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Roger Powell

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THE IMPACT OF TEACHER AND STUDENT MINDSETS ON RESPONDING TO
STUDENT WRITING IN FIRST-YEAR COMPOSITION

A Dissertation

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies and Research

in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

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This dissertation has five interrelated purposes: 1. To understand individual teacher and student mindsets in three first-year composition courses at one university, 2. to learn how teachers with certain mindsets preferred to comment on student writing, the purpose of their commenting, and what they viewed as shaping their comments, 3. to examine comments that individual teachers with these mindsets give on student writing on one particular assignment in a specific class, 4. to explore what kinds of comments students with certain mindsets preferred on their writing, and 5. to examine how individual students with these mindsets process and apply teacher comments in revision with one assignment in one class. To fulfill these purposes, it draws upon case studies of three teachers' comments on student writing and three students' processing and application of those comments.

Results indicated that teacher and student mindsets were along a continuum from very growth to very fixed and that participants had moments of both mindsets depending on context. Furthermore, all teachers agreed that the purpose of their comments was to help students become better writers and that what shaped their comments was a complex interplay between their mindsets, their students' mindsets, and their identity. All students saw the purpose of comments as a way to improve their writing. Lastly, the teacher that often displayed a fixed mindset gave comments that had several purposes:

advising/suggesting, editing, and problem identification. The teachers that often had very growth mindsets had comments with the following purposes: advising/suggesting, questioning, problem identification, praise, and editing. All students processed and applied comments in ways that sometimes appeared to be through a growth mindset perspective and other times through a fixed mindset perspective.

The results of this dissertation confirm and extend research on responding to student writing and dispositions in composition studies and mindsets research in educational psychology. They also suggest key pedagogical implications: mindsets in composition teacher training, continual dialogue about student mindsets, and considering fixed mindsets and how to succeed. Lastly, this dissertation suggests implications for several future research studies such as: continuing to find methodologies that account for fluid, contextual, and individual nature of mindsets, considering the longitudinal implications of mindsets and response, thinking about mindsets, response, and transfer, and lastly, considering how other factors, such as identity, previous experiences, and other dispositions may shape response or mindsets.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

“This paper is not even close to college-level standards. If you don’t improve greatly, you won’t make it through college! You need to think through the next rhetorical analysis much more and consider giving more appropriate examples.” –

The response I received from my teacher in my first-year composition (FYC) course. The comment was on a rhetorical analysis paper.

Over a decade later, this comment marked a pivotal moment in my overall development as a college student and later as a composition teacher. I read the comment for the first time in my dorm room and slammed my fists on my desk. Rather than wadding up the paper in further rage, I took a deep breath and walked around the block on a brisk, October day in Southern Iowa.

After collecting myself and re-reading the comment and paper, I realized I was angry and frustrated with myself, not my teacher. I thought, “You should have spent more time on this essay than just that one weekend! You also could have asked for help!” I realized my professor was trying to motivate me to improve my poor writing. I drew a connection between her comments and the film sessions I had as a college football player where my coaches gave me feedback on how I played in games. Just like film study in football, I saw these comments from my FYC teacher as an opportunity to grow and learn and not as an attack on me personally. I had not performed well or spent enough time writing, and it was her job to let me know I could improve. On my next paper, I started much earlier and received feedback in a writing center session. These were lessons I would take with me when I decided to become a composition teacher.

When I became a composition teacher, I remembered my FYC experience and was determined to write effective comments. These comments attempted to be clear, constructed a positive tone, gave students an honest reaction that treated their writing seriously, and tried to help students both revise their paper and grow as writers. I wanted to guide students towards revision and encourage students to continue to implement the conventions of the genre or to follow the expectations of the assignment, which are all commenting strategies validated by empirical research and scholarship in composition and writing in the disciplines (Bean, 2011; Sommers, 2012; Straub & Lundsford, 1995). I offered students different paths for revision, which meant they ultimately had to make choices to meet genre conventions, assignment expectations, and their ideas about how to improve their writing. While I guided revision because they were freshman-level writers, it was ultimately up to them to make choices in revision, which I thought would promote their overall writing development. Additionally, I encouraged students to list a few areas of concern and questions they had about their writing. By voicing concerns, students could develop the ability to evaluate their written texts. Despite all of this, I became frustrated when I would give comments and students would sometimes revise and sometimes not. I wondered “What did I do wrong? What is getting in their way when they revise?”

As I continued my teaching career in my PhD program, my comments stayed positive, were clear, and gave students options in revision, but I was determined to improve my practice. Therefore, I decided to give students time to read the comments in class and then required them to write a short one-page plan for revising their writing with the comments in mind, which is another practice validated by previous

research/scholarship (McBeth, 2015; Shidvko, 2015; Sommers, 1982). I chose this practice because I thought students might not be spending time reading the comments, and it would give them time to ask questions. I framed this activity by explaining that the purpose of comments was not to point out their flaws. Rather, this activity was meant to help students learn and revise their writing. My comments were “constructive criticism,” aimed at assisting their growth as writers.

As I passed out comments, I caught the glance of nervous eyes as students sat upright and unsettled. After giving them time to read the comments, I heard some students whisper: “This is ridiculous,” “What does he expect us to do with this?” “I don’t think I need to do all of that,” “This paper was revised plenty.” Some students even put their heads on the table or left the papers turned over. One girl who wrote about being bullied in her narrative assignment fought tears and later told me in a reflective journal entry, “I don’t like anyone to read my writing and tell me what to fix. It makes me feel dumb.” Perhaps her outlook on feedback/revisions might be tied to her experiences with bullying. Maybe it was something else?

The other half of the class went straight to work and made notes all over their drafts. I could hear them saying “Oh yeah, I could see that”; “I think I’m going to do this...”; “Well I don’t like that option, but this other option could work.” One student came up to me and said, “I agree with all of your comments, and they are helpful. So, first of all, thanks! But one of them I don’t agree with: I like my introduction and don’t think I should revise it.” I told him “Well that’s okay to disagree, but explain to me, in your revision plan, why you think that way and what your purpose for your intro is.” He immediately sat down and returned to writing. These students and their individual

reactions and thoughts about revising their writing seemed to differ substantially. In about 20 minutes, the students who read the comments and engaged with them wanted to leave, so they could find a computer and revise their writing. From my vantage point as their composition teacher, it seemed that students processed these comments in different ways. Some students appeared open to my suggestions and motivated by the opportunity to learn and grow from my feedback. They understood my purpose in giving comments and planned to use them to revise. Whereas other students were the opposite – they viewed these comments as a reflection of their weaknesses and were more reluctant to engage with these comments. What I soon learned was this: I was a more determined writer as undergraduate than were some of my students. As a result, my individual perspective and mental processing of these comments ended up being different than theirs.

To examine these comments on another level, I analyzed students' revisions to see how they applied my suggestions. From my perspective, those revisions were a mixed bag: students who were open to comments and viewed comments as a way to improve applied my suggestions. Others who saw the purpose of the comments as a reflection of weaknesses would revise a sentence or two. Their revision plans lacked depth, and it was apparent from reading the revision plans that students did not fully consider my comments. I further realized this by examining the word length of various student texts using a program called Google Draftback that showed statistics of revisions done and time spent in a Google Doc, which my students used to compose their writing. Some students added 500-1,000 words between drafts, rearranged portions of their paper, and spent several hours revising their writing. Other students would leave their text mostly

intact and spend less than an hour in revision. The difference in revision might be because of several factors. The assignment (literacy narrative) may have caused the lack of revision. It's also feasible that students had other commitments and did not feel like they could spend extra time on the writing for my class. However, another possibility is that their outlook on improving their writing led them to react differently to teacher comments and revise their paper based on those comments in different ways. It seemed there was a two-fold process: 1.) Students had individual and psychological processing of my comments. 2.) They did or did not apply my comments in revising their writing. Upon reflecting, it appeared each student had individualized, psychological processing and application of the comments. The diverse ways students processed and applied my comments was something I wanted to interrogate further.

In interrogating this idea further, I talked to several of my colleagues (who were also PhD students) and found they were having the same types of problems with student revision after giving teacher comments. Some of them stated: "I'm not sure they always read them!" Or "Nope it doesn't seem like they revise after I give comments. I have no idea why though." I thought it also prudent to ask colleagues how they gave comments. They informed me that they tried to write positive comments that helped students write better papers. They did not get into specifics and admitted: "Well I don't always spend a lot of time thinking about them." Their answer to my question made sense given how busy composition teachers are and how time-consuming writing comments can be (Anson, 2012; Haswell, 2006). If it takes forever to comment, do we always have the time to consider this practice? I began to realize that what went through my colleagues' minds as they wrote comments may be different than what went through mine. Writing

comments may have a layer of individual and psychological processing just like students reading of these comments.

All of these experiences provided a developing insight into complex aspects of teacher comments that needed further inquiry: 1. Responding to student writing, especially teacher comments, is not an easily understood practice of teaching writing and is something composition teachers must continue to consider. 2. I was still confused as to why students' processing and applications of teacher comments differed significantly. 3. I realized this practice was different for individual teachers and students.¹ Individual teachers seem to understand commenting in one way, and individual students seem to react to and use comments in a variety of ways. Therefore, perhaps their unique, psychological characteristics play a role in this interaction between teachers and students.

This dissertation will explore these lines of inquiry by examining the individual, internal, psychological characteristics of teachers and students at one Western Pennsylvania university. Then, it will see what the actions these teachers and students take with responding to student writing. Specifically, it will examine how teachers comment on student writing and how students process and apply these comments in revising writing. Doing a study of this nature would begin the process of seeing what link there might be between individual, psychological characteristics and teacher comments. This chapter will aid in this examination by: 1. Defining individual, psychological characteristics of teachers and students as “dispositions” and arguing for a specific disposition – mindsets – as the major disposition to examine. 2. Defining response, describing why it is so vital to composition, explaining why teacher comments are so

¹ A claim often argued in composition. See Sommers (1982) for the beginning of this conversation about individualized comments.

vital, and describing why response has been an important topic in composition studies. 3. Reviewing the literature on responding to student writing and arguing for a study of teacher comments that uses the frame of mindsets (a particular disposition) to extend response research. 4. Concluding with outlining the chapters to come.

Dispositions, Mindsets, and Teacher Comments

Individual and psychological characteristics have received increased attention in recent composition research. One such framework that has arisen from learning transfer conversations is the idea of “dispositions.” Driscoll and Wells (2012) defined dispositions, with the use of psychological research, as “individual, internal qualities” of students “that may impact transfer” (para. 1). Transfer is defined as the transferring of writing knowledge and skills from the context of FYC to other courses or even professional contexts. Driscoll and Wells (2012) explained that dispositions are broad and specifically mention four which impact writing transfer: “value, self-efficacy, attribution, and self-regulation” (Driscoll & Wells, 2012, para. 3). Dispositions affect how students might transfer writing knowledge and skills from one context to the next. These characteristics themselves are not students’ *skills and abilities*, but instead these characteristics determine *how* or *if* those skills and abilities can be learned, attained, or applied. For example, an FYC student may lack self-efficacy, which is the confidence they have in themselves to do a task (Bandura, 1977), and this lack of self-efficacy affects the student’s ability to learn. Imagine that the task a student lacks self-efficacy for is writing; this may cause that student to avoid writing a rough draft of an assignment. Therefore, they have not gained the ability to draft or develop a writing process that may transfer to another context.

But how does this interact with my project? I interpret what happened with my students as a potential dispositional problem. I may have a teacher disposition that conceptualized my comments on their drafts as a way for them to improve, learn how to write, and as a way for them to revise their writing. Some students saw it in that way; some did not. Perhaps our dispositions did not match up? This dissertation seeks to grapple with questions like these by examining how teachers and students with specific dispositions interact with responding to student writing.

It is important to note here that dispositions are a vast category. No one study could account for all the different types. This is exactly an issue Driscoll, Gorzelsky, Wells, Hayes, Jones, and Salchak (2017) later discovered by examining a “study of a study,” (para. 1) that focused on too many dispositions at once. Because of this issue, Driscoll et al. (2017) claimed composition researchers should focus on one or two writerly dispositions at a time. Building on Driscoll et al.’s advice, this dissertation will focus on one particular disposition – mindsets. Dweck (2006) developed the concept of mindsets after decades of empirical research and found that people typically lean more towards one of two mindsets – growth or fixed. Growth mindset people believe their abilities and intelligence can develop over time, so they view struggle as a part of learning. When they fail at something, they view this failure as learning and see it as an opportunity to improve a task or skill. On the other hand, fixed mindset people believe their abilities and intelligence are fixed and view struggle as a reflection of their inability to do something. When they fail at something, they conceptualize this failure to mean they cannot do that task or master that skill. While people may lean toward one mindset more than another, it also depends on context. For example, some students might have a

growth mindset in a math class and a fixed mindset in a composition class, or vice versa. In composition classrooms, this may influence how students engage with one genre of writing and not with another. In my teaching experience, some students loved to write personal or creative genres such as a personal narrative or memoir and did some quality drafting and revising over the course of that assignment. However, these same students hated academic genres such as a rhetorical analysis or an argumentative paper and thought “I cannot do them.” These students had a growth mindset with personal/creative genres and a fixed mindset with research or analytical genres. Therefore, mindsets in composition, at least from experience, seem to depend on genre, context, and individual students.

In turning back to my opening anecdote, I posit that I had a “growth mindset” that led me to write positive comments, which aimed at helping students learn to write, revise their writing, and develop as writers. My students who processed and applied my teacher comments by being open to them and using them to revise their writing potentially had more of a growth mindset. They agreed that comments are a way to learn and grow. They also appeared to revise their writing based on these comments. However, students who were not as open and did not do as many revisions had more of a fixed mindset. My struggle in helping them learn might very well be a reflection of competing dispositions, which is conceptualized in this instance as mindsets. However, this is my biased perception of what happened supported largely by my experiences with teaching (though earlier in this dissertation I do cite revision statistics from Google Draftback). My point is that there needs to be more than anecdotal evidence to support this claim. Therefore, this dissertation will begin the process of empirically analyzing teacher and student mindsets

in relation to teacher comments in a particular context, which may help compositionists better indicate or predict how teachers will comment and how students will process and apply those comments in the context of their composition courses.

Therefore, this dissertation will have several purposes: 1. To understand individual teacher and student mindsets in three first-year composition courses at one university, 2. to learn how teachers with certain mindsets preferred to comment on student writing, the purpose of their commenting, and what they viewed as shaping their comments, 3. to examine comments that individual teachers with these mindsets give on student writing on one particular assignment in a specific class, 4. to explore what kinds of comments students with certain mindsets preferred on their writing, and 5. to examine how individual students with these mindsets process and apply teacher comments in revision with one assignment in one class.

To achieve these purposes, I will ask the following research questions:

1. What are the mindsets (growth, fixed, or neutral) of individual teachers and students in three composition classes at a Western Pennsylvania institution?
2. What are the preferred commenting methods of teachers with growth, fixed, or neutral mindsets at this institution?
 - a. What do teachers with these mindsets believe is the purpose of their comments?
 - b. What do teachers perceive as shaping these commenting methods?
3. What comments do students with growth, fixed, or neutral mindsets prefer on their writing at this institution?

4. How do teachers with growth, fixed, or neutral mindsets at this university comment on student writing with a specific assignment?
 - a. Where are the comments located (intertextual, margin, or end)?
 - b. What is the level of attention for the comments (surface or substance)?
 - c. What is the purpose of the comments (questioning, editing, advising/suggesting, problem identification, mitigating, describing, and praising)?
5. How do students with growth, fixed, or neutral mindsets at this university process teacher comments and apply teacher comments in revising their writing with a specific assignment?

I will answer these questions through an exploratory case study approach that I discuss in Chapter 3 and with the use of mindsets lens, which I will discuss in more depth in Chapter 2. In what follows, I will situate this project in the field of composition studies and discuss how this dissertation adds necessary understandings to the complex practice of responding to student writing. But first, I describe why composition researchers should study responding to student writing in the first place.

The Need for Response Research

Responding to student writing has been a vital part of composition pedagogy and research. Teacher comments are one form of response, and for the rest of this dissertation, I will use these terms interchangeably. Responding to student writing is often a topic in composition readers that is used to train new composition teachers, which provides evidence for how much composition teacher-scholars value this practice. For example, *Cross-Talk in Composition Theory: A Reader* has several chapters dedicated to

response theory, and nearly every chapter in the recent *Guide to Composition Pedagogies* book discussed how teachers might give feedback using different pedagogical approaches. This practice is so vital to teaching composition because it is individualized to each student and helps them revise their writing (Sommers, 2012; Straub & Lunsford, 1995). Furthermore, and as Sommers (2012) articulated, composition teachers respond to student writing to “remind students that their writing is intended for a reader” and “to give them a motive of revision” (p. xi). Overall, the practice of responding to student writing reflects several important goals of teaching composition: student-centeredness, rhetorical knowledge through audience awareness, and process pedagogy by guiding students through drafts and revisions of their writing (Murray, 1997).

In the last five years, the *Journal of Response to Writing* formed to expand knowledge on the topic and argue for more response research. Dana Ferris, the journal’s co-founder, found that when teaching a doctoral seminar on responding to student writing there was “little (or no) recent research for them to review” (Ferris, 2015, p. 1). Ferris (2015) went on to claim this does not mean there is absolutely no recent empirical work on response but that a bulk of the research appeared in the 1980s and 1990s in composition and second language writing. Consequently, she decided to begin this journal as an avenue for scholars to discuss response. A couple of the areas she suggested for focus in this journal include “teachers’ approaches to feedback,” and “students processing and application of teacher feedback” (Ferris, 2015, p.3-4). These are areas that I explore in this dissertation. Therefore, an additional layer of exigence for this dissertation is composition studies’ need for more work on responding to student writing, which was reaffirmed by a survey measuring the interest in the topic of response done in

the first issue of the *Journal of Response*. Nearly 70% of respondents to that survey agreed a journal dedicated to response would be beneficial for the field and would be interested in submitting to it and/or using the information from these articles to better help their response practices (Hartshorn & Evans, 2015). Overall, composition teacher-scholars appear to largely agree that more response research is necessary. Besides this agreement, response is individualized and essential to students. Because of this fact, more research can do nothing but reveal important information on how different individual teachers and students interact with response.

Defining Response and Teacher Comments

Responding to student writing can also be achieved in different forms, but this dissertation will focus on teacher comments (either typed or handwritten) as opposed to peer response, teacher conferences, or writing center visits. I made this choice because teachers often give comments in FYC. Typically, comments appear in the margins, as an end comment, some combination of these practices (Lundsford & Straub, 1995; Smith, 1989). These comments also appear on rough or final drafts. My study aimed to explore comments as they naturally appeared, so I wanted teachers to write comments as they planned on doing with as little of my influence on those comments as possible; but, of course, these teachers were aware I was going to see their comments. As I will discuss in Chapter 3, all three teachers in the study wrote their comments in a digital format – either through the Microsoft Word comment feature or a course management system called D2L. Overall, my research focused on written comments in naturally occurring forms because this is a common practice in many FYC courses across America.

Additionally, written teacher comments were the focus, because as Sommers (2012) claimed, commenting strategies can "...apply to both written and oral comments" (p. vii). By discovering more about teachers' written comments, there may be implications for the other response practices, such as one-on-one conferencing, audio/visual comments, or even writing center tutoring. Future research would reveal this for certain, but my research would add to this knowledge base.

