about his ability to be successful in college courses as a non-native English speaker, he remained steadfastly engaged in the course and continued to develop his own writing practice throughout the semester. This level of engagement seemed to stem from his focus on planning, organizing, drafting, and revising, as opposed to simply doing the work to earn a grade. While the components of his writing RI remained fairly consistent throughout the semester, there were some small transformations throughout the course.

**Analysis of data from course weeks 1 – 7**

*Ontological beliefs.* Data collected from Seojun’s IdEx assignments and journals suggested that Seojun had a clear set of ontological beliefs about writing and writers right from the beginning of the semester. Unlike Elizabeth and Anna, who focused solely on
foundational skills as the defining feature of good writing, Seojun started the semester with the belief that writing was the act of clearly articulating thoughts to readers in an effort to convince them of your position, and writers were people who documented those thoughts. He also centered his beliefs about good writing on clarity, organization, and connecting with readers. For example, in IdEx #3, he wrote, “A writer is a person who write something for record or show thoughts...I believe a good writer should be able to show what writer's thoughts with well organized sentences and it should be easy and able to understand for readers” (IdEx#3, 9/14/16). Throughout the first half of the semester, he continued to emphasize his belief about writing being the medium by which writers convince audiences of their position on an issue. For example, in IdEx #4, he wrote, “If my writing make readers change their opinion to agree with my opinion, that makes writer happy” (IdEx#4, 10/24/16). Seojun also stated that he believed he was a writer because he was engaged in the act of writing in English class: “I am writer now too because I am this for now” (IdEx #3, 9/14/16).

His belief in organization as a central tenet to good writing was supported by evidence in his daily journal as well. After the first day of collaborative writing with the class, Seojun expressed a belief that the writing practices (i.e. writing in groups, workshopping paragraphs, and then writing individually) we were using in class were not only important to developing his writing skills, but were important to transfer to other relevant RIs in his life. Though he did not specify exactly how these practices related to other relevant RIs, he seemed to indicate that his ontological beliefs about writing practices overall and his engagement with different writing practices within the class (action possibilities) were transferable across RIs and could be integrated with other relevant RIs, thus indicating that Seojun used the class content as a scaffold for both writing and exploration of his writing and student RIs: “I think those processes are great to everything in our life that do things separate a little bit and collect together at the end” (Journal, 9/23/16).
Seojun’s ontological beliefs from the beginning of the semester differed greatly from those expressed by Anna and Elizabeth. Whereas Anna and Elizabeth did not consider audience, organization, or process in their stated ontological beliefs about writing, Seojun believed in clear expression, organization, and process as the key steps to producing writing that garners full understanding from one’s audience.

Goals. Seojun did not express many goals for writing during the first half of the semester. But the few goals that he did articulate were aligned with his ontological beliefs about writing. For example, Seojun expressed that the purpose of writing is to convey meaning to the audience; thus, his goals for writing focused on clearly articulating his ideas to his readers. In his reflective journal, Seojun wrote: “I want to concern about how readers understanding my essay. I would like to readers understand clearly what I meant to say. That is the main point of the essay” (Journal, 10/12/16). The data from his IdEx assignment also showed this goal of making his writing understandable to an audience so that he can convince readers of his arguments: “Based on my opinion about the topic, readers should be able to understand what is my opinion no matter if they agree or disagree. For the last, I would like to make a change from readers” (IdEx #4, 10/24/16).

Action Possibilities. The data from the first half of the semester indicated that Seojun carefully considered his writing action possibilities, and most of the actions were in alignment with his ontological beliefs about and goals for writing. Seojun indicated that in order for him to convey his opinions to his audience and convince them of his arguments, he needed to work on properly organizing his delivery of the information and on supporting his argument with evidence. In terms of organization, he stressed the importance of “making outline” because “the outline is helpful a lot to organize my ideas. If I was without outline, I could not start writing” (Journal, 10/12/16). His focus on his writing well for his audience was also illustrated in his IdEx assignments. For Seojun, having solid evidence was vital to establishing a convincing argument that would persuade his reader to agree with his thesis. In the following statement from his IdEx
assignment, Seojun stated both a belief about being a good writer as having resources like experience about the topic, and an aligned action possibility that involved a sub-goal of acquiring such resources: “To be a good writer, the writer should have lots of resources to writing. For example, the experience about topic is important. So I will try to get more experience about topic” (IdEx #4, 10/24/16).

Self-perceptions. The data from the beginning of the semester showed that while Seojun had some anxieties about his English skills overall – both in terms of oral and written communication – he also felt fairly confident is his ability to learn to write better and often expressed joy at his accomplishments in learning something new or writing a good argument for an audience. Seojun often expressed confidence following a group writing activity or in-class writing workshop. The analysis suggested that the course materials, lessons, and reflective writing assignments helped Seojun to maintain confident self-perceptions as a writer or, at the very least, someone who is capable of improving his writing. For example, after the first class workshop, Seojun wrote, “Today's workshop gave me more confidence, because now how I get this” (Journal, 9/26/16). After the group writing activity in the next class period, he expressed feeling “a little bit more comfortable with writing, not like the huge wall” (Journal, 9/28/16). Thus, it appeared that the in-class activities provided Seojun with a sense of safety to explore his writing identity.

Even when Seojun felt uncomfortable with his English skills, he still celebrated his achievements instead of getting down on himself for not being perfect: “I am not really satisfied with my draft because I have limited English and couldn't wrote all of what I wanted to say. However, I proud of myself that I did half a full essay” (Journal, 10/12/16). Ultimately, the data from the first half of the semester indicated that while Seojun had mixed self-perceptions of himself as a writer in English, he was confident about his ability to develop his writing skills.
The data at mid-semester suggested that the components of Seojun’s writing identity were aligned, which possibly encouraged his openness to change (i.e. embracing collaborative writing) and overall contentment (i.e. feeling “proud”) with his progress in the course at this time. His ontological beliefs about writing as a vehicle by which he can deliver his insights on certain topics seemed to align with his goals for developing his evidence and improving his overall communication skills. These ontological beliefs and goals also appeared to be aligned with his action possibilities in terms of using good evidence to support his claims and organizing his claims and evidence, and also aligned with his self-perceptions in terms of his expressions of confidence and pride in developing and mastering his own strategies for planning, organizing, drafting, and revising his writing.

Mid-term analysis of identity exploration and development. Seojun started the semester with positive self-perceptions about being a writing student, a belief system about writers that focused more on content than skills, and an unwavering dedication to his goals and actions of working hard to improve his skills. The data suggested that the components of Seojun’s writing identity were more sophisticated than some of his classmates’ components at the start of the semester, which may have contributed to his motivation to engage with the course content and his ability to hold seemingly conflicting ontological beliefs/perceptions in his mind. For example, unlike his classmates Elizabeth and Anna, who attributed their perceived lack of foundational skills to their poor perceptions of themselves as writers, Seojun did not view his mistakes and his confidence as mutually exclusive. He wrote, “I think the experience from Essay#1 will be helpful because while writing Essay#1, I had many mistakes but I had confidence too” (Journal, 10/14/16).

Seojun began the semester with fairly committed ontological beliefs about writing, writers, and his identity as a writer. The data suggested that Seojun essentially used the IdEx assignments, journals, and in-class discussions to maintain and support his
already-established ontological beliefs, goals, actions, and self-perceptions. The curriculum did not seem to prompt him to question any of aspect of his writing RI or consider alternative ways of thinking about his writing RI.

Thus, it could be said that, it did not appear that Seojun underwent much exploration within his writing RI in the first half of the semester. The data seemed to suggest that the exploration activities in the course at this point in the semester worked as vehicles for Seojun to express himself - which, at the very least, intimated his sense of safety to explore and explain his identity in writing - but not necessarily as methods that encouraged him to think more challenge or further develop his already-established about his writing RI.

**Analysis of data from course weeks 8 – 16**

*Ontological beliefs.* The data from the last half of the semester suggested that Seojun continued to view writing as an important way to make claims and support positions. His IdEx assignments, journals, and end-of-semester interview focused strongly on his belief about understanding one’s audience and providing readers with solid evidence when making an argument. In his journal, Seojun wrote “My belief is still the same that makes understandable for reader and show my opinion clearly” (Journal, 12/12/16). While his ontological beliefs mostly remained the same, he did expand his ontological beliefs to include a connection between writing and power. For example, when asked to find an image of a “writer”, he chose an image of a politician. He stated,

The reason of why I choose this political [image] is that it is similar as writer's writing process. First, writer and politician are need to listen careful to other people. If you have more evidence from many sources, that make more quality writing for writer and more power for politicians. Also, both writer and politician, they argue with their topics to persuade someone to make them stay on their side. (IdEx#7, 11/2/16)
Here, Seojun based his image assignment on the importance of evidence in creating persuasive arguments, which aligned with his stated ontological beliefs about writing and writers. Similar to Anna, Seojun equated good writing—particularly writing that includes detailed evidence—with having “power”, which illustrated ontological beliefs that related writing with a sense of agency.

**Goals.** Seojun did not express many new goals in the second half of the semester in his journals or IdEx assignments. While his end-of-semester interview mostly reiterated his previously stated goals about making clear arguments, Seojun also discussed plans to diversify the types of writing he does. He indicated that his initial purpose of his writing was “not to be a professional but just be clearly giving my opinion” (Interview, 12/16/16), but that he was also considering a goals in a more challenging direction: “Maybe my next step should be like more professional in writing. Like considering other things too. For now, I just considering giving opinion clearly but next step should be consider what readers want and voice the reader” (Interview, 12/16/16).

**Action Possibilities.** Analysis of data from Seojun’s journals, IdEx assignments, and final interview suggested that by the end of the semester, Seojun focused his action possibilities more on practicing writing in an effort to achieve his goals of improving his language skills and developing his planning, organizing, drafting, and revising skills that he learned in class. This marked a change that could be perceived as a misalignment between his action possibilities and the other components of his writing RI. Whereas earlier in the semester, Seojun’s action possibilities were aligned around the central ontological beliefs and goals of writing as producing work that convinced his audience of his position via detailed evidence, his end-of-semester action possibilities seemed to almost regress to a less sophisticated type that was more aligned with ontological beliefs expressed by Elizabeth—a focus on producing prose with correct grammar. He wrote,
“Keep writing make me better output… If I keep writing, that will helpful to use correct grammar and learning this language” (Journal, 12/16/16).

Also like Elizabeth, Seojun attached himself wholeheartedly to the writing practices learned and developed in the class, which indicated a move toward more procedural ontological beliefs about writing, which diverged from the more conceptual ontological beliefs he had at the beginning of the semester. In his end-of-semester interview, he indicated that his success on his writing assignments were due to his actions regarding the writing practices he had learned throughout the semester: “I followed the guideline of this class, so I kept to fit in your format and try to be like your sample essay” (Interview, 12/16/16). Thus, in the last half of the semester, it appeared that Seojun’s action possibilities became more focused on developing the practicalities of his writing (i.e. sentence skills, following models of good writing), which did not seem to align with his stated ontological beliefs about writing’s role as a tool of argumentation. While these actions seemed to indicate a regression of sorts, another interpretation could be that Seojun felt that he had mastered the structure of writing essays overall and, thus, should turn his attention more toward foundational skills as he prepared to enter the next semester. In focusing more on developing his foundational skills in for his writing to be readable across contexts, Seojun may have been attempting to integrate the components of his writing and student RIs.

Self-perceptions. The data from the last half of the semester suggested that Seojun did not perceive much change in himself or his writing abilities. This may be attributed to a lack of identity exploration triggering experiences in the second half of the semester. Though he did find the essays and the reflective identity assignments beneficial to his development as a writer, Seojun’s IdEx assignments and journals suggested that he was tired of writing about gender and no longer perceived this topic to be self-relevant; he felt the three essays for the semester were essentially the same but with different movie topics; and the IdEx assignments and journals overlapped too much and occurred too
often for him to perceive any notable change in himself as a writer. For example, in IdEx #8, he wrote, “Most of my answers are same as what I talked with you in your office and last journal” (IdEx#8, 11/18/16). Yet, while Seojun may not have perceived much change in himself as a writer or his writing skills in the second half of the semester, he clearly perceived a marked improvement in his writing from August to December. When asked in his interview about the class assignments, including the IdEx and reflective journal assignments, he stated,

I feel we had repetition same question throughout the semester. In the beginning there’s a lot of things I can writing like my self-perception and what I think as a writer. That was interesting….Even the same question after each essay I feel she’s asking me these question a few days ago. So when we getting into the end of the semester, there’s not much to write about in the journal. But it was a good experience like a diary. The reason why I write diary we just look how I did and how I thinking and how I grow. Journal is my education diary (Interview, 12/16/16)

While Seojun may have grown tired of the IdEx and journal assignments, the data from his interview suggested that these writing assignments allowed him to see his transformations over time, which seemed to encourage positive perceptions of himself as a writer by semester’s end:

I look back…I’m still same or a little improved. If I found that I improved then it a delight for me. It’s hard to find big differences in the short term but just compared to the beginning of the semester and end of semester, it is huge (Interview, 12/16/16)

Thus, the exploration assignments could be viewed as scaffolding his exploration in that they provided a framework with which Seojun could assess his experiences across time.

*End-of-semester analysis of identity exploration and development.* The data indicated that, relative to his classmates, Seojun came into the course with a fairly
sophisticated view about writing and about himself as a writer. His writing RI seemed to be most impacted by the collaborative writing unit and the early IdEx and reflective journal assignments, which suggested that these activities did serve, in some ways, as triggers and scaffolds for exploration. It also appeared that the journals provided a sense of safety for exploration, especially for someone whom felt uncomfortable participating aloud in class because of the language barrier.

However, once Seojun learned the “pattern” of the course and viewed the repetition of the gender theme (course content) and the essay assignments as no longer self-relevant, his level of identity exploration seemed to wane. From his stated goals at the end of the semester, the data suggested that he was searching for different kinds of writing assignments and alternative ways to gather and discuss evidence in writing. And, though he completed all of his IdEx assignments, reflective journals, and essays as instructed, it did not appear that those assignments from the last half of the semester inspired any additional critical reflection on his role as a writer beyond what he articulated in the first half of the class.

At the semester’s end, it did not appear that Seojun had engaged deeply in identity exploration via the course curriculum. Most of the manifested changes that occurred seemed to be the result more of participation in the course (i.e. socialization) than the activities themselves (i.e. exploration). The data indicated that Seojun did not question any of his previously stated ontological beliefs, nor did he develop any alternative views of writing or of himself as a writer. While he consistently reflected on his writing and on what writing means to him, he did not seem to challenge himself or his ontological beliefs in new and evolutionary ways. He seemed to stay fairly committed to the ideals that he had at the start of the semester.

Seojun’s case was interesting in terms of exploring the effectiveness of the PRESS-based curriculum. While some of the activities encouraged Seojun to reflect on his writing and the role of writing in his life, especially in terms of writing’s role in the
development of his English language skills overall, in general, the activities did little to facilitate the exploration process. It appeared that the exploration activities no longer had relevance to him following the mid-semester point, which may have deterred serious exploration. Additionally, the assignments did not seem to trigger exploration, as the course content itself seemed to have lost its novelty by mid-semester. While Seojun could have used the activities to scaffold exploration of other RIs, he did not.

Conversely, the exploration activities did seem to provide a sense of safety to Seojun as a non-native English speaker and writer. Because of his perceived language barrier, in-class discussion did not create a sense of safety for him; thus, the exploration activities gave him an individualized way to communicate with the instructor about his writing and his academic RIs without having to express those views aloud. While Seojun felt safe to express himself via the exploration activities, it was not enough to facilitate deep exploration.

*Analysis of final essay.* Like Elizabeth’s final essay, Seojun’s third essay seemed to represent his tepid feelings about writing toward the end of the class. As noted above, he was exhausted by the gender topic, which may have impacted his writing decisions on the final paper. While his essay had more words than the class average (= 984), he did not select a novel topic, and he exhibited only a cursory use of evidentials even though he stated that providing solid evidence was central to being a good writer. Seojun’s final essay topic was *The Notebook*, which was listed as one of the instructor-suggested films because it had fairly obvious gender stereotypes for both men and women. Seojun chose to write about the female characters in the movie; however, he essentially wrote about these characters in the same way that Marcia Lieberman wrote about princesses in the “Some Day My Prince Will Come” article. Thus, it appeared that Seojun’s writing actions for the third assignment were misaligned with many of the ontological beliefs and goals that he established in the first half of the semester. However, these writing actions
did seem to align with the more procedural ontological beliefs and goals that he established in the second half of the semester.

Seojun’s final essay was clearly written, but it adhered strictly to the basic requirements outlined on the assignment sheet and to the organizational structure learned in class during the semester, which was in harmony with his other end-of-semester action possibilities concerning his use of the class model for writing essays. Throughout the essay, Seojun’s evidentials came mostly from the film itself. Like Elizabeth, Seojun only used one source one time in his opening paragraph. Also like Elizabeth, Seojun’s use of the Lieberman article lacked a clear connection to the main topic and argument of his essay and seemed as though it was included simply to meet the requirement of using one printed source. Though comparisons can be made between fairytale movies and romantic dramas, Seojun did not make this connection smoothly in the beginning of his opening paragraph:

Romantic movies give many lessons, and young adults imitate and learn gender values from the lessons while they watch the film. However, most gender values from romantic movies are negative because they present stereotypical gender values. In the essay, “Some Day My Prince Will Come,” Marcia Lieberman points out the negative gender values children learn from fairy tales, which illustrate media’s influence on children…These gender lessons shape children on how they grow up. Children also grow up with many kinds of media, and even when they become young adults, media still has influences on them both positively and negatively. Most of the modern romantic movies have positive values, but they still have negative values, too… (Final Essay, 12/15/16)

Within his body paragraphs, Seojun relied on the movie’s plot and character descriptions as the main evidentials in the paper. However, his examples were often vague and lacked the specifics needed to make a solid analysis of the gender values in the film. For example, in a paragraph about passive women, he wrote:
She is raised in a strict family, where all of the decisions about her come from her parents; she cannot make decisions herself. Even in the relationship with Noah, she cannot make a decision. Noah suggests and makes decisions most of the time, which shows Allie’s dependence and lack of initiative in the relationship. For example, when Allie cannot make the decision to choose Noah or Lon, both men even give options for her, but she cannot decide (Final Essay, 12/15/16)

There are no specific examples of Allie – the main character – dithering on her decisions. Even following the code gloss “For example…”, Seojun does not articulate an actual example that a reader who is unfamiliar with the film could clearly understand. While Seojun’s use of evidentials were not very sophisticated, he did engage in other writing actions that seemed to support his earlier stated goals of writing in a clear and organized way in order to communicate effectively and efficiently with his readers.

Seojun relied heavily on transitions and framemarkers throughout his essay, which supported his ontological beliefs about and goals for writing, both of which centered on clearly conveying arguments to readers in an organized way. Since transitions and framemarkers are used to guide a reader through a text, it is no surprise that he used these interactive metadiscourse acts over 20 times in his five-paragraph essay. In his conclusion paragraph alone, he used six transition words in an eight-sentence paragraph. From these examples, it was clear that Seojun’s top priority was writing a structured, though not necessarily inspired, final essay.

**Conclusion.** The data collected in the fall 2016 semester suggested that Seojun entered the semester with a coherent writing RI in which the elements of the components of his writing RI were in harmony, and there was alignment across the components as well. Additionally, his writing RI seemed to be integrated with his other relevant RIs, specifically his student RI. It could be argued that his developed writing identity in the beginning of the semester encouraged him to be open to new ideas and new writing practices. However, once Seojun became comfortable with the course content and the writing strategies discussed in class, the components of his writing identity became a bit
more fragmented, and his willingness to further develop his writing practice seemed to decrease.

The data suggested that his ontological beliefs about writing were aligned with his goals early in the semester. To Seojun, writing was a powerful medium by which to convince an audience of one’s positions, and his writing goals were just that – to gather evidence and write clearly enough to convey his argument to readers in an effective way. Though he had more complex ontological beliefs and goals than some of his classmates, he initially lacked writing practices to help him achieve these goals, which might explain why the collaborative writing unit was most meaningful to him.

Following Essay #2, however, Seojun’s motivation to explore his writing identity seemed to wane. He often repeated himself in his journals and IdEx assignments, and it did not appear that he was triggered to push his exploration further than that which he had already done in the first seven weeks of the course. Whereas in the beginning of the semester, Seojun articulated sophisticated ontological beliefs about writing and expressed mastery-oriented goals, his final essay seemed to represent the statement he made in his final interview: “I followed the guideline of this class, so I kept to fit in your format and try to be like your sample essay” (Interview, 12/16/16). He seemed to believe that following the structure of the other essays he had done could lead to success; thus, his action possibilities focused on following that model instead of branching out and challenging himself with new ideas and new sources of evidence.