Because of these choices, my study will first attempt to measure teacher and student mindsets within the context of this course. Then, it will examine how teachers with growth or fixed mindsets comment on student writing and how students with growth or fixed comments process and apply these comments with one assignment. In what remains of this chapter, I explore how this project extends prior work on responding to student writing by first examining the research done on teachers' perspective of comments and moving into the student perspective of those teacher comments.

Research on Teachers' Perspectives of Their Comments

Much response research has focused on effective teacher commenting practices. As Anson (2012) and Haswell (2006) astutely pointed out, comments take an exorbitant amount of time to compose and we, as composition teachers, hope that they are useful to our students, so our time spent on these comments does not go to waste. Therefore, this focus on effective commenting practices is logical.

This empirical work has found essential practices that seem to govern the way we give comments now, one of which is to prioritize comments on global concerns, such as developing ideas, structure, genre, or audience, over comments on local concerns such as spelling, punctuation, and grammar (Brannon & Knoblauch, 1982; Sommers, 1982;

Straub, 1996). These studies suggested that teachers spent a lot of time trying to help students develop the “ideal text” rather than for them to grow as writers, so spending less time editing student work would be helpful with student revision (Brannon & Knoblauch, 1982, p. 159). Furthermore, research found that comments should be facilitative and promote a collaborative dialogue between teacher and student (Straub, 1996) and should encourage the writing process of individual students, by focusing on the rhetorical situation of writing and the individual needs of the student (Bean, 2011; Haswell, 2006; Straub & Lundsford, 1995). To further aid in revision, comments should focus on concepts talked about in class to serve as a bridge from inside and outside of class writing (Sommers, 2012; Straub, 2000). These comments should also be focused on two to three areas of the text that students can really improve upon (Beach, 1979; Ziv, 1980). The tone of comments is additionally important, and comments should be constructed in a positive tone that offers appropriate praise when students do well, so they are motivated (Daiker, 1989; Gee, 1972). However, composition teachers must be careful not to praise everything, so students do not think they have no areas to improve (Daiker, 1989; Gee, 1972). Recent articles in the *Journal of Response to Writing* have focused on how teachers might give comments on low-stakes reflective writing (Cohn & Stewart, 2015), how to give comments that encourage student voice (Macklin, 2016), and how to give written corrective feedback on student writing (Ahern-Dodson & Reisinger, 2017; Shepard, O’Meara, & Snyder, 2016, 2016). While this work offered useful information for *how* teachers could comment, it did not always explain what might have *impacted* their comments. What I mean here is that less research through the years has examined teachers’ *awareness* of those comments and what might *affect* the comments given.

The research that does exist on teachers' awareness and factors that shape their comments paint a nuanced and complex picture. Anson (1989) examined teacher "ways of knowing" by examining what they believed to be the purpose of their comments on student writing (p. 344). He found that teachers fit into three categories: "dualistic," (p. 344) who focused on correcting student errors; the "relativistic," (p. 349) who focused on responding to what the teacher felt was interesting; or "the reflective" (p. 351) who emphasized a range of concerns for student ideas and global concerns. Anson (1989) went on to argue that teachers often did not consider what kind of responder they are because this takes time and practice with comments to move into the most desirable reflective responder. In recent L2 Composition research, Ferris (2014) interviewed teachers about their commenting practices and found that some did implement effective practices but often were more directive than they perceived. Teachers reported asking more questions in margin comments, but when Ferris (2014) examined their written comments, there were fewer questions than reported – suggesting teachers may not be fully aware of the comments they write. Other research affirms this lack of awareness. For example, Montgomery and Baker (2007) and Paterno (2002) interviewed teachers in FYC and English language teaching contexts about their comments. Teachers reported they focused comments on global errors and gave fewer comments overall, but when the researchers analyzed teachers' written comments, there was more local error correction, and a higher number of comments than teachers reported. Scholarship focused on teacher practice has attempted to offer methods for teachers to be self-reflective of their commenting practices (Ferris, 1997; Straub, 1997) and to continue to improve upon them. Recently, Edgington (2015) modeled a method of considering what type of "identity"

teachers can take as a responder, which offered another approach to reflect on response practices (p. 75). Overall, there is little evidence that teachers are completely aware of the comments they write, probably due to contextual factors such as time that limit their ability to be reflective.

The inconclusive results of this research opens the door for further inquiry on how other teachers, in a different context and with varying levels of experience, might be aware of their comments. Therefore, one focus of this dissertation is to examine teachers' perceptions of their methods and purposes of giving comments. Furthermore, these studies are almost always done with experienced teachers, though one participant in Ferris's (2014) study was a graduate student. The research I propose will examine comments that graduate student teachers write on student writing because they have not often been participants in studies of teacher comments. Also, graduate student teachers teach many sections of composition all over the country, so learning more about how aware they are of their comments could be beneficial to help them develop as teachers.

Research on teacher comments has also found that specific psychological factors can impact the types of comments teachers give. These factors are never called "dispositions" but are individual and psychological, so they could be defined that way. For example, Paterno (2002) and Gellis (2002) worked in the fields of English language teaching and composition and indicated that if teachers have a poor attitude about grading, they may grade students much more harshly and write harsher comments on final papers. Thompson (1995) found that composition teachers attitudes towards assessment may shape the kinds of comments they give. She specifically analyzed Peter Elbow and Ed Whites' comments on final graded papers. Peter Elbow, for instance,

sought less assessment in the classroom, and therefore, valued giving comments that helped student writers develop an understanding of how others interpreted their writing (i.e., he responded as an authentic reader). Ed White, on the other hand, valued assessing students' ability to produce academic discourse, and therefore gave comments aimed at helping students develop this academic discourse knowledge. These three studies highlight that attitudes can be a factor in determining teacher comments. Attitudes could be interpreted as a particular kind of disposition, but as I mentioned above, are not labeled as dispositions in these three studies. However, these studies do show that a disposition-like quality such as an attitude can impact the comments teachers give on writing. While attitude is certainly important, it is not the only factor that impacts teacher comments which appears to be disposition-like.

Personality, a disposition-like quality, appears to be an indicator of teacher comments as well. Carrell (1995) did research that utilized the Myers-Briggs personality test to examine how teachers evaluated student writing. Carrell (1995) found that Myers-Briggs could accurately determine what kinds of comments teachers gave on final papers. Likewise, Callahan (2000) conducted an exploratory study which found that Myers-Briggs personality impacted the types of comments given on students' reflective writing.

A last trend in response research that appears dispositional, is work that shows how gender bias impacts teacher comments in problematic ways. Barnes (1990) and Haswell and Haswell (1996) have both empirically examined teacher comments in FYC courses to find that teachers have an explicit gender bias in their comments. Gender bias, like attitudes and personality, might also be considered a disposition-like characteristic. In their studies, teachers were often harsher in their comments to students that are the

same gender as them, and they use their comments to push female students to draw upon more gender stereotypical, emotional language than males. These gender bias studies also highlight the fact that dispositional characteristics of teachers can help determine both the tone and content of teacher comments.

While these studies are useful, they are not the only potential dispositional factors that may affect the types of comments that teachers give on writing. As my anecdote at the beginning of this chapter illustrates, mindsets may be another pivotal dispositional factor that impacts the types of comments that teachers give, but to date, no published studies have examined what kinds of comments FYC teachers with certain mindsets give on writing. Therefore, mindsets offer a new disposition that may impact teacher comments, and consequently, this dissertation would extend understandings of response in composition research.

While disposition-like qualities have proven to make big impacts on comments, contextual factors can make their mark on teacher comments with equal force. Straub (2002) found in his case study of a one FYC teacher that the dynamics of the classroom, the individual teacher, individual students, the goals of the institution, the time it takes to comment, and the chosen curriculum can all impact the choices teachers make in giving comments. Therefore, these factors may influence how teachers write comments.

Dispositions and context are both critical toward understanding what might affect or shape the types of comments teachers give, and even more likely is that a complex interplay between both of these factors influence the types of comments teachers give. Therefore, my dissertation seeks to understand how graduate student teachers with certain mindsets comment in a particular context. However, as Straub (1996) and Sommers

(2012) have so accurately described, response is meant to be a dialogue and two-way street between teachers and students. As a result, it is also vital to understand the student's perspective on responding to student writing as well as the teacher's.

The Student Perspective in Response

Studies of students' perspectives on teacher comments are far less common than that of teachers, but there is a decent body of literature built around the subject. This argument about the lack of students' perspective on teacher comments was first brought to composition teachers' attention when Murphy (2000) analyzed seminal works on response and found research nearly always focused exclusively on the teacher's perspective of commentary. Similarly, Fife and O'Neill (2000) set out to study the teacher's perspective of response through case studies and quickly found they needed to know the students' perspective as well because the teacher perspective alone could not fully help them understand this practice. At this point in composition studies, research was limited and did not yet fully study the whole context of response by examining teachers and students equally. As composition research began to explore students' perspectives of teacher comments, many studies found that, like teacher comments themselves, students' perspectives were complex.

Student Reactions and Teacher Comments

To fully understand these student perspectives on teacher comments, I begin by examining research on students' reactions and interpretations of teacher comments. In contexts outside of FYC, students want teachers to show them how to get good grades and may have negative reactions if teachers do not do this. Sperling and Freedman's (1987) case study about how a high school student interpreted her teacher's comments

found that the student often wanted to please the teacher by being a “good student” (p. 346). However, the teacher in this study often gave response that was contradictory to the course goals, which hurt the student’s use of commentary in revision and her overall grade and writing development (Sperling & Freedman, 1987). Like interpretations, Richardson’s (2000) studied how students reacted to teacher comments on their portfolio writing. Students in this study, who ranged in age from sixth grade all the way to their senior year of high school, resisted the teachers’ attempts to be open and push students to revise their writing on their own. Students thought it was the teachers’ job to “teach them the correct way to write,” (p. 117) and that not doing so was “demeaning” (p. 117). Teachers, on the other hand, wanted to be “open” and “non-directive” (p. 117). Therefore, students ended up misunderstanding the teachers’ purposes of commenting because students’ understanding of this purpose was different. In regard to interpretations and reactions of college-level students, Dohrer’s (1991) qualitative study of WAC/WID courses used interviews and think-aloud protocols with History students and Speech/Communication students to discover how they engaged with teacher comments. He found the following: students used comments to get a better grade on writing, students were overwhelmed by too many comments, and students reported being motivated to revise for a better grade (Dohrer, 1991). Dohrer (1991) claimed that teacher’s comments read like an evaluator, not as someone interested in reading the students’ writing, which may have shaped students’ reactions.

In L2 composition research, there are more mixed results with students’ interpretations and reactions. Lee (2008) found that students sometimes did not understand teacher comments. Furthermore, Ferris (1995) found that students did not like

handwritten comments because they were difficult to read. Also, students tended to remember overly negative and overly positive teacher comments in this study. In other L2 research on student reactions and interpretations of teacher response, Hang and Dykema (2017) did a critical discourse analysis of L2 students' responses to teachers and found that some wanted teachers to know that they were hardworking students that considered their teacher's comments, and others exhibited their agency by avoiding teacher comments. Lastly, Mahfoodh's (2017) recent study suggested that L2 composition students have a range of reactions to teacher comments including: "acceptance of feedback, rejection of feedback, surprise, happiness, dissatisfaction, disappointment, frustration, and satisfaction" (p. 53). Essentially, Mahfoodh (2017) found that L2 students' emotional reactions to teacher's comments were diverse and depended on the individual learner.

In research that examines FYC students and courses, Straub's (1997) study on student preferences of comments discovered that students wanted explicit comments that were directed toward their ideas and helped them revise. Additionally, they liked comments that were more positive. O'Neil and Fife's (2006) qualitative study of student perspectives found that individual students processed comments based on a range of criteria: previous experiences of receiving comments, teachers' ethos in the classroom, and the way teachers framed the purpose of response. Several other studies in FYC contexts discovered that students liked positive comments but for different reasons. Tregalia (2008) found that students preferred to receive positive comments on their writing while negative comments made writers feel as if their ideas were not important nor did the teachers see them as someone who was capable of writing. Smith's (1989)

and Straub's (1997) studies both found similar results of students preferring comments that were constructive. In a similar vein, Elbow's (1999) theoretical work argued that giving students a positive tone motivated them to revise. Overall, it appears that the studies done in FYC contexts found that students seemed to react to teacher comments in different ways, which is especially true in O'Neil and Fife's (2006) study. However, even the studies that find similar results about students' preference for positive comments appear to discover that they want these positive comments for different reasons. Sometimes it is to motivate students, others it is so they know the development of their ideas matter, and yet others are so the student knows they are the right track to getting a better grade. Overall, secondary students tend to agree that teachers should show them how to write better and help them get a better grade. However, when examining research in second language writing and composition classes, it becomes clear that students' reactions to teacher comments depend on the individual student and context.

I believe these results open the door for further research that examines student reactions/interpretations to teacher comments since they appear to be so diverse and based on the individual differences of students. Because mindsets are unique to individuals and contexts shape their mindsets, I believe they offer a useful framework to study response because in different moments, and with different assignments, we may have different mindsets. Therefore, this dissertation will analyze students' reactions and interpretations of teachers' comments, or what I will define in this dissertation as "processing of teachers' comments," by using a mindsets lens.

In addition to student reactions, research has also explored how students revise based on teacher comments, which makes sense because this is one of the goals of

helping students learn how to revise their writing. While again there is a decent body of literature on this topic, the results appear mixed, which leaves room for further work as I will detail in the next section.

Teacher Comments and Student Revision

Some research on teacher comments suggested that students use comments to revise, but this research is not always in an FYC context. For example, Beach (1979) and Hillocks (1982) both found that if teachers gave focused comments in secondary writing classrooms that paid close attention to one or two aspects of students' writing, students showed revisions over several drafts. However, Hillocks' research suggested that if teacher comments are not focused, then comments can have little to no effect on how secondary students revise their writing. Both studies utilized a control group that did not receive teacher comments. The control group did worse in both studies unless the teacher's comments were not focused, and then both the control and experimental group did about the same in revision. Along the same lines as Beach (1979) and Hillocks (1982), research in writing across the curriculum (WAC) has examined student revision from teacher response. Beasley (1993) found that in WAC classrooms, students would revise if teachers focused on global concerns. These studies provide a useful link between teacher comments and student revision but are not in an FYC context.

In the context of second language (L2) composition, research results indicate that students revised their writing from teacher comments in individual ways, which is sometimes caused by a lack of communication and sometimes by the relationship between teacher and student. Paulus (1998) found that L2 students can misunderstand and misuse teacher comments if teachers do not construct a positive, open dialogue where

individual students can ask questions about the comments they have received. Further emphasizing this point about communication, Goldstein's (2004) study of teacher and student communication on revision, which found that the clearer and more open teachers were to having individual students ask them questions about teacher comments, the more students revised. Along similar lines, Lee and Schallet (2008) found that the better the relationship that teachers and L2 students had, the more likely a student was to trust teacher comments and use them to revise their writing.

Besides communication and trust between teacher and student, research also indicates that individual students may have other commitments that impact how they revise their writing. Conrad and Goldstein (1999) study examined why some L2 students do not revise their writing after getting teacher comments and found that sometimes students have many other commitments in their life that impact how much time they have to revise. Additionally, they have other individual factors, like strongly-held beliefs about writing, which affect revising.

Other L2 composition studies find that the comments or understanding of comments impacts individual student revision. Ferris (1997) found that certain types of teacher comments on writing, such as requests for more information, led to more revision. Lastly, Christiansen and Blochs' (2016) recent work suggests that L2 students do not always understand what revision means and therefore think they might be addressing comments when they are not. What seems to be apparent across these different research studies is that individual L2 students revise their writing in different ways because of different belief systems. Additionally, diverse, unique, L2 students need to talk to teachers about their comments. While these are undoubtedly useful findings for

second language writers, not every student who is in our FYC courses are a second language writer, and therefore this highlights the need to continue understanding how all students in composition courses revise after receiving teacher comments.

The studies that have considered revision phenomena in the FYC classroom with both monolingual and L2 writers have again found mixed results. Sometimes the issue is a lack of understanding about revision. Berzsenyi (2001) and Shidvko (2015) discovered that composition students need explicit instruction that defines revision if they are going to revise after receiving teacher comments. Other times it is the type of comment that matters. For instance, Tregalia (2009) found that students revise their writing about half the time and if they received clear, positive, comments that motivate students to revise. Likewise, Wingard and Geosits (2014) studied FYC classrooms and WID courses and found that if teachers focused comments on “substantive concerns,” or what others might call global concerns, then students tended to make revisions (p. 3). Lastly, Silva (2012) found that digitally written comments and video comments helped individual students revise their writing better because students thought these comments were more explicit and easier to read, which is similar to Ferris’s (1995) research.

The collective results of these studies are this – sometimes students revise under certain conditions, and sometimes they do not. These varying results are likely because response is all about individuals who are writing and receiving comments in a particular context. There is going to be variance and diversity, and therefore I believe further work would help bring new understandings of this nuanced, variant, practice that is different for different learners. As I stated at the beginning of this dissertation, I believe that if we know the mindset of a student we can better determine another factor that predicts where

students will or will not revise. I make this claim because in my interpretation of students' processing and application of teacher comments their mindsets played a role. Additionally, I argue that mindsets are individual and psychological and can be very contextual, which makes them a good frame for understanding the individual, psychological, and contextual practice of students processing and applying teacher comments in revision. However, to date, no published study in a composition classroom context has examined how students with growth or fixed mindsets process (react and interpret) and apply (revise) teacher comments.

Lastly, another trend through nearly all of this research is that the best response work is in contexts with highly prepared students – Carnegie Research 1 institutions and ivy league schools. The study for this dissertation, as I will explain in chapter 3, aims to examine teacher and students in a context with underprepared students for college at a nearly open-enrollment institution.

Conclusion

This chapter has argued that teacher comments are deserving of more attention because of my practical experiences, the need for this research in composition studies, results of previous research vary, and finally, this practice is highly individual and contextual in nature, so more research will broaden our understanding of more individuals and more contexts. Mindsets appear to be important because they are a disposition that determines how we see improvement, our skills, and our abilities, which is the larger purpose of teachers giving comments – so students can improve.

Chapter 2 will argue why mindsets would be a good framework for studying teacher comments and students' processing/application of those comments. I begin this

chapter by defining dispositions and discussing how mindsets are a subset of dispositions. I will then review the literature on dispositions in composition and explain how mindsets are a disposition that could be very beneficial to the fields' understandings of writing, but as of yet has not been explicitly explored in FYC. Lastly, it will review the literature of mindsets and discuss why analyzing them in an FYC context would be beneficial because of FYC's implications for retention and long-term writing and learning development.

Chapter 3 will discuss the methodology for this study of teacher comments. I will argue for an exploratory case study approach for studying comments within their context at a Western Pennsylvania university. It will describe the studies' purpose, research questions, context, participants (selection and recruitment), the data collected, how I analyzed the data, and the limitations of this study.

Chapter 4 will present three cases of teacher comments on a specific assignment and students' processing and application of those comments on that particular assignment. It will do so through rich, thick descriptions.

Chapter 5 will provide the discussion and conclusions of the three case studies. It will do so by first synthesizing the data across the three cases and presenting a summary of the results for each research question. Then it will discuss how the results extend previous research on response, dispositions, and mindsets. Following this discussion, it will describe pedagogical implications and provide classroom examples for teaching mindsets, training teachers, and writing comments in composition courses. It will end by discussing future directions for research based on this exploratory study.

CHAPTER TWO

DISPOSITIONS AND MINDSETS

In Chapter 1, I argued that a study of teacher comments, students' processing of those comments, and students' application of those comments in revising their writing would be beneficial to composition studies. This is because of several factors: composition studies' need for current research on response (Ferris, 2015); much of the prior response research finds mixed results; and finally, because research and my previous experience both found that teacher comments are highly individualized and contextual practices, which means further research would only add more knowledge of new individuals and new contexts. I also argued that a mindsets framework would be useful for studying teacher comments in their naturally occurring context.

In this chapter, I define mindsets as a particular kind of disposition and argue for why a study of teacher comments using this framework would be beneficial to composition studies. Furthermore, I review the literature on dispositions in composition studies and discuss how defining mindsets as a disposition would extend the work on dispositions in productive ways. I will then argue why mindsets would work well as a theoretical framework for studying teacher comments. Lastly, I review the mindsets literature and discuss how a mindsets study in FYC contributes to educational psychology research.

Defining Dispositions

Dispositions can be defined in different ways (see Wardle [2012] who uses Bordieu's [1990] work in sociology to define dispositions) but this dissertation will subscribe to dispositions in a psychological sense, very similar to Driscoll and Well's (2012) definition. Driscoll & Wells defined dispositions as "individual, internal qualities"

of students (para. 1). They drew on Bronfenbrenner and Morris's (2006) model of human psychological development to explain dispositions. This model of human psychological development includes four components: "Person, Process, Context, and Time" (p. 795). Human psychological development includes the individual characteristics of the person, their processes, the context where development happens, and the length of time for development. This model suggests that individual persons develop based on a complex interplay between unique characteristics, their interactions with others and environments, and context. These "unique characteristics" of the "Person" component of human development are "dispositions" which are individual, internal "...human characteristics," such as emotions, attitudes, beliefs, and values (p. 795). Dispositions "...can set [processes] in motion" (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006, p. 795), and these processes again are interactions individuals have with other individuals or environments. Think of dispositions as a frame of mind, or a way of viewing the world. That frame of mind or way of viewing will cause an individual to have specific actions or interact with others or environments in particular ways.

In the context of response in FYC, dispositions could determine how students interact with teacher comments. However, it is important to note that dispositions are a broad term, which means many dispositions could impact how students interact with teacher comments. A particular disposition might be self-efficacy, which again is one's confidence in themselves to do a task (Bandura, 1977). For example, a student that does not have any confidence in her or his ability to write a particular genre of writing in an FYC course has low self-efficacy. This lack of confidence might cause the student to

react negatively to a teacher's comments on that particular genre that they have low self-efficacy with and perhaps this same student would not use teacher comments in revision.

Furthermore, Bronfenbrenner & Morris (2006) claimed that dispositions can either be "generative" or "disruptive" (p. 810). Generative dispositions are aspects of a "Person" such as "...curiosity, tendency to inmate or engage in activity alone or with others, and readiness to deter initial gratification to pursue long-term goals" (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006, p. 810). These dispositions have a positive impact on a person's development over time because they include qualities such as being persistent, being determined, being willing to work hard, and being willing to ask for help when needed. These traits would position FYC students as willing to ask for feedback and then work hard to revise based on that feedback. On the other hand, disruptive dispositions can do as their name suggests and disrupt a person's psychological growth over time; they include such qualities as "impulsiveness, explosiveness, distractibility, inability to defer gratification, or, in a more extreme form, readily resort to aggression or violence; in short, difficulties in maintaining control over emotions and behavior" (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006, p. 810). These qualities could cause FYC students to feel frustrated at any response that guides them toward revision, and thus, have poor reactions to teacher comments. Additionally, students with disruptive dispositions might not use teacher comments in revision.

On a related note, dispositions can move from disruptive to generative. A student may have low self-efficacy, and a disruptive disposition, but that does not mean a student cannot eventually gain confidence in writing and develop a generative disposition of higher self-efficacy. Therefore, this highlights how dispositions may differ slightly from

other psychological concepts such as learning styles, which are often static and unchanging.

Dispositions as a Theoretical Frame for Teacher Comments

Dispositions are individual characteristics of students and teachers, but these individual characteristics can sometimes be socially constructed via different contextual factors. As a result, this makes them a useful frame for understanding teacher comments, because responding to student writing is both individualized and based in a particular context. Slomp (2012) made this claim when he described his “intra-personal” approach (p. 84) to assessing students’ writing development, which draws on the Bronfenbrenner and Morris’ (2006) bioecological model mentioned above. Slomp’s (2012) model argued for assessing writing development as a complex interplay between components of individual dispositions and context. This model of writing assessment intersects with recent learning transfer research that contends dispositions are individual components of students yet are also sometimes socially constructed by contextual factors (Blythe, 2016; Driscoll et. al. 2017). This claim that dispositions are individual yet socially constructed is informed by research in other fields as well. For example, research from literacy studies claims that communities shape individual students’ perceptions of literacy (Cushman, 2001). Furthermore, work in critical pedagogy has found race, class, and gender can all impact how students perceive education and learning (Delpit, 2009; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 2009). Therefore, these social constructs could impact student dispositions toward learning. However, it is important to mention that individual students can still have individual, internal, psychological qualities that are unique to them despite the context they are in. This means social forces such as context and community may

shape how someone views something, but that people belonging to that community may hold different views. For example, a student may value academic literacy, despite belonging to a community that may *not* value academic literacy at all. Ultimately, student dispositions derive from individual and social forces working in tandem to shape the particular disposition.

Because responding to student writing happens in a context, but should still be an individualized practice, dispositions, understood in this dissertation via mindsets, are a useful theoretical framework to understand the exploratory case studies this dissertation will propose in Chapter 3. To better illustrate this claim that dispositions can be socially and/or individually constructed I offer the following example. A teacher has a fixed mindset with teaching writing, perhaps because that teacher is working in a context with underprepared student writers that have difficulty remember due dates or coming to class prepared. As a result, the teacher writes comments on a particular assignment that are short, unclear, and focus solely on identifying problems in a student's assignment. A different teacher may be in a similar context but could have a growth mindset and therefore maybe writes comments that are more positive, clearer, and aim at helping students develop as writers. Turning to the students who receive the comments, there may be a student with a fixed mindset, which could be from negative experiences in previous English courses. This student may react negatively to any comments and do less revision. Whereas, a different student who comes from a similar context may have a growth mindset. This student may not be fazed by this short and unclear comments. Instead, the student may react positively to these comments and may make many revisions.

Therefore, mindsets might be an effective way to understand what is happening with the interaction of response.

Studying Dispositions

While dispositions make a useful framework for studying response, researching dispositions carries methodological challenges. Driscoll et al. (2017) found the sheer scope of dispositions is challenging to investigate. The term, dispositions, is broad, and therefore needs to be narrowed, which is why they argue that researchers should focus on one or two interrelated dispositions. Because dispositions are complex and can often be informed by context, focusing on a specific disposition will allow for thorough analysis of how individual dispositions function in a particular context of FYC with responding to student writing on one assignment. This dissertation will narrow down the focus to a single disposition – mindsets.

Mindsets as a Disposition

But how do we know mindsets are a disposition? Well, recent scholarship on teaching and learning has confirmed that mindsets are a disposition (Papanek-Wells, 2016; Schwartz, 2014). Mindsets are an individual, internal characteristic that shapes how we view the world and interact with others. Figure 1 represents the relationship between dispositions and mindsets:

Dispositions: Individual, internal, psychological characteristics that affect how people interact with others and environments. Think of them like attitudes, beliefs, values, frames of mind, and how one views the world. They sometimes can be generative or disruptive.

Mindsets: a specific disposition that focuses on how one views the development of her or his abilities and intellect.

Growth: Positive end of the spectrum where individual believes his or her abilities can be developed through hard work and persistence and views failure as a way to learn. This is a generative disposition.

Fixed: Negative end of the spectrum where individual believes his or her abilities and intellect are innate and no amount of hard work or persistence can change what they have. Views failure as a reflection of one's inadequacies. This is a disruptive disposition.

Neutral: Middle of the spectrum where individual views skills and abilities in neither fixed or growth ways.

Figure 1. Dispositions and mindsets graphical representation.

Figure 1 shows that mindsets are a specific disposition and that they fall along a continuum. Therefore, they have the potential to impact overall learning and human development. Dweck's (2006; 2008; 2011; 2014) many research studies indicated that fixed mindsets often hurt individuals' development and ability to succeed. This is often

because of how they view failure. When students in these studies fail at something and have a fixed mindset, they often want to avoid that task. While this is important to know, it also raises the question as educators – how do we work with fixed mindset students to facilitate their success? This study will try and understand how fixed mindset students engage with teacher comments in order to begin this conversation.

Fluid, Contextual Mindsets and Problems in Measuring

An additional layer of importance in defining mindsets as a disposition is that this means mindsets are individualized and contextual. Dweck (2006) argued this same point by articulating that different domains and contexts can factor in what type of mindset an individual has. For example, a student may have a growth mindset with English and a fixed mindset with Math, and even within these courses they may have a growth mindset with one type of writing and a fixed with another type – the same with different types of math problems or tasks. Therefore, I argue that mindsets are fluid and contextual. This claim that mindsets are fluid and contextual is important for several reasons: 1. it means that no one is always one type of mindset, 2. it means anyone has the capacity to change their mindset, and 3. it means everyone does not have to be placed in a box. However, making this claim does present methodological difficulties when trying to categorize mindsets. As I will discuss in much more depth in Chapter 3, previous research on mindsets often utilizes a questionnaire method to measure mindsets. This method surely helps to narrow down individuals into one of two mindsets – fixed or growth. However, it does not account for the fluid and contextual nature of mindsets. Therefore, my attempt to account for the fluid and contextual nature of mindsets is to move away from the questionnaire approach and instead interview participants and ask them open-ended

questions about their mindsets with teaching, learning, and writing. What I found in this approach, which will be highlighted in more depth in Chapters 3 and 4, is that participants are neither fixed nor growth, but are more of a degree to which they are a particular mindset in a particular moment within a particular context.

Student and Teacher Mindsets and Writing

Mindsets also impact writing, but only a handful of studies have explored mindsets in writing contexts. Limpo and Alves (2014) found that when sixth-eighth students learned about growth mindsets, they were able to produce longer and more well-developed written texts by spending more time revising their writing. Additionally, Schubert's (2017) recent dissertation described an intervention study that utilized a course-embedded writing tutor and taught students about writerly mindsets. Those students were junior-level college students who were in an engineering course. At the end of the study, students who developed growth mindsets about writing with the help of their tutor revised their writing more and reacted well to feedback from the tutor. These two studies seem to suggest that mindsets play a role in how students develop as writers, how they can revise, and lastly, how they react to teacher feedback more generally. However, they are not done in the context of an FYC course, nor are they explicitly focusing on teacher comments. Furthermore, all students in these studies had growth mindsets – which again leads to the question: what happens if a student displays more of a fixed mindset? This is where my work can contribute the conversations on mindsets and writing.

Other important research on mindsets and writing has found that students' mindsets have a long-term impact on learning to write. In a study with my co-author on

mindsets, we found mindsets to impact writing development and how graduate student writers interacted with teacher comments (Driscoll & Powell, 2018, in preparation). We came to this realization after we examined interviews, writing samples, and teacher comments from 14 students over a six-year time span. Of these 14 students we conducted case studies with two of them. In both case studies, we found that each students' mindset impacted the students' reactions to teacher comments, revisions from teacher comments, and ability to engage in learning transfer from what the students learned in those teacher comments. We examined two students who were working on literature reviews for master's level courses—one in medicine and the other in counseling. One student frequently displayed a growth mindset, and after seeing her mindset we noticed that she had more positive reactions to teacher comments, especially response that was blunt and critical of her writing, she engaged in more revisions, and she engaged in learning transfer from what they learned from the comments. Another student in the study frequently had a fixed mindset and engaged with teacher comments in the exact opposite way: she did not like overly harsh comments, preferring positive comments that accounted for her lack of expertise in this discipline, she engaged in less revisions, and she reported engaging in less transfer from what they learned in those comments. To further illustrate the characteristics of growth or fixed mindset students from this particular study, I present Table 1 that my co-author and I developed from our research on student mindsets:

Table 1

Characteristics of Student Mindsets

Area	Characteristics of Writers with a Growth Mindset: “Writers that believe they can improve with practice and hard work”	Characteristics of Writers with a Fixed Mindset: “Writers that believe that writing is a gift/talent (and they either have it or don’t)”
Other Dispositional Qualities Affected by Dispositions		
Answer-Getting vs. Problem-Solving Dispositions (Wardle, 2012)	“More likely to hold ‘problem exploring’ dispositions; willing to engage in reflection, curiosity, and recursive learning processes”	More likely to hold “answer getting; dispositions; ‘seek right answers quickly’”
Attribution (Driscoll & Wells, 2012): “How a student attributes the cause of success/failure of a writing task”	“Often attribute poor performance to self and choices”	“Often attribute poor performance to outside sources (teachers, peers, or other sources)”
Persistence (CWPA & NCTE, 2011): “The ability to continue in the face of adversity”	“More likely to accept challenge is part of growth; persevere through difficulty”	“More likely avoid challenging situations; may hinder development and success”
Self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977; Driscoll & Wells, 2012): “The connection between a student’s belief about his/her capacity to succeed and the likelihood that the student will take the necessary steps to achieve that goal”	“Often believe they can overcome the challenge; may also take pride abilities and ownership of success”	“Often believe they are good writers as long as they do well; may also have pride in abilities; self-efficacy is fragile and more externally dependent”
Motivation (Gegenfurtner, 2012): “What encourages students to engage in effort to complete writing tasks”	“Challenging writing tasks are motivating and may result in high effort; easy tasks sometimes result in lack of motivation or even apathy”	“Comfortable tasks are motivating; however, difficult tasks may result in motivational challenges”
Giftedness (Palmquist	“Believes writing is	“Believes writing is a

and Young, 1992)	something they work hard to improve upon”	gift/talent they are born with”
Help Seeking Behavior (Williams & Takaku, 2011)	“More likely to seek help in challenging writing circumstances from a variety of sources (peers, writing center, friends, family, etc.)”	“Will often avoid seeking help, particularly from those who are not “comfortable” or “unknown” such as the writing center or teacher. May seek help from “trusted” friends, family, or partners.”
Mindsets Effect on Writing Knowledge, Process, Teacher Comments, and Revision		
Expectations for Teacher Response & Revision (Sperling and Freedman, 1987; Wingard & Geosits, 2014)	“Often is looking for authentic feedback; feedback is perceived to be about texts, rather than writer. Accept and work with feedback; open to revision and improvement from feedback”	“Often is looking for praise and feedback that affirms their abilities; feedback is perceived as about writer; argues with the feedback; certain feedback inhibits revision processes and reshaping texts”
Challenging Writing Tasks “(Tasks that are considerably more challenging than previous tasks; new for foreign; and/or have some other challenging element)”	“Embrace challenging writing tasks and sees these tasks’ worth for their own development as writers”	“Avoid challenging writing tasks and shut down in the face of difficulty”
Comfortable Writing Tasks: “Tasks that are similar in nature to what writers have completed before (rhetorical situation, genre); and/or offer substantial scaffolding”	“Claim to not “learn” anything from easy tasks; extremely growth-oriented students may find ways of challenging themselves independently if the tasks present insufficient challenge”	“Often embrace and excel in comfortable writing tasks to demonstrate their ability as a writer”
Teacher Preferences	“Values a tough teacher and a tough grader; values teachers with high standards that make them think and work for their grades”	“Values nurturing and non-confrontational teachers, or confrontational in ways that don’t impact their self-identity; will often avoid tough teachers”
Metacognitive “Evaluation (Gorzelsky et. al., 2017): The ability	“Often engages in effective metacognitive evaluation about writing process, task,	“Often resists engaging in metacognitive evaluation of task, process, self, and

of a student to evaluate choices that led to success/failure of a writing task”	self, and strategies”	strategies”
Mindsets Effect on Learning Development and Transfer		
Writing Transfer (Elon Statement, 2016): “The ability of students to use, adapt, or partially adapt writing knowledge, skills, and dispositions from previous writing contexts to new contexts”	“Challenging writing experiences become critical moments of writerly development; learning transfer often occurs from these events, as does a deepening of writerly identity; builds strategies to overcome weaknesses”	“Transfer is often constrained by challenging writing tasks because student is defensive; may transfer positive experiences they were successful at”
Developmental Trajectory (Curtis & Herrington, 2003)	“May make long-term developmental choices based on challenge and growth (including changing major to a more challenging one, etc.)”	“May make long-term developmental choices based on avoiding challenge (including changing major or career trajectory to avoid challenge)”

Note. This table is reprinted by permission from Driscoll, D. L., & Powell, R. (2018)

Growing writers: How student mindsets impact responses to faculty feedback and learning transfer. Manuscript in preparation.

This table highlights the characteristics of a growth and fixed mindset student from our previous work. It is important to note here that the characteristics from this study, like in the above Table 1, represent the far ends of each mindset within a particular moment. Most individuals fall more along a continuum with their mindsets. For the study this dissertation proposes, I will draw on these characteristics to ask open-ended questions in an attempt to understand what mindset my participants have with one assignment in an FYC course. Specifically, I will ask about their mindsets in general, how students work with challenging writing tasks, how they engage with teacher comments, and what their mindset might be like with different genres of writing. But what I want to make apparent

from this table is that not only are student mindsets a disposition, but they have the ability to impact a host of other qualities that make up a successful composition student: self-efficacy, attribution, persistence, metacognitive thinking, long-term writing development, ability to transfer their learning, perspective of challenging writing tasks, and teacher preference. The most important quality to the study this dissertation proposes is how students react to and revise their writing from teacher comments. Therefore, mindsets are important for two reasons: 1. they can impact what students do with teacher comments on particular assignments based on our data, and 2. bringing mindsets research to composition studies has the potential to help our understandings of how students succeed or do not succeed in FYC classes with different types of assignments and with a variety of mindsets. Furthermore, mindsets are all about how individuals view the improvement of their skills and abilities, and teacher comments are supposed to be about improving individual student writing and helping individual students learn how to revise. Therefore, I believe that mindsets are the perfect framework to understand how students interact with teacher comments.

However, and as I stated in the opening chapter to this dissertation, responding to student writing is very individualized. The research just presented shows how growth mindset students are successful with writing development, but what about fixed mindset students? In my study with a co-author (Driscoll & Powell, 2018, in preparation) the fixed mindset student had trouble with teacher comments, especially when they perceived the comments as harsh. If that is the case, it begs the question – how do we comment to help fixed mindset students? Therefore, one of the exploratory case studies in Chapter 4 will present a fixed mindset student and show how they engage with comments. In

Chapter 5, I will discuss how teachers might help fixed mindset students succeed in composition courses.

But, students are only one part of this equation, because teachers’ mindsets also matter, and for more reasons than I suggested in my beginning anecdote. According to Dweck’s (2010) work on mindsets, teachers can unknowingly construct their students’ mindsets. They can do this by the interactions they have with students, and we have to ask: Do teachers promote a growth mindset? Do they promote a fixed mindset? Some combination of these mindsets? If a teacher promotes one more than the other, it might influence the mindset a student has with writing or with particular tasks. Furthermore, it may be that teachers view their teaching in a growth or fixed way as well, so students may end up viewing their learning that way, and it could or could not help them depending on their mindset. Overall, not only does the context and domain influence students’ mindsets, but the teachers that students have in that context and domain also influence students’ mindsets, which could or could not be helpful.