**Spring 2017 – Intervention Iteration 2**

Following feedback received from my students as well as my own observations notes from the fall 2016 semester, I adjusted the IdEx intervention in the spring 2017 semester. Specifically, I eliminated the daily journals and, instead, instituted weekly IdEx assignments that targeted participants’ student RI and writing RI relative to the class material from that week. This decision was made based upon the need to better trigger
and scaffold students’ identity exploration process. Since many students in the fall
iteration found the IdEx assignments and journals to be repetitive, the assignments
themselves seemed to lose their ability to trigger meaningful exploration and change.
Thus, the second iteration reduced the number and type of exploration activities in order
to maximizing potential for triggering and scaffolding exploration. Additionally, the
exploration activities in the fall semester focused more on students’ writing RIs than
student RIs, which resulted in students rarely making transfer and integration between
writing and being a student. Thus, in an effort to better scaffold exploration of the
connections between the student and writing RIs, the second iterations of the study
modified the writing activities to scaffold the exploration of these targeted identities.
More specifically, each IdEx assignment included questions that asked students to reflect
more specifically on the course content and its relationships to their writing and student
RIs.

The modifications in the spring semester seemed to benefit both the students and me,
which ultimately created a better environment for identity exploration and
development. From the new iterations of the IdEx assignments, I gained a better
understanding of how students connected (or didn’t) writing to their experiences as
students in my class and other classes. Data collection in this iteration also made it easier
for me to compare the components of participants’ student RI to the components in their
writing RI. Additionally, the data from the spring 2017 semester suggested that the
targeted intervention facilitated deeper connections between student and writing RIs for
some students and more sophisticated identity exploration for some students, which may
be due to fewer but more targeted writing assignments and exploration activities overall.

The section that follows provides narratives for three participants involved in the
spring 2017 iteration of the study. The three cases include a range of students who
typically take developmental courses at MCCC. The first student, Jason, represents
MCCC’s non-traditional (24+ years old) student population. Jason also represents
students who repeat developmental courses. Jessica and Deja, both traditional-aged students, represent the racial diversity typically found in developmental writing classes. By focusing on this range of students, we can gain unique insights into the varied experiences of the students who most often populate MCCC developmental writing courses. Since the IdEx assignments in the second iteration of the study focused more specifically on students’ writing and student RIs - giving us more targeted data for these RIs - each participant’s narrative is structured according to the DSMRI components for both Student RI and Writing RI. Similar to the previous narratives, the data from Weeks 1-7 are presented first, followed by a mid-semester summary. The data from Weeks 8-15 are presented thereafter, followed by an end-of-semester summary. Finally, each narrative ends with an analysis of the student’s final essay in the course and an overall conclusion.

**Jason**

Jason was a 24-year old white male who was taking my developmental writing course for the second time in the spring 2017 semester. He first took my class (pre-intervention) in the fall 2011 semester, dropped out of college, took almost six years off, and then came back and took my class again in the spring 2017 semester (spring iteration of intervention). This allowed me to get a more complex picture of his experiences in both versions of the course and his transformations as a student and writer since he first started college. Upon re-entering the college in spring 2017, it was clear that many of Jason’s ontological beliefs, goals, self-perceptions, and actions had changed dramatically from his first stint at the college. He came into the semester with a more positive and committed attitude toward being a student and a writer, and his writing and student RIs underwent some moderate changes throughout the semester. The data suggested that he engaged in more exploration and had more notable transformation within his writing RI than he did within his student RI. Overall, the academic content and IdEx assignments
seemed to facilitate some of the small changes he made within his RIs and helped him to improve his commitments to these identities.

**Analysis of data from course weeks 1 - 7**

*Student RI*

*Ontological beliefs.* In terms of his student RI, the data from the first half of the semester suggested that Jason held both cursory and sophisticated ontological beliefs about being a college student. At first, Jason used a basic definition of a student – essentially, a person who attends college - to express his ontological beliefs about being a college student. However, he also went beyond the elementary definition of a college student to include a deeper set of ontological beliefs: a college student is someone who is planning for life and who acknowledges the importance and relevance of education in that planning:

I believe that being a college student is someone wanting to continue their education. A college student could be anyone from the ages of 18 that have a high school diploma. To me a college student is someone figuring out their next step in life, values education, and the opportunities that education offers them (IdEx#3, 2/3/17)

Yet, when asked to explain his ontological beliefs about himself as a college student, he fell back onto cursory definitions, stating that he believed he was a college student because he “attend[s] this Community College and take[s] the necessary action to graduate” (IdEx #3, 2/3/17). Thus, the data from Jason’s IdEx assignments in the early part of the semester indicated a set of disharmonious ontological about college students that vacillated between “doing” and “being” a college student.

By Week 7, he focused his ontological beliefs specifically on *how* to be a good college student rather than the deeper ontological beliefs about the value of education,
which is often described in the literature as typical for developmental students who tend

to focus more on “‘doing’ college work rather than ‘being’ a college student” (Colyar &
Stich, 2011, p. 131). Jason’s ontological beliefs included more procedural definitions,
such as engaging actively in class (i.e. note taking), advocating for oneself, seeking
help/resources, managing time, and having a strong work ethic:

Remember your ultimate goal and write everything down. Also use your teachers
as a resource and don’t be afraid to advocate for yourself… While you might think
college is all about socializing its really the work that counts time management is
key. All work should be done before you try and socialize and have fun I learned
that the hard way (IdEx #6, 2/24/17)

While his simple and complex ontological beliefs were not necessarily at odds, there
seemed to be some initial tension within the ontological beliefs component of his student
RI in terms of the broader, more abstract ontological beliefs about “being” a college
student (i.e. valuing education) versus the more specific and practical ontological beliefs
that relied on “doing” (i.e. time management, seeking help).

Goals. The data from the first half of the semester suggested that Jason had not
yet developed tangible goals for being a college student. His goals mainly focused
broadly on being successful in class and preparing for the workforce. For example, in
Week 3, he wrote, “My goal as a college student are to pass my classes and be prepared
with my future career” (IdEx #3, 2/3/17). Though his goals were vague, they were fairly
aligned with some of his more superficial ontological beliefs about being a college
student.

By Week 7, the data showed that Jason had established more specific goals aimed
at improving his success in his college courses. Similar to his ontological beliefs, these
goals also focused on “doing” college work rather than “being” a college student. For
example, in Week 7, he wrote, “One goal I would like to set for myself is to ask for my
math teachers help at least every week and do practice problems in the book on a more frequent basis so I can pass math” (IdEx #7, 3/3/17). Jason’s goals, while more specific and achievable than those stated in Week 3, remained fairly procedural.

Action possibilities. The data from the beginning of the spring semester indicated that Jason’s action possibilities were as general as the aforementioned components of his student RI. However, similar to the small change in the goals component of his student RI, Jason’s action possibilities also became slightly more specific, though not much more sophisticated, at mid-semester. At the onset of the semester, Jason’s action possibilities were fairly broad, simplistic, and focused on “expected” student behaviors: “The action I take to be a college student include going (participating) in class, study, and take diligent notes” (IdEx #3, 2/3/17). By mid-semester, instead of focusing his actions on general student behaviors (i.e. study, go to class), he concentrated his actions on using tools to help him improve as a student. For example, in Week 7, he stated that he “more regularly used a planner to time manage as well as stay organized” (IdEx #7, 3/13/17). Though fairly basic, his action possibilities were aligned with his ontological beliefs about time management and relevant to his goals for passing his classes.

Self-perceptions. According to the data from the beginning of the semester, Jason articulated only one perception about himself as a student. Aligned with his stated ontological beliefs, goals, and action possibilities, Jason’s perception of himself as a student also lacked detailed elaboration. However, Jason’s self-perception did include a comparison to his former student self who had taken my class in 2011: “Currently my self perception as a student is I have improved a lot but I still have a lot of work to do” (IdEx #7, 3/3/17). This “improvement” seemed to be related to a statement he made in an earlier IdEx assignment in which he emphasized the need for college students to put their schoolwork ahead of their socializing. Of himself, he said, “I learned that the hard way” (IdEx #6, 2/24/17). Though he perceived himself to be an improved student relative to the
2011 version of himself, he did not actually offer any concrete statements about his perceptions of himself as a student within the spring 2017 semester.

*Writing RI*

*Ontological beliefs.* Similar to the ontological beliefs in his student RI, Jason often held both deep and cursory ontological beliefs in his writing role identity. For example, unlike other students in the study, Jason did not emphasize grammatical correctness or even enjoyment of writing as the predominant characteristics of a writer. Instead, he offered an almost dictionary-like definition: “To be a writer to me means someone who is able to communicate without the use of verbal communication, but instead with symbols that represent their language” (IdEx #3, 2/3/17). He furthered this point by stating, “I think that writers do not have to be grammatically correct, they just have to be able to effectively communicate their purpose” (IdEx #3, 2/3/17). Jason identified himself as a writer because he could “communicate without spoken word” (IdEx #3, 2/3/17). While these responses might seem a bit mechanical, Jason also took a deeper view of writing as an important part of being a productive person in the world: “My beliefs about writing are that it is necessary to be successful in society” (IdEx #3, 2/3/17). After the collaborative writing unit triggered exploration of his writing ontological beliefs, he revised his ontological beliefs to include more specific emphasis on revision and collaboration, which illustrated a transformation in ontological beliefs about his process for writing:

> Working in a group allows for the opportunity to collaborate and bounce ideas off of each other which helped speed up my own writing process. It weakened my belief that writing has to be a solo endeavor or that writing cannot be effectively done collaboratively (IdEx #5, 2/17/17)
Here, the data suggested that Jason did indeed experience a relevant difference in his consideration of group writing and the process by which writing gets done. Thus, it appeared that this activity did play a role in his exploration of his writing identity, specifically the ontological beliefs component. For example, in Weeks 6 and 7, he wrote,

> But overall the most important thing is to revise while you right several times and have others revise your paper as well. Having another persons imput helps to round the paper out (IdEx #6, 2/24/17). You have to be willing to revise your writing several times if you want it to be your best work…in order for me to successfully write it helps when I get other people involved. Sharing my writing helps me to develop stronger and better details (IdEx #7, 3/3/17)

Similar to the transformation of his ontological beliefs about being a student, Jason started the semester with a fairly broad, almost dictionary-like set of ontological beliefs about writing’s relevance to success in society. He also articulated a conceptual belief of writers as people who express themselves clearly. By mid-semester, though, the data showed that the collaborative writing unit, coupled with reflection on that unit in the IdEx assignments, triggered new ways of thinking about writing and prompted him to transform his ontological beliefs to include sharing writing with others, getting feedback, and editing as vital components of the writing experience.

**Goals.** The data from the beginning of the semester showed that Jason’s goals for writing focused exclusively on developing foundational skills. Though Jason stated the belief that grammatical perfection was not pertinent to good writing or being a good writer, his first stated goal for writing contradicted his belief about writing, as the goals dealt primarily with foundational skills: “My goals for writing are to continue to progress with clarity and fewer grammatical errors” (IdEx#3, 2/3/17).

Following the collaborative writing unit, however, Jason’s goals moved away from specific references to grammar improvement, but they still focused on technicalities, such as getting feedback from a specific number of readers: “One goal I
would like to set for myself is that I will allow at least three people to revise my paper before handing it in as a final draft” (IdEx #7, 3/3/17). While Jason’s stated goals were important to his process for writing overall, they barely focused on development of his ideas or his actual writing, which aligned only in part with his ontological beliefs about writing at this time. Additionally, though he acknowledged the importance of seeking help and getting feedback, the goal of having others to revise his work for him suggested no real sense of agency or control over his own writing. The data at mid-semester suggested that Jason’s goals for writing were not focused on improvement, clear communication, or self-expression but, instead, on reaching certain procedural or skills objectives that, only to a small extent, aligned with his ontological beliefs about writing.

Action possibilities. Akin to the other components of his writing RI, Jason’s action possibilities were fairly basic throughout the first half of the semester. Initially, Jason stated no actions for himself as a writer. At Week 6, he finally articulated some writing actions, but they were rudimentary: “Research your topic before you begin to write and to have you and other revise your paper” (IdEx #6, 2/24/16). Similarly, in Week 7, Jason’s action possibilities for writing mainly focused on time management, with a nod to the editing and revising process: “One action I will take in the future is to start the writing process earlier so that I will have plenty of time to edit and revise” (IdEx#7, 3/3/17). While the collaborative unit triggered some change in Jason’s ontological beliefs and goals, it did not seem to have the same impact on his action possibilities. In some ways, his stated actions aligned with his goals for writing and ontological beliefs about writing, especially concerning revision; however, in other ways, they were overly simplistic, in that there was little to no elaboration or thoughtfulness about how to actually advance his writing skills or incorporate writing into his life or academic pursuits.

Self-perceptions. The data from the first half of the semester did not show many statements regarding Jason’s self-perceptions. Early in the semester, Jason identified
himself as a writer simply because he could perform the act of writing: “Yes I do believe I am a writer because I can communicate without spoken word” (IdEx#3, 2/2/17). The self-perception, on the one hand, aligned with his first stated belief about writing (i.e. writing is communicating in non-verbal symbols). However, this belief and the aligned self-perception failed to delve into the nuances of writing or being a writer, which could suggest that Jason was distancing himself from a writing identity.

After the collaborative unit, Jason did let his guard down slightly and expressed a perception of himself as a writer: “Sometimes I find when I am writing by myself I can get stuck on one thing or get writers block and not know where to go with my writing” (IdEx#5, 2/17/17). Based on this perception, it made sense that, following the collaborative unit, Jason updated his ontological beliefs and goals to include more emphasis on working with others and getting feedback.

Mid-term analysis of identity exploration and development. Jason entered the semester with some lofty ontological beliefs about education, writing, and writers; and, in many cases, there was alignment between the components in each of these RIs. However, he quickly succumbed to the general expectations for students and writers, as opposed to fully embracing his role as a student and writer. While he made some transformations in his ontological beliefs and goals for writing following the triggering that occurred during the collaborative unit, the components of his student RI remained fairly fixed and procedural through the first seven weeks of the semester. Overall, in both RIs, Jason tended to focus more on the technical aspects of being a student and a writer, which, according to Colyar and Stich (2011), is one way in which developmental students tend to distance themselves from fully adopting an academic or writing identity.

While Jason tended to distance himself from his academic and writing identities, he did undergo some exploration throughout the first half of the semester, particularly when he discussed his current writing and academic identities versus those he had when he first started (and then dropped out of) college. The data indicated that, via the
exploration activities in the class, Jason questioned himself and his actions by comparing his former student self to his current student self and, from this, figured out how to navigate college after having taken time off.

The data suggested that the in-class identity exploration activities somewhat facilitated Jason’s exploration of his RIs. Because this iteration’s IdEx assignments targeted student and writing RIs more specifically, the assignments prompted Jason to embrace the relationship between being a student and being a writer and to connect those RIs to other relevant areas of his life, such as his potential career in business. Along the same lines, the more targeted intervention also helped to scaffold identity exploration in that Jason often used his descriptions of one RI as a framework for discussing another relevant RI. The assignments also helped to trigger exploration in that they encouraged Jason to consider the connections between academics and writing that he may have previously overlooked and/or compare his current ontological, actions, goals, and perceptions with those he held when he first attempted college courses in 2011. Finally, the data suggested that the exploration activities facilitated a sense of safety wherein Jason felt comfortable enough to share and discuss his previous failures in college and how those failures contributed to his current ontological beliefs of what it means to be a writer and student, his current goals and actions for writing and for succeeding in his academics, and his perceptions of himself as a writer and student.

**Analysis of data from course weeks 8 – 16**

**Student RI**

*Ontological beliefs.* In the last half of the semester, the data suggested that Jason made no notable changes in ontological beliefs about being a student. He continued to focus on the logistics of being a college student, such as managing time and being organized. He specifically referenced his ontological beliefs only one time in the IdEx assignments from the last half of the semester: “One belief now that I have about being a
college student would be that you need to be dedicated and to have good time management…Yes, you need to be organized and have better time management in order to be a successful college student” (IdEx #12, 4/14/17).

By the end of the semester, Jason indicated that he believed that being a college student was much more than simply managing time and staying organized. When I asked about why he returned to college after six years, he explained the role that a college education plays in his life and in his future. He stated, “I just thought I gotta get this done if I want to do anything in life basically. Not necessarily that you need college to go forth, but it’s always nice to have that” (Interview, 5/5/17). While Jason did not necessarily address some of the initial ontological he had about being a college student (i.e. one who values education), he no longer focused solely on the purely technical aspects of how to be a successful student; instead, he also centered his ontological beliefs on why college is relevant to his life and potential career.

Goals. In the second half of the semester, Jason maintained many of the same goals that he had at the mid-term. Almost all of the goals focused on managing time and staying organized, both of which were aligned with the more procedural ontological beliefs about being a good college student that he expressed at the beginning of the semester. For example, he wrote, “A goal that I have set for being a student is to be more organized and have better time management when completing assignments” (IdEx#12, 4/14/17).

While little change occurred in Jason’s stated goals in his Id Ex assignments, there were a few moderate changes articulated in his end-of-semester interview. The data from his interview suggested that Jason’s goals for being a college student were based almost entirely in performance. In his interview, he stated that a college education was important “To say I did required college courses and to have that boost myself above another person applying for a job” (Interview, 5/5/17), which showed that his goals for earning a college education were focused on, first, being able “to say” (I am assuming, to
that he completed college courses and, second, besting other people in the job market.

Action possibilities. Once again, Jason did not have many stated action possibilities in the last half of the semester. Those that he did articulate were completely aligned with his ontological beliefs and goals about being an organized and efficient student. In Week 12, he stated, “An action that I have to take as a student would be to find a better system of organization” (IdEx #12, 4/14/17). Similar to this other statements, Jason’s action possibilities were vague and did not actually articulate a plan or an understanding of how this action could help him become a better college student.

In his end-of-semester interview, Jason did articulate an action possibility that was much more developed and veered greatly from any other statement that he had made previously about being a college student. When I asked him about his actions to facilitate his success in future college classes, he stated,

> Just immerse yourself in the class. Try and find a point of connection between you and the class so that it will be easier for you. It won’t be like ‘Ugh it’s class, I gotta do it.’ If you can connect with it, that will be a huge help (Interview, 5/5/17)

While he used the second person point of view (a distancing technique), his stated actions here showed that he did transform his ideas about how to be a college student. Clearly, it was no longer about just being organized and using time wisely; instead, it was about making connections to the class so that the course has more personal relevance.

Self-perceptions. In the remaining weeks of the semester, Jason did not offer many perceptions of himself as a student. If he did, he focused on time management and organization. For example, he wrote, “I often wait to the last minute to complete a writing assignment” (IdEx #10, 3/31/17) and “A self perception that I have as a student is that I need to be more organized” (IdEx #12, 4/4/17). Jason did not express any self-perceptions of himself as a student in the final interview. Thus, components of his student
RI showed alignment around the central ideas of organization and time (procedural vs. conceptual); however, Jason’s student RI components, in many ways, indicated a fairly shallow understanding of being a college student in general and a fairly shallow reflection on being a college student himself. The data suggested that identity exploration of this RI during the semester was minimal and did not seem to involve much change.

**Writing RI**

*Ontological beliefs.* At the onset of the second half of the semester, the data suggested that Jason had made a fairly significant change in his ontological beliefs about writing. He articulated a belief in needing to understand complexities in the world around us – via the texts we read in class – as central to formulating good ideas for writing. In Week 9, he stated,

> Before this class I was not particularly interested in reading articles with unconventional arguments however the article we have read in this class have allowed me to think deeper about the world around me and now i see the value in reading such things. These articles have shown me that in order to effectively write a well written research paper you need to look at articles that do not necessarily express your own opinion (IdEx #9, 3/24/17)

Thus, that data indicates that the course content and activities had triggered a change in his ontological beliefs about both reading and writing.

However, following this, Jason reverted back to his earlier stated ontological beliefs from the first half of the semester, focusing on the importance of time and organization as central to producing good writing. For example, he wrote, “Through writing in this class I have learned that the writing process take time and that waiting to the last minuet does not produce the best writing” (IdEx #10, 3/31/17). He also re-articulated the belief that writing is important in society: “I believe writing is an essential skill needed to be successful in today's society” (IdEx #12, 4/14/17). While it seemed that
Jason was making some change in his ontological beliefs about the importance of learning and using complex ideas in writing, he fell back on the simpler and broader ontological beliefs articulated at the beginning of the semester, indicating that development and exploration of his writing RI was a complex and dynamic process.