Additionally, teachers’ mindsets vary from students’ mindsets. Drawing from Dweck’s (2014) instrument used to measure teacher mindsets, I present the Table 2 that gives characteristics of teachers’ mindsets built from K-12 studies on teacher mindsets:

Table 2

Characteristics of Teacher Mindsets

Growth Mindset Teacher Characteristics	Fixed Mindset Teacher Characteristics
“No matter how much natural teaching ability you may have, you can always find important ways to improve.”	“The kind of teacher someone is, is something very basic about them and can’t be changed very much.”

“Every teacher, no matter who they are, can significantly improve their teaching ability.”	“Teachers can change the way they teach in the classroom, but they can’t really change their true teaching ability.”
“Teachers with growth mindsets engaged in more professional development, such as reading professional literature to pick up teaching techniques and ideas.”	“Some teachers will be ineffective no matter how much professional development they go through.”
“Growth mindset teachers observed other teachers.”	“Fixed mindset teachers did not want to see others teach in fear of seeing something they do wrong.”
“Growth Mindset teachers specifically asked for feedback on their teaching from a respected colleague or supervisor.”	“Fixed mindset teachers feared getting feedback from a colleague and were not open to the idea of being mentored.”

Note. This table was adapted from an instrument mentioned in the following source:

Dweck, C. S. (2014). Teacher’s mindsets: Every student has something to teach me. *Educational Horizons* 93, (2), 10-14.

I will draw on these characteristics later to develop open-ended interview questions aimed at measuring teacher mindsets in a particular context. Essentially, teacher mindsets are all about how they view observations, teaching abilities, improvement, how much they reflect, and if they consult the pedagogical literature in their fields. Additionally, and like student mindsets, teachers also fall along a continuum, and this table is meant to show the extreme end of each mindset. Lastly, teacher mindsets are also contextual and fluid, and therefore, are difficult to measure. I will also draw on interviews to see what mindsets teachers have in particular moments and within the context of these FYC courses.

Overall, student and teacher mindsets can make a great deal of impact on teaching and learning and in composition. However, to date, the three studies I mentioned are the only ones that have examined mindsets and writing. Furthermore, these studies are not

done solely in FYC contexts. Limpo and Alves (2014) conducted their study with middle school students. Schubert (2017) completed her study in a WAC/WID context, and my co-author and I did our study with graduate students, though the study did begin in an FYC context. I turn now to the literature on teacher and student dispositions to discuss how a study of mindsets and teacher comments contributes to composition research.

Student Dispositions in Composition Studies

Without calling them dispositions, composition research has been exploring qualities of students that are dispositional for several decades, as evidenced from empirical studies on writing apprehension, self-efficacy, and giftedness (Daly & Hailey, 1984; Palmquist & Young, 1994). Furthermore, several seminal studies in *WPA Journal* examined dispositional qualities such as valuing writing and being motivated to engage in writing transfer. Learning transfer and writing transfer are defined in these studies as the knowledge of writing and skills of writing that transfer from FYC to other contexts (Bergmann & Zerpernick, 2007; Nelms and Dively 2007; Wardle 2007). For example, Bergmann and Zerpernick's (2007) study found that when students did not value writing or their FYC course, they were less motivated to engage in learning transfer. This lack of motivation was reaffirmed when Nelms and Dively (2007) and Wardle (2007) also found that motivation can impact students' learning transfer. While this initial work on writing apprehension, self-efficacy, giftedness, and motivation could be viewed as dispositional in nature because these qualities are individual, internal, psychological characteristics that can impact interactions within an environment and students' ability to learn, none of these studies explicitly state they are examining dispositions because this is a recent term in circulation in composition studies.

The term “dispositions” was first used in composition studies in a special issue of *Composition Forum*. In this issue, Driscoll and Wells (2012) used their empirical work on learning transfer to argue that “dispositions determine students’ sensitivity toward and willingness to engage in transfer” (para. 21) and that composition research needs to examine dispositions such as “value, self-efficacy, attribution, and self-regulation” (para. 3) to understand individual FYC students better. In that same issue of *Composition Forum*, Wardle (2012) argued that students’ prior educational experiences construct student dispositions about learning to write. They often come to composition classrooms with “answer-getting” (para. 14) dispositions that position them as wanting to find one right way to engage in a writing task. Instead, Wardle (2012) argued that composition teachers should push students towards “problem-solving” (para. 25) dispositions that highlight the messiness in complex, real-life writing situations. These “problem-solving” dispositions are better for learning transfer. In my co-authored work, I examined emotional dispositions, which “...are not about specific emotions but rather indicate how emotions are managed across many situations; they are the long-term orientation of emotions connected to writing (and more broadly, learning)” (Driscoll & Powell, 2016, para. 10). Students’ ability to manage their emotional dispositions impacted their learning transfer and writing development (Driscoll & Powell, 2016). Lastly, Baird and Dilgers’ (2017) recently explored how two specific dispositions, expectancy-value and ownership, impacted the writing that two students did in an internship. Therefore, dispositions are important because they impact what students can and cannot learn in composition classrooms and beyond.

The aforementioned research reveals that student dispositions are becoming vital to composition pedagogy and research, but there is still much composition studies needs to know about dispositions. The above research indicates that dispositions can impact learning transfer and writing development, but not how dispositions may impact the day-to-day practices, such as responding to student writing, which could lead towards learning transfer and writing development. As I argued in Chapter 1—response is one of the most important practices in teaching composition and central to teaching students how to be better writers. Therefore, response itself could definitely have an impact on learning transfer and writing development. However, without first understanding the type of impact dispositions (or even which dispositions) have on how students engage with responding to student writing, compositionists can't be sure if students are open to gaining knowledge from teacher comments that they use to revise their writing, which could be a form of transfer from draft-to-draft.

The impact of dispositions on transfer is another reason why I propose a study that focuses on mindsets as the lens to study teacher comments and students' processing and application of those comments in revision. First, mindsets offer a new disposition that has not been studied explicitly in an FYC context, despite the fact that recent research has found that mindsets are a specific disposition that is important to learning transfer and writing development in K-12 contexts, WAC/WID contexts, and graduate contexts (Limpo & Alves 2014; Schubert 2017; Driscoll & Powell, 2018, in preparation). Student dispositions impact on students' writing transfer and writing development is the reason scholars have been so interested in dispositions in the past few years. Second, mindsets could contribute an understanding of how dispositions, understood by focusing

on the specific disposition of mindsets, help us analyze and interpret what is happening when teachers give comments and students process and apply those comments. This is especially true because mindsets are individual and contextual, just like responding to student writing. This might open the door to additional useful research on other specific dispositions not already covered in the literature (earlier work mentioned in chapter 1 on gender bias, teacher and student personality, and teacher attitudes may be considered dispositions [Barnes, 1990; Callahan, 2000; Carrell, 1995; Haswell & Haswell, 1996; Thompson, 1995]) that help us understand responding to student writing in particular contexts with particular individuals.

While composition is beginning to understand student dispositions better, teachers' dispositions can also be impactful in composition classrooms, particularly when they give comments. To better understand response, it is important to study both teachers and students. The next section will explore the dearth of research on teacher dispositions to reveal that there is much more to know about dispositions. Specifically, there is very little research on mindsets impact on teachers' comments.

Teacher Dispositions

The concept of teacher dispositions originates in research from teacher education. In fact, the National Council of Assessment in Teacher Education (NCATE) lists professional dispositions as a standard for assessing teachers (NCATE Professional Standards, 2008). They define professional dispositions as “professional attitudes, values, and beliefs demonstrated through both verbal and non-verbal behaviors as educators interact with students, families, colleagues, and communities. These positive behaviors support student learning and development” (NCATE Professional Standard, 2008, p. 89-

90). Teacher dispositions are similar to student dispositions because they are individual, internal, psychological characteristics that can impact how teachers interact with students.

Examining specific studies of teacher dispositions reveals that dispositions can impact how teachers communicate with students. Gomez (1990) analyzed new secondary teachers' dispositions, specifically what teachers valued in writing pedagogy, which included process pedagogy and student-centered classrooms. Students who came from diverse economic, linguistic, and ethnic backgrounds valued the exact opposite – product-based pedagogy and teacher-centered classrooms. These dispositions caused the teachers to be frustrated when speaking to students during class discussions. However, teachers eventually learned how to overcome these frustrations and respond to students in class discussions more respectfully. Ultimately, these dispositions impacted how the teachers interacted with each student in this study, and they had to learn how to respond positively. Furthermore, if dispositions have the potential to impact verbal communication, they may impact something like a writing a comment on student writing.

In regard to composition studies, theoretical scholarship has tried to parse out this relationship between teacher dispositions and interactions with students. McLeod (1995) argued for a term called “teacher affect” (p. 370), which has several qualities that could certainly be conceptualized as a teacher disposition. Teacher affect includes three concepts: 1. teachers' expectations of students; 2. teachers' empathy (while teachers need good empathy, they cannot get bogged down in it); and 3. teachers' self-efficacy with how they help students learn. McLeod (1995) claimed these components of teacher affect can make a big impact on students' motivation to learn and their overall success in

composition classrooms. If teachers do not view their students as individuals who can learn and improve their writing skills, then students may hold a similar view.

Drawing on McLeod's (1995) whole theory, Ball and Lardner (1997) argued for teacher dispositions as a part of "teacher knowledge" (p. 473), in FYC classrooms, which they analyzed in relation to how teachers work with linguistically and racially diverse students. They defined dispositions as "...one's customary manner or emotional response" and the "...power to control, direct or dispose" (p. 483). Drawing on McLeod's (1995) concept of teacher affect, they argued that this concept is what gives teachers their disposition. Like McLeod (1995), they see teacher dispositions as having a huge impact on how teachers communicate with students. However, besides examining teacher personalities (Callahan, 2000; Carrell, 1995) and attitudes (Thompson, 1995) there is no other work on how teachers' dispositions impact their comments. Furthermore, and as I will describe later in this chapter in more depth, there are no studies that examine how a teacher with a particular mindset comments on student writing, despite the fact it may play a role in the types of comments a teacher gives, and mindsets are so important to teacher and student development.

Review of Mindsets Literature

Research on mindsets in educational psychology shows its impact on students' achievement and motivation to learn. Blackwell, Trzesniewski, and Dweck (2007) conducted a two-year longitudinal study on mindsets and found that seventh-ninth grade students who had growth mindsets (they used an earlier term for growth mindsets – "malleable view of intelligence"), were more successful, had more motivation, and were more likely to achieve from seventh to ninth grade. In comparison, seventh-ninth grade

students with fixed mindsets were less successful, had less motivation, and did not achieve as much on standardized tests (they used an earlier term for fixed mindsets -- “fixed entity view of intelligence”).

Similarly, Yeager and Dweck (2012) reviewed the literature on implicit theories of personality in high school students and found mindsets had a big impact on student achievement. They argued that entity (belief that personality cannot be developed or changed) and incremental (belief that personality can be developed or changed) theory can determine how resilient students are, which can indicate their success in school. Students with incremental theories of personality believe they can adapt and change in the midst of struggle and obstacles while students with an entity view believe they cannot. In another study, Dweck (2014) claimed that the terms “entity” and “incremental” to also reflect the growth and fixed mindsets discussed above. To measure overcoming struggle, resiliency, and hurdling obstacles, Dweck (2014) examined students’ ability to overcome peer victimization (being bullied) and their ability to solve challenging math problems. These three studies highlight that fixed mindsets inhibited learning and growth mindsets aided in learning.

While this research highlights how mindsets greatly impact learning and overcoming struggle, very little happens in the context of a writing classroom. In fact, most of the research focuses on standardized tests or doing math problems. Both math and standardized tests have a structured environment, where there are often right answers. Writing and various English courses typically do not have “right” answers and there are multiple ways to write any genre effectively. Furthermore, much of this research explores K-12 contexts and not college classrooms.

When mindsets research examines undergraduate contexts, it shows that mindsets can also greatly impact undergraduate students' learning. For example, Nussbaum and Dweck (2008) conducted an experimental study where they asked undergraduate students to engage in a difficult speed-reading test and then gave them negative feedback on students' performance. They found that students with fixed mindsets asked the researchers if anyone did worse than them. Growth mindset students, on the other hand, asked researchers how higher achieving students completed the task effectively. In other words, growth mindset students looked for strategies to improve, and fixed mindset students looked for ways to boost their confidence by finding those who did worse than them. Not only do growth mindset students want to develop strategies to succeed, but these students also have more brain activity when learning new concepts than do fixed mindset students (Moser, Schroder, Heeter, Moran, & Lee, 2011). While this work promotes the idea that mindsets are important towards learning, this research does not explicitly deal with FYC classrooms. Additionally, Nussbaum and Dweck's study does mention mindsets impact on how students react to negative feedback, but the feedback was given on a reading test, and not on writing. Therefore, the study proposed in this dissertation will explore the impact of students' mindsets on how they interact with response in a composition classroom to explore this gap.

Research in TESOL college classrooms, which is a similar context to composition, discovered that mindsets are also important, especially towards learning another language. Mercer and Ryan (2010) interviewed nine second language learners to measure their mindsets with learning another language – whether one had to have natural talent to learn a language, a fixed mindset belief, or if anyone can learn a language

through hard work, determination, persistence, and process, a growth mindset belief. What Mercer and Ryan (2010) found was rather complex –it depended on the skill the learner was trying to master. For instance, many participants in the study had growth mindsets when learning grammatical terms such as prepositions or articles but had fixed mindsets when developing their ability to pronounce certain words. This work again highlights that mindsets are domain and context specific and adds that mindsets can greatly impact learning a language. However, this study is not specifically looking at FYC courses and responding to student writing. Therefore, Mercer and Ryan’s (2014) work also reaffirms the need for a study that uses mindsets to understand how students engage with response in FYC courses.

But why should FYC courses be such a focus for mindsets research? Why should educational psychologists care about this context? I contend that FYC is an important context to study because it is a required course at every major university and it begins the development of students as writers and thinkers. Furthermore, recent research has discovered that positive experiences and grades in FYC can positively impact retention of students across majors and disciplines (Garrett, Bridgewater, & Feinstein, 2017; Robbins, Allen, Casillas, Peterson, & Le, 2006; Volpe, 2011). Anybody who works in academia and cares about the future success of universities and students should care that students finish their education. A part of retention is also how teachers interact with students, and teacher comments are one the primary ways we, as composition teachers, interact with our students. Despite this fact, little research has explored mindsets and teacher feedback.

Mindsets and Feedback

What the few studies on feedback and mindsets has shown is how feedback can shape mindsets. Kamins and Dweck (1998) examined the differences between three types of feedback with elementary students: person, which is feedback directed at the person, such as, “you didn’t do a good job”; outcome, or feedback that discusses the outcome of a task, such as, “this isn’t what I would call a good job”; and process, or feedback that discusses the process used to complete a task, such as, “you have put some good effort into this task; apply that to the next time you do something similar” (p. 838). They found that process-oriented praise feedback led to students developing better strategies for completing a task and managing struggle. This feedback helped students build growth mindsets. Other studies focused on students of all grade levels. Dweck’s (2014) theoretical work suggests that using feedback that praises intelligence probably contributed to K-12 students who want to be rewarded for just trying even though they may not have achieved something and to the development of a fixed mindset. Dweck’s empirical work tested this argument in numerous research studies and found that giving feedback that praises intelligence reinforces fixed mindsets across K-12 populations (Dweck, 2008; Mueller & Dweck 1998).

Essentially, these studies on feedback and mindsets find that feedback can reinforce either fixed or growth mindsets. However, besides the study I conducted with my co-author (Driscoll & Powell, 2018, in preparation), there has not been research that uses mindsets as a lens to analyze students’ reactions to feedback and their revisions from feedback. Our study did examine student revisions but did not examine them in an FYC

context, which is similar to Schubert's (2017) dissertation that was mentioned earlier in this chapter.

In regard to teachers, Dweck (2010) has argued that teachers' mindsets may impact students' mindsets and may impact how positively or negatively teachers communicate with their students. Furthermore, McLeod (1995) and Ball and Lardner (1997) argue in their theoretical work, that FYC teacher dispositions impact how teachers interact with FYC students in their classrooms. Because teacher mindsets are a disposition, then they could impact how teachers write their comments. Despite this fact, the previous research on mindsets in relation to feedback was not specifically looking at how teachers write comments, nor did it take place in an FYC context. Therefore, a mindsets theoretical framework is useful in examining how teachers with certain mindsets comment on student writing.

Conclusion

This Chapter has argued that mindsets are a disposition. Furthermore, it has discussed that mindsets are an important concept for writing development, other dispositions, and most important to this study, teacher comments and students' processing/application of those comments. It also argued that mindsets would contribute to the dispositions literature in composition by adding a specific disposition that impacts writing. Furthermore, a study of teacher and student mindsets and commenting in FYC would contribute to the mindsets literature by adding an important context that has yet to have a study within it. The next Chapter will describe the methodology that was used to study how teachers and students with certain mindset comment and process/apply comments on a specific assignment in the context of an FYC course.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the empirical study of mindsets and teacher comments on student writing mentioned in Chapters 1 and 2. Beyond explaining and describing, I will justify my methodological choices and argue for this methodology as appropriate for studying teacher comments in FYC courses at one Western Pennsylvania university. In what follows, I will begin by discussing my researcher bias and how I attempt to avoid stigmatizing participants because of this bias, offer the research questions I answered, and define the case study method this dissertation employed. Next, I will describe the participants for this study, the data collection methods, and how the data will be analyzed. I will conclude with the limitations of this study.

Researcher Bias

As I have stated in Chapter 1, I tend to fall mostly on the growth mindset end of continuum. This is true anytime I have taken a mindset questionnaire; anytime I have been asked about my teaching, research, writing, or learning; and anytime I have considered my skills or abilities. Because I tend to have a growth mindset in most contexts and most situations, I see the world differently than other individuals have moments of fixed mindsets. Therefore, I believe this could create an internal bias towards participants who display moments of fixed mindsets. I will work towards controlling this bias as best I can because it is not productive. Instead of casting judgment, I aim to describe exactly how growth and fixed mindsets are working in particular contexts and moments. This will be important in discussing the data in Chapter 4 but also in describing the methodology used to collect that data in the remainder of this chapter. The questions I

pose for this study also attempt to account for the different mindsets individuals might have.

Research Questions

I sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the mindsets (growth, fixed, or neutral) of individual teachers and students in three composition classes at a Western Pennsylvania institution?
2. What are the preferred commenting methods of teachers with growth, fixed, or neutral mindsets at this institution?
 - a. What do teachers with these mindsets believe is the purpose of their comments?
 - b. What do teachers perceive as shaping these commenting methods?
3. What comments do students with growth, fixed, or neutral mindsets prefer on their writing at this institution?
4. How do teachers with growth, fixed, or neutral mindsets at this university comment on student writing with a specific assignment?
 - a. Where are the comments located (intertextual, margin, or end)?
 - b. What is the level of attention for the comments (surface or substance)?
 - c. What is the purpose of the comments (questioning, editing, advising/suggesting, problem identification, mitigating, describing, and praising)?
5. How do students with growth, fixed, or neutral mindsets at this university process teacher comments and apply teacher comments in revising their writing with a specific assignment?

To answer these questions, I conducted case studies with three teachers and three students in three separate composition courses at a Western Pennsylvania institution. Table 3 shows the data I collected in these case studies to answer each research question:

Table 3

Research Questions and Data Collected to Answer These Questions

Research Question	Data Collected to Answer This Question
RQ1	Interviews with Teachers and Students
RQ2	Interviews with Teachers
RQ3	Interviews with Students
RQ4	Comments on what teachers defined as an “evaluative genre,” which was the third assignment of the semester
RQ5	Think-alouds with students on the comments they received on their evaluative genre. Also, I collected drafts before and after they had received comments

I now turn to defining case study methodology, which will answer these questions.

Case Study Definition

The ultimate goal of any case study is to describe the case (Creswell, 2012). Yin (2009) defined case studies in the following ways:

1. A case study is an empirical inquiry that
 - investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when
 - the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident.
2. The case study inquiry

- copes with the technically distinctive situation in which there will be many more variables of interest than data points, and as one result
- relies on multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a triangulating fashion, and as another result
- benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis. (p. 19)

Therefore, case studies help researchers gain an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon in its context and with a theoretical position that guides the process of data collection. Furthermore, this method uses multiple forms of data collection to develop rich, thick descriptions of the individual cases. The general principles of case studies make it a useful methodology for my study. Specifically, this methodology is useful because I examined teacher comments in their natural classroom context and used the theoretical position of mindsets and how teachers and students with certain mindsets interact with comments.

In defining case study methodology, it is also pivotal that a clear definition of case is presented. For this research, a “case” is the following: a teacher’s mindsets and comments on one assignment, and a student’s mindsets and processing and application of teacher comments on one assignment. Also, equally vital is to define the purpose of the case study, because, according to Yin (2009) there are three different purposes – “exploratory, descriptive, and explanatory” (p. 7-8). This particular case study will be exploratory because it aims to see how teachers and students with certain mindsets

interact with comments in a particular context, and no prior research has analyzed teacher comments in a FYC course with this framework.

Case Study Justification

As previous research mentioned in Chapter 1 explained, responding to student writing depends greatly on context, and therefore, should be researched in the contexts in which it originally appears (Fife & O'Neil 2001; Straub, 2002). I make this claim because teachers can teach writing concepts through their comments on student drafts. For example, developing students' ability to understand audiences is a common goal in composition courses. Therefore, a teacher may respond as an authentic reader characteristic of that audience (i.e., the student writes a paper toward a general audience, so that the teacher may comment on the use of certain concepts or terms). Furthermore, if teachers are supposed to be individualizing comments, as suggested by prior research (Sommers, 1982), then different classroom contexts, with different individuals, would have different comments. Additionally, no research explored mindsets in the context of FYC with responding to student writing. Therefore, conducting a new case study would help develop deeper understandings of the impact of mindsets in FYC contexts and the individual teachers and students who make up those contexts. Mindsets are also individual and contextual, so logically they make sense in learning more about the individual, contextual practice of response.

Lastly, because the gaps in response research include a lack of deeper understandings of teacher and student mindsets, which are complex, case studies will be beneficial in developing an understanding of this complex phenomenon due to this method's multiple data collection techniques. Collecting these multiple forms of data will

not only help better account for the complexity of student and teacher mindsets but also their impact on the equally complex activity of response. For example, many previous studies that either look at teacher comments and subsequent revisions on student drafts in isolation (i.e., Christiansen & Block 2016; Tregalia, 2008, etc.), only ask for students' perceptions of teacher comments (Sperling & Freedman, 1987; Straub, 1997; Tregalia, 2008), or only examine teacher commenting strategies (Sommers, 1982; Straub & Lundsford, 1995). By using a case study approach with multiple data collection methods, my study attempted to account for what teachers and students both say and do with the vital practice of response in FYC. Now I turn to explaining the research site and context of these case studies.

Research Site and Context

The research site for this study was a mid-sized public university in Western Pennsylvania. There are approximately 13,000 students at this school. According to the Common Data Set (2017) for this university, 74% of students are white. Furthermore, 57% of students are female, 43% are male, 95% come from Pennsylvania, 5 % are out-of-state or international students, and 63% qualify for Pell grants (Common Data Set, 2017). As these percentages indicate, students are predominately white, female, from Pennsylvania, and come from low-income households. Furthermore, 16% of students take basic writing courses (Siegel-Finer, 2017). Additionally, from my experience teaching at this institution and from previously published scholarship on this school's context (Siegel-Finer, 2017), many students are first-generation college students and display qualities of underprepared college student writers. These qualities include:

trouble with time management, remembering deadlines, attending class, writing multiple drafts, and with writing.

I chose this context to research for two reasons: 1. I have access to this site and have taught at this university in the past, which gave me insight into participants and the types of approaches that are used in this school to teach writing; and 2. as briefly discussed in Chapter 1, previous research on response typically is done at large, public and private universities where students come to college highly prepared. For example, Sommers (1982; 2006; 2012) conducted her influential response research at Harvard University. While this research gives compositionists important insights, it does not give voice to students who come from a diverse, working-class background, who may lack preparation for college, who have not grown up in a privileged environment like many of the participants in previous studies, and who may be working part or full-time jobs while attending school. My claim here is not to discredit the excellent work done by influential researchers like Sommers. Rather, it is meant to help the field of composition studies extend knowledge about how working-class, first-generation, college students interact with teacher comments. Therefore, this study is my attempt to give a voice to underprepared college students. Additionally, I aimed to not only empower such students but also to help composition teachers have methods for responding to underprepared student writing.

In addition to my choice of context, I chose the first course in the sequence of FYC courses at this institution because I considered it to be most vital toward student success. That course emphasizes the following goals:

1. use writing processes to generate, develop, share, revise, proofread, and edit major writing projects.
2. produce essays that show structure, purpose, significant content, and audience awareness.
3. produce a variety of essay genres.
4. understand and integrate others' texts into their own writing.
5. reflect on their own writing process and rhetorical effectiveness. (LSE 101 Handbook, 2016, p. 6)

While there are these common goals, instructors do have the freedom to adapt the approach to meet their teaching needs and to reflect their research interests. Instructors at this university have various backgrounds in English –literature, creative writing, film studies, cultural studies, composition and rhetoric, TESOL, applied linguistics, and education. While graduate students teach many sections of composition, tenure-track and tenured faculty also teach these courses. Lastly, teachers have various levels of experience teaching composition – graduate experience at all to full professors who have 30 or more years of experience. The graduate student teachers are called “temporary faculty,” and often teach more sections of the course than do full-time faculty members at this school.

Participants and Recruitment

This section describes the participants and why I chose them. It will also detail how I recruited participants to be a part of this study.

Teacher Inclusion Criteria and Recruitment

The inclusion criteria for teacher participants were: 1. participants had to be teaching English 101 in Fall 2017 at this Western Pennsylvania University; 2. they had to be temporary faculty or teaching associates, who are the graduate student teachers at this school; 3. they had to give comments on student writing in some form; and 4. they had at least one student who volunteered for the study and completed the full study. I chose these inclusion criteria for teachers because I believe the first-semester composition course was vital toward student development and retention, which I argued in Chapter 2. Therefore, I wanted teachers from those courses. As I recalled in Chapter 1, the first-semester composition course I took as an undergraduate student was where I received harsh comments that motivated me to become a better writer and was instrumental in my development as a college student. An additional reason for choosing this course is that every student must take in their first or second year at this university. In addition to the fact that graduate student teachers are underrepresented in the literature on responding to student writing, I also chose temporary faculty and teaching associates because they teach the most sections of this English 101 course, and they also have a range of experience in teaching experience. In fact, the three teachers I discuss in Chapter 4 came into the semester where I collected data with experience ranging from 0-10 years. Furthermore, some had never taught at this school, some had for three years, and some had never taught in the United States. These participants show the differences amongst individual teachers, even in a small dataset. Lastly, I did not want to put restrictions on the types of comments instructors were required to give, so I could study the comments as the

instructors were already planning on giving them. I chose this approach after careful consideration because I thought it would help teachers respond more naturally and get closer to reflecting how the comments occurred in a context.

To recruit participants, I sent out an email to the adjunct faculty listserv in the first two weeks of the semester. This listserv is meant only for temporary faculty and teaching associates at this university, and these were the graduate students I sought to study. This email explained the study to teacher participants and assured them their participation was completely on a voluntary basis. Six total teachers responded to the email and were interviewed. However, two teachers did not have any students volunteer take part in the study, so their comments were not collected, and their interviews were not analyzed. One teacher had two students who volunteered to be a part of the study, but both of these students did not complete the study because one dropped the course and the other chose not to complete the third assignment of the semester. Therefore, three teachers were chosen for systematic analysis because they not only met the inclusion criteria, but they also had students who completed the study.

An additional method of recruitment I used included mentioning the professional development teacher participants would gain by the end of the study. While the study did take some of their valuable time away from their own writing, research, and teaching duties, I assured them that extra time reflecting on their practice in the early semester interview would be beneficial to developing their teaching practices. This inclusion criteria worked effectively for teachers, but because students have a different role in the classroom, there needed to be different set of inclusion criteria for them, which is detailed in the next section.

Student Inclusion Criteria and Recruitment

The inclusion criteria for students were: 1. they are enrolled English 101; 2. they are a student of one of the teachers in the study; and 3. they stayed in the study from beginning to end. In order to recruit students to participate, I went to the students' classes and briefed them about the study. I then spent several minutes talking about the added benefits students would receive by being a part of the study. These benefits included: an awareness of their mindset toward writing and learning, which can help them in future academic and professional contexts, an increased awareness of how they process and apply teacher comments, which can help in future classes or even in professional settings, and how they improved their writing over the course of two drafts.

Ethical Consideration of Participants

This study is under the supervision of this university's IRB. As a part of this protocol, all participants read and signed a consent form during the first month of the Fall 2017 semester (see Appendix A and B for Teacher and Student Consent Forms). Additionally, I protected the anonymity of each participant with pseudonyms that are used in results of the study and will continue to be used in any subsequent publications or conference presentations. Lastly, participants had the option to quit the study if they did not feel comfortable at any time during the data collection process.

Data Collection and Analysis

This section details the data I collected from both teachers and students. Teacher data included: an interview after teachers gave comments on the first paper and the comments they gave on student participants' third paper. Student data included: interviews after students received comments on their first paper, a think-aloud with the

comments on their third paper, the draft where they received comments, and their draft after they had revised (when possible).

The rest of this section will describe each form of data collection in depth, further justifying why I collected it, and discusses how I analyzed it. I will begin with teacher data and move to the student data because this was the exact order I collected data.

Teacher Interview

I used semi-structured interviews with teacher participants (see Appendix C for teacher interview protocol) to understand their mindset and commenting methods. Previous research often used a questionnaire to measure participant mindsets (see Dweck [2006] and her website at <https://mindsetonline.com/testyourmindset/step1.php>). While these instruments have been validated, I questioned their ability to account for the contextual, fluid, and individual nature of individuals' mindsets. The instrument itself forces a choice between one of the two mindsets, which doesn't allow for any shifting of mindsets between different contexts and particular mindsets within those contexts. I attempted to remedy this by interviewing participants with open-ended questions that allowed participants to talk about their mindset in growth or fixed or neutral ways depending on the question. I developed those open-ended interview questions to measure mindsets based on teacher mindset characteristics I discussed in Chapter 2 of this dissertation. For example, a growth mindset teacher believes their abilities can be improved over time, so I asked "Do you think your teaching ability has improved over time? What's a specific example?" I also chose to not tell participants their mindset because I thought this would prompt participants to give growth mindset answers.

For interview questions related to commenting, I asked participants what they thought the purpose of commenting was, their commenting methods, and I also gave them a sample scenario to comment on where students with two different mindsets had the same paper and same problems. Lastly, I asked what shaped their commenting methods. Teachers could speak about this experience this semester, or what they believed about these different aspects of commenting across their different experiences.

Teacher Interview Analysis

I coded all data in Dedoose, an online qualitative coding software. I read the data multiple times and used Saldana's (2009) coding method. This method utilizes multiple rounds of coding. The first round or "first cycle" (p. 48) requires the researcher to read the transcripts and develops emerging codes from the interview transcripts. There are several ways to do this, but I focused on what Saldana calls "initial coding," which has the researchers read through and get their initial reactions to the codes. Then I did a "second cycle" of coding where I engaged in "pattern coding" (p. 48) to develop understandings of patterns in participant responses. I then presented thick descriptions of these codes by quoting heavily from the interview transcripts, which will be presented in Chapter 4.

After doing this coding for teacher methods of commenting, I had to use a slightly different method to categorize and measure teacher mindsets. After coding, I used Dedoose to see how many times certain mindsets were coded. What I found was that some participants had multiple mindsets coded on multiple occasions depending on the context. Therefore, I developed a continuum to place participants upon that was adapted

from Driscoll’s (2018, in preparation) upcoming article. This table shows that continuum, which will also be used for students:

Table 4

Mindsets Continuum

Very Fixed	Fixed	Neutral	Growth	Very Growth
In all but a few contexts, participant views their skills, intellect, and academic abilities as something they have or don’t have. They also attribute success and/or failures to something else and believe all practices cannot improve what they have or don’t have.	Often the participant views their skills, intellect, and academic abilities as something they have or don’t have. They also attribute most successes and/or failures to something or someone else. They believe some practices cannot improve the abilities and skills they have or don’t have.	Participant views skills, intellect, and academic abilities as sometimes growth and sometimes fixed. They fit neither the growth or fixed category.	Often the participant views their skills, intellect, and academic abilities as something that can be improved and developed through hard work and persistence. They attribute success and failure to themselves and believe most abilities and skills can be improved.	In all but a few contexts, the participant views their skills, intellect, and academic abilities as something that can be improved and developed through hard work and persistence. They attribute all successes and failures to themselves and believe all abilities and skills can be improved.

By doing this analysis I could determine, at least within this specific context, what mindset teachers were often displaying.

Teacher Comments

I also collected all the comments that teachers gave on their students’ third paper, which they all defined as an “evaluative genre.” For two participants in the study, this was a review assignment where students reviewed a book or film. One participant commented on what they called a “cause and effect paper.” I chose these “evaluative

genres” because they are very typical assignments that are used in this particular context. Furthermore, I wanted to keep consistent with assignments across three participants. This assignment also occurred in the same time period in the semester – after midterms and on the third paper of each teachers’ course. It was my goal to show comments on a similar assignment, in a similar moment of class, and a typical assignment, but in different contexts with different individual teachers and students. Additionally, I chose this assignment because this was the first traditional academic assignment that each teacher assigned where students focused on making an argument and using evidence from a source to back up that argument. The first assignment for each teacher was a form of personal writing, the second was informative writing like a brochure or infographic. I decided to focus on this research-based argumentative writing because it is more typical of the types of writing students will engage in after the course. Lastly, this assignment was the only one where all three teachers planned on giving comments; whereas the first two assignments, instructors gave feedback via conferences and/or in an audio format.

I used Wingard and Geosits' (2014) framework (they call it a taxonomy) to categorize comments, which focuses on purpose and level. The purpose could include one of the following: “problem identification, editing, describing, praising, mitigating, questioning, advising/suggesting, and other;” the level which could be “surface,” that focused on lower order concerns such as grammar, spelling, punctuation; or “substance,” that focused on higher order concerns such as ideas, structure, developing the particular genre, etc.) (Wingard & Geosits, 2014, p. 3-4). I added to this taxonomy by describing the location and number of comments. I used Wingard and Geosits’ (2014) framework for three reasons: 1. it was the most current empirical study on teacher comments I could

find; 2. it also had a framework that categorizes student revisions; and 3. I thought it categorized comments that teachers gave students in ways that were detailed and appropriate but also clear and easy to understand.

Teacher Comments Analysis

To further explain the analysis, I conducted for each teacher’s comments, I present Table 5, which is the analysis for the first teacher in the study:

Table 5

Sample Analysis of Teacher Comments

Number of Comments	Number of Times Comments Appeared in Specific Locations	Number of Surface Comments and Substance Comments	Number of Times Each Purpose was Applied to Comments (Some Comments Have Multiple Purposes)
20	18 Margin. 1 End. 1 Intertextual.	7 Surface. 13 Substance.	2 Questioning. 7 Editing. 7 Advising. 10 Problem Identification.

In this analysis, I also mention the mindset of the teacher in this particular context and give examples of each type of commenting purpose.

Student Interview

Each student was interviewed after receiving comments on their first paper (See Appendix D for student interview protocol). Each student wrote a narrative genre for their first paper: one student wrote a personal narrative, and two students wrote a memoir. The interview was semi-structured and began with gathering demographic information

about students. After getting the demographic information, I asked questions the rest of the interview to better understand students' mindsets and perceptions of teacher comments. Like for teacher participants, I resisted using the questionnaire because I wanted to see if students' mindsets would change given different aspects of the FYC context (i.e., different genres, working with different comments, different questions about intelligence and their writing, etc.). Furthermore, this interview allowed for participants to discuss their mindsets in fluid and contextual ways which is exactly how mindsets appear to manifest themselves.

I measured student mindsets by taking the characteristics of mindsets developed by Dweck (2006) and characteristics of mindsets with writing developed by Limpo and Alves (2014) and turned them into interview questions. For example, one question asked about the characteristic that says: growth mindset people develop their talent with hard work, effort, and overcoming obstacles and failures in their writing. I then developed that characteristic into this interview question:

Tell me which one you agree more with and why? If you agree with both tell me why?

- a. Good writers are born that way, and it shouldn't take much effort to develop their abilities.
- b. Good writers develop their talent with hard work, effort, and overcoming obstacles and failures in their writing.

I asked them interview questions to develop an understanding of their mindset because it opened up the opportunity for participants to give more nuanced answers and hopefully account for the fluidity and contextual nature of student mindsets. As with the above

example, they could explain their answer and also not be forced to agree with just one type of mindset. Like teacher participants, I chose to not tell student participants their mindset because I thought this would prompt them to give growth mindset answers. Furthermore, I gave students scenarios where they received harsh comments and asked them to tell me how they would respond to these comments from a teacher. I thought this began to give an understanding of how students' mindsets in a particular moment (with harsh comments) affected their ability to process teacher comments.

The second half of the interview asked students questions aimed at understanding their perceptions of teacher comments. I asked questions related to the following aspects of teacher comments: the purpose of teacher comments, which comments were the most and least helpful, and if comments help them revise their writing. I asked them questions about revision, because, as I mentioned in Chapter 1, this is one of the major goals of responding to student writing (Sommers, 2012). I instructed students that the questions could be answered first in relation to the teacher comments they had received this semester, and if the participants wanted to, they could also talk about teacher comments they received on writing in high school as well.

Student Interview Analysis

To analyze these interviews, I used a coding method Saldana's (2009) coding method. This method utilizes multiple rounds of coding. The first round or "first cycle" (p. 48) requires the researcher to read the transcripts and develops emerging codes from the interview transcripts. There are several ways to do this, but I focused on what Saldana calls "initial coding," which has the researchers read through and get their initial reactions to the codes. Then the researcher will do a "second cycle" of coding where he

or she will engage in “pattern coding” (p. 48) to develop understandings of patterns in their responses, which I present in Chapter 4 as rich, thick descriptions through direct quotes from the participants. After coding, I used Dedoose to see how many times certain mindsets were coded. What I found was that some participants had multiple mindsets coded on multiple occasions. Therefore, I used the same continuum that was adapted from Driscoll (2018, manuscript in preparation) work that I used for teachers. By doing this analysis I could determine, at least within this context, what mindset students were often displaying.