Goals. The data from the last half of the semester showed that Jason did not express many goals for writing. The one goal that he did articulate was a performance-based goal and had little to alignment with any of his ontological beliefs about writing. His one stated goal for writing dealt only with the final essay for the developmental class and not for any other future writing endeavors: “On my next paper I will strive to receive a score higher than my last paper” (IdEx #12, 4/14/17). It is unclear whether this goal indicated a mastery or performance orientation. On the one hand, it could suggest a mastery orientation if Jason’s goal to improve grades centered on further developing his writing skills. However, if earning a higher grade were the goal itself, then it would appear that his goals at this time were more performance-oriented than mastery-oriented. In his final interview, Jason did not state any goals – about writing or otherwise – concerning his future courses at the College or in life.

Action possibilities. According to the data, Jason did not state many action possibilities for writing in the last half of the semester. However, those that he did state aligned with his ontological beliefs about writing, particularly the belief that solid research is needed to reach the goal of producing good writing: “In the future I will collect research from multiple sources in order to conduct a stronger argument” (IdEx #12, 4/14/17). This emphasis on research and synthesis was supported in his final interview wherein Jason stated that the most important actions he learned to do in the development course were “applying the lessons from the articles that we read for our first essay the one on female gender roles, traditional or modern, actually having to do the research and applying what the authors of those articles said to our own papers” (Interview, 5/5/17).
Self-perceptions. Where the data from the beginning of the semester indicated that Jason had fairly cursory and general perceptions of himself as a writer, the data from the end of the semester showed that he had developed some fairly new and interesting perceptions of himself as a writer and how he changed over the course of the semester. When Jason was asked to find an image of himself as a writer and explain the meaning of that image, he wrote about a picture of a clock. His explanation of the clock represented his perception of himself as a procrastinator, which aligned with many of his writing and student ontological beliefs, goals, and actions, particularly those that focused on time management and organization: “I feel that this image of a clock best represent me as a writer because I often wait to the last minute to complete a writing assignment” (IdEx #10, 3/31/17). However, this perception was not necessarily related to his perception of his actual writing or his role as a writer. Moving forward, though, he expressed much more specific perceptions of himself as a writer.

The data collected from the remainder of Jason’s IdEx assignments for the semester, coupled with his final interview, indicated that Jason perceived himself as a writer who needed a process for writing, specifically a way of structuring and organizing his ideas. In IdEx #10, he stated, “I really didn't have much of an opinion about the writing process nor did I understand what it entailed” (IdEx #10, 3/31/17). Then, in the following IdEx assignment, he intimated a transformation in his perceptions of himself as a writer at the end of the course:

As a developing writer this class has helped me understand the writing process more in depth. Because, when I would write a paper for other classes I would become unorganized. Now that i have a better understanding of the writing process I follow the steps accordingly to stay organized which for me has produce better papers (IdEx #11, 4/7/17)
Though organization was something Jason expressed anxiety about throughout the semester, by the end of the semester he perceived a transformation in this particular skill: “A self perception I have as a writer would be that I have a strength organizing my writing so it flows” (IdEx #12, 4/14/17). This was supported in his final interview. When I asked him if his relationship with writing had changed throughout the semester, he responded, “I wouldn’t say it changed but it developed a better writing process” (Interview, 5/5/17). Following that statement, Jason expressed positive feelings about himself as a writer: “I’ve gained confidence for sure. From receiving grades back on my papers and just seeing that I’ve done well. Definitely a confidence booster” (Interview, 5/5/17). While his confidence, in part, stemmed from earning good grades on his essays, it could be also be related to Jason’s development of a process for writing that worked for him and met his needs as someone who stressed organization as a primary belief, goal, and action for both his student and writing RIs.

End-of-semester analysis of identity exploration and development. While many of Jason’s ontological beliefs, goals, actions, and self-perceptions remained as general and procedural as they had been in the beginning of the semester, there were some fairly important changes that occurred by the end of the semester, particularly in his writing RI. By the semester’s end, Jason had focused more on research, organization, and process as the most important components in his development as a writer. In terms of organization, which was highly important to him, he perceived that he had made major improvements in this area, which led to feelings of confidence and satisfaction. However, the data from the last half of the semester indicated that Jason had not transformed much within in his student RI.

The data suggested that Jason underwent minimal identity exploration in the last half of the semester. Overall, his writing RI exploration was much deeper than his student RI exploration. His IdEx assignments and final interview indicated a tension between - or maybe a thoughtful transition from - Jason’s initial ontological beliefs about writers as
people who communicate effectively and his alternative ontological beliefs about writers as researchers. His emphasis on the importance of gathering evidence and reading complex articles that express varying viewpoints illustrated an evolution in Jason’s thinking about writing in that he seemed to have realized that communicating effectively is important, but only if a writer has something meaningful to communicate (i.e. good evidence, solid and well-rounded arguments). In terms of his student RI, the data did not illustrate much exploration. Jason did not seem to question or evolve many of his previously stated ontological beliefs, goals, actions, or perceptions in the last half of the semester.

Similar to Seojun, Jason appeared to lose interest in deeply exploring his identity via the IdEx assignments by the end of the semester. While the IdEx assignments prompted Jason to consider the connections between writing, academics, and other relevant aspects of his life, they did not seem to trigger identity exploration. It is possible that for Jason, like Seojun, the course content and the IdEx assignments had become repetitive, tiresome, and irrelevant. While Jason still felt safe enough to complete and share his writing activities with the class, it did not appear that this was enough to encourage him to deeply explore his RIs. It could be the case that because the exploration activities were so structured and targeted, they lacked the flexibility needed for students in this iteration to truly explore their identities.

**Relationship Between RIs.** The data collected from Jason’s IdEx assignments exhibited explicit coherence between writing and student RIs. For both RIs, Jason stressed the importance of dedication, organization, and time management. For example, early in the semester, he wrote, “One of the overlaps in advice is that you have to put your all into both the writing process and being a college student” (IdEx #6, 2/24/17). This sentiment was continued in his IdEx assignments throughout the semester. In Week 7, he wrote “To be a successful writer and a successful student you need to use your time wisely and be organized...The same dedication you need to be a successful student you
need to be a successful writer” (IdEx# 7, 3/3/17). In his final IdEx assignment for the semester, he repeated this view, stressing the significance of the first unit of the semester in terms of teaching him a process for writing and staying organized:

The essay that impacted my views as a developing writer would also be the first one. because, it helped me stay the most organized throughout writing. this had a small role on me as a college student, where through the writing process taught me to be more organized and manage my time better and I now apply those tactics more effectively (IdEx #13, 4/21/17)

While it was important to understand the similarities between being a writer and being a college student, his focus on organization was rather simplistic, as it did not address the deeper meanings of writing or learning.

In some instances, the data showed that Jason did try to connect these RIs in more meaningful ways, but he typically resorted to oversimplifications, such as, “The criteria I have listed for both being a writer and a college student reflect my belief that in order to be successful one must practice and be an effective communicator (IdEx #3, 2/3/17) and “The two are similar, the qualities you needed to be a successful writer directly correlate with being a successful student” (IdEx #12, 4/14/17). On the surface, Jason understood the relationship between writing and academics. However, as data throughout the semester suggested, he tended to focus on singular concrete principles (i.e. organization). Thus, while Jason viewed his RIs as interrelated, he did so by focusing on cursory details instead of on the deeper individual meanings of being a writer and student, as well as the larger connections between writing and academics.

Analysis of final essay assignment. The data collected from Jason’s final essay indicated agency, engagement with the writing process, and a more developed set of action possibilities as displayed through the sophistication in his content and organization of ideas. Jason’s paper topic itself illustrated his confidence in himself as a writer. For this assignment, students were asked to choose a film and write about the gender
presentations of the male or female character(s); however, Jason chose to write about the portrayals of both feminine and masculine gender values. This indicated a willingness to take on additional work for this paper, as he would have to analyze both sexes individually and then synthesize those analyses into a coherent argumentative essay about the film’s gender representations. It also showed confidence in his organizational abilities to handle multiple points of data and structure the paper in a clear and coherent manner.

Jason’s decision to write about the movie *Grease*, which was not on the instructor-suggested list of film choices, indicated a willing expansion of his perceived action possibilities for writing in the final assignment. He also wrote significantly more words in his essay than other students in his class wrote in their final papers. Jason’s final essay used 1455 words, whereas the class average was 978 words.

In terms of the sophistication of the writing itself, Jason relied more heavily on interactional metadiscourse methods than many of his classmates did. Though he was not permitted to use the word “I” in his writing, Jason found ways to interact with the reader directly through attitude markers, boosters, and engagement markers. For example, in one paragraph about the sexual double standard for men and women, Jason used both a booster and attitude marker as a way of making an argument with certainty, while also expressing his attitude about that point to the reader: “As the media has always suggested, for boys, having an active sex life is perfectly fine and could even be their main pursuit. This is a pretty interesting sexist notion on it’s own” (Final Essay, 5/8/17). Within this statement, Jason used a booster to emphasize the media’s constant focus on the relationship between masculinity and sexuality, followed by an attitude marker that indicated Jason’s personal opinions (even without him using the first person point of view) about that stereotype for the reader.

Additionally, in terms of evidentials – a core principle of academic writing – Jason did not use any of the class readings provided to him but instead conducted research on masculinity and femininity and weaved paraphrases and quotations from
outside sources consistently throughout his essay. Outside research was not required for this assignment; thus, Jason’s choice to do his own research was aligned with his stated writing ontological beliefs about the importance of research and evidence in the last half of the semester. Even the types of sources he used in the paper – i.e. *Journal of Sex Research* – indicated a deeper sophistication for writing than displayed by many of his classmates who typically used only the articles that were provided for them in class. As an example of Jason’s use of evidentials, he used an online article from *Shape Magazine* to make an important point about the portrayal of women as “gold-diggers.” While he did not always make smooth transitions from the film to the article, he showed sophisticated writing actions in his attempt to synthesize his two sources:

In the song “Summer Nights,” the lyrics state, "Tell me more, tell me more, Like does he have a car? How much dough did he spend?" *Grease* makes women seem like they are gold diggers, and that they aren't looking for love, but for a man who is wealthy. "This notion is emphasized with this stereotype of women: a woman needs a wealthy man to take care of her, as if she’s not capable of taking care of herself, and is only interested in a man if he is wealthy..." (Final Essay, 5/8/17)

While Jason often focused the components of his writing RI on cursory details or procedural elements, his final paper seemed to indicate that he really cared about his writing, not just in terms of organization, but in terms of quality of content and connection to the reader. His final essay assignment showed that by semester’s end, he had learned a process for writing, valued unique arguments about the world (i.e. class readings and his own research), and developed confidence in his ability to produce a clear and organized piece of written communication for a reader. All of which led to a final paper that went above and beyond the assignment’s expectations, as well as above and beyond the level of work produced by his classmates.

*Conclusion. *Jason’s exploration and development of his identities as student and writer were minimal but still complex, dynamic, and interesting. He entered the semester
with a much more dedicated focus to his student RI, likely the result of his failure during his first attempt at being a college student. However, it was not his student RI that transformed the most over the course of the semester, but his writing RI that underwent the most change. He vacillated back and forth between lofty, cursory, procedural, and conceptual statements about the components of his writing RI, which suggested that his identity was not fixed but instead fluctuated across time and context. But, he ended the semester feeling confident in what he had learned and the improvements he had made. This confidence led to a final paper that indicated a more complex vision of writing, as something more than just communication in symbols or organized sentences and paragraphs. His final essay indicated that he could engage readers with both his research and his personal attitudes about topics (even without using “I”). He showed agency in his topic selection and his choice to do more than what was required for the assignment. Most importantly, it seemed that, at least for the final assignment, Jason was motivated more by mastery of planning, organizing, drafting, revising, researching, and connecting with readers than he had been at any other point in the semester.

**Jessica**

Jessica was an 18-year-old Latina female who began her first semester of college in the spring 2017 semester. When Jessica first started the semester, she admittedly lacked confidence and did not believe that she had anything important to say in class or in her writing: “I identify myself as a conservative, reserved and insecure person because I tend to doubt myself a lot which causes me to become afraid of any changes or opportunities in life whether they are good or bad” (IdEx #1, 1/20/17). Despite these insecurities – or maybe because of them – Jessica came into the course with fairly sophisticated and complex ideas about being both a student and a writer, especially in terms of how both of these roles played a role in developing confidence and agency. By the end of the semester, Jessica had undergone transformations in both her student and
writing RI, with the most significant change occurring in self-perceptions within her writing RI. According to the data, it appeared that the class theme (gender in pop culture), the collaborative writing unit, and the scaffolds for her reflections on the content and lessons in her IdEx assignments, facilitated exploration and transformation in her writing RI as well as her overall engagement with the course.

**Analysis of data from course weeks 1 - 7**

*Student RI*

*Ontological Beliefs.* The data from the beginning of the semester suggested that Jessica believed that being a college student was a way to find herself, both in terms of developing her interests and potential career options. For example, she wrote, “Being a college student is taking more responsibility about your future and what your goals are in life. Being a college student to me is helping find what I want my career to be one day” (IdEx #3, 2/3/17). Unlike students, such as Jason, who defined being a college student simply as being a person who attends college classes, Jessica believed she was a college student because she was “working to find my likes a dislikes career wise even though I’m still undecided on what career to take but until I find what I am truly passionate about I’m gonna to keep working on it” (IdEx #3, 2/3/17). Thus, the data suggested that Jessica came into the semester with fairly sophisticated ontological beliefs about college. She was not simply in college to take classes; she was there to discover her passions and explore her identity.

*Goals.* Jessica’s goals for being student aligned almost perfectly with her ontological beliefs about being a student. She focused her goals on self-improvement and development, followed by goals about finding a passion that she could turn into a career: “My goals to being a college student is to learn more about myself and the things I like and for one day to be able to graduate with a college degree” (IdEx, #3, 2/3/17). Unlike Jason, for example, Jessica did not have goals that focused on “doing” (i.e. managing
time, staying organized, asking for help) but rather on “being” a college student. Additionally, her goals were not performance-oriented; instead, her goals focused on making the college experience relevant to her identity development, particularly her career interests.

*Action possibilities.* In the first half of the semester, Jessica did not state many action possibilities for being a student. However, in reference to her goal of finding a passion that she cares about, she wrote, “Until I find what I am truly passionate about I’m gonna to keep working on it” (IdEx #3, 2/3/17). The data suggested that her action possibilities aligned with both her ontological beliefs and goals in that she planned to use college as a way to determine who she is and what she is interested in.

*Self-perceptions.* The data from the first half of the semester indicated that Jessica was a woman with insecurities and self-doubt, not just as a student, but in general. She consistently indicated that she did not believe in herself and that she believed others did not care about her opinions. For example, in IdEx #1, she stated,

> Throughout my childhood and growing up I have encountered some difficulties that made me identify myself as insecure, reserved and conservative. I've become insecure growing up because of society and my cultural believes. I've been judged by friends, Family and sometimes even strangers. This type of things have made me become more reserved of what I think or what I feel, as if I feel i will be judge for my thoughts and feelings (IdEx #1, 1/20/17)

Though her first IdEx assignment centered mostly on her life outside of school (unspecified RI), these feelings of inadequacy were mirrored in her self-perceptions of herself as a student as well: “Most college students already know and are taking the career they want and that to me sometimes makes me feel like an outsider” (IdEx #3, 2/3/17). Thus, it is no surprise that she focused her ontological beliefs, goals, and actions on the relationship between college and self-discovery. For Jessica, it seemed that college was the place to find her voice.
Once the class started the collaborative writing unit, Jessica’s self-perceptions began to change. Though she first articulated fears about expressing herself publicly in class, by Week 4, she seemed to embrace her burgeoning voice:

The most interesting thing I learned this week was sharing my ideas and not being afraid to do so. During high school I never enjoyed being in groups. I always felt like my ideas never mattered or were never good enough so I was afraid to share them because I didn’t want anybody to think of me as dumb. This week’s class has made me realize that I shouldn’t be afraid to speak my mind out and share my ideas to people because the only way to be heard is to actually speak up (IdEx #4, 2/10/17)

My observation notes from the collaborative unit supported the changes in Jessica’s self-perceptions and subsequent level of participation in class. The observations notes from this time period consistently noted Jessica as an active leader in group writing, as well as in the class workshops (Observation Journal, 2/1/17 – 2/10/17). This change in Jessica’s perceptions may have been spurred because of her sense of safety within the classroom environment: the class size was small (6 students total), and all of the students (and the teacher) were female.

Writing RI

*Ontological Beliefs.* Jessica’s ontological beliefs about writing were also more conceptual and less procedural than other students’ ontological beliefs about writing. Contrary to many of her peers, Jessica did not mention the logistics of writing (i.e. grammar, vocabulary) as part of her core ontological beliefs about writing. Though her ontological beliefs about writing sometimes lacked detailed elaboration, she did hold more sophisticated ontological beliefs about writing’s role in expanding the mind, as well as being a form of self-expression. For example, she wrote, “My beliefs about writing are it gives the opportunity to view things from multiple perspectives and it can also be a
very personal thing” (IdEx #3, 2/3/17). This belief was supported in Week 7, when she stated, “My belief about writing is you somehow have to feel connected to what your writing in order to write a good paper and be a good writer” (IdEx #7, 3/3/17). Her ontological beliefs about writing seemed integrated with her ontological beliefs about being a student in that they focused on self-improvement and discovering new viewpoints.

Jessica also held strong ontological beliefs about collaborative writing in terms of its impact on her writing. The data implied that collaborative writing, and reflection and discussion thereof, scaffolded not only her writing but also her exploration of herself as a writer. The group workshops and in-class discussions allowed her to openly and safely share her opinions on writing while also learning new ways of thinking about a writing task by listening to others’ opinions and by seeing others’ writing (and their varying writing practices):

Working with other people has taught me to expand and share more of my ideas. I've learned how my classmates write and we have helped each other improve on our weaknesses throughout class. Hearing someone else's point of view on my writing helps me analyze and take in different ideas (IdEx #5, 2/17/17).

These ontological beliefs were supported in Week 7, when she reiterated her belief in the importance of sharing ideas as part of the process of writing: “When writing a paper always ask for an opinion either from friends, teachers or family. It is always good to view other peoples opinions/ideas” (IdEx #7, 3/3/17). Though Jessica’s ontological beliefs about collaboration bordered on procedural, it seemed that she believed in the collaborative process for writing as integral not only to improving writing, but in exploring her role as a writer in terms of developing her ontological beliefs, actions, and self-perceptions (i.e. self-esteem and feelings of worthiness).
Goals. Jessica did not articulate many goals for writing at the beginning of the semester. Early in the semester, she expressed only one goal for writing, and it was fairly unspecific: “My goals to being a writer is improving my writing skills” (IdEx#3, 2/3/17). However, by Week 7, she had updated her goal to include a sense of personal validation in addition to improving her writing skills. She wrote, “My goal I have for writing is for one day to feel proud of what I write. Little by little I want to better myself at writing because writing has been one of my weakest points throughout school” (IdEx #7, 3/3/17). Jessica’s goals at this point in the semester were both mastery-oriented and performance-oriented. On the one hand, Jessica wanted to produce writing that she could feel proud of, which indicated a more intrinsic goal for writing. Her other goal was more performance-oriented in that she wanted to improve her writing to prove to herself and others that she has developed as a writer. This change at Week 7 was important because it showed that writing, especially improving her writing skills, was integral to Jessica’s sense of self.

Action possibilities. Similar to her goals for writing, Jessica’s action possibilities were not described in detail in the first half of the semester. She offered some vague action possibilities, such as “practicing, focusing, and asking for help when I need it” (IdEx #3, 2/3/17). During the collaborative unit, she updated her actions to include some additional help-seeking behaviors, such as “always ask for an opinion either from friends, teachers or family” (IdEx #6, 2/24/17). From the data, it could be inferred that Jessica’s experiences with collaborative writing facilitated a small change in her actions in that they changed from fairly broad actions with no clear definition to one smaller, but more meaningful, action of getting feedback from others.

Self-perceptions. The data showed that Jessica started the semester with fairly poor perceptions of herself as a writer. This was not surprising considering her overall lack of confidence upon entering college. She stated, “I do not see myself as a writer because my writing is not as good as I would like it to be” (IdEx #3, 2/3/17). However, she did perceive that she was learning a lot in the developmental course, which suggested
that she did not see her current self-perception as final: “I'm trying to improve on and therefore I’m taking [developmental] English which so far I have learned so much” (IdEx #3, 2/3/17).