Student Think-Aloud Protocols

To better determine students processing of teacher comments, students engaged in a think-aloud with teacher comments. Student participants completed the think-aloud protocol with the comments they received on their third paper which each teacher defined as an evaluative genre (two movie reviews, one “cause and effect” paper). This protocol asked participants to verbalize their thoughts and feelings about teacher comments and describe if or how they might use them in revising their writing (see Appendix E for think-aloud protocol). I attempted to do as little prompting as possible, but I did model the process for students prior to students completing the protocol. I wanted to do as little prompting as possible because students were reading these comments for the first time, and I wanted their natural processing of these comments to come through as best as it could. I did some prompting because as previous research on think-alouds has found, this process does not come naturally to FYC students (Charters, 2003). I asked participants to think about the following questions to prompt them for the think-aloud with the first comment and asked them to verbalize their thinking this way with each comment:

What is your reaction to this comment?

How does it make you feel?

Do you plan to address this in revision? How? Why? If not, why?

Ultimately, these think-aloud protocols attempted to see how students process comments in the moment of revision, which would greatly benefit compositionists' understanding of response.

Student Think-Aloud Protocol Analysis

The think-aloud protocols were coded in a similar way to the interviews by doing first and second rounds of coding. I focused the think aloud coding on the emotional reactions participants had and how they described that they were going to revise the writing. I chose these foci because these were the primary purposes of having them conduct the think-aloud protocols.

Student Drafts Before and After Comments

Where possible, I collected student drafts before and after teacher comments. As mentioned in the interview process, I wanted to see how much students revised their writing after receiving teacher comments because this is one of the goals of giving comments to students. The drafts were on an evaluative genre – two reviews and one “cause and effect” paper. Two of my student participants received comments on their drafts and had the opportunity to revise before being graded, and one participant received comments on her final draft without the opportunity for revision. I selected these participants because they were the only three student participants who completed the entire study. However, these two assignments are very typical assignments used in FYC courses at this institution. Therefore, they provide a good glimpse into how these

instructors at this institution comment on specific assignments and how students revise based on those comments on a specific assignment.

Student Drafts Before and After Comments Analysis

The revisions were categorized using a framework based on Wingard and Geosits' (2014) study. I chose Wingard and Geosits' (2014) study because it the most current study I could find that categorized students' revisions from teacher comments, and I discovered it could categorize the revisions effectively. Here is an example that will be discussed further in Chapter 4 to highlight how I categorized comments:

Table 6

Sample Analysis of Student Revisions

Revisions: 14 Total.	Surface or Substance?	Type of Revision
Revision 1: Added a Title	Surface	Meaning-Preserving (micro-level)
Revision 2: Added short phrases to remind readers of audience in paragraph 1.	Substantive	Meaning-Changing (micro-level)
Revision 3: Added a sentence explaining their thesis for the review in paragraph 1.	Substantive	Meaning-Changing (macro-level)
Revision 4: Added two sentences to further evaluate the book and what type of readers the book might interest in paragraph 1.	Substantive	Meaning-Changing (macro-level)
Revision 5: Changed a word in paragraph 2.	Surface	Meaning-Preserving (micro-level)

Revision 6: Deleted repetitive word in paragraph 2.	Surface	Meaning-Preserving (micro-level)
Revision 7: Added short phrases to remind readers of audience in paragraph 2.	Substantive	Meaning-Changing (micro-level)
Revision 8: Added citation in paragraph 3.	Surface	Meaning-Preserving (micro-level)
Revision 9: Added one sentence to evaluate how the audience might understand the book in paragraph 3.	Substantive	Meaning-Changing (macro-level)
Revision 10: Added two phrases to remind the reader who the audience for this type of book might be in paragraph 3.	Substantive	Meaning-Changing (micro-level)
Revision 11: Added a phrase to remind readers who the audience for this kind of book might be in paragraph 4.	Substantive	Meaning-Changing (micro-level)
Revision 12: Added a sentence to recommend the book to a certain kind of reader in paragraph 4.	Substantive	Meaning-Changing (macro-level)
Revision 13: Added a sentence to evaluate the book and recommend it to a particular kind of audience in the conclusion paragraph.	Substantive	Meaning-Changing (macro-level)
Revision 14: Changed the author's name to a pronoun in the conclusion paragraph.	Surface	Meaning-Changing (micro-level)

Study Limitations

Because of the qualitative nature of this study, it was not my goal to find generalizable patterns with mindsets and response or to claim that the mindsets that participants reported went outside of this particular context. Rather, I wanted to explore individual perspectives of teachers and students in FYC courses at one Western Pennsylvania university with one assignment. Furthermore, I narrowed my focus to examining the mindsets of participants within this context and then what those participants did with responding to student writing on one particular assignment. It is fully possible that a host of factors may be shaping and influencing the kinds of comments teachers give and students' processing and application of these comments within this particular assignment. Therefore, mindsets may be an important factor within this context, but they are not the only factor that impacts how teachers and students interact with comments with this and/or other assignments.

Furthermore, I relied on the self-reported mindsets of both teachers and students. Surely, additional methods of observing teachers and students in classroom contexts could develop a deeper and more nuanced understanding of mindsets in their contexts. However, I was unable to observe classrooms for several reasons: 1. not all students in the classroom consented to be observed; 2. there was not enough time to complete observations in my research study's timeline; and 3. because of many forms of data collection, I asked a great deal of my participants time, to the point where some of them dropped out of the study. Another form of data collection may have been too much to the point where no participants had the time to complete the study.

Additionally, I limited my scope to examine only how students revised this particular assignment in accordance with teacher comments. I did not explore other outside influences on their revision of this assignment; as a result, there may be other factors as to how and why students did or did not revise their writing that this study did not explore.

Lastly, I had difficulty with participant attrition. This seemed to be because of two factors: 1. teachers and students were very busy in this semester, so they did not have a lot of time to engage in all forms of data collection; and 2. some students had difficulty completing the course and/or the assignments this semester.

Conclusion

This chapter outlined my empirical study of teacher and student mindsets in relation to responding to student writing. I draw on an exploratory case study approach to further understandings of the how teachers and students with particular mindsets in a specific context comment on student writing and process and apply those comments with one assignment. The various forms of data that this dissertation will collect will provide for triangulation and the in-depth analysis of mindsets and responding to student writing that will benefit composition studies.

Chapter 4 will provide the results of this empirical study. Chapter 5 will discuss the implications of this research, suggest pedagogical implications, and offer directions for future research.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

In this chapter, I provide the case study results. I do this by providing thick descriptions for all three cases. As stated in Chapter 3, cases are one teacher and one student pair. Therefore, cases will capture both the teacher's and student's ends of responding to student writing in this context. My case studies sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the mindsets (growth, fixed, or neutral) of individual teachers and students in three composition classes at a Western Pennsylvania institution?
2. What are the preferred commenting methods of teachers with growth, fixed, or neutral mindsets at this institution?
 - a. What do teachers with these mindsets believe is the purpose of their comments?
 - b. What do teachers perceive as shaping these commenting methods?
3. What comments do students with growth, fixed, or neutral mindsets prefer on their writing at this institution?
4. How do teachers with growth, fixed, or neutral mindsets at this university comment on student writing with a specific assignment?
 - a. Where are the comments located (intertextual, margin, or end)?
 - b. What is the level of attention for the comments (surface or substance)?
 - c. What is the purpose of the comments (questioning, editing, advising/suggesting, problem identification, mitigating, describing, and praising)?

5. How do students with growth, fixed, or neutral mindsets at this university process teacher comments and apply teacher comments in revising their writing with a specific assignment?

I begin the case studies with Amber and Darcie.

Amber and Darcie

Amber ²is originally from California and did her undergraduate and master's degree at a large, private university in southern California. Additionally, she was ABD in Literature and Criticism at this Western Pennsylvania university and had experience in professional writing and editing. Amber had taught composition and literature courses for 10 years at a variety of universities and colleges. The universities and colleges she taught at range from community colleges to large, elite, private universities. Additionally, she received "extensive" professional development while teaching at a community college. She even experienced a mindsets workshop, which Carol Dweck led. Therefore, Amber was aware of mindsets but admitted: "I can't quite remember what the theory says but I do remember that one is set and one is malleable." It appeared that Amber is mentioning growth and fixed mindsets here, though she does not call them by this name.

In relation to her background, she described her teaching philosophy as "a tough teacher." She goes onto elaborate further on this point:

I have really high expectations of my students. And I think that comes from coaching. I had seven-plus years of coaching experience and being an athlete before that for a number of years. And I found that-- and it's the cliché quote, but...your students will rise to our level of expectation.

² All participant names are pseudonyms.

Amber mentioned her experience of being a rower at the NCAA Division I level and also coaching at that same level, which shaped her high expectations for students. She later mentioned in the interview that students will be “more successful,” if she sets “these higher expectations.”

Amber’s student, Darcie, is from Western Pennsylvania. She is a first-semester freshman and planned to major in childhood education with an emphasis in special education. She chose her major because she “wanted to help people.” She was a high school cheerleader and was on a large academic scholarship at IUP. She described these scholarships as “helping a lot.”

Amber and Darcies’ Mindsets (RQ 1)

As mentioned in Chapter 3, I took Dweck’s (2006) characteristics of mindsets, turned them into open-ended questions, and then asked them to participants to measure their mindsets. I then counted the number of times that each mindset was coded. What I found for Amber and Darcie was all three mindsets, growth, fixed, and neutral, were coded at least once and it often depended on the context they we were discussing. Because I coded multiple mindsets, it made it difficult to categorize them into strictly one mindset. In dealing with this challenge, and as I stated in Chapter 3, I decided to place each participant’s mindset along a continuum, which I adapted from Driscoll (2018, manuscript in preparation).

For this study in this context, Amber and Darcie reported the “fixed” part of the continuum because I coded fixed mindsets the most times in this context. Amber had 14 fixed codes and Darcie 11 fixed codes. Amber had four growth codes and three neutral mindset codes. Darcie had eight growth codes and one neutral mindset code. Therefore,

in most contexts discussed in this interview they viewed their skills and abilities as fixed, though there were moments they were growth or even neutral.

Amber described her fixed mindset with observations in this context. Based on Dweck's (2014) characteristics of teacher mindsets, this part of teaching indicates a particular mindset because observations are focusing on gaining feedback on teachers' performance and considering ways their performance can get better. When asked for her thoughts on being observed she said:

I don't find it very useful, honestly. I think the point of it, and I think the purpose behind it here, especially with the mentoring program, is a good purpose. I don't think it fulfills the outcomes. And I think...that the full-time faculty sometimes like to input their own expectations on the course. They would teach the course differently... 'Like, no. I'm going to teach my course the way I want to.' I'm going to not take that suggestion. I think that can be really frustrating because it's like our ability to get a job next year is based on those evaluations...

Despite acknowledging there sometimes good purpose, Amber does not find observations useful. It is important to note that this may be shaped by this Western Pennsylvania institutional context. In the English department at this institution, part-time faculty are nearly all graduate students. They are required, twice a semester, to be observed by a full-time faculty as a part of a teacher mentoring program. This could certainly be a stressful time for part-time faculty because they often depend on this position to fund their graduate education, and if they receive a bad observation there is a chance it could affect their funding. While the goal behind the mentoring program is to help part-time faculty develop their teaching skills, it seemed that Amber believed the full-time faculty she has

had as mentors are appropriating her classroom. Because of this, I asked Amber if she found observations useful in other teaching contexts. Amber replied: "I have talked a lot about [this Western Pennsylvania University] haven't I? On the whole, no, I don't find observations helpful. I think they can be extremely disruptive." Thus, Amber displayed fixed mindset characteristics when she discussed observations across contexts.

Furthermore, Amber states that she "hates critique." She says that she "doesn't like her evaluations." Amber was specifically mentioning student evaluations of her teaching in this statement when she made this remark. She goes on to say "93% of my evaluations could be positive, and I focus on the few that weren't happy." Amber here seems to focus on the negative aspects of the feedback on her teaching. These statements again indicate that Amber views feedback on her teaching with fixed mindset characteristics, at least within the context of this institution.

At the same time, Amber is not without her moments of growth in this particular context. She had been working on her "time management skills." Amber stated:

The thing I'm always working on here is time management in the classroom because when I was teaching community college... all the classes were the same length of time. They were that hour 15, hour 20 minutes, whatever it is... So I got really, really used to what could be done in that period of time. So, teaching [at this Western Pennsylvania institution] Monday, Wednesday, Friday, which I have now - this will be my fifth semester doing that - and having 50 minutes, I've lost 30 minutes almost. That's a really big difference. So that's definitely something I'm constantly working on, managing time and still being able to have the conversations I want to have with the students...

Because this context is different than ones she has had in the past, Amber was improving her time management skills, and even goes on to say, “I still want to communicate my expectations to students in a clear way,” despite having less class time in this new context. In terms of developing her time management and pacing of her class, Amber approached this situation within this Western Pennsylvania university with a growth mindset.

Additionally, Amber does view her students in growth-oriented ways. She explained “all students can be better writers. Writing is a skill they can learn and practice.” However, she later complicated this statement by claiming “students won’t do it [writing] on their own. They’re not going to do it. I have to push them.” While she does think that students can be better writers, she does not believe this was an intrinsic quality they possessed without teachers bringing this out in them. I first coded this view as growth because she saw her students as being able to develop their skills. The second part of this statement received a fixed mindset code because Amber understood her students as having pre-determined skills and abilities that could only be developed through outside forces.

Darcie seemed to hold similar fixed beliefs within this context. To determine her mindset, and other student mindsets, I asked student participants about their intelligence, academic ability, and how they viewed writing/writers, all of which highlights the mindset of a particular individual (Dweck, 2006; Limpo & Alves, 2014). Additionally, I posed questions about harsh criticism in teacher comments and how they thought and felt about writing different kinds of genres. Darcie perceived herself as “extremely intelligent because I’ve gotten good grades.” She also knows that she has improved her writing

because “she’s been blessed with good teachers that improved her skills.” While part of this statement is a growth mindset, she also attributed her success because of others, which is a part of fixed mindset characteristics with student writers (Driscoll & Powell, 2018, in preparation). Furthermore, when asked what she would do if she received a harsh comment, such as the example comment I gave at the beginning of this dissertation (i.e., that I would not progress in college if I did not improve), she stated:

Yeah, I'd be pretty pissed. I'd be like, ‘Really?’ And that's not helping you. That's basically putting someone down just to justify your point. I think if they would have said to me, ‘I think you really need to improve on this, this, and this, this, and this,’ like gave me blank, blank, blank. And I knew, ‘Okay, I need to definitely improve on those otherwise I'm not going to do well in college,’ right? I think that that would have helped me. But I mean, that kind of makes me think of the one time I did get an essay from someone.

Here it appeared that Darcie started as being fixed towards the comment. At the end of her statement, she moved toward a growth mindset by stating that she wanted to know how to improve. But, she wants “fill in the blanks” instructions on how to improve. Therefore, this statement is again fixed because she always needed teachers to give her the skills and abilities to be successful. She goes onto add that “these comments would be a setback. I obviously wasn’t as good as I thought. I wouldn’t quit writing though. I need to get a better grade.” This is another element of her fixed mindset that she discussed in this interview – she is often motivated to improve her writing skills because it means getting a good grade. While this is not meant to be pejorative, I bring it up because it again highlighted her reliance on others to determine her success and how hard she

should work. In contrast, growth mindset individuals understand working hard and focusing on improvement will lead to success and may or may not need others to tell them this. Also, it is worth noting here that she stated that she would not give up on her writing. Despite moments of being fixed, Darcie also has moments of growth – sometimes within the same statement. This example also highlights the difficulty in ascribing only one mindset to individuals. There are times when Darcie and Amber both shift between the mindsets as Darcie does here because she is neither fixed nor growth when discussing harsh criticism.

Darcie had other moments of growth as well. She viewed “personal writing,” or writing such as the personal narrative she began the semester with (what genre studies might classify as creative nonfiction), as something that she excelled at and liked to improve upon. Therefore, she had a very growth mindset with this genre. I asked Darcie why she felt so positive about what she called “personal writing,” and she stated “I think it’s because my parents got divorced when I was young. I’ve always wrote topics about that to deal with those experiences.” This quote suggested that her prior experiences shaped her growth mindset with personal genres. However, she reported a fixed mindset with “informational genres,” because “they are boring, and do I want to do them? No, but I have to!” Perhaps different types of writing shape the kinds of mindsets an individual has. Overall, the mindset may be forming based on contextual factors that are not fully elaborated in this response.

Amber's Method for Commenting and Darcie's Preferred Comments (RQ 2 and 3)

For teacher's comments, I asked teachers about their methods, the purpose in commenting, and what shaped or influenced the way they comment on student writing. For students, I asked questions related to their preferences in comments.

In terms of commenting, Amber said she began her career by thinking that the purpose of her comments "...was to tell them [students] what they did wrong." Now, she wrote comments to "help them improve." To do this, she switched to "commenting on drafts," and utilizing the "sandwich method." This method "...tell [s] them [students] what they did good, tell [s] them what they need to work on, and tell [s] them something maybe nice at the end like, Okay, keep working on this..." In Amber's interview, she also mentioned commenting on higher order concerns (such as developing ideas, structure, clarity, etc.) the same number of times as commenting on lower order concerns (grammar, spelling, punctuation, etc.) (each mentioned twice in the interview). Further elaborating on the purpose of commenting and her methods, Amber stated: "So I think with comments, the idea should be to help them improve and so I think that's where shifting to making comments on their drafts really helps with that." Amber seemed to perceive her commenting methods in growth mindset ways despite seeing her teaching skills in fixed mindset ways, which again highlights how fluid mindsets can be and may even depend on the particular practice that teachers and students are undertaking at the moment.

Furthermore, Amber thought that many concepts shaped the way she gave comments. She stated, "It's a combination of things. It's how I view my teaching skills [i.e., her mindset towards teaching], but it's also my background as a coach." She went on to say "...it depends on the student. The assignment." Because she was already familiar with mindsets and mentioned them early in her interview, I asked her if knowing the student's mindset would impact how she commented, and she replied "absolutely." In relation to this, I had her respond to two student writers, one who had a growth mindset with writing, and one who had a fixed mindset with writing. I also gave them a particular assignment and context where the student was displaying that mindset. When discussing her comments, Amber stated:

Interesting. I think that- well, it depends if I knew these different perspectives of the students, right? I think with the first student if I knew that that was her thing- so like on day one, she's like, "I'm a terrible writer." And I'm like, "Okay, so I know this." Then I would probably be a little bit more encouraging in the comments and say, "Look, you can really improve this if you do X, Y, and Z. Come talk to me." And what I would probably try to do is also talk to the students so that they understand like, "Hey, I'm here to help you and you can get better." If I didn't know the scenarios I would probably make the same comments on both. And I think for the second student, with her comments...with them, I'd be like, 'Look, you can do better.'

In addition to her background as a coach, the student, and the genre, the students' mindset also appeared to be very important in Amber's thoughts about commenting on student

writing. She was more encouraging with the student who displayed the fixed mindset in this context and more direct with the growth mindset student in this context.