Similar to the other components of Jessica’s writing RI, her self-perceptions transformed slightly during the collaborative unit. She even expressed satisfaction with the first essay unit: “I've enjoyed working in groups on our first essays because it has helped me improve on my writing” (IdEx #5, 2/17/17). The data here indicated that she connected the collaborative unit to her perceived improvement in her writing, which could indicate that Jessica’s identity exploration process was, in part, prompted by socialization rather than the course curriculum.

*Mid-term analysis of identity exploration and development.* The data suggested that Jessica began the semester with sophisticated ontological beliefs concerning the roles that being a writer and a college student play in the development of her agency, interests, and career objectives. By mid-semester, she had evolved these ontological beliefs to include the importance of collaboration and group work as the means by which she could better facilitate those developments. Her goals in the first half of the semester were fairly limited, but the few small goals that she professed were fairly aligned within each RI and integrated across RIs. For example, her ontological beliefs about being a writer and college student were integrated in that they focused on the goals of discovering her passions, developing more confidence, and improving her skills so that she can be proud of herself. Similarly, Jessica’s action possibilities were also fairly limited. However, those action possibilities that she did express - collaborating with others, seeking help/advice from others, and committing to her continued search for her academic passions – aligned with other components within each RI and were integrated across the targeted RIs.

Jessica’s self-perceptions underwent the most transformation in the first half of the semester. In the beginning of the semester, Jessica perceived herself to be a poor
writer, and she also expressed some anxiety about being different from other college students because she did not yet have a passion or an academic plan. However, by mid-semester, Jessica’s self-perceptions and confidence had improved. She spoke up more frequently in class discussion, and expressed more certainty that she, indeed, had important things to say and that people would listen to her. While her self-perceptions were not dramatically improved, she still expressed a perception that she had already learned a lot in the first half of the semester, which was helping her to feel more secure in her writing skills.

Jessica’s identity exploration seemed to stem mostly from the social context of the class. However, the IdEx assignments and subsequent class discussion facilitated some interesting exploration, especially in the first half of the semester. Similar to Jason, Jessica examined the student and writer she was in high school compared to the student and writer she is in college via the IdEx assignments and class discussions. She consistently questioned her former self both in class and in her exploration activities and attempted to alter the aspects of her former self that she felt were preventing her from fully engaging with her academics and writing. Unlike Jason, Jessica also used the exploration activities to speculate about the student and writer she wants to be in the future. Thus, the data suggested that the exploration activities were a way in which Jessica could challenge her past ontological beliefs and perceptions in an effort to make substantive change to both her student and writing RIs.

The exploration activities seemed to be moderately effective in terms of promoting self-relevance, triggering exploration, scaffolding exploration, and promoting a sense of safety. The exploration activities prompted Jessica to make connections between her work in college and other relevant self-aspects, such as her possible academic interests and career choices. The assignments also worked to trigger exploration by encouraging Jessica to explain and challenge some of the ontological beliefs that she had upon entering college. Additionally, the data suggested that her
reflections on the collaborative writing activities specifically also seemed to trigger exploration as well. Where Jessica previously had not imagined the possibility of writing successfully and contributing confidently in a group, she described this process in her IdEx assignments, reflecting on the collaborative work as one of the more meaningful experiences in the development of her writer and student RIs in the first half of the semester. The IdEx assignments also helped to scaffold identity exploration for Jessica. For example, Jessica often used the IdEx prompts about her writing and academic identities to address other aspects of her identity, such as her family life and her cultural values, in similar ways. Thus, the exploration activities, while focused mostly on writing and academics, served as a framework for her to explore her life outside of college as well. Finally, in terms of facilitating safety for exploration, it was unclear from the data whether the IdEx assignments or the classroom environment (socialization) facilitated a sense of safety for Jessica. The data showed that she referred to the “class” when she noted a change in her engagement in class. However, while the class itself may have provided a safe space for her to increase her participation, the IdEx assignments seemed to facilitate the sense of safety needed for exploration, especially in the beginning of the semester when Jessica was not comfortable vocalizing her ontological beliefs or perceptions aloud to the class. Thus, similar to Seojun, Jessica used the IdEx assignments as a safe space to question herself and develop herself when she was not comfortable enough to do so publicly.

Analysis of data from course weeks 8 – 16

Student RI

Ontological Beliefs. There was a dearth of data on Jessica’s ontological beliefs about being a student in the second half of the semester. However, the ontological beliefs she did articulate focused less on ontological beliefs about being a student in general and more about the aspects of the course to which she attributed her success as a student. For
example, Jessica expressed one belief several times in class discussion, in her reflective writing assignments, and in her final interview: the small class size – especially a small class comprised of all females - facilitated her sense of safety, thus encouraging greater participation in class and increasing her confidence to express her opinions (Observation Journal, 3/1/17). This belief was corroborated in her final interview, wherein she stated, “I like the small amount of people…If there had been a lot of people, I wouldn’t have talked or made a lot of connections (Interview, 4/24/17).

Jessica’s sense of safety was complemented by the course content (gender stereotypes and pop culture), which triggered exploration and also connected to Jessica’s life personally, and the class discussions, which scaffolded Jessica’s exploration. The critical examination of gender presentations in pop culture appeared to be a novel topic for her, especially in light of her family’s very conservative gender values, thus triggering exploration of her own identity as a Latina female while also contributing to her engagement in the course work. For example, she wrote, “This class makes me think. Other classes are just…there” (IdEx #11, 4/7/17). While Jessica’s ontological beliefs were limited in the last half of the semester, the data suggested that the course content and IdEx assignments played a role in the small additions to her ontological beliefs about being a student.

Goals. Jessica did not state many goals for being a student in general in the second half of the semester. She only stated one goal for herself as a student in the developmental writing course, and it specifically focused on grades: “I am aiming for at least a 95% in this class” (IdEx #10, 3/31/17). This goal was not at all aligned with her ontological beliefs about the importance of the sense of safety and camaraderie in the class or to the importance of relevance and novelty in the course content. In her final interview, Jessica did not state any goals for being a student or any goals for continuing her education in college.
Action possibilities. Since Jessica did not express many new ontological beliefs or goals for being a student, her stated action possibilities were also limited. For example, in reference to her goal of getting an A in the course, she wrote a fairly general statement: “In order to accomplish this, I need to focus and work more time on tasks” (IdEx #10, 3/31/17). Her action possibilities seemed related to her stated goals; however, this specific action did not seem related to the aforementioned ontological beliefs about her success in the classroom. In her final interview, though, Jessica did express a future action possibility that aligned with her ontological beliefs about the importance of class participation, camaraderie, and safety in the classroom: “I feel like I will be able to participate in a bigger class” (Interview, 4/24/17).

Self-perceptions. Similar to the other components of her student RI, Jessica did not express many perceptions of herself as a student. However, the perceptions that she articulated were more closely aligned with her ontological beliefs about her success as a student. In reference to her ontological beliefs about class participation, Jessica perceived that she had undergone some changes in her student RI: “I used to always keep my opinions to myself because I didn’t feel like my opinion was as strong as theirs [other students in the class]. Now I don’t feel as bad about my opinions or when they correct me” (Observation Notes, 3/1/17). This sentiment was echoed in a later IdEx assignment: “I am able to speak and have a discussion about our opinions, as we are a small class. I don’t feel shy to speak my mind” (IdEx #13, 4/21/17). These transformations could be attributed to her overall sense of safety in the classroom. These perceptions are also important to note because Jessica seemed to suggest that her sense of safety in the developmental English class and subsequent change in her confidence to participate vocally are transferable to other courses, even those that are different from our own.
Writing RI

Ontological Beliefs. Contrary to her student ontological beliefs, Jessica expressed many ontological beliefs about writing in the second half of the semester. Most of the transformations in ontological beliefs stemmed from her engagement, facilitated through self-relevance related to the topics that she was writing about, and scaffolding of exploration through class discussions:

I believe that what help me through my writing assignments more were all of the topics and class discussions we had because I felt a connection talking about gender roles and stereotypes in society. I feel like most teachers should have in mind that a small part of writing a good paper is having a good topic/connection with the assignment (IdEx #11, 4/7/17)

This belief was supported in her final interview as well, wherein she expressed the following:

I felt a lot close to gender roles and stereotypes because I experience it. I felt a connection to it. That’s why I could write about it. I need to feel a connection with my topic or else I won’t be interested or work on it much. At least I need to understand the topic. If I’m really not into it, my brain functions differently. I don’t pay attention to it or the small details. I guess I have to work on that (Interview, 4/27/17)

Thus, the data suggested that some of her success in the writing course could be attributed to the relevance of the topics to her life as well as to the scaffolding of her exploration via class discussion.

In addition to her ontological beliefs about self-relevance, Jessica also expressed ontological beliefs about the helpfulness of developing writing strategies together as a class. For example, after completing the first essay, she wrote, “Writing Essay #1 felt easy when we worked as groups, had class discussions, and gave each other feedback” (IdEx #12, 4/14/17). This belief was reiterated in her final interview when she noted,
“Like the first essay - separating everything and you working with us - it helped me understand each part of the essay, like the intro, body paragraphs, and conclusion (Interview, 4/24/17). In working together as a class, a sense of safety was established, which allowed Jessica not only to better understand the importance of developing writing strategies, but also helped her to develop her writing skills.

She also expressed an ontological belief in the role that student/teacher conferences played in her writing development, which was in harmony with her stated ontological beliefs about the importance of feedback in her writing practice. She stated, “The class discussions and the meetings with just me and you. That was really helpful. You would review our essays and let us know what we could change. That was good. Some teachers don’t do that” (Interview, 4/24/17). Similar to the collaborative writing work and class discussions, the student/teacher conferences also seemed to provide a sense of safety for Jessica in terms of getting the opportunity to discuss writing with her teacher in a private setting.

Goals. Unfortunately, the data showed that Jessica did not express any new goals for writing in the second half of the semester, nor did she reiterate any previous goals. As mentioned earlier, the only statement that related to goals was her desire to earn a 95% in the course (IdEx #12, 4/14/17).

Action possibilities. The data suggested that Jessica’s action possibilities aligned with the two ontological beliefs that she held most solidly in the second half of the course: establishing the connections between her life and the course/writing content and continuing to develop her process for writing. In the second half of the semester, Jessica explained that the process for writing that she learned in class was the scaffold for her future writing possibilities. For example, in IdEx #12, she wrote, “I will continue to use the techniques from class, like hearing back from someone [i.e. getting feedback], keeping ideas organized, and just breaking it down in to separate sections and taking your time in each of them” (IdEx #12, 4/14/17). In her interview, she also articulated that she
used the lessons from the first unit to help her write her second essay: “All the steps we took gave me an idea of how to start an essay, that’s what I did for Essay 2. It helps to know how to start” (Interview, 4/24/17).

Additionally, Jessica articulated action possibilities that she used – or could use – in her writing to feel establish self-relevance. For example, in the second essay unit when the class was asked to write about masculine gender values, she noted that the paper was interesting and easy for her to write because she related all the male gender stereotypes to experiences she had with her brothers while they were growing up (IdEx #11, 4/7/17). When I asked her what she would do if the topic was not explicitly relevant to her life, she stated, “I guess I’ll try to find a connection somehow either through me or someone else. Try to see it through different perspectives” (Interview, 4/27/17).

Self-perceptions. Jessica expressed more positive perceptions of her skills, abilities, and confidence as a writer over the last half of the semester. Though she often did not express perceptions about specific aspects of her writing RI, she did articulate pride and confidence in the development of her writing overall. For example, after completing the second essay, Jessica wrote, “Overall I feel very proud with what I've achieved so far” (IdEx #11, 4/7/17). This sentiment was echoed in a later IdEx assignment: “I feel a lot more confident than I used to before. At the beginning of the semester I had not much clue of how to write essays” (IdEx #12, 4/14/17). The data from the final interview also corroborated these positive self-perceptions. For example, Jessica stated, “I improved. I saw my improvement. I feel like I can… I’m able to do it. I feel a lot more confident” (Interview, 4/27/17). Thus, the data from the last half of the semester suggested that Jessica had developed improved self-confidence and self-efficacy for writing.

End-of-semester analysis of identity exploration and development. The data suggested that Jessica underwent greater transformations in her writing and student RIs from the beginning of the semester to mid-semester than she did from mid-semester to
the end of the semester. However, she did experience some developments in her ontological beliefs and self-perceptions about writing and being a college student. Also, the data on Jessica’s writing RI was much more comprehensive than the data on her student RI in the second half of the semester, suggesting that Jessica may have valued her writing RI more than her student RI.

Jessica did not engage as deeply with identity exploration as she had in the beginning of the semester, especially in terms of her student RI. However, Jessica did make some important discoveries about her writing RI in the second half of the semester, particularly in terms of topics that she is interested in writing about. Her engagement with exploration was best exemplified in her consideration of her family’s conservative gender values in relation to the gender topics that she was writing about in class. While some students who experience a conflict between course content and personal, cultural, or religious values may retreat from or shut down exploration, Jessica embraced it. The data seemed to suggest that this discrepancy between her family’s values and the course content facilitated her writing identity not only because it made the writing topics more relevant and interesting to her, but also because she seemed to use the course content to explore the meaning behind her family’s gender values.

While it could be argued that some of Jessica’s identity transformations might be attributed to socialization via her participation in the class, the data also seemed to suggest that some of her transformations stemmed from the identity exploration pedagogical approach. For example, while the course content may have appealed to Jessica because she could relate it to her family’s values about gender roles, she might not have made the more specific connection between self-relevance and her development as a writer had the course curriculum not scaffolded an approach to explore identity via the course content. Similarly, while the collaborative writing unit could be seen as a tool of socialization that aided in transforming components of Jessica’s writing or student RIs, it could also be seen as trigger of exploration. Since Jessica came into the semester with
limited confidence in herself or her ability to contribute meaningfully in a group setting, her reflection on and discussion of the collaborative process in this class may have served to trigger a relevant difference in her ontological beliefs about the benefits of collaboration and peer review. Finally, the course curriculum and the classroom environment both worked to facilitate a sense of safety, which Jessica clearly needed in order to explore her ontological beliefs, goals, perceptions, and actions. Without the safety of a small class environment, individualized student/teacher conferences, and IdEx assignments that provided her the private space to write her mind, Jessica may not have developed any components of her student or writing RIs at all.

**Relationship between RIs.** Overall, Jessica seemed to inhabit her writing RI much more than she did her student RI. She had more specific ontological, actions, and self-perceptions about herself as a writer than she did as a student. However, there were some overlaps in Jessica’s RIs that showed an integration of her student RI and her writing RI. Jessica’s ontological beliefs were one component of her RIs that shared common features. For example, her ontological beliefs in self-relevance were consistent between the RIs. For her student RI, she believed that being a college student involved discovering her own passions and interests. In her writing RI, she believed that personal connection to the topic helped her to engage in and improve her writing.

Additionally, Jessica’s self-perceptions in both RIs shared some commonalities. Whereas Jessica expressed negative perceptions of herself early in the semester, she showed some positive improvements in her perceptions by the end of the course. In terms of her student RI, Jessica seemed to find her voice in the class and developed more confidence in participating in class discussions and sharing her opinions. In terms of her writing, Jessica also showed positive transformations in her writing abilities and her self-efficacy for writing.

The data suggested that the most underdeveloped components with the least change were her goals in both RIs and her action possibilities within her student RI.
Jessica’s goals in both RIs wound up being fairly performance-orientated even though she did not seem to have a performance mindset in any of the other components of her RIs. In terms of action possibilities, there was not much overlap between the RIs, as Jessica stated many more action possibilities throughout the semester for her writing RI than she did for her student RI. This, in some ways, made sense considering that in the developmental writing course she learned more specifically about ways to improve as a writer than she learned ways to improve as a student.

In terms of the greater development of her writing RI compared to her student RI, the data suggested that this could be related to self-relevance. Throughout the semester, she often noted the relevance between the writing topics and her own life, whereas she did not make this connection within her student RI. This might suggest that she did not necessarily see the same level of self-relevance between the course content, her personal life, and being a college student in general.

**Analysis of final essay assignment.** Analysis of Jessica’s final paper showed some level of sophistication in topic selection and metadiscourse strategies. Despite this sophistication, Jessica also safely relied on the same organizational structure and evidentials that we had covered in the other essays throughout the semester. Jessica’s final paper topic choice supported her ontological beliefs that writers should write about issues that are relevant to their lives and that writers should engage in a process for writing. However, beyond the topic selection, Jessica showed little progression beyond the basic essay format learned in class.

Jessica chose to write her paper on a telenovela, *Sin Senos No Hay Paraiso* (*Without Breasts There Is No Paradise*), that she and her family watched together. The topic choice was extremely important in terms of Jessica’s development of a writing identity. First, it showed that Jessica was willing to take expand her writing action possibilities by choosing a topic that was not on the instructor-suggested list of topics. Second, this illustrated maturity in her writing action possibilities in that she chose to
write about a television show that has many episodes and many seasons, which made the evidence more difficult to synthesize than it would be for an analysis of one film. Last, it further supported her previously stated ontological beliefs about the need for writers to feel personally connected to their topics.

In terms of the writing itself, Jessica’s essay showed signs of both sophistication and simplicity. For example, Jessica’s sophistication as a writer was illustrated in her use of many kinds of evidentials: class readings, different episodes of the TV show, and real world connections. She also used a combination of paraphrases and direct quotations effectively throughout her work, which showed a command of common expectations for college-level writing. Though she only referenced one source (the Lieberman article) beyond the TV show itself, she did so in a way that accurately and effectively synthesized the previously learned material about gender roles in fairytales with presentations of women in Spanish soap operas. In her opening paragraph, she wrote,

In Marcia Lieberman’s article “Someday My Prince Will Come,” she discusses the impact of a specific media source, fairy tales, in which she addresses the negative gender values girls learn. However, fairytales are just one genre of several media that embraces negative values. Another example is telenovelas, such as Sin Senos No Hay Paraíso (Final Essay, 5/3/17)

Unlike other students who merely mentioned the Lieberman article but made no direct connection to their own paper topic, Jessica clearly integrated the article into her discussion of the TV show. Jessica’s synthesis of the class reading and the telenovela represented a writing action that was, in a way, aligned with her ontological about self-relevance in that she used a class reading to develop an argument about a television show that was important to her and her family.

Jessica also effectively used a variety of discourse methods consistently throughout the paper. In terms of interactive discourse methods, she relied most often on framemarkers, transitions, and code glosses. Because she was relying on different
episodes of the TV show to support her argument about the negative portrayal of women in telenovelas, Jessica made the sophisticated writing decision to use framemarkers frequently to guide the reader through her examples. For instance, she often started sentences with phrases like “In one of the beginning episodes” or “Later on in the TV show” (Final Essay, 5/3/17). After framemarkers, Jessica’s most frequently used interactive discourse method was transitions. One the one hand, she consistently used transitions throughout the paper, which is an effective and expected writing strategy to help make connections for a reader; however, she often relied on the same transitions over and over again. For example, she used the phrase “As a result” to begin five sentences in her essay. Jessica also used code glosses throughout her paper in an effort to elaborate more specifically on general points that she made. For example, Jessica engaged in the sophisticated writing act of offering a general point followed by a specific example, as she did in the following sentences:

Throughout *Sin Senos No Hay Paraiso*, women with the most appealing physiques are rewarded with lavish gifts. Specifically, Catalina is rewarded with money and luxuries after her breast augmentation because her body is seen as a trophy from the perspective of cartel leaders, who flock to her after she undergoes cosmetic surgery (Final Essay, 5/3/17)

Jessica did not use many interactional discourse methods, which is not surprising since students were explicitly restricted from using first or second person point of view. Thus, the only interactional discourse method used was boosters. Jessica’s use of boosters, though, indicated a command of the information, as she often made confident, direct statements without wavering or hedging. For example, Jessica stridently commits to her argument about the presentation of women and its impact at the end of her essay:

Since social media, like modern telenovelas, affect how adolescent females are to portray and identify themselves, young girls become increasingly obsessed with
perfection, a standard that is simply unachievable. As a result, insecure women go to extreme measures to achieve a desirable physique, which is truly frightening because more women are suffering from anorexia, depression, anxiety that lead to death (Final Paper, 5/3/17)

While Jessica’s paper showed agency, self-relevance, and sophistication in terms of topic selection and use of several metadiscourse methods, there were some aspects of the paper that showed Jessica’s hesitance to extend beyond the essay’s basic requirements. For example, Jessica’s paper contained only 809 words, while the class average was 978 words. Second, Jessica’s body paragraphs focused solely on topics we had already discussed in the first unit when the class wrote about presentation of women in fairytales. Her three supporting paragraphs emphasized unrealistic standards of beauty, competition between women for men and resources, and rewarding women (with money or relationships) for being beautiful. These topics were emphasized in the Lieberman article and throughout the class’s first essay unit on fairytales. Thus, while Jessica showed sophistication by making connections between what we had previously learned and her own topic, she did not extend beyond those topics to include other relevant portrayals of women in the TV show. Thus, it seemed that it was more important for Jessica to write about something she cared about than it was for her to push herself as a writer, which, overall, seemed to be consistent with the ontological, goals, action possibilities, and self-perceptions within her writing RI.