Amber's thoughts on commenting seemed to interact with Darcie's preferences of commenting. Darcie prefers comments "that show the teacher cares," and are "specific on what I need to fix." She went on to say:

I've liked how she's actually read them and gave the comment about it. She didn't just do a lecture to the whole class and say, 'Okay, I read all your essays and I think you all should do this...' And so I think it's helped more that professor has gone into every single person's essay. I've enjoyed that. It made me feel good that she actually read my essay and didn't just put it off to the side as another person in the class. And so, I think that whenever a teacher is giving feedback to each student, it makes the student feel a lot better. It makes me feel better. It makes me feel like they actually care and they're not just there to teach the whole class as one.

Overall, Darcie seemed to want comments that were kind, caring, and help her fix her essays. Lastly, she stated that "the purpose of the comments are to get a better grade." Here I saw all of her learning and improvement tied up to grades, at least within this course and with this interview. Perhaps she might believe this because of K-12 educational experiences, which place an emphasis on earning good grades to get accepted into college. Regardless, I coded this view as fixed because she displays an external locus of control.

Amber's Comments and Darcie's Processing and Application of Comments (RQ 4 and 5)

When Amber gave comments and Darcie processed and applied comments, both mindsets again appeared to affect how they approached their actions with these comments. Amber gave comments on the final drafts of what she thought of as an “evaluative genre,” which she referred to as a “cause and effect” paper. Amber’s students did this paper for their third writing assignment of English 101 in the semester I collected data. While Amber stated in her interview that she gave comments during the drafting phases, her actions ran contrary to this statement in the context of this particular assignment because she commented on Darcie’s final draft to explain Darcie’s grade. She commented using the Microsoft Word Comment feature for this assignment. As stated in Chapter 3, I adapted a taxonomy for categorizing teacher comments from Wingard and Geosits’ (2014) study. This taxonomy places comments in two ways: 1. level of comments, and 2. their purpose. The level of comments determines if comments are about “substance,” which are higher order concerns such as developing ideas, structure, and genre awareness; or about “surface,” which are lower order concerns, which are about grammar, spelling, sentence structure, etc. There are seven purposes in this model: questioning, editing, advising/suggesting, problem identification, mitigating, describing, and praising. Table 7 highlights the number of Amber’s comments, where the comments appeared on the students’ paper, whether they were surface or substance comments, and the number of times I found each purpose for commenting:

Table 7

Summary of Amber's Comments

Number of Comments	Number of Times Comments Appeared in Specific Locations	Number of Surface Comments and Substance Comments	Number of Times Each Purpose was Applied to Comments (Some Comments Have Multiple Purposes)
20	18 Margin. 1 End. 1 Intertextual.	7 Surface. 13 Substance.	2 Questioning 7 Editing 7 Advising 10 Problem Identification

Nearly all of Amber's comments appeared in the margins. There was a summative end comment that explained the aspects of the final draft that could have been better.

Furthermore, there was one intertextual comment that stated, "For your next essay, you need more scholarly sources to actually prove your argument." This comment appeared in the Works Cited page at the end of the essay. The comments often had multiple purposes, too. For example, many comments were problem identification, and the first couple also included advising and/or questioning. For example, "Unclear – read out loud and simplify." This comment tells Darcie her writing did not make sense and offered some advice on how to make it clearer.

Furthermore, there were a few occasions where Amber asked questions, which occurred in relation to Darcie's source use: "I wish you could find the surveys they talk about – instead of using PETA, which is a secondary source, can you find the primary source for these studies?" Furthermore, there were several problem identification

comments that asked Darcie to think about the genre of writing that she was doing, and in those moments, Amber also offered advice on how to fix that error “This is a cause, not an effect – I’m confused – I thought you were talking about effects based on your thesis – We need to rethink this topic.”

Lastly, Amber edited Darcie’s paper, focusing on typos, wordiness, and sentence structure. Overall, Amber’s comments were more substance than surface. However, she did the most editing of all three teacher participants. Furthermore, she is the only teacher to comment on the final draft that was turned in to be evaluated than on a rough draft that could be revised. However, she does appear to achieve her method of writing comments “depending on the student, genre, and assignment,” which is a method she mentioned in her interview. Despite often discussing her teaching with a fixed mindset, some of the comments in the context of this assignment would help her student develop their writing for the next assignment, which could be viewed as approaching these comments with a growth mindset. We again have evidence that mindsets shift given the context of teaching and learning.

Darcie did not have any revisions since this was the final draft, so I could not determine how she applied these comments; however, I met with her to talk about her reactions and processing of the comments on her final draft. Overall, Darcie reacted to the comments with a sense of relief. I know this because she stated her overall impressions early on during her think- aloud with statements like this: “Honestly this was much better than I expected. I thought I was going to get a C. But I have a B-.” She literally went on to sigh heavily after this statement. Because of this, she seemed open to the comments and was very unemotional when discussing her comments. For example,

when she reacted to Amber's comment, "Unclear – read out loud and simply," Darcie responded with "Oh yeah I didn't do that." Additionally, when she reacted to the comment on source use, "I wish you could find the surveys they talk about – instead of using PETA which is secondary source, can you find the primary source for these studies? Darcie stated, "I didn't use good sources." Darcie reported a fixed mindset often throughout her interview but when she received a higher grade than expected was very open to comments and dealt with them in a way that would suggest a more growth-oriented mindset. Therefore, we see it difficult to suggest that Darcie was always one particular mindset. Within the particular context of this assignment, Darcie appeared to view the comments with a growth mindset.

When I asked her if there were any emotions when reading comments, Darcie stated: "With this essay, no, because I honestly got a better grade than I thought I was going to get." This quote was the closest emotional response she had to Amber's comments. With the end comment that Amber gave on her writing, Darcie said: "I wanted to let you know I take her criticism well and try to use it. She is a good teacher, and she doesn't, like here, she said 'why is this paragraph so long? Try to break it up.' She actually tells me what to fix." From this quote, we can see that Darcie seemed to be processing the comments productively by telling us that she considered Amber's comments.

Another prominent theme in Darcie's think-aloud was focused on how she might improve her writing for the next essay, which she informed me "built off of this essay and made it into an argument." The assignment required students to develop their cause and effect essay by doing further research and then writing a researched argument paper.

This might be why Amber decided to comment on the final draft instead of the rough draft, but my methodology did not examine the next paper that Amber assigned, so I did not ask Amber or Darcie to elaborate on this assignment. With many comments, Darcie spent time talking about how she was going to improve this draft and make it into an argumentative research paper. She spent time talking about comments that asked for genre revisions (six times) using sources better (eight times) and making writing clearer (three times).

Lori and Samantha

Like Amber and Darcie, Lori and Samantha appeared to draw on different mindsets during different moments, but also displayed mindsets in ways that were unique to them and their teaching and learning experiences. Lori was the only teacher participant from Western Pennsylvania, and she also did both her BA & MA at a small, private, liberal arts university in the area. She was a PhD Candidate in Literature and Criticism at this Western Pennsylvania University. She went through an English education program as an undergraduate student and now is in her fourth year as a teacher (one as a high school teacher and three as a college teacher). Like Amber, she was introduced to mindsets theory as an educator and said: “she understood one mindset as developmental and one as not developmental.” Lori appeared to be talking about growth and fixed mindsets as well, but like Amber does not remember the names.

Lori described her teaching philosophy as “that of a facilitator.” She considered her role as a teacher to be “someone who guides students in their own learning by asking questions and lecturing less.” Lori even gave an example question she might ask in her interactions with students “How can you come at this topic, genre, or writing from a

different angle?” Lori believed her role was to make students “better learners and better thinkers.”

Samantha was from a small town in Western Pennsylvania, and she stated: “I’m sure you have never heard of it.” Her graduating class was less than 30, and she told me she did not do much writing as a high school student. While she did not do a lot of writing in high school, she did enjoy reading, and her favorite author was Ellen Hopkins. She was a first-semester freshman at this Western Pennsylvania University but transferred in many credits from dual-enrollment courses as a high school student. At the time of the study she had a job as an LPN on the weekends in her hometown and majored in nursing.

Lori and Samanthas’ Mindsets (RQ 1)

I coded Lori’s interview with the most growth mindset codes out of any of the teachers in the study (11 total codes). Therefore, I placed her on the “very growth” continuum. Most times she did not view any of her teaching abilities, nor her students’, in a fixed mindset way (though there is one instance where this begins to occur). She specifically talked about improving two areas of her teaching the most since her first time stepping into the classroom: facilitating group work and giving comments on student writing. In regard to commenting, she stated:

My feedback [from earlier in my career] was really poor. I was recently looking through some samples that I had been given permission to use with my current classes, and some of them still had my comments on them. And I’m like, why are you commenting so much with grammar? Why are you obsessed with the tense? There are bigger things here that really need to be addressed, in terms of their

purpose and their thinking and-- oh, I could have really pushed this more here. So, I think, definitely, the way that I interact with my students has changed. I am a lot more laid back. I'm also really more focused now on those sort of broader picture concerns that I've really gotten away from focusing so much on the lower order grammar stuff, to really think about how I can not only get my students' writing to improve but also their thinking.

This statement about her feedback seemed to interact with her overall teaching philosophy and also seemed oriented toward a growth mindset within this particular context. This quote highlighted her ability to reflect and change her practice in ways that benefitted her students from previous contexts to this new context. Furthermore, she stated that with group work

Right now, I am really working on the way I facilitate group work. I think that at times I'm a little bit too timid about being that person that comes over, and plops down with the chair, and really engages with them. I'm trying, it's just not something I'm 100% comfortable with. So, I'm definitely working on that this semester.

Again, she tried out a reflective practice that aided in her development as a teacher, which will eventually have a positive impact on her students. I also noted how she pushed out of her comfort zone, which would certainly lead to growth and development. Furthermore, it is worth noting that this mindset is in relation to a practice she was working on in this particular context. Again, mindsets often depended on the context my participants were working within. Perhaps Lori felt she needed to develop this skill for the students at this particular institution.

In addition, Lori was very growth with many characteristics that make up a teacher's mindset. Particularly, she was growth with reflecting on her teaching, drawing on pedagogical theory, and being observed as a teacher. In terms of reflection and pedagogical theory, she stated:

I'm really big on just personal reflective practice because I tend to teach sort of the same thing from year-to-year with comp. And so, I like to at the end of my classes just jot down a couple of quick notes. 'This worked, that didn't.' 'Today was a bad day because of X. Maybe the students were really tired.' So, I also like to remind myself sometimes, it wasn't necessarily that this lesson was bad, it just didn't go over all that well. Next time, maybe you can generate more enthusiasm by doing this, or keep an eye on this, reword this question, whatever it may be.

And I think that pedagogical articles give us sometimes a series of tools to do that, or new lenses to look at our classes.

Though early in this quote Lori stated that she taught similar approaches year in and year out, which is a fixed mindset, she went onto talk about reflective practices that she utilized to make her approach stronger, and therefore, she appeared to develop this approach in the best ways that she could. Again, this appeared to highlight the fluid and contextual nature of mindsets. Like Amber and Darcie, Lori seemed to move from a fixed mindset at the beginning of this statement into a growth mindset at the end. Furthermore, pedagogical articles gave her perspectives and lens that allowed her to conceptualize her practices in a new light. I coded this passage as first fixed and then growth because I saw her looking to improve her teaching and thinking about what did well and what could go better.

As far as observation goes, Lori admitted this:

Okay. Having my teaching observed is completely anxiety-inducing, but I think it's necessary. I feel like it's very important, particularly to have more experienced faculty in the classroom who can not only let you know kind of what you're doing well, and you maybe need to work on, but also just to help you understand your classroom climate. I know that when I've had particularly difficult classes in the past, sometimes it helps to have somebody else come in and say, "Well, I've noticed that when you do this, your students are doing X. Maybe there's a way that you can adjust it so that either the climate is better, or students feel more comfortable. Maybe they don't quite understand your directions," whatever it may be. So, I find it really useful in that way.

While observations were stressful for her as a teacher, which could again be viewed as a fixed mindset, Lori appeared to be open and willing to improve her practice using other teachers' perspectives. This quote again brought her "very growth" mindset to the forefront, but also showed how she could view a particular practice such as observations in a fixed way.

While many participants displayed multiple mindsets, Samantha highlighted how mindsets can be very individualized. The first three participants (Amber, Darcie, and Lori) all have some moments of fixed mindsets in their interviews, Samantha has absolutely none and therefore also had a "very growth" mindset. In all, her interview was also coded the most times for a growth mindset (ironically, 11 total growth mindset codes, the same as Lori). Samantha reported a growth mindset with her intelligence, writing, and how she engaged with harsh criticism of her writing/performance.

In regard to her intelligence, Samantha explained: “I think if you work at anything you can definitely make yourself better after a while.” She thought the same way about writing:

Pretty much, I think that if you work at something like I said earlier, you can obviously improve in it if you take the time to do so. But if not-- you aren't really born with it, I don't think. Some people are just a bit more talented naturally, but still, you can improve either way.

This statement pointed out an important concept of Dweck’s (2006) work on mindsets – some people do have talent that they are born with, but anyone does have the potential to improve their abilities and skills. Samantha believed this way with her writing.

Furthermore, it did not matter what kind of writing she attempted because she stated, “Sure writing about yourself is easier, but I think I can get better at whatever I’m doing.” Samantha appears to have a similar mindset across contexts, genres, and tasks.

I also asked how she would react if someone gave her harsh criticism of her writing. She described that reaction like this:

I think if people are telling you their feedback, I mean, they obviously want you to become better, but that doesn't mean that you're a bad writer necessarily. Pretty much, I think that there's always room for improvement, so I don't think you can really get upset if people tell you things you can improve on because they're just trying to really help you out. I definitely don't take anything personally, but I also remember it for next time. I mean, I always take their comments into consideration when I'm writing next time...

Samantha viewed feedback in a growth mindset way – as an opportunity to improve her writing and skills. These exemplified why I labeled Samantha with a “very growth mindset.”

Lori’s Methods of Comments and Samantha’s Preferred Comments (RQ 2 and 3)

Lori believed that the purpose of commenting was to “...certainly help them [students] improve their writing.” She went on to add that she “...hope[s] to give guidance,” on their writing. Lori also mentioned being “positive” in her comments on any student writing.

In terms of the methods that Lori utilized in her comments, she stated this:

...I try to limit the number of marginal comments that I put on any one paper. I know, even from my own experiences, that if you get something back and it looks like it's been stabbed, there's a very good chance that you're not going to be able to even process what you're seeing really...they [students] get two focus areas for me to carry forth under their next assignment on every single thing. One of them is a grammatical focus area that I work on with them... With grammar, I try and focus in on one really small area that they can improve and by the end of our time together they've hit four or five areas for their paper, each paper getting a different one, and it really tends to boost their confidence which I love to see. It also impacts the way I do sort of summative comments. I try to do sort of a comment that's right. They're always going to get something positive from me, something that they can work on and then sort of an overall positive comment about their audience or their purpose...

Here Lori explained that she doesn't want to overwhelm students with her comments and doesn't want to just focus on grammar. She tried to balance critique with praise and "asks questions." Furthermore, she mentioned that she uses a mixture of margin comments and end comments.

In addition, to these aspects, Lori's claimed her comments were shaped by a host of factors: "...anything from the time of day to where I'm working at," which highlighted the highly contextual nature of this teaching practice and how it might shift even within a particular day and time. Furthermore, when asked about how her teacher mindset plays a role, she thought it "probably does" affect her teaching and went on to say:

... Even the way I think about my own writing probably impacts the way that I think about student writing in the way that I comment. Especially since sometimes I think it can be easy to forget that students have-- I don't want to call them underdeveloped processes, but they're new. They're new writers... You know what I mean? ...It's a very different experience for them. And so, I do think that there are probably ways in which my own sort of experiences with writing, and sometimes struggles with writing, color the way that I comment.

While she cannot necessarily specify how her teaching mindset plays a role, she does think it made a difference. Furthermore, it appeared that it is not just her teacher mindset that impacted her practice, but her mindset as a writer. Lastly, she reported that it also depended on how the students viewed their writing and skills. She stated that if a student thinks "'I'm a horrible writer. I can't write,'" then she

...[thought] knowing that is important, not only in the way I approach them in conferences or interpersonal conversation but also in the way I approach them in

the comments. I tend to really watch my language with those students, making sure that it's all about improvement.

Therefore, I interpreted the idea of knowing the students' mindset as being very important to Lori in forming her comments.

Samantha was very open to the idea of Lori's comments on her first paper of the semester, which was a memoir. In fact, she could not think of any comments that she didn't prefer. She stated

All of hers [Lori's] were actually really helpful. As soon as she gave me feedback I automatically went, and I ended starting my draft all over again. I really took her words into consideration. I like how she kind of made it personal. She would underline a sentence for me in my draft and she would kind of tell me different ways to be able to get the reader more interested or add dialogue about myself. Just so then the reader knows that I was there at the time. Just kind of include myself in it and- so then the reader knows what I was feeling during the whole thing, too.

Samantha appeared to appreciate Lori's comments and reported that she considered them when she revised. Furthermore, it seemed that Samantha preferred how personal the comments are and the different perspective that Lori gave. This preference was further affirmed for me when Samantha stated that she thought the purpose of teacher comments were to "get another perspective on my writing." Samantha seemed to be approaching these comments with a very growth mindset.

While Samantha had nothing but praise for Lori's comments, I asked her to imagine when comments were not helpful, and she was able to highlight what comments she didn't prefer. Samantha stated that

It would pretty much be using words that wouldn't really tell much about what they're actually talking about. They could describe the layout, but they could just say, "You have a poor layout." But what is a poor layout? You have to kind of explain what your student's doing wrong if you expect them to improve on these different things.

Samantha reported a very growth mindset and did not like comments that were not specific in how she can improve. Overall, Samantha liked personal, specific comments that helped her improve her writing. It did not matter if these comments were harsh.

Lori's Comments and Samantha's Processing and Application of Comments (RQ 4 and 5)

When examining the comments and processing/application of comments, Lori gave comments on Samantha's draft of her review assignment with the use of the Microsoft Word Comment feature. This assignment asked students to review a book or movie of their choosing and recommend it to a particular audience of their choosing.

Table 8 summarizes Lori's comments:

Table 8

Summary of Lori's Comments

Number of Comments	Number of Times Comments Appeared in Specific Locations	Number of Surface Comments and Substance Comments	Number of Times Each Purpose was Applied to Comments (Some Comments Have Multiple Purposes)
12	12 Margin.	2 Surface. 10 Substance.	2 Praise 4 Problem Identification 5 Advising/Suggesting 10 Questioning

Lori's comments on this particular assignment were all in the margin, and most comments asked a question, advised, and identified problems, which seemed to reflect her teaching philosophy as well. She also spent much more time on substance comments over surface comments and had multiple purposes to her comments. The second comment that Lori gave on Samantha's draft highlights the nature of her comments with this assignment:

This is a little unclear to me. Who is coming up with this perfect way to describe it to others? Is it you? How could you clarify this to draw your reader's attention in more? One way might be to talk about what the book means to you before moving on.

Lori's comment identified an unclear moment via a question for Samantha in the text and advised her to consider her audience more to make that moment clearer. Furthermore, she offered a way that Samantha could reach her audience by discussing what the book

means to Samantha first before moving on. Her fourth comment returned to this idea of working on reaching Samantha's audience in much more depth by describing who Samantha is writing to: "Who is we? How can you make your audience more apparent?" This awareness of audience seemed to be the big area that Lori wanted to Samantha to consider in revising her draft on this particular assignment in this context.