Conclusions. Jessica’s exploration and development of her student and writing RI ebbed and flowed throughout the semester. Unlike many other developmental students, Jessica started the semester with a fairly complex set of ontological beliefs about what it meant to be a writer and a college student. She believed that college was a place for self-discovery, and writing was a method by which people could express themselves and make connections between topics and their personal lives. While she made some significant transformations in her writing RI, particularly her ontological beliefs and her
self-perceptions, she never fully connected the two identities in a coherent way. For Jessica, it appeared that the seat of motivation was in self-relevance. If she could not make a direct connection to her personal life - as it seemed she could not with the components of her student RI - then she ignored it altogether. Jessica’s final writing assignment supported this point in that she chose an interesting and unique topic that related directly to her life; however, she maintained the basic standards for writing that she had learned in the semester without much evolution beyond those standards. Overall, the data suggested that the course theme, lessons, and assignments did facilitate some of the self-discovery that Jessica desired at the beginning of the semester. However, it did not seem to encourage a full commitment to a writing or student identity.

Deja

Deja was a 19-year-old African American woman attending college for the first time in the spring 2017 semester. The data collected from her IdEx assignments, class observations, interview, and final essay suggested that Deja underwent minimal, yet positive, exploration and change in both her student and writing RIs. Similar to Jessica, Deja came into the semester with a fairly sophisticated set of ontological beliefs about the purpose of college and being a student in general. Also like Jessica, she seemed to focus more on her writing RI than student RI after the mid-semester. However, unlike Jessica, Deja consistently articulated a connection between the two targeted RIs throughout the semester.

Analysis of data from course weeks 1 - 7

Student RI

Ontological Beliefs. The data suggested that Deja had some fairly unique and sophisticated ontological beliefs about the purpose of college and being a student. Like Jessica, Deja believed that college was a place for self-improvement and self-discovery.
She articulated that college students like her are “dedicated to becoming the best version of ourselves...to learn many more things and try to make us as human beings better” (IdEx #3, 2/3/17). However, unlike Jessica, Deja articulated less self-relevance ontological beliefs about her role as a college student as well. For Deja, a college education was not just beneficial to her, but also to the people she could inspire and encourage. For example, she expressed a belief that college students motivate others, and she perceived herself as that source of motivation: “I define a college student as a motivator...I motivate by encouraging people to always be the best they can and always do their homework and if they need help studying I'm always there with a helping hand” (IdEx #3, 2/3/17).

Deja’s general ontological beliefs about self-development and cooperation with others were supported by her specific ontological beliefs about being a student in our class. For example, Deja believed that class participation, group work, and discussion were beneficial to her as a college student:

> When we discuss as a class or as a group you will learn from other people perspective about a subject in the class or just a general conversation... your getting ideas from one another and debating about some things you might not agree with your partner...in life you will need somebody to help you out and correct something about yourself or other things and once you learn from your mistake you will correct them and see if you can do something on your own the next time (IdEx #4, 2/10/17)

The class discussions and collaborative work here seemed to serve as scaffolds for exploration. Through the guided class discussions about both the course content and the students’ reflections on course content, Deja had a framework with which to explore her student RI. The class activities also seemed to provide a sense of safety for exploration for Deja, as she felt comfortable enough to express her opinions and, possibly, be corrected by someone else in the class. Additionally, it also seemed that the collaborative
work and reflection upon it worked as a trigger for Deja, especially when she experienced
debate or disagreement (relevant difference). Finally, Deja also seemed to experience
self-relevance through the group work: she made connections to other areas of life where
it will be important to brainstorm and collaborate.

Goals. The data from Weeks 1 -7 showed that Deja did not articulate any goals
for being a college student.

Action possibilities. While Deja did not express many action possibilities for
being a student, the data illustrated an alignment between her actions and her ontological
beliefs about being a college student. Her work during the collaborative unit, specifically,
seemed to confirm her ontological beliefs that participating actively as a student benefited
both herself and others. For example, during the collaborative writing unit, Deja
expressed that writing in groups and participating in the class workshops encouraged her
to “Get out and share my ideas to people because the only way to be heard is to actually
speak up” (IdEx #4, 2/10/17). This was corroborated in my observation journal wherein I
noted that Deja (student 216) was “actively involved in class discussion and showed
leadership in collaborative writing activities” (Observation Journal, 2/1/17).

Self-perceptions. The data suggested that Deja had some anxieties about her role
as a college student at the onset of the semester. While her ontological beliefs about being
a college student focused broadly on self-discovery and self-development, her self-
perceptions were fairly narrow and negative. She wrote, “I thought my first semester was
going to be hard and was going to receive a lot of work from professors, and not knowing
what I’m doing on these assignments. I realize that I thought I was going to fail” (IdEx
#4, 2/10/17). These early perceptions were not aligned with her ontological beliefs about
being a college student in that she started the semester with a fairly poor image of herself
as a student, rather than perceiving herself to be a “work in progress,” which would have
aligned more closely with her overall ontological beliefs about being a college student.
Despite this seeming misalignment with other aspects of her student RI, Deja’s
expressions of uncertainty and doubt could be interpreted as identity exploration in progress. Her use of the past tense “thought” seemed to indicate that she might not currently (at the time of writing) think this way about herself or, at least, is open to alternative ways of thinking about herself.

Writing RI

Ontological Beliefs. The data suggested that Deja held some fairly complex ontological beliefs about writing that centered on clearly developing ideas and engaging readers. For example, Deja believed that the primary role of writing was to deliver information to a receptive audience: “To be a writer it means to [write] about stories or articles that readers want to read about” (IdEx #3, 2/3/17). Throughout the first half of the semester, she continued to express ontological beliefs about the central roles of supporting her arguments with evidence and effectively engaging her audience: “As a writer you always want have good information that you can back information with, and be concise sometimes because if you keep going on about something it will get boring” (IdEx #6, 2/24/17).

Deja also held ontological beliefs about the collaborative group work, which worked in tandem with her ontological beliefs about developing strong paragraphs with well-reasoned information since good evidence can stem from group discussion. She believed that the group work was essential to her development as a writer “because as you work with another partner you’re debating if the answer is wrong or not or trying to see if you have enough evidence in a body paragraph” (IdEx #5, 2/17/17). Deja’s ontological beliefs, in this case, were fairly sophisticated in that they focused on creating an enjoyable (not “boring”) and enlightening (“good information”) experience for her readership.

Another important belief that Deja held was the relevance between writing and every day life. Unlike some students, Deja believed in a direct connection between being
a successful student and a successful writer: “As a successful student you should become a better writer” (IdEx#3, 2/3/17). Toward mid-semester, Deja maintained similar ontological beliefs about writing’s importance in almost all aspects of life in general:

Writing is going to be a part of our everyday life and whatever major you have you still have to take reading because when you start your career and they say write a 5 page paper about the body system you will have to give good information, a lot of details, and write something that makes sense (IdEx #6, 2/24/17).

Unlike many developmental students who do not see the relevance of writing outside of the English classroom, Deja believed that reading and writing are essential to being successful within college and within one’s potential career. Because the IdEx assignments were more targeted on student and writing RIs, they provided a scaffold with which Deja could apply aspects of her student RI to her writing RI. In this case, Deja used her dance student RI (and potential dance career) as a way to explore her ontological beliefs about writing. Additionally, the new intervention prompted Deja to consider writing’s relevance in her life, specifically its relationship to her other courses and her career.

**Goals.** Deja’s goals for writing at the beginning of the semester were fairly broad and tended to address development of her foundational skills, such as vocabulary. However, even in their generality, her goals were relatively aligned with her ontological beliefs in that she remained focused on the goal of clearly and effectively communicating with her audience. For example, early in the semester, her stated goals were “become a better writer and use more vocabulary words in essays or journals” (IdEx #3, 2/3/17). She maintained similar broad goals as she approached the mid-semester, stating that she planned to work on “not write a lot of fragments, improve my vocabulary, and not how I speak” (IdEx #6, 2/24/17).
**Action possibilities.** Deja did not state many action possibilities in the first half of the semester. Those that she did articulate focused on the actions she planned to take after having completed the collaborative writing unit, which appeared to indicate that the collaborative unit and reflection thereupon served as a trigger for exploration of her action possibilities at the very least. In terms of action possibilities, the data suggested that the collaborative writing unit facilitated Deja’s plans for future writing actions. For example, she wrote, “What I learn in this class and will definitely use in the future is to break each paragraph down and see what I need to work on. When I did that method it was much easier to write and maybe add or take out stuff” (IdEx #7, 3/3/17). While these action possibilities were not specific or sophisticated, they did indicate that the course activities scaffolded Deja’s exploration of action possibilities within her writing RI. Through her engagement with the class material and lessons, Deja explored new ways to plan, organize, draft, and revise.

**Self-perceptions.** The data from the first half of the semester illustrated that Deja’s self-perceptions mainly focused on her ability to communicate effectively with an audience. She often wrote negatively about her tendency to use slang (IdEx #1, 1/20/17) and write how she speaks (IdEx #6, 2/24/17), which she perceived as two “problems” she wanted to eradicate. She also perceived herself as needing to be clearer and more concise when she writes. For example, close to the mid-semester, she articulated the following self-perception: “Sometimes I don't get to the point or I'll make certain paragraph too broad which the reader won't be able to understand” (IdEx #6, 2/24/17). These self-perceptions are clearly aligned with her ontological beliefs about the importance of clear and effective communication with an audience.

While the data suggested that Deja sometimes held negative perceptions of herself as a writer, she also articulated positive perceptions heading into the second half of the semester. One such positive perception illustrated her commitment to improving herself as a writer. For example, in IdEx #6, she wrote, “Yes I do still struggle with these writing
problems but as a developing writer I'll shall succeed and not these mistakes again” (IdEx #6, 2/24/17). Additionally, she also perceived that she had made some important strides in her writing: “I like that I can give enough details in each of my paragraphs although they might get a little wordy (IdEx #7, 3/3/17). Deja’s reflection on her self-aspects and admission of struggle seemed to indicate that she was engaged in a process of exploration about her writing and about perceptions of herself as a writer.

Mid-term analysis of identity exploration and development. The data from the first half of the semester suggested that Deja had fairly strong commitments to both her student and writing RIs. The components within each of Deja’s targeted RIs were fairly aligned, especially in terms of Deja’s ontological beliefs and action possibilities. Her emphasis on the role of collaboration and discussion in both her student and writing RIs indicated integration between the two RIs as well.

Though Deja entered the semester with strong commitments to each RI, she still underwent some important identity exploration, facilitated by the curriculum and in-class activities. For example, within her student RI, Deja held strong ontological beliefs about what it meant to be a college student; however, she also reflected on her uncertainties and insecurities as student. Deja’s concerns about the workload and her potential failure in completing this work illustrated a potential conflict that she had to untangle. While her initial belief about college as a place to find herself and to help others was positive and sophisticated in terms of its focus on “being” a college student rather than “doing” expected student behaviors, she also understood that there was work that had to be done; and it was this part of the student RI that concerned her. Thus, it appeared she was trying to reconcile her conceptual understanding of college with the practicalities of being a student.

In terms of her writing RI, Deja started the semester with a fairly committed writing RI, yet she continued to explore her this identity throughout the first half of the semester. Guided by the curriculum and in-class activities Deja seemed to wrestle with
her more conceptual ontological beliefs about writing and her practical skills in similar ways as she did with her student RI. While she started the semester with fairly conceptual ontological beliefs about writing, the data suggested a tension between her loftier ontological beliefs and the practicalities of writing well, especially in terms of her uncertainties in her abilities to use Standard English correctly and effectively.

Deja’s identity exploration in the first half of the semester appeared to be facilitated by the curriculum and in-class writing activities. The IdEx prompts, and class discussions of those prompts, provided Deja with a safe environment in which to explore her identity and also provided a scaffold that guided her exploration of both of the targeted RIs in similar ways. The collaborative writing, and her (and the class’s) reflections on these activities, seemed to trigger Deja’s identity exploration in terms of prompting her to consider and negotiate the tensions between her more conceptual ontological beliefs about being a student and writer and the practicalities of being a student and writer. Finally, the targeted IdEx assignments also seemed to promote self-relevance, illustrated through Deja’s consistent connections not only between the two targeted RIs but to other relevant aspects of her life, such as her career.

Analysis of data from course weeks 8 – 16

Student RI

Ontological Beliefs. Similar to Jessica, Deja did not articulate much about her student RI in the last half of the semester and, instead, focused more on her writing RI. She did develop some new ontological beliefs about being a student, while she maintained some of the ontological beliefs she had in the beginning of the semester. The data from the last half of the semester showed that her ontological beliefs ranged from the significance of camaraderie in a classroom to the need to feel challenged in college to the importance of understanding what she’s learning instead of just simply completing tasks for the sake of completing them.
Deja expressed some new ontological beliefs in terms of the purpose of being a student. In her interview, she claimed that when she was in high school, she would just do the work that her teacher gave her without every really understanding why she was doing what she was doing. Her experiences in the developmental writing course, however, seemed to trigger and scaffold her exploration about learning and what it means to be a student. Through the course activities and class discussion, Deja experienced a relevant difference between learning in high school and learning in college. Through this development, Deja updated her student RI beliefs to include an emphasis on understanding and mastery. She even made a comparison between being a writing student and being a dance student:

That’s what we did this whole course…understand what you’re doing, not just write it down. Because when you go into 101 you have to understand what the teacher is giving you and what you have to do. Even in dance, you gotta know the steps and form your body and not just do it because the teacher told you to do it. Because if you want to be a dancer on Broadway or teach a dance class, you need to know what you’re doing and why (Interview, 4/17/17)

Along the same lines, Deja also expressed a belief in the need to be challenged in college. For Deja, being challenged meant moving away from “personal” topics and, instead, being asked to look at the world in new ways and examine topics that actually impact people. The novelty of the course theme, and reflection upon that theme, seemed to facilitate self-relevance and triggered exploration of her student RI and other relevant but unspecified RIs. For example, Deja reflected not only on the impact of the course content and assignments in terms of her role as a college student who will have to think critically and conduct research, but she also reflected on how her understanding of these challenging topics could prompt her to think about her place in the world:

I think college gives you not more personal stuff, but maybe more media, more mature stuff to talk about…I feel like it challenged me more to think about what’s
going on out in the world and not just to read a book. Well, we can read a book and then compare it. Or a research paper or how does it affect me or in the future. I think that challenges me to think how in the future this situation is going to affect kids or adults or anybody. It’s more of a challenge and helped me write more (Interview, 4/17/17)

While Deja developed some new ontological beliefs about her student RI, she also cycled back to some of her earlier ontological beliefs about the importance of classroom dynamics. She specifically noted the significance of the class discussions, peer workshops, and general collaboration, which could suggest that the classroom environment and in-class activities promoted a sense of safety that encourage her exploration and development as both a student and writer. She felt that one of the most important aspects of being in the developmental class was

working together because that helped students and it opens them up more. When I was in there I was like, ‘Well, I don’t know nobody, shoot, so I’m just gonna be quiet.’ But once you talk to your peers I think it’s fine and it’s helpful. You won’t be shy. You’ll be like ‘What did you get on this?’ or ‘Can you help me with this?’ (Interview, 4/17/17)

Like Jessica, Deja’s sense of safety in the classroom seemed to influence her belief that the configuration of the class (small number of students, all female), as well as the overall camaraderie in the class, contributed to her development as college student.

Goals. While Deja did not articulate any goals for being a college student in general, she did express a specific goal of transferring to Temple University to complete her major in dance with the hopes of starting her own dance company or opening a dance daycare center for children (Interview, 4/17/17).

Action possibilities. The data from the last half of the semester indicated that Deja’s experiences in the developmental course encouraged her to rethink how she completes her coursework. In her IdEx assignments and final interview, she consistently mentioned approaching her work with more time and care (IdEx #12, 4/14/17). This
action was supported in her interview in which she stated, “Just take my time and don’t rush. Because that’s what I used to do, just rush into it” (Interview, 4/17/17). Her stated actions, though broad, seemed aligned with most of her ontological beliefs about being a college student in that slowing down allowed her to understand her assignments and why she was doing them and gave her time examine her work properly to make sure it was meeting her expectations. Like other students in the class, Deja’s engagement with the class activities and the reflective assignments encouraged her to compare her actions in high school and her current actions (and anticipated actions) in college. Through her reflections, Deja uncovered relevant differences in her previous practice and current practice, which seemed to shape her actions as a college student. This comparison also seemed to work as a scaffold for exploration in that it provided Deja with a framework in which to analyze her the past, present, and future student actions.

*Self-perceptions.* The data from the last half of the semester did not show much by way of Deja’s perceptions of herself as a student. However, in her final interview, Deja implied that she saw a difference in herself as a student because of the developmental course. She stated,

> At first I thought I’m wasting my money on this developmental course instead of a college class. But I probably would’ve done the same things that I did in high school and failed. I forgot about brainstorming and outlining. It’s been a while. But I thank god for this class (Interview, 4/17/17)

This segment of the interview seemed to suggest that Deja perceived herself as a different student now than she was in high school. It also seemed to suggest that she might not have developed healthier student behaviors, such as taking her time and breaking down tasks, had she not engaged with this specific developmental writing curriculum. She perceived that she would have continued to operate from the same base of knowledge of being a student that she had in high school, which, she believed, would not have
benefited her in a college environment. Thus, it appeared that the course content was effective in triggering Deja’s identity exploration, specifically her examination of her perceived differences between her former and current student self.

Writing RI

Ontological Beliefs. The data from the last half of the semester indicated that Deja’s ontological beliefs about writing had not changed much from the beginning of the semester. She continued to hold ontological beliefs about the importance of utilizing writing strategies, writing clearly for an audience, using detailed evidence, and not conflating oral and written communication. For example, Deja expressed the ontological belief that “as a writer you should not write like how you talk, when writing an essay be descriptive and concise” (IdEx #12, 4/14/17). This ontological belief was confirmed in her interview when she stated, “The way you talk, you can’t write” (Interview, 4/17/17).

In the last half of the semester, the data indicated that Deja’s primary ontological beliefs about writing focused on not only using a process for writing, but also understanding why she was engaging in this process. For example, she emphasized the importance of brainstorming, planning, drafting, and tutoring: “I need these 4 because it helps me improve my skills in writing” (IdEx #13, 4/21/17). These beliefs were confirmed in her interview. Regarding her ontological beliefs in developing her writing strategies, Deja stated, “When I got to the class I expected us to do what we did in high school: write an essay and just move on. But once you broke it down, it made sense how to do it. Like how to write the intro, body and conclusion. It just made sense to do all that (Interview, 4/17/17). She expanded on her ontological beliefs about developing writing strategies and why this practice was so meaningful to her. For Deja, the developmental writing class provided her with an understanding of essay writing that she did not previously have but always wanted:
I wanted to go right into 101 because I felt like it [developmental English] was wasting my time. But it didn’t. It actually taught me this is how you have to write. This is how to write an intro. It helped me. It lets me see why [my emphasis] I have to brainstorm. This is why [my emphasis] I have to outline. This is why [my emphasis] I have to not rush (Interview, 4/28/17)

For many developmental writing students, learning to plan, organize, and draft are important mechanisms in their growth as writers (Macarthur and Philippakos, 2013). However, for Deja, the process was more than just a means to an end; it actually provided her with a deeper understanding of what is expected of writers and why writers engage in certain actions and processes. This deeper understanding could be a result of Deja’s reflection on her writing practice and its importance in her development of a writing identity via the course’s exploration activities. Whereas many students simply mimic writing practices that are taught to them, Deja sought to understand the self-relevance of these practices.

Goals. At the end of the semester, Deja adopted both procedural and conceptual goals for her writing, which seemed to indicate that she continued to explore her writing identity via the tensions she experienced between the “being” versus “doing”. At this point in the semester, Deja seemed to be attempting to resolve or navigate these tensions with her goals.

On the one hand, Deja continued to want to improve her vocabulary and move away from writing in the same way that she speaks. For example, she stated, “One goal I have for writing is to use more vocabulary words” (IdEx #12, 4/14/17). This goal came up again in her final interview:

Back then [in high school] I always would write how I talk, which back then would mean slang. But now I’m trying to avoid that because it’s gonna affect me and be on my paper which I don’t want. That was my main problem. When I got to this class, I can't write the way I talk. I gotta update my vocabulary (Interview, 4/17/17)
However, Deja also had broader, more conceptual goals for writing as well. The data suggested that Deja did not just want to improve her foundational skills; she wanted to understand writing. Deja’s articulated goals at the end of the semester showed a mastery-orientation that seemed to align with the other components of her writing identity and showed a complexity in her exploration and development as a writer:

Then they [high school teachers] talked about how your research paper should be, how long it should be. But I was just writing. I didn't know what I was writing. I got a little help from my mom. *But I wanted to know how to write it myself and what am I doing* [my emphasis] (Interview, 4/17/17)

The data on Deja’s goals indicated continued exploration of her writing RI. Unlike other developmental students who did not connect the practicalities of writing with the broader conceptual meaning of writing, Deja, instead, used this tension to develop a comprehensive set of goals that addressed both her procedural and conceptual understanding of writing. Where she did not have any stated goals in the beginning of the semester, she now did even if they were a bit broad. Her exploration throughout the semester seemed to facilitate the adoptions of goals that could help her improve her writing skills while also developing her understanding and mastery of strategies for successful writing.

*Action possibilities.* In the last half of the semester, the data showed that Deja did not express many specific action possibilities. As mentioned previously, she articulated that she wanted to work on improving her vocabulary and avoid using slang in her writing, but she did not express specific actions that might help her reach those goals. Additionally, as an extension of her ontological beliefs about planning, organizing and drafting, Deja did mention that she would continue to use some of the techniques we learned in class: “One action I will always take from this class and in the future is to take my time and to brainstorm outline and get help from a peer or the tutor” (IdEx #12,
4/14/17). These action possibilities were supported in her interview, coupled with her desired action to understand what is expected of her:

> Just to take my time and don’t rush. That’s what we did this whole course. And to understand what you’re doing, not just write it down. Because when you go into 101 you have to understand what the teacher is giving you and what you have to do (Interview, 4/17/17)

**Self-perceptions.** The data from the end of the semester showed that Deja, while still concerned about her vocabulary and use of Standard English, had developed positive perceptions of herself as a writer. For example, in one of her final IdEx assignments, Deja wrote, “To me I feel like I still talk like a 10th grader and it has an effect because if I write an essay I will sometimes throw in slang words” (IdEx #12, 4/14/17). However, Deja also perceived improvement in her essay writing abilities overall. When asked about her overall experience in the developmental writing course, she expressed pride in her progress:

> I’m gonna miss this class. It felt good to really learn. Because my mom’s always like, ‘Deja you’re not doing this right or that right.’ And now when I ask her, ‘Can you look over something?’ she looks at my work and she’s like, ‘Oh, look at you! You got your thesis. You’re a little off, but it’s ok. I see that you’re developing.’ She’s always saying stuff like that. I like that (Interview, 4/17/17)

Similar to Elizabeth, Deja’s perceptions of her improvement stemmed, in part, from external sources like her approval from her mother. However, unlike Elizabeth, Deja also seemed to express some intrinsic motivation when she said, “It felt really good to learn” (Interview, 4/17/17). In the last half of the semester, many of Deja’s ontological beliefs, goals, and actions focused on understanding (i.e. the “why”) of what she was learning in school. Thus, her perceived positive feelings about her learning seemed aligned with the
other components. Her perceived feelings of enjoyment could be considered a positive feedback loop related to the alignment between the components of her writing RI.

**End-of-semester analysis of identity exploration and development.** The data from the last half of the semester suggested that Deja made important, developments in both her student and RIs. While some of the content within the components of both RIs remained the same, there were some transformations. For example, Deja developed a more mastery-oriented mindset about both college and writing by the end of the semester. Additionally, the lessons and assignments from the beginning of the course facilitated Deja’s ontological beliefs in collaboration and effective communication in both classroom and writing contexts, while the lessons and assignments from end of the semester gave Deja a chance to reflect on those ontological beliefs and connect them to an overall understanding of how and why students and writers engage in certain academic actions that lead to their success as both students and writers. By semester’s end, it appeared that Deja no longer engaged in certain writing or student actions because she was told to; instead, she engaged in them because she understood their meaning and their overall benefit to her development as a student and writer.

From the data, it seemed that Deja engaged in identity exploration in the last half of the semester. As mentioned previously, Deja experienced some tension between her ontological beliefs and goals for “being” a student and writer and her practical ontological beliefs and goals for “doing” the expected behaviors of a student and writer. This tension sometimes manifested itself in uncertainty. However, through her exploration, Deja found ways to navigate these tensions and develop action possibilities that aligned with both conceptual and procedural notions about being a student and writer.

Without the PRESS-based curriculum, Deja may not have had the triggers, scaffolds, sense of safety, or self-relevance prompts to facilitate her deep exploration of her student and writing RIs. The data from the semester seemed to illustrate that Deja’s
consistent participation with the IdEx assignments, class discussions, and writing activities helped her to develop both of her RIs. While Deja did not necessarily transform specific aspects of these RIs, she continued to add ontological beliefs, goals, actions, and self-perceptions to those she had established in the beginning of the semester. Most importantly, the data suggested that not only did she add new elements to each component, but she found ways to keep those elements harmonized within each component, aligned across components, and integrated across RIs.

**Relationship between RIs.** The data suggested that there was a lot of overlap between Deja’s student RI and her writing RI, though she made stronger statements about the components of her writing RI than she did for her student RI. For example, Deja emphasized ontological beliefs in collaboration with peers and class discussion as important parts of both her student experience and her writing practice. Additionally, within her action possibilities for both RIs, Deja articulated the importance of taking her time and breaking larger tasks into smaller, more manageable pieces. Finally, in terms of self-perceptions, there were also similarities between her student RI and writing RI. In both cases, Deja came into the semester with a perceived lack of confidence and anxiety about college expectations, particularly her writing abilities. In both RIs, she admitted that she had typically approach both school and writing as something to “get done” without actually understanding what she was doing. By the end of the semester, the data suggested that Deja perceived herself as someone who now knew what was expected of her and, more importantly, understood why those expectations existed. The one component that diverged from the others was Deja’s goals. By semester’s end, she had not articulated many goals for being a college student except to transfer and complete her degree at Temple University. However, she did have more specific goals regarding the improvement of her vocabulary and avoiding informal speech in her writing.

**Analysis of final essay assignment.** Deja’s final writing assignment met many expectations for academic writing, though not necessarily in the most novel or
sophisticated ways. First, after a long debate about her final topic choice, Deja chose a film, *Mean Girls*, from the list of instructor-suggested topics. Initially, Deja had wanted to write about *The Princess and the Frog* with the intent to focus on presentations of Black female characters in fairytales. This topic would have been a self-relevant and sophisticated choice, as it would have shown her abilities to address intersectionality in her essay and apply her analysis skills beyond gender to race as well. However, after discussing this option in a brainstorm with her classmates, she decided that the topic was too hard and, thus, she chose an easier topic from the instructor-suggested list.

The decision to go with the easier choice could be considered aligned with some of her ontological beliefs and self-perceptions about writing. For Deja, it was important that she could clearly and effectively communicate descriptive examples to her readers; therefore, she may have selected a topic that contained more specific evidence that aligned with the class’s earlier discussions about the negative presentations of women in fairytales. She also may have picked an easier film in order to decrease the cognitive load in order to focus more attention on developing concise sentences that were free of slang since these were other important goals that she expressed for her writing.

While she did not show much development of her action possibilities via her topic selection, Deja did illustrate her strength as a writer in other ways. For example, she used a variety of evidentials throughout her essay: an academic article, the film itself, and general societal mores. Her body paragraphs provided specific details, clear descriptions of the characters, as well as connections between the characters and teenage girls in the real world. Similar to Jessica, Deja only used one academic article as a source in her paper. However, she effectively synthesized the academic article with her main argument about the presentation of teenage girls in the movie *Mean Girls*. In her opening paragraph, she wrote,
In movies aimed at women and girls, media shows girls negative values, such as appearance, competing with others, and living happily ever after with their soul mate. For example, fairytales shows girls a notorious way about their identities. In the article “Some Day My Prince Will Come”, Marcia Lieberman writes talks about fairytales’ negative values, such as girls competing with one another, how their identities and actions negatively impact girls, and girls always need a man to survive or make them a whole. These negative stereotypes about women also continue in our modern movies for teenage girls. The movie Mean Girls projects these negative images onto girls. For instance, Cady the main character, wants to fit in with a group that is all about appearance, getting attention, and being well known. This teaches girls that beauty, and being popular are the only things a girl should be worried about (Final Paper, 5/3/17).

Like many students in her class, Deja relied most often on interactive discourse methods, such as transitions, framemarkers, and evidentials. However, her use of evidentials specifically most aligned with her earlier stated ontological beliefs about the importance of providing readers with detailed evidence and connecting college lessons to the outside world. Unlike other students, Deja used a variety of evidentials in each paragraph, and each body paragraph contained a specific pattern of delivering her evidentials to the reader: She started the paragraph with a topic sentence that expressed the main idea of the paragraph, followed by a connection to real life, and then transitioned to her evidence from the film. For example, one body paragraph began as follows:

In addition to appearance, the movie Mean Girls also highlights the need for women to confirm. Fitting in is a part of most teenagers’ lifestyle in high school. Around this time, most teenagers face this peer pressure to fit into what society thinks is ideal. Throughout the movie, Cady wants to fit in with the “The Plastics”. Once Cady becomes one of The Plastics, she starts to look like them and act like them. When she becomes popular, students want to be like her. One student says, “I saw Cady Heron wearing army pants and flip flops so I bought army pants and flip flops.” (Final Paper, 5/3/17)
Her paragraph continued with additional examples from the film and ended with a tie back to real life and how girls who are watching this film might interpret or inhabit the gender values contained therein.

Deja used this same paragraph construction for all three of her body paragraphs throughout the essay. The use of a pattern may seem simplistic, but it clearly showed her commitment to creating a coherent document that her readers could easily follow and identify with either through their own personal experiences, their understanding of stereotypes in general, or through their knowledge of the characters in the film itself. Thus, in weaving together the lessons she had learned about gender, her knowledge of female characters with certain stereotypical attributes, and the role of women outside of the fictional world, she provided her readers a variety of ways to connect with her content. This substantiated Deja’s stated ontological beliefs about the purpose of college and writing: She believed that college should provide her with lessons that make her think critically about the world around her. She also believed in the importance of expressing those critical thoughts to her readers through creating effective arguments supported by solid, understandable evidence.

While her final paper was relatively shorter than the class average (861 words) and did not show much sophistication in terms of topic selection or metadiscourse methods, her use of evidentials and a consistent paragraph structure pattern throughout her essay highlighted the aspects of writing that Deja valued all semester long – communicating effectively with her audience and providing clear and detailed evidence to the reader.

Conclusions. Overall, the data indicated that Deja’s experiences in the developmental writing course facilitated minimal but positive changes within her student and writing RI. While Deja came into the semester with an understanding that being a college student and a writer were important to her in terms of self-improvement and achieving life goals, she did not seem to have the scaffolding to explore these roles more
deeply and was, self-admittedly, just doing what she was told without understanding what she was doing. The data seemed to suggest that the collaborative unit, specifically, encouraged Deja to adopt ontological beliefs about the importance of cooperation and discussion as significant parts of the practice of becoming a student and a writer. It also facilitated her ontological beliefs in the importance of pre-writing steps, such as planning, organizing, drafting; taking her time when thinking and writing; and asking for help when needed. While the lessons themselves helped Deja to adopt some new student and writing behaviors, the course itself seemed to inspire a larger philosophical change, one that pointed to the development of a more mastery-oriented mindset about both college and writing. By semester’s end, Deja focused on the importance of understanding why she was engaging in certain academic or writing behaviors, and she articulated that the developmental writing course facilitated that understanding through the structure of the course, the lessons, the group work, and both formal and reflective writing assignments.

**Cross-Case Comparison**

While each participant in the study underwent his/her own unique experience within the developmental writing course, some important observations can be made across student cases. The results can be characterized according to students’ motivational processes, their role identity exploration and change, and the overall effectiveness of the PRESS principles in promoting students’ identity exploration and change.

First, the findings highlight how role identity, identity exploration, and motivation are unique and dynamic for each student, and varied depending on class activities and time period within the semester. Nevertheless, the findings do suggest that students’ writing and academic RIs could be classified along a dimension of level of sophistication as defined by the type of role identity components in students’ RIs. Students with less sophisticated RIs, as exhibited in Elizabeth and Jason’s cases, tended to have ontological beliefs, goals, self-perceptions and actions that centered on procedure, skills, and effort
(i.e. “doing” as opposed to “being” a writer or college student); and they, typically, had more negative self-perceptions of themselves as students and writers. While the components of their RIs were usually aligned, they were not necessarily aligned in adaptive ways that contribute to their development as writers and college students.

Conversely, the data suggested that students with more sophisticated or mature RIs, as exhibited in Anna and Deja’s cases, held deeper, more conceptual ontological beliefs, goals, self-perceptions, and actions that centered on the powerful role of writing in creativity, self-expression, and communication across contexts (i.e. outside of the English classroom). The data also suggested that these students had more positive self-perceptions of themselves as writers and students. Their alignment of the components of their individual RIs and their integration of the components across RIs typically resulted in more positive and adaptive academic and writing behaviors that contributed to their positive development as students and writers.

A second important comparison can be made in terms of the success of the PRESS principles in facilitating identity exploration and change for each participant in the study. Whereas the effectiveness of the PRESS principles varied across students and context, the data indicated that their incorporation into the course design does have potential to contribute to facilitating students’ identity exploration and development. The data illustrated that many, if not all, students used the IdEx assignments, journals, and class discussions to reflect on, analyze, and, at times, explore their RIs. Specifically, in Anna, Elizabeth, and Deja’s cases, the design prompted modification or creation of new RI elements within the components, as well as the unification of disharmonious elements, misaligned components, or disintegrated RIs.

The data also seemed to show that different aspects of the pedagogy and class experiences were more salient in promoting identity exploration and change among different students. For some students, as illustrated in Jessica, Deja, and Jason’s cases, engagement in identity exploration occurred more through the social experiences in the
classroom than through their individual experiences with the IdEx activities (i.e. socialization). However, for other students, as exhibited in Seojun and Elizabeth’s cases, their individual experiences with the IdEx activities, more so than their experiences with the collaborative activities, facilitated greater identity exploration and change. For Anna, both the collaboration and the IdEx assignments appeared to work in almost equal measure in facilitating her identity exploration and change. It is important to note that the data suggested that the collaborative writing unit, in general, facilitated much exploration and change for the students in this study, which indicates the importance of socialization in the identity exploration and development process. However, the IdEx assignments, in conjunction with the social writing processes that occurred in the class, served as a scaffold for students to further explore and develop their student and writing RIs. Whereas the collaborative writing itself gives students physical writing action possibilities with which to develop and evaluate their own writing and academic practices, the IdEx assignments specifically directs students’ attention to the foundation of their practices, prompts commitments to or changes in their practice, and triggers exploration that connects these commitments or changes to other relevant aspects of their lives.

The data also suggested that students’ identity exploration varied based on context and activity. For example, some students, such as Jessica and Deja, engaged in more exploration when it was triggered or scaffolded through class discussion or at the end-of-semester interview, while others, such as Seojun and Elizabeth, engaged in deeper exploration within the written journals and IdEx activities. Still others, namely Seojun and Jason, found the IdEx assignments boring and repetitive and, thus, only minimally used them as a scaffold to explore or develop their identities. The research on the PRESS model and student engagement with identity exploration supports these diverse findings (Flum & Kaplan, 2006; Flum & Kaplan, 2012; Sinai, Kaplan, & Flum, 2014): Students enter the semester with wide-ranging initial RIs, they differ in their developmental
readiness and willingness to explore or develop their RIs, and may respond differently to cues and attempts to trigger and scaffold identity exploration. This highlights the diversity and complexity of identity processes, points to what may be realistic expectations for effectiveness of uniform pedagogical practices across students, and further supports the need to engage in continuous iterative design that takes into account differences between students both in initial role identities and in developmental trajectories in the course.
CHAPTER 5
DISCUSSION

In this chapter, I summarize the study’s findings and offer implications for theory, research, and educational practice in developmental writing. I also consider the limitations of the study and the outlook for future research. Finally, I reflect on the way engaging in this research promoted my own identity exploration and development.

Summary of Study and Findings

The research on pedagogical practice in developmental writing classes is vast. Most instructors and researchers agree that skills-based instruction alone does not motivate students to actively develop their writing skills. Thus, other pedagogical approaches (i.e. critical approaches, process-oriented approaches, and contextualized approaches) have received increased attention in terms of their impact on student success in developmental courses. While these approaches have their merit, they are based on certain narrow assumptions about developmental students – i.e. lack of self-relevance between course content and students’ lives or lack of self-regulated learning and writing strategies - that ultimately limit their effectiveness, as each approach impacts only some students in some contexts, only some of the time. These approaches fail to address the dynamic and varied sources of developmental writing students’ struggles; thus, an effective pedagogical approach in the developmental writing classroom must address students’ diverse motivational processes. What is needed, therefore, is an approach to conceptualize and address students’ diverse motivational processes. In the current dissertation, I have argued and investigated the contention that the concept of role-identity and Identity Education (IdEd) pedagogy may provide such an approach.

Identity education aims to promote the exploration and development of students’ identities within the classroom context and has been shown to positively impact students’
motivation to engage with the course material, their sense of belongingness within academic settings, and their value for education in general (Faircloth, 2012; Kaplan, Sinai, & Flum, 2014). The current study involved an iterative design of an identity exploration instructional intervention aimed at facilitating developmental writing students’ identity exploration and development around the domain of writing. This intervention was guided by the PRESS principles: promoting self-relevance, triggering identity exploration, facilitating a sense of safety, and scaffolding exploration strategies (Kaplan, Sinai, & Flum, 2014). Unlike other identity interventions that are either top-down in approach (i.e. Young, 1996) or focus more on exploration via socialization (i.e. Street, 2005), the PRESS principles aim to facilitate identity development by putting students at the helm of their own exploration.

To conceptualize and investigate the effectiveness of the PRESS principles on students’ identity development and motivational processes in the current study, I used the Dynamic Systems Model of Role Identity (DSMRI). This model offers a comprehensive framework - based on the concept of role identity - from which to analyze the diverse contents, structure, and change of students’ motivational processes: ontological and epistemological beliefs; purpose and goals; action possibilities; and self-perceptions. Thus, the PRESS principles and DSMRI model guided the design of pedagogical practices that aimed to facilitate, examine, and understand developmental writers’ unique and complex experiences, identity exploration, and motivation in developmental writing courses. The study’s overall aim was to investigate the effectiveness of the PRESS principles in guiding the design of course curriculum that facilitates students’ identity exploration, development of academic and writing identity over the semester, and motivation to develop and engage in adaptive academic and writing behaviors.

The study’s findings illustrate the complex, unique, dynamic, and varied experiences of six students in a developmental writing class with an identity exploration component embedded in the course curriculum. The findings also highlight the potential
significance of incorporating IdEd, specifically the PRESS principles, into a writing curriculum or any curriculum. Through the IdEx assignments and course activities, students were engaged in a culture of identity exploration that, to varying degrees, facilitated students’ reflections on themselves as students and writers. Some students used the IdEx assignments and accompanying class activities to perform a “deep dive” into the components of their student and writing RIs, sometimes resulting in change to certain components of their RIs or, in at least one case (i.e. Anna), making a strong commitment to one or both RIs. Others performed only cursory exploration and change, which often manifested in minimal change to the components of the RIs or minimal commitment to the RIs (i.e. Jason). In either case, the IdEx activities prompted students to think about their conceptions of what it means to be a student and writer and, in some cases, make changes to the components of their targeted RIs.

The findings also suggested that despite variation in exploration and change in RIs across students, some commonalities emerged. As noted above, students with unsophisticated RIs – those students who focused the components of their RIs on procedure, effort, and skill (i.e. Elizabeth) – effectively completed the course but rarely made strong commitments to their development as writers and students. This sometimes resulted in poor self-perceptions and constrained action possibilities regarding adaptive and healthy writing and academic behaviors and goals. Comparatively, students with more sophisticated RIs – those students who focused the components of their RIs on creativity, communication, self-expression, and agency (i.e. Anna) – had more positive self-perceptions and seemed less confined in terms of their writing and academic goals and actions.

In terms of the effectiveness of the incorporation of the PRESS principles – via the IdEx activities - into an academic curriculum, the results are promising. While each student used the IdEx activities as a means for exploration in different ways and in varying degrees at different times throughout the semester, the important point to
consider is the role these activities played in creating a culture of exploration in the classroom. This enabled students to simultaneously engage with the academic content, reflect on the content, and use that reflection to explore and, if needed, evolve their roles as students and writers. In developing a pedagogical approach that uses identity exploration in tandem with the academic content in this way, the academic content and the identity exploration were always presented as a unified entity, which illustrated for the students the inextricable link between the work – particularly the writing - and the self.

It is also important to note the role of socialization in the process of identity exploration and development, especially in terms of exploration and development of student and writer RIs. While the PRESS principles guided and facilitated exploration via the IdEx assignments, we cannot overlook the impact of the class’s social experiences, specifically the collaborative writing unit, the class discussions of the IdEx assignments, and the student-teacher conferences. The data clearly indicated that these social experiences also played an important part in establishing a foundation for most students’ identity exploration and development. Through group work and class discussion, students created pieces of writing together; they witnessed and learned from other students’ writing practices; they heard other students’ experiences with college courses or writing courses, and they shared their own experiences as well. Almost all of the students in the study noted the importance of these social interactions in their development as students and writers. However, as mentioned previously, the IdEx assignments provided students with a scaffold to further explore and develop these roles beyond the collaborative unit, as well as in other contexts and across their varying RIs.

The study findings suggested that the PRESS curriculum has potential to fill some of the gaps found in the aforementioned pedagogical approaches to teaching developmental writing courses. First, while the common pedagogical approaches, particularly the transformative and contextual approaches, loosely attempt to connect
course content to relevant aspects of students’ lives, they ultimately undermine students’ agency to find and develop these connections on their own by forcing assumptions about self-relevance onto students. Alternatively, the PRESS-guided curriculum provides students with assignments that scaffold and trigger their own process for exploring self-relevance.

Additionally, the common pedagogical approaches seem to have the sole focus of “fixing” students’ writing habits; however, they do so without examining or probing the foundations of students’ motivation: ontological beliefs, goals, actions, and self-perceptions. Conversely, course curriculum driven by the PRESS principles facilitates students’ understanding of these underlying forces behind motivation, which may encourage and/or help students to develop adaptive writing or academic behaviors. The PRESS curriculum, and use of the DSMRI to examine students’ experience with such a curriculum, also allows instructors to understand these components as well, which could improve targeted teaching and intervention strategies that address the diversity in students’ skills, abilities, and needs.

Furthermore, whereas many of the common pedagogical approaches, particularly the contextual and process-oriented approaches, tend to view developmental students as monolithic and homogeneous in their needs, skills, and abilities, the PRESS approach and the evaluative tool of the DSMRI highlight students’ diversity overall. However, when the data indicates commonalities across cases, they are specific to students’ engagement with identity exploration and development and the level of sophistication with which students discuss the components of their targeted RIs. This is an important distinction because it suggests that the PRESS and DSMRI models are better suited to address the why questions that are at the heart of instruction. When instructors want to know why some students are motivated to develop a practice for writing while other students are content to simply “wing it”, the PRESS and DSMRI models can help to answer those questions because they are focused on the foundations of motivation. Thus, this type of
curriculum, and subsequent examination of students’ identity process and development, fills a big gap in the aforementioned approaches because it attempts to explain the diversity in motivation and action found in developmental courses.

Thus, overall, the findings suggest that incorporation of identity exploration principles into a developmental writing curriculum holds promise for facilitating students’ academic and writing RIs. The findings also demonstrate the rich insights into these processes provided by the DSMRI framework. However, the variability of students’ experiences, identity, and motivation processes, as manifested in the cases described above, also raise several important implications for the interdependent areas of theory, research, and educational practice.

**Implications for Theory**

The study’s findings may inform theoretical understandings regarding developmental students’ attitudes towards writing, the nature of their role identities as writers and as college students, and way these processes manifest in educational contexts.

First, the findings highlight the simple, yet important, contribution to theory on developmental students that (surprise!) developmental students are not monolithic, as some of the research on developmental writing students seems to suggest. For example, research on developmental students tends to emphasize their overall lack of value for writing, their inability to connect course work and relevant aspects of lives, or their failure to strategize, and self-regulate. The data in this study shows otherwise for the developmental writers in these particular writing courses. While some students have more sophisticated RIs than others, overall, the developmental writers in this study - in varying degrees - value writing, consider writing to play a role in their lives outside of the English classroom, connect writing to other relevant RIs, and develop strategies for writing. However, instructors or researchers may overlook these variations in behaviors or
attributes if there is no mechanism by which to facilitate or examine students’ diverse experiences in the developmental classroom (i.e. PRESS and DSMRI).

In addition to their diversity, the findings illuminate the level of sophistication, dynamism, complexity, and fluidity of developmental students’ - and, perhaps, all students’ - writing and academic identities. These findings raise theoretical implications for possible manifestations of RIs that are more or less desirable and impactful in terms of positive and adaptive academic and writing behaviors for students. For example, students who aligned their writing RIs around procedural, skills-based ontological beliefs, actions, and goals tended to focus on simplistic practicalities, which often manifested in writing devoid of creativity, evidence development, and, in some cases, agency in honing individualized writing strategies (i.e. adhering strictly to the models learned in class). The findings also indicated that students with such RIs articulated poorer self-perceptions about their writing and themselves as writers, illustrated through their low self-concepts and self-efficacy for writing. In contrast, the findings suggested that students who aligned their writing RIs around more conceptual and mastery-oriented ontological beliefs, actions, and goals also manifested more sophisticated writing choices, such as selecting novel and, in some cases, more difficult topics for their essays, synthesizing multiple pieces of evidence in interesting and learned ways, and showing greater signs of creativity, authority, and individuality in their writing practice. These students also exhibited improved self-perceptions over the course of the semester.

All that said, these attitudes and RIs manifested in a particular educational context in which identity exploration activities were incorporated into the pedagogy of the course. These activities prompted students to think more directly about the components of their writing RIs relative to lessons about writing itself, which could more concretely illuminate for students the relationship between their coursework and their academic and writing identities. This important role of the educational context also has implications for IdEd theory.
This study offers a meaningful examination of the effectiveness of IdEd, and specifically the PRESS principles, in terms of facilitation of identity exploration and development of students’ academic and writing RIs. The findings suggest that while, overall, the PRESS principles can guide design of pedagogy for facilitating students’ exploration and development of their relevant RIs, the degree to which the specific application principles impact particular students’ exploration and development is variable. For almost all students, scaffolding and triggering seemed to make a contribution to commencing identity exploration and change. If students did not have a framework by which to examine or modify their exploration, they reverted to simplistic and practical reflection and action. If students no longer felt that a topic or assignment was novel or interesting, or if they had not experienced a relevant difference between established and new ontological beliefs, goals, actions, and self-perceptions, many decreased their level of engagement with exploration or with the course in general.

Another theoretical contribution to the IdEd approach is the finding that, even when the IdEx activities promoted students’ reflection and identity exploration, students differed in their responses. For example, experiences of self-relevance were important for almost all of the students; however, the source of self-relevance varied from student to student, which emphasizes why it is so important for instructors to allow students to explore and express their own self-relevance instead of imposing relevance on them. For example, the relevance of the course theme (gender and pop culture) precipitated increased levels of exploration and motivation for students like Jessica and Elizabeth. However, the repetitiveness of course theme was actually de-motivating for Seojun because, by mid-semester, he no longer found the theme relevant or interesting to him. For students like Anna, Deja, Jason, and Seojun, self-relevance was seated in the writing lessons and workshops more so than in the course theme. These students found writing and collaboration to be relevant to their academic pursuits and to their desires to express themselves creatively and professionally. Similarly, while almost all students felt a sense
of safety in the class, the manifestation of this safety manifested differently, with some students feeling free to explore and express newly found relations with writing (e.g., Anna), and others manifesting increased anxiety about writing or about college (e.g., Elizabeth).

Thus, overall, the findings of this study suggest that the conceptual framework of the PRESS principles has value and usefulness for both students and instructors; however, students’ responses to the IdEx activities varied across person, time, and context. Therefore, more research and theoretical development is needed on understanding how the shared contextual features interplay with individual students’ personal characteristics in facilitating each student’s enactment of the PRESS principles in individualized, healthy, and adaptive ways. In short, IdEd theory should address the variation in students’ identity exploration and development on both group and individual levels under different contextual conditions.

**Implications for Research**

The study findings also raise important implication to research, especially research focused on writing identity, academic identity, and/or developmental students within community college contexts. While results herein provided a theoretical dimension that is concordant with the writing literature on conceptions of writing, the results also provide a more nuanced and differentiated frame with which researchers and writing instructors can examine students’ varying writing role identities in different educational environments. Thus, the findings highlight the need for research on the myriad types of writing and academic RIs in developmental writing courses, or any developmental course, at community colleges.

Additionally, this study can be used as a framework with which to analyze different levels of sophistication or maturity within students’ RIs. Research that investigates and characterizes dimensions, such as level of sophistication or maturity of a...
RI (i.e. cursory vs. deep; procedural vs. conceptual), may provide further insights into students’ motivation to engage – or, likelihood to engage - with certain activities or content. Additionally, this study offers a methodology for investigating the complex and dynamic content, structure, and processes – individually and collectively - of students’ relevant RIs in these settings.

The findings also have implications for research on the context and mechanisms of identity transformation. The findings suggested that students’ identity exploration and transformation varied depending on the prompt (i.e. class activities vs. journals vs. IdEx assignments), time point in the semester (i.e. beginning of semester vs. mid-semester vs. end-of-semester), and communication method (verbal vs. written responses to exploration activities). This suggests that students’ expressions of their RIs and their exploration were situational and contextual. For example, when students reflected on their writing RI during writing their final paper, they did so from that vantage point, at that time - their RI as that of a student-writer completing a final paper in a developmental writing course. Thus, certain components of their RI (i.e. action possibilities as opposed to goals for writing), or certain RIs altogether (i.e. writer RI vs. student RI) may be more salient at different times depending on task and time period within a semester. In correspondence with theoretical insights about the contextual, complex, and dynamic nature of identity and its exploration, future research could raise questions such as: how/why certain stimuli prompt or impede change within students’ relevant RIs; how/why these stimuli work differently for different students across different domains and in different contexts; and, how/why certain components within RIs, or the various RIs themselves, are more or less salient and specific according to task and time.

Finally, this study has implications for research on the effectiveness of the incorporation of the PRESS principles in different educational settings. Researchers may pursue the interplay of the four principles and the ways by which each one, and in combination, contributes to students’ identity exploration and development across
domains and contexts. This may lead to insights about potential domain-specific differences in the ways in which students explore and develop their RIs. Research may also pursue the process by which different instructors interpret the PRESS principles into practices in their own domains, unique educational contexts, and groups of students. Particularly, in light of the diversity of students’ responses to the identity exploration promoting practices, research may investigate the interpretation and practices that are more effective in terms of individuating the PRESS principles to address the needs of diverse students in the group.

**Implications for Practice**

This study highlights some important ways in which community college instructors can design a developmental writing course that enhances students’ cultural capital through a cohesive course theme and rigorous assignments that involve critical thinking, reading, and writing, while also promoting identity exploration and development through complementary assignments, reflections, and discussions that scaffold said exploration. More specifically, the findings’ central implication for practice is the demonstration of a framework for developing a classroom culture of identity exploration that centers on the academic content of writing as its core. The developmental writing classroom can become an “exploratory space” (Flum & Kaplan, 2003) in which students develop their academic and domain-specific skills in tandem with their own exploration and development of their identities as writers and students.

The current study provides some examples of ways to create a classroom culture of identity exploration; however, implications for practice should include an evolution of techniques in this arena. One way to accomplish this goal, as seen in the current study, is to incorporate multiple and diverse activities that, together, may facilitate perceived self-relevance, identity exploration trigger experiences, sense of safety, and exploration scaffolds across different students. The current study not only included the IdEx
assignments in the curriculum, but also built time for discussion of these reflective assignments into the class itself, especially in tandem with writing lessons so that students were continuously reminded of the connection between their identities and their academic and writing behaviors. Much of the fruitful transformation for the students in this study came after we, as a class, discussed their responses to the IdEx assignments and journal prompts.

Additionally, instructors can create a culture of exploration in their classrooms by including themselves in the process. For example, instructors can scaffold exploration for their students by engaging in identity exploration right alongside their students. While the IdEx assignments may have been designed to facilitate students’ exploration and development first and foremost, these tasks can also work to facilitate instructors’ exploration and development of their teacher RI. Instructors could demonstrate how to use the DSMRI by mapping their own teacher identity for the class. Or, instructors could explain the usefulness of reading the students’ exploration responses to their own teaching practice. For example, teachers could share with the class the impact that the students’ IdEx assignments had on their own ontological beliefs about teaching, goals for teaching, action possibilities for teaching, and their perceptions of themselves as teachers. Both of these suggestions can create a sense of safety in the classroom by removing traditional barriers between teachers and students, but it would also scaffold exploration strategies for the students.

While both iterations of the current study showed some level of effectiveness in promoting identity exploration in the developmental writing courses, there are certainly ways in which the activities can be improved, especially in terms of scaffolding of exploration. For example, instructors could work more closely with students on mapping their relevant RIs. One way to do this may be to provide students with a simplified explanation of the DSMRI framework and have them map their own RIs, which would provide students with more agency and scaffolds for exploring their RI than the practices
did in the current study. From this exercise, students could identify the harmony/disharmony, alignment/misalignment, and integration/disintegration within and between their own RIs. Once that process is complete, instructors can assess students’ level of sophistication with their explorations and develop subsequent activities that may trigger exploration and move students away from cursory exploration toward deeper and more valuable exploration.

A Note on My Personal Identity Exploration and Development

While the central focus of this study did not include my own personal identity exploration and development, engaging in this study had important influence on my teacher RI. The process of conducting a design-based study that included a comprehensive understanding of theoretical and practical literature, as well as active involvement in iterative decision-making about practices to promote developmental writing students’ motivation, engagement, and success, started (and continues, I suppose) with my own exploration of my role identity as a teacher. Thus, it is important to examine the implications of design-based research on the researcher herself. Because this was not a focus of my research, there is no substantive data to present or examine here. Instead, this section will provide an anecdotal account of my development as an instructor as a result of designing this study and writing this dissertation.

As any instructor can attest, we all have ontological beliefs about and goals for teaching and learning that guide our practice. We also have perceptions of our teaching strategies and of ourselves as teachers. However, too often we neglect to reflect on these components of our teaching RI. More importantly, many of us do not have the tools with which to examine our teaching RI. For those teachers who have not been through an educational psychology doctoral program, they may not be aware of the myriad motivation theories, developmental theories, learning theories, or identity theories that
can be utilized to explain what undergirds the practical pedagogical approaches we use in the classroom everyday. Thus, we often rely on our gut feelings about what is working or not working in our classes, and often these gut feelings have no theoretical basis. This is not to say that there is no merit to intuition; however, without frameworks with which to explore and analyze our practice, we are left with little, or potentially distorted, understanding of what is happening (or not happening) in our classes. This was the case for me, at least, when I began the doctoral program five years ago.

When I started the doctoral program at Temple in 2013, I had already been teaching at the college level for ten years. Six of those years were spent primarily teaching developmental writing courses, first as an adjunct instructor in Temple’s English Department, and, later, as a full-time, tenured-track professor in the English Department at Montgomery County Community College. Prior to entering the doctoral program, I had taken only three education classes throughout my undergraduate and graduate studies, and they were not very good in terms of developing my instructional practice. Any knowledge that I developed about teaching came from my own personal experiences in the classroom or research that I conducted on my own in my (limited) free time (which, by the way, is how I started reading Avi’s work on motivation and decided to apply to Temple so that I could work with him). From my experiences and limited research, I tried whatever innovative teaching techniques were popular at the time, incorporated different reading and writing assignments into my courses, and developed novel and interesting themes that served as foundations for my writing assignments. I spent more time meeting with students one-on-one. I included more collaborative writing and workshopping into my classes. I required students to keep reflective journals and to turn in portfolios of their work at the end of each semester, complete with formal written letters explaining what they learned about themselves as writers through their work during the semester. I tried everything, yet I had little to no idea how to assess the effectiveness of any of it.
From my observations, students seemed to like my courses and me as an instructor. They seemed to enjoy writing for the most part, and they typically appeared to be engaged with the course material. However, I did not know why they were engaged. Even for the instructional strategies that the students themselves directly linked to their learning and engagement (i.e. the collaborative writing unit), I still felt like I was relying on anecdotes and positive feelings to guide my practice. I truly did not know what I was doing right. Along the same lines, I also did not know why some students quit coming to class, stopped turning in work, or ceased being engaged in class. I truly did not know what I was doing wrong.

My quest became focused on answering the why questions because, to me, understanding why is essential to good practice. This is part of my ontological beliefs about learning and, therefore, guides how I teach my students. Since I did not understand all of the why questions, I perceived myself to be a mediocre instructor. I knew the basics about teaching reading and writing, and I had a pretty reliable teaching intuition, but I did not have theory-driven practice. Hence, I set a goal to answer these why questions and to develop better teaching practices guided by the knowledge that I would acquire in the doctoral program. Therefore, I signed up for classes in the College of Education to formally study educational psychology.

Fast forward to the redesign of my developmental writing courses under Avi’s tutelage and guidance. From working with Avi, I came to believe that many of the answers to the why questions can be found in motivation and identity research. More specifically, I believe that a person’s ontological beliefs, actions, goals, and self-perceptions work together to propel or prevent action in a given context. Since I believed that identity was the seat of motivation, I set a goal to design new developmental courses guided by identity education (IdEd) theory, research, and practice, specifically the PRESS principles. After reading articles and dissertations, attending conference presentations and poster sessions on motivation and identity research, and brainstorming
with Avi, I designed the first iteration of a developmental writing course that included an identity exploration and development component.

In the first semester of teaching this new course, I learned a lot about myself as a teacher by exploring my teaching RI. In terms of ontological beliefs, I did, indeed, believe that identity was the seat of motivation and that the identity exploration components I developed for the course would benefit students’ outcomes in the course. Therefore, in the beginning of the semester, I assigned what I now consider to be an excessive amount of IdEx assignments and reflective journaling. I also made a goal to address students’ IdEx assignments and journals at the beginning of every class period and use it to segue into the writing lesson for that day. At the beginning of the semester, the class discussion was good, students seemed happy and motivated, and I was feeling great about the course redesign. It seemed that all of the components of my teacher RI were aligned at this time.

Then, right before the mid-semester, I thought that we might be overdoing the identity work in class. Students seemed a bit less excited to share their IdEx assignments and journals with the class, and the discussions seemed to become repetitive. I was also worried about the amount of time I was using for the identity work. At that time, I realized that I also had a belief that the majority of class time and work, especially in developmental courses, should be spent practicing and improving critical thinking, reading, and writing skills. Therefore, when pressed for time, the in-class identity work started to take a back seat to the domain-specific lessons. I kept the IdEx and journal assignments as they were, but I revised my goals: we would spend time at the beginning of at least one class period per week discussing their IdEx assignments; if we had time for more discussion on more days, then we would act accordingly. At this point in the semester, my perceptions of the course redesign and of myself as a teacher changed. I was no longer confident in the redesign, as I felt it was drawing time and attention away from formal reading and writing activities. I was also feeling insecure as both a teacher
and a graduate student/researcher. As a teacher, I was anxious about the level of writing instruction I was giving students under this new curriculum. As a graduate student and researcher, I was anxious about negatively impacting my research by modifying the time spent on in-class identity work. It appeared that two of my RIs were becoming disintegrated, and, as a result, I experienced anxiety.

By the end of the semester of the first iteration, I decided that my most important and relevant RI was my teacher RI, not my graduate student/researcher RI. Therefore, I had to let the components of my teacher RI drive my practice. I debriefed with my students - in class and in the end-of-semester interviews - about the IdEx assignments and journals, I sought counsel from my advisor and colleagues, and I reviewed my observation notes from the semester. From these discussions, I redesigned the course to more effectively incorporate the PRESS principles into class activities and discussion in a less cumbersome manner without compromising the domain-specific content of the course.

In the spring semester iteration that followed, I further explored and honed my teaching RI via the design-based research I was doing with my classes. I still had many of the same ontological beliefs that I had during the first iteration of the study. However, I did gain a new belief in the second iteration: I adopted the belief that students needed to explore and develop their academic identities in tandem with their writing identities since writing plays such an integral role in their education. Thus, I set a goal to use the PRESS principles to target both identities more specifically in the second iteration. I devised new IdEx assignments in the second iteration that consistently prompted students to connect their writing RI to their student RI, as well as to other relevant RIs.

In the second iteration of the study, I still believed that identity was the seat of motivation, and, thus, my goals and actions for teaching continued to include facilitation of students’ identity work in the course. I also still believed that developmental students should spend the majority of their time practicing and developing their reading, writing,
and thinking skills. Therefore, I cut back on the number of IdEx assignments throughout the semester and assigned the IdEx tasks as weekend reflections, which we then discussed at the beginning of each class period on the Monday of the following week. This schedule allowed more time for consistent scaffolding and triggering of identity exploration and development without compromising the domain-specific content of the course. As a result, I felt more confidence and less anxiety about the new course design and my teaching practice in the second iteration of the study.

This research continues to facilitate my exploration and development of my teaching RI. Unlike the teacher I was five years ago, I now have more (but not all) answers to those why questions, which is a testament to the DSMRI model’s effectiveness not only as a model for evaluation of my students’ RIs, but also as a model for evaluation of my own RIs. From my own personal experience, the DSMRI can, indeed, provide a framework by which instructors, alongside their students, can explore their professional role identities.

**Limitations of the Current Study**

While this study adds interesting research to the current literature on motivation, identity exploration and development in educational settings, and developmental writing instruction, it is not without its limitations. The study’s weaknesses include a targeted but limited notion of identity; constraints on exploration and development of RIs due to overemphasis of course theme/topics; and limited context for analyzing students’ application of identity exploration strategies.

The research on identity is vast, and to address every facet of a person’s identity in one study is virtually impossible. In order to effectively focus on the role of the PRESS intervention in students’ identity exploration and development as students and writers, this study focused only on students’ writing and student RIs as facilitated by the PRESS principles and analyzed via the four components of the DSMRI. However, in doing so,
other relevant and meaningful RIs may have been overlooked or ignored altogether. For example, students’ cultural backgrounds, college majors, or positions in their family may have also contributed to students’ ontological beliefs, goals, actions, and self-perceptions around writing or being a student. While these external RIs were not the focus of the study, it would be a mistake to dismiss them as factors in terms of students’ exploration, development, or commitment to certain RIs. In the case of this study, for example, we might explore how Seojun’s background in the Korean education system impacted his views of himself as a student or writer here in the U.S. Or, we might examine how Elizabeth’s nursing student RI engages with her writing or general academic RI. Overall, it could be interesting to delve into students’ “external” RIs to better understand their influence on students’ writing and academic RIs and to evaluate their integration (or not) with students’ writing or academic RIs.

Another limitation of the study was the academic content itself. Because the course had a theme (gender and pop culture), students were not always engaged in the act of thinking about, writing about, or talking about writing and academics. Much of the semester was spent exploring gender and critically examining media for presentations of gender stereotypes. While many of the students were engaged with this course theme, it may have distracted them from focusing on their writing or academic identities because the focus of the course was on gender identity, which was not a targeted identity in this study. Additionally, the course theme restricted student writing and thinking. Students were aware that the course itself was deigned to show them how to analyze media for gender stereotypes; they simply had to illustrate the gender values they observed in the media. They were not offered alternative points of view (i.e. media does not portray gender stereotypes and has no impact on our gender identity development) or much agency to select their own topics (besides the final assignment), which ultimately limited the positions they could take on a given writing assignment or the room with which to explore other topics that might be more relevant to them and their development as writers.
and college students. Thus, it would be interesting to conduct this study again without the limitation of a course theme. Would the study yield different results, especially in terms of exploration, development, and change of the RI components, if the students read about, wrote about, and talked about writing throughout the entire class? Or, similarly, would the results change if students were allowed to select their own themes and topics that are important to them throughout the entire semester?

Finally, the study herein only examines students’ RIs during the semester in which they were taking the developmental writing course. There is no additional information provided on the students following the developmental course. It is not clear if students used the PRESS principles to continue to explore their identities in other courses or if all exploration stopped once the targeted facilitation ended. Future research might consider a longer more longitudinal project that follows students throughout their community college career to see if and how students continue to use the tools provided in the developmental course to scaffold identity exploration in other areas of their academic and/or personal lives.

**Conclusion**

Unlike other pedagogical approaches used in developmental writing courses, facilitation of identity exploration and development via the PRESS-based curriculum, as well as examination of students’ experiences with such a curriculum via the DSMRI, sheds light on students’ unique identities, motivations, and learning processes without reducing students down to a singular set of struggles, needs, skills, or abilities. Arguably, developmental courses are a prime environment for incorporating identity exploration into the curriculum since these courses tend to be foundational courses wherein students get their first exposure to what it means to be a college student or a writer in a college setting. The research herein has explained the important role that developmental writing courses that include an identity exploration component can play in community college
students’ academic experiences, especially in terms of their identity development as students and writers. Future research can use this study as a stepping-stone to further examine the role that identity exploration can play in helping our community college students become successful writers and students, as well as resilient and adaptive human beings.
REFERENCES


Flum, H. & Kaplan, A. (2012). Identity formation in educational settings: A


Issues in Educational Research, 23(2), 151-163.


about writing relate to their self efficacy, apprehension, and performance?

*Learning and Instruction*, 33, 1-11. Retrieved from

https://doi.org/10.1016/j.learninstruc.2014.02.001


https://www.insidehighered.com/quicktakes/2015/10/02/developmental-education-reforms-conn-and-tenn


http://www.jstor.org/stable/43744174


https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssresearch.2016.10.016


Doi: 10.3102/00028312031004845
APPENDIX A
INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Interview 1
Interviewer: Hi, __________. Thank you for agreeing to talk with me. The purpose of our meeting today is to better understand your experience in the class. So, the focus of today’s interview is your personal perspective. I would like to remind you about the informed consent statement you signed at the beginning of the semester. This told you about the project, confidentiality, and how the information will be used. The interview data will be used to understand participants’ experiences in the course in order to inform pedagogical strategies in the developmental writing classroom. Is it OK if I record the interview? (If they say no, continue but take notes and review/revise them afterwards).

• Could you please describe your experience in ENG 010A/ENG 011 this semester?
• What were the most meaningful experiences you had in the course? Why were they so meaningful?
• What aspects of the course worked best for you? Why? What aspects did not work? Why?
• If you were teaching this course, what would you do differently?
• Could you please tell me about your experiences with the exploration tasks that we did in each of the three units this semester?
• How do you think these experiences relate to who you will be as a student? A writer?
• Could you please tell me about your experiences with the reflective journals this semester?
• Could you please tell me about your experiences with the end-of-unit reflections?
• What dilemmas and challenges did you experience in the course?
• What might you take from these experiences for the remainder of your time in college?
• How, if any, did your relationship with writing change over the course of the semester?

Interview 2
Interviewer: Hi, __________. Thank you for agreeing to talk with me again. The purpose of the meeting today is to discuss your post-ENG 010A/ENG 011 experiences. I would like to remind you about the informed consent statement you signed at the beginning of the fall semester. This told you about the project, confidentiality, and how the information will be used. The interview data will be used to understand participants’ experiences in the course in order to inform pedagogical strategies in the developmental writing classroom. Is it OK if I record the interview? (If they say no, continue but take notes and review/revise them afterwards).

• Were you registered for courses this semester?
  o If not enrolled…
    ▪ Why were you not enrolled?
- Will you consider enrolling in the future?
  - If enrolled…
    - What classes did you take this semester?
    - How did your semester go?
    - If enrolled in ENG 101, can you describe your experience in that class? If no, why did you not register for ENG 101 this semester?
    - Did you do a lot of writing in your other (not ENG 101) courses?
    - What types of writing assignments did you get?
    - How did you feel about the writing assignments when you received one this semester?
    - Can you describe your process when you received a writing assignment?
- In general, how are you feeling about your role as a college student right now?
- In general, how are you feeling about your role as a writer right now?
- What are your plans after this semester?
APPENDIX B

IDEX WRITING PROMPTS (PHASE 1)

IdEx #1: Which - if any - gender do you most identify with? By what criteria do you define or characterize that gender? How does your gender enable or hinder what you can do in your life? How did you come to formulate these ideas about your gender?

IdEx #2: How does the author’s views about gender roles align with or diverge from your own beliefs? Did the article make you think differently about your own gender or about your own beliefs on the ways gender roles are constructed? Were there any specific ideas that you found interesting, disturbing, difficult, thought-provoking?

IdEx #3: What do you think it means to be “a writer”? By what criteria do you define or characterize “a writer”? What are your beliefs about writing? What are your goals for writing? What do you do to be “a writer”? Do you think of yourself as a writer? Why or why not?

IdEx #4: Now that we are almost finished with Essay #1, let’s reflect on our beliefs about writing, our beliefs about ourselves as developing writers, and our beliefs about ourselves as students. Please explain at least one belief you now have about writing. Describe one self-perception you have of yourself as a writer. Explain one action you have taken or will take when you write in the future. Describe one goal you have for writing.

IdEx #5: Find an image that represents your personal view of masculinity. Write a short paragraph about why that image represents your definition of masculinity.

IdEx #6: Are the authors’ views of masculinity similar or different from your own? Did the articles make you think differently about masculinity? Was there any specific sentence(s) that you found interesting, disturbing, difficult, thought-provoking?

IdEx #7: Find an image that represents your perception of yourself as a writer. Write a short paragraph about why that image represents your perception of yourself as a writer.

IdEx #8: Now that we are almost finished with Essay #2, let’s reflect on our beliefs about writing, our beliefs about ourselves as developing writers, and our beliefs about ourselves as students. Please explain at least one belief you now have about writing. Describe one self-perception you have of yourself as a writer. Explain one action you have taken or will take when you write in the future. Describe one goal you have for writing.

IdEx #9: Think about Essays 1 and 2. Write a short paragraph explaining which of the two essays had the most impact on your views about gender identity and why.

IdEx #10: Think about Essays 1 and 2. Write a short paragraph explaining which of the two essays had the most impact on your views about writing and why.
IdEx #11: Now that we are almost finished with Essay #3, let’s reflect on our beliefs about writing, our beliefs about ourselves as developing writers, and our beliefs about ourselves as students. Please explain at least one belief you now have about writing. Describe one self-perception you have of yourself as a writer. Explain one action you have taken or will take when you write in the future. Describe one goal you have for writing.
IdEx #1: This week we started discussing how people develop their gender identities, particularly the influence that pop culture has on that development. For this journal, I would like you to think about other aspects of your identity (besides gender) that may shaped by outside forces and/or other people’s perceptions/definitions. For example, you might think about your identity as a student or a writer. How do you define yourself as a student? How do you define yourself as a writer? How did you develop these definitions? Have outside influences impacted how you think about yourself?

IdEx #2: This week we read an academic article that argued that female gender values have been shaped by the stereotypical themes found in fairytales. How do the author’s views about gender roles align with or differ from your own beliefs about gender roles, about fairytales, or about the influence of popular culture (i.e. books, media) on our development? Did the article make you think differently about your own gender or about your own beliefs on the ways gender roles are constructed? Is it important to you to read texts that have unconventional arguments, like Marcia Lieberman’s? Why or why not? Did the process of reading, annotating, and discussing this article together as a class impact your beliefs about being a college student and/or a writer in a college class?

IdEx #3: Explain/describe your identity as a college student and a developing writer. Answer all of the following questions:

**College Student Identity:** What do you think it means to be “a college student”? By what criteria do you define or characterize “a college student”? What are your beliefs about being a college student? What are your goals for being a college student? What do you do (actions you take) to be “a college student”? Do you think of yourself as a college student? Why or why not?

**Writing Identity:** What do you think it means to be “a writer”? By what criteria do you define or characterize “a writer”? What are your beliefs about writing? What are your goals for writing? What do you do (actions you take) to be “a writer”? Do you think of yourself as a writer? Why or why not?

**Synthesis (bring it together):** Is there any overlap between these two identities? Do you see any similarities or differences in how you see yourself as a writer and as a college student? Do any of the answers you have here relate to other aspects of your identity (i.e. family, career)?

IdEx #4: Open journal! Please feel free to share any thoughts, feelings, or questions about our class or college in general. Try to keep the discussion focused on your emerging identities as college students and developing writers. If you need some guiding questions, see below: What was the most interesting/important thing you learned, discussed, or thought about from this week’s class? Did you learn, discuss, or think about anything NEW this week? How can you relate this week’s classes/lessons to some other aspect of your life (i.e. school, job, family)?
IdEx #5: Now that we have started working on the first essay as a class, please write about your experience working in groups and as a class on the first essay. Does group essay writing make you think differently about the writing process or what it means to be a writer? Does it weaken or support any beliefs that you may have about writing or how writing gets done? Does group work make you think differently about being a college student or what it means to be a college student? Does it weaken or support any beliefs that you may have about being a college student or the actions college students engage in?

IdEx #6: Based on what you have learned about essay writing so far this semester, what is the most important lessons or advice you would give to a new essay writer? What aspects of the writing process would you emphasize? What personal beliefs or perceptions about writing would you share? Based on what you have learned about being a student this semester, what is the most important lessons or advice you would give to a new college student? What aspects of the college experience would you emphasize? What personal beliefs or perceptions about being a student would you share? Are there any overlaps in your advice above? Meaning, are there any similarities (or differences) in the advice that you would give to a developing writer vs. a new college student?

IdEx #7: Now that we are almost finished with Essay #1, let’s reflect on our beliefs about writing, our beliefs about ourselves as developing writers, and our beliefs about ourselves as students. Please explain at least one belief you now have about writing. Describe one self-perception you have of yourself as a writer. Explain one action you have taken or will take when you write in the future. Describe one goal you have for writing. Please explain at least one belief you now have about being a student. Describe one self-perception you have of yourself as a student. Explain one action you have taken or will take as a student in this class and/or in the future. Describe one goal you have for being a student. Are there any overlaps between these sets of beliefs, self-perceptions, actions, and goals? Where do you see similarities and differences?

IdEx #8: Unit 2 is similar to Unit 1 in that we will continue our discussion of gender values in pop culture. Unit 2 is all about images of masculinity in popular culture. For this journal, find and upload here an image that represents YOUR personal view of masculinity. With the picture, include a short paragraph about why that image represents your definition of masculinity. Make sure to explain where your beliefs about masculinity come from. Do you think those beliefs are changeable? Do you think that learning new information about masculinity could shift your opinions?

IdEx #9: This week we read articles that argued that male gender values have been shaped by the culture in negative ways. How do the author’s views about gender roles align with or differ from your own beliefs about gender roles, about media/culture, or about the influence of popular culture (i.e. movies, media) on our development? Did the article make you think differently about your own gender or about your own beliefs on the ways gender roles are constructed? Is it important to you to read texts that have unconventional arguments, like Copper Thompson or the APA’s? Why or why not? Did
the process of reading, annotating, and discussing these articles impact your beliefs about being a college student and/or a writer in a college class?
IdEx #10: Find an image that represents your view of yourself as a writer/writing student (note: this assignment is intentionally vague). Write a short paragraph explaining the image and how it relates to you view of yourself as a writer and writing student. Make sure to explain where your beliefs about writing come from. Do you think those beliefs are changeable? Do you think that learning new information about writing could shift your opinions?

IdEx #11: Open journal! Please feel free to share any thoughts, feelings, or questions about our class or college in general. Try to keep the discussion focused on your emerging identities as college students and developing writers. If you need some guiding questions, see below: What was the most interesting/important thing you learned, discussed, or thought about from this week’s class? Did you learn, discuss, or think about anything NEW this week? How can you relate this week’s classes/lessons to some other aspect of your life (i.e. school, job, family)?

IdEx #12: Now that we are almost finished with Essay #2, let’s reflect on our beliefs about writing, our beliefs about ourselves as developing writers, and our beliefs about ourselves as students. Please explain at least one belief you now have about writing. Describe one self-perception you have of yourself as a writer. Explain one action you have taken or will take when you write in the future. Describe one goal you have for writing. Please explain at least one belief you now have about being a student. Describe one self-perception you have of yourself as a student. Explain one action you have taken or will take as a student in this class and/or in the future. Describe one goal you have for being a student. Are there any overlaps between these sets of beliefs, self-perceptions, actions, and goals? Where do you see similarities and differences?

IdEx #13: Now that you have completed two essays in this class, please answer the following questions: Which of the essays had the most impact on your views about gender and why? How did that paper assignment shape your worldview about gender? Which of the essays had the most impact on your views about writing and/or your identity as a developing writer? Did it have any impact on your role as a student in this class or college in general? Did it also help you make a decision about the topic for your next essay?

IdEx #14: Now that we are almost finished with Essay #3, let’s reflect on our beliefs about writing, our beliefs about ourselves as developing writers, and our beliefs about ourselves as students. Please explain at least one belief you now have about writing. Describe one self-perception you have of yourself as a writer. Explain one action you have taken or will take when you write in the future. Describe one goal you have for writing. Please explain at least one belief you now have about being a student. Describe one self-perception you have of yourself as a student. Explain one action you have taken or will take as a student in this class and/or in the future. Describe one goal you have for being a student. Are there any overlaps between these sets of beliefs, self-perceptions, actions, and goals? Where do you see similarities and differences?
## APPENDIX D

DSMRI CODE SCHEME FOR WRITING AND STUDENT RIs

### Writing Role Identity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DSMRI Component</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Ontological & Epistemological beliefs  | Students’ knowledge and beliefs about the nature of writing and about how and under what conditions they learn to write best | Being a writer means…  
Being a writing student means…  
Good writing is…  
Bad writing is… |
| Purposes & Goals                        | Includes students’ personal values and understanding of the purpose of writing and writing courses. These can be goals for their education, for a course, for their life. | Writing courses are meant to….  
In my writing class, I aim to learn….  
I want to be able to…. |
| Self-Perceptions & Self-Definitions    | How a student describes or perceives him/herself as a writer or writing student; includes their values & beliefs about who they are and their interests, personality characteristics, or other self-attributes as a writer or writing student | I am someone who…  
I am bad/good at…  
As a writer/writing student, I…. |
| Action Possibilities                   | The behaviors or actions a student takes (or sees as possible) or does not take (or sees as not possible) as a writer or writing student | When I write an essay, I (i.e., type the first thing that comes to mind, make an outline.)  
It’s not possible for me to do X when I write… |
## College Student Role Identity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DSMRI Component</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ontological &amp; Epistemological beliefs</td>
<td>Students’ knowledge and beliefs about the nature of knowledge and learning and about how and under what conditions they learn this knowledge best or happens best; can be domain specific</td>
<td>College/higher education means/is…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Being a college student means…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>A good student…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>A bad student…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purposes &amp; Goals</td>
<td>Includes students’ personal values and understanding of the purpose of college and being a student. These can be goals for their education, for a course, for their life.</td>
<td>College is meant to….</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>In college, I aim to…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I go to college because I want to be able to…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Perceptions &amp; Self-Definitions</td>
<td>How a student describes or perceives him/herself as a student; includes their values &amp; beliefs about who they are and their interests, personality characteristics, or other self-attributes as a student</td>
<td>As a college student, I am someone who…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>As a college student, I am bad/good at…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action Possibilities</td>
<td>The behaviors or actions a student takes (or sees as possible) or does not take (or sees as not possible) as a student</td>
<td>When I’m in class or at school, I (i.e., take notes, go to tutoring, check Facebook.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>It’s not possible for me to do X in school when…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category: Interactive Discourses</td>
<td>Function: Help to guide readers through the text</td>
<td>Examples</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transitions</td>
<td>Express semantic relations between clauses</td>
<td>In addition/but/thus/and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frame markers</td>
<td>Refers to discourse acts, sequences, or text stages</td>
<td>Finally/to conclude/my purpose is to…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Endorphic markers</td>
<td>Refer to information in other parts of the text</td>
<td>Noted above/see figure 2/aforementioned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evidentials</td>
<td>Refer to the source of information from another text</td>
<td>According to X…/Y states…/Similar to Z's argument…</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category: Interactional Discourses</th>
<th>Function: Involve the reader in the argument</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hedges</td>
<td>Withhold writer's commitment to the full proposition</td>
<td>Might/perhaps/possible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boosters</td>
<td>Emphasize force or writer's certainty in proposition</td>
<td>In fact/definitely/it is clear that…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude markers</td>
<td>Expresses writers attitudes toward proposition</td>
<td>Unfortunately/I agree/surprisingly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engagement Markers</td>
<td>Explicitly build a relationship with readers</td>
<td>Consider… You can see that…</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>