Furthermore, Lori also appeared to be focused on helping Samantha understand the genre of writing with comments such as these:

You're doing a really good job with plot summary. Remember, though, that your job is to point out to a specific audience what is about a particular scene or scenes that makes this book so important to them, personally. What is it about the scene that would be good for your imagined audience to read or understand? I would restructure each paragraph, so it has a little bit more analysis or evaluation to it.

Here I saw that Lori was praising an aspect of writing that Samantha was doing well (plot summary) but pushing her to describe a scene of the book more to connect to her audience. This is a characteristic of the review genre and suggested that Samantha needed to continue to think about her audience.

On the whole, Lori appeared to be pretty aware of her comments. In her interview, she stated that she tried to balance critique with praise, tried to help them improve their writing, and also tried to remain positive throughout the comments. The only practice that differed for Lori was that she stated that she also gave end comments, but none appeared in this particular set of comments in this context.

Like Darcie, Samantha read her comments on her draft with me for the first time. Of the three participants, Samantha was very emotional when she read the comments.

She described being “frustrated” (twice) and “confused” (twice) about the comments. Furthermore, on one occasion Samantha stated that she was “disappointed in her draft.” This comment does not appear to blame Lori for what Samantha wrote, rather Samantha was disappointed in the draft as it currently sat. While reactions and processing seemed to be very emotional, she discussed managing these emotions: “I will just have to figure this out.” Furthermore, she stated that “her [Lori’s] comments are always helpful.” In relation to Lori’s comment: “Who is we? How can you make your audience more apparent?” Samantha stated:

Who is "we"? Okay, "person who challenges ..." Okay. How can you make your audience more apparent? So, I guess that could be a reason that she said about the audience, as well. I could say that a personal challenge is, we as young adults may face, so then, the audience is brought back into it. I mean, that is, that's a good point. The we. Who is we, like she said.”

Here Samantha seemed to agree with the comment, viewed it as a good point, and began to discuss ways that she could revise her writing.

Furthermore, Samantha frequently discussed how she was going to revise her writing (In fact, she mentioned this 25 times throughout her think-aloud transcript). Nearly all of this discussion was about how to revise the genre characteristics of the review and also how to better write toward the audience, which were both frequent comments she received from Lori on her writing. While Samantha was acutely aware of the revisions she needed to make, and on occasions like the one above, was very open to making these changes, there were some moments where Samantha was unsure of how to

revise her writing. In relation to Lori's comment about improving her discussion of audience, Samantha said

I don't know, like, with the one that she said about ... I know that I did a fair amount of summarizing the plot, so I feel like that's a good part that I have. But that's one thing I don't understand. She says, I have a clear audience in mind, but then she's saying, she doesn't know how I'm appealing to teenage readers. So, I kind of think it's contradicting itself, in a way. Because, when I get to this, then, I end up, in my first paragraph ... right off the bat, I say that it's well-written for young adults ... and basically, in every paragraph, I do say that it's for young adults. Everyone has complications in life, so, I end up talking about ... "We wish to learn more about that in life, and I think that it's a good thing that teenagers should really read about, because it's beneficial to them." That's one thing, I'm not really sure, how it's not relating to a young audience?

Samantha appeared to misread this comment and thought the praise was on she was dealing with the audience. She also seemed to feel like she was stating who the audience in the beginning of her paper and it would be repetitive to do it again later. Despite how open Samantha was to processing comments, this did not mean that she always understood what these comments stated she needed to revise. Despite this lack of understanding, Samantha stated: "Well I will figure it out." This statement suggested that Samantha wanted to solve this misunderstanding and was willing to do so. Overall, Samantha, who had a "very growth mindset," appears to be open to comments and revising her writing based on comments, despite being frustrated and confused at times with the comments. This frustration and confusion may be conceptualized as a moment

where Samantha viewed the teacher comments through a fixed mindset, which again problematizes the notion that students are always one mindset in every context. But then in the same statement, Samantha appeared to shift her perspective to more of a growth mindset with the comments.

Further complicating the binary of growth vs fixed came when I examined Samantha’s draft before and after comments. Samantha’s made many revisions to her draft and seemed to approach it in a very growth mindset-oriented way. Table 9 displays the revisions that Samantha did on her draft after receiving comments:

Table 9

Summary of Samantha’s Revisions

Revisions: 14 Total.	Surface or Substance?	Type of Revision
Added a Title	Surface	Meaning-Preserving (micro-level)
Added short phrases to remind readers of audience in paragraph 1.	Substantive	Meaning-Changing (micro-level)
Added a sentence explaining her thesis for the review in paragraph 1.	Substantive	Meaning-Changing (macro-level)
Added two sentences to further evaluate the book and what type of readers the book might interest in paragraph 1.	Substantive	Meaning-Changing (macro-level)
Changed a word in paragraph 2.	Surface	Meaning-Preserving (micro-level)
Deleted repetitive word in paragraph 2.	Surface	Meaning-Preserving (micro-level)
Added short phrases to remind readers of audience in paragraph 2.	Substantive	Meaning-Changing (micro-level)
Added citation in paragraph 3.	Surface	Meaning-Preserving (micro-level)

Added one sentence to evaluate how the audience might understand the book in paragraph 3.	Substantive	Meaning-Changing (macro-level)
Added two phrases to remind the reader who the audience for this type of book might be in paragraph 3.	Substantive	Meaning-Changing (micro-level)
Added a phrase to remind reader who the audience for this kind of book might be in paragraph 4.	Substantive	Meaning-Changing (micro-level)
Added a sentence to recommend the book to a certain kind of reader in paragraph 4.	Substantive	Meaning-Changing (macro-level)
Added a sentence to evaluate the book and recommend it to a particular kind of audience in the conclusion paragraph.	Substantive	Meaning-Changing (macro-level)
Changed the author's name to a pronoun in the conclusion paragraph.	Surface	Meaning-Changing (micro-level)

Lori's comments asked Samantha to think about how she was reaching her audience more, asked her to be clearer, asked her to consider the genre, and asked her to give more recommendations of the book to that specific audience. Lori made 12 comments that were mostly about substantive concerns, and Samantha made 14 total revisions, eight of which were on substantive issues in the paper and six which were on surface level concerns. Overall, this suggested that Samantha revised her text heavily. As the table highlights, Samantha revised her paper many times based on concerns that Lori highlighted in the text. While I am not claiming there is a direct correlation here, it

appeared that when Lori, who in this context often had a very growth mindset, gave substantive comments on genre and audience, Samantha, who in this context often had a very growth mindset, made substantive revisions to include genre characteristics and reach her audience.

Shamim and Karley

The case of Shamim and Karley also showed how individuals displayed mindsets in diverse ways. Shamim was originally from Bangladesh. He did his bachelor's degree and his master's degree in English Language Teaching at a university in his home country. He did a second master's degree in TESOL at a university in Eastern Ohio and was currently a PhD Candidate in Composition and TESOL at this Western Pennsylvania University. He has been teaching for seven years, but this was his first-year teaching college composition at a US university. However, he taught English in high school summer programs at an Ivy League school and this university in Western Pennsylvania within the United States. Lastly, he was aware of mindsets theory through coursework he had taken in his PhD program.

Shamim stated that the core of his teaching philosophy was that he is “an optimistic teacher.” He believed that:

Every day is learning for me, I find it. Every day, I grow, and every day I learn. I find that, of course-- my belief that as a-- teachers are a lifelong learner, so that's also like-- teacher means it doesn't mean that, well, we have learned everything. No...So every day, I'm learning. I'm learning from this class [this semester]. I'm learning from the institution. I'm learning from the students. I have so much to learn, and I feel that I have also so much to improve. And I strongly believe that

so long as we live, as long do we learn. So as a teacher, I'm also growing. I'm also trying to reach the perfect. I'm also trying to be a better teacher every day.

Shamim appeared to think of his pedagogy as an act of teaching, learning, and growing. In this way, he recalled notions of critical pedagogy where teachers continue to learn (Freire, 1970).

Shamim's student, Karley, was from a medium-sized city in Eastern Pennsylvania. She was a first-semester freshman and is a psychology major and anthropology minor. She self-identified as a former athlete and excelled at track and field in high school by qualifying for the Pennsylvania state meet. She also stated, "that English has also been her favorite subject in school." Additionally, she liked to draw and produced artwork in her spare time.

Shamim and Karleys' Mindsets (RQ 1)

Like Lori, Shamim had a very growth mindset (nine total growth mindset codes). When he discussed his teaching practices, Shamim stated that because teaching in the US was very new to him, he developed a goal to build:

...a very good relationship with the students to get close to them and to understand. This is the first semester and first-time teaching English composition, so... and to know better about them. How can I improve my course and what goes well? And this is what they like most. Every day I'm taking notes what to motivate for the next semester. I understand that.

Shamim believed that at the heart of good teaching is building a good relationship with students, and he attempted that endeavor. Here I saw how the new teaching context for Shamim might have influenced the mindset he has toward teaching. Because he had to

learn about new students, this may shift him toward a growth mindset. This quote also highlighted the value Shamim placed on reflecting on his practice within this context. He added further to this:

Well, yeah. From a course, I came to learn something about reflective teaching. I come into class. I just see how it goes or how it went, and then I reflect how to make it better. I'm working on that more.

In fact, Shamim claimed he drew from most heavily on “theories of reflection.”

Furthermore, he went on to state that observations were very helpful to him in this particular context. Shamim stated:

Well, I think that if an experienced teacher observed my class-- as I told you, that I have so much learning to improve. So, if I am observed by an experienced teacher, definitely that teacher, he or she will be able to find out where the room to improve. I mean, it's what are the things I need to work on? Or he or she be able to identify my strength and weakness, which ideas I need to work better. So, I look at it very positive, that it's really an opportunity for me to grow and develop.

Shamim appeared to see observations as important toward his growth and development at this particular institution, especially when having an experienced teacher give him feedback. This further highlights his very growth mindset because he also viewed observations as a way to identify both his strengths and weaknesses and to improve his teaching at this university.

Shamim viewed students in a very growth-oriented way as well. When asked if “all students can learn to be better writers,” he stated “Sure of course! Because writing is

a skill you can improve with practice.” Furthermore, Shamim believed in “encouraging” students “to do better.” Overall, Shamim conceptualized students’ abilities and skills as having the potential to be developed, which appeared to be a view he held across different contexts.

I coded Karley as having a “growth mindset” (8 total occurrences of growth mindset). This growth mindset was apparent with her writing skills (most of the time), her intelligence, and her reading ability. However, there are a few moments where this was not the case, and I coded a fixed mindset. Karley’s interview seemed to be another area where I saw that mindsets could be fluid and contextual, given that there are times when she was growth and others when she was fixed.

In terms of growth mindset, Karley believed that her intelligence:

...it grows every day. You're not born with the intelligence you're going to have the rest of your life. So, obviously everything you do ... go to school every day, you learn every day. Even if you don't go to school, you'll still learn something every day. So, their intelligence is going to increase daily...

It appeared that Karley never stopped improving her intelligence. In her response, she also did not see this as only occurring in a school context. This view differed from other participants in the study.

Karley held a very similar growth mindset in terms of writing:

Because I think there's ... I mean, like Stephen King. I don't think he started out writing the way he does now. So, I think all writers develop their style and better ways to describe and develop their stories than when they first started, so their latest book might be better than their first one. I definitely think they can keep

getting better. So that's with anyone, too, it's the more you write and that kind of thing. But I don't think any writer's born perfect... So things like the more you write, and how much you like it, rather than being born with it.

Karley critiqued the notion of fixed mindsets by stating that people were not born with the ability to write. It also appeared that she thought individuals have to write more to enjoy it and improve. She saw individuals improving their writing over time and that no one is born to write. Lastly, and in regard to harsh teacher criticism, Karley explained that “I’d take that. Look at it. And now I’ll get better.” Karley displayed a nonchalant persona about a particular situation where she received difficult feedback, and it did not appear to both her.

While Karley often reported a growth mindset, she reported a fixed mindset with certain genres of writing. Specifically, she did not think she was good at what she calls “personal writing” and went on to say, “I hate writing about myself.” Furthermore, she said that “research writing” was easier for her and was something that she “is much better at.” Overall, Karley seemed fixed with certain types of writing and liked when the writing task involved research because it was a bit easier. Not liking some genres and preferring genres that were easier are both characteristics of a fixed mindset. While she displayed a growth mindset most times throughout her interview, this fixed mindset moment highlighted why she was “growth” instead of “very growth.” Furthermore, it also highlighted how certain contexts can shift a particular individual’s mindset.

Shamim’s Methods of Commenting and Karley’s Preferred Comments (RQ 2 and 3)

Shamim thought the purpose of his comments were “to make them [students] better writers.” In terms of how he achieved this purpose, Shamim stated that:

Well, the tone, I prefer not to give very in the authoritative tone because I want to mean that I am-- since writing is a process, the student and teacher and I'm also part of the process. So, I mean, firstly facilitative moderator. So, I don't like the dictator, very authoritative tone. It's a little bit friendly, with sympathy, and in a positive way so that they can accept it gladly. I know that they understood as they're pretty young. They're teenagers so if I be-- I don't want to be rude anytime with the comments because I think that's violating the code of conduct. I want to give them little bit of soft, positive tone so that they get it better.

Shamim claimed his comments remained positive because he wanted students to accept his comments. Furthermore, he called it a process between student and teacher, and he was the only participant to mention teacher comments as an interaction where he is facilitator rather than an authoritarian.

In terms of what shaped these comments, Shamim believed that:

when I give comments, yeah, it's a combination of all the things that I can see my students, whether they're having some sort of fixed or growth mindset, maybe they need a little bit more motivation. So, yeah, concentrating the student's level and competence and with my-- as I told you that I'm a bit positive and optimistic and to give comments with sympathy and love. So, my comments should never be very rash or harsh to them, so that they don't resist...I want to give comments so that they create positively and it's something motivating for them, yes. They understand that, yes, by following the comments, by taking the feedback positively, I can improve myself. While giving comments, I will just talk about not only the weakness, but I want to talk about the strength like, "Hey, you have

done this good" so that they feel that, yes, I'm acknowledging their strength as well. And they're willing to accept my comments...

Here Shamim suggested that knowing students' mindsets and his relationship with the students is what impacted the types of comments that he gave. An additional layer that appeared to be coming in this statement is that he wanted to remain positive to keep students motivated. Overall it seemed that Shamim's comments were shaped by the potential reactions his students would have to them.

Karley's preferred comments that at times contradicted Shamim's preferred methods. She stated:

I wouldn't want them to say just 'This is good' just simple things like that. I want to hear if I should add anything, especially, or taken out, too. If I should take anything out. I think especially add, like if I'm missing anything that I'm not aware of, what would sound better, and then he could spot it. I think that would be, rather than saying "This is good," or "I like this sentence" or things like that.

Karley wanted comments that go beyond positive praise and tell her what she needed to improve. Furthermore, Karley preferred comments that would challenge her to succeed. She called these "good is good but better is better" types of comments. Shamim never mentioned challenging his students via comments. Lastly, she stated that she keeps all of the comments in mind: "All their feedback has helped me, I've really paid attention to that, from teachers especially...I've always tried to pay attention to what the teacher or professor says and take that into consideration before everything." Here again, Karley appeared to be very open to the process of revising her writing based on teacher comments.

Shamim's Comments and Karley's Processing and Application of Comments (RQ 4 and 5)

Turning to the interaction of Shamim's comments and Karley's processing/application of those comments, Shamim gave one comment on Karley's review draft. He administered this comment via a course management software called Desire 2 Learn. This platform allowed students to upload their drafts and then receive comments. Here is that comment:

Dear Karley

Thank you very much for submitting your first draft of your movie review. I have really enjoyed it. I like that you have written it in accordance with the instructions of maintaining six paragraphs.

My suggestions:

1. Please make sure your paper is formatted following APA formatting style.
2. Please use sub-headings with every single paragraph to guide your readers.
3. Your second paragraph should be elaborated with more details about the movie.
4. You should talk more in the conclusion with your evaluations.

Once again thank you very much for your great job! I hope my feedback will help you revise this paper further.

I analyzed the comment in the following way:

Table 10

Summary of Shamim's Comments

Number of Comments	Number of Times Comments Appeared in Specific Locations	Number of Surface Comments and Substance Comments	Number of Times Each Purpose was Applied to Comments (Some Comments Have Multiple Purposes)
1	1 End Comment	1 Surface. 1 Substance.	1 Praise 1 Problem Identification 1 Advising/Suggesting

Shamim displayed a very growth mindset, and then in the context of this assignment gave a comment that focused on specific problems with Karley's draft. He was encouraging and even told her that he hoped the comment will help in revision. Most of the comment focused on substance-level concerns, such as the development of ideas and revising for genre expectations. He also had praise at the beginning and end of the comment. However, the comment also has a purpose of editing the document. Therefore, in the context of this particular assignment Shamim seems to have a balance of different purposes.

Karley reacted very positively to the comment:

Yeah. I felt like they were helpful when I read them just now. I absolutely really liked that he numbered them and did each one like specifically what I have to do because that way when I go back, I can kind of check it off on this that I took it one by one. So, I really liked that. And then I think those four suggestions are helpful because now that I know that I need to do that, but it gives me an idea of

everything what he saw that I should work on, so I'll definitely go back and take each one into consideration.

Karley also stated here that she was going to consider the comment as she revised her draft and enjoyed the clarity of this feedback. She preferred the opening comment saying that “it made me feel proud he liked parts of it.” Furthermore, she described feeling “good and happy” about her draft and the changes she was going to make.

However, when I examined the revisions, Karley only did half of what Shamim suggested:

Table 11

Summary of Karley’s Revisions

Revisions: 2 Total	Type of Revision
Changed to APA format	Surface
Restructured paper with headers and transitions	Meaning-Changing (macro-level)

I only saw Karley doing the APA formatting and restructuring into headings and transitions that Shamim’s comment suggested. She did not elaborate on her evaluation nor did she add in details of the movie to the second paragraph as Shamim suggested. Karley had a growth mindset and processes the comments in a positive and productive way, but only does half of the revisions suggested by her professor. This suggested that she approached the revision in a fixed mindset way despite being growth toward the comment in her think-aloud. Here I again saw that there is a shift between the growth and fixed mindset in relation to teacher comments. While Karley processed the comments by

viewing them through a growth mindset, when she applied them it appeared that she does so through a fixed mindset.

Conclusion

This chapter has highlighted three specific case studies of responding to student writing in first-year composition courses at a Western Pennsylvania university. It showed teachers and students mindsets, teachers' preferred methods, what teachers think shapes those methods, and what they think the purpose of their comments are. It also shows students' preferences in comments, and finally, it showed teacher comments and how students process and apply those comments.

Chapter 5 will first synthesize results across each case study, and it will situate the results within composition scholarship to describe how this study affirms prior research and extends it. Following this, it will offer pedagogical implications. Finally, it will suggest avenues for future research that emerge from these results.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

In this final chapter, I discuss the results of the case studies presented in Chapter 4 and discuss their implications for composition pedagogy and research. In what follows, I begin by summarizing and synthesizing the key results across the three case studies in relation to this study's research questions. I will then discuss how these results also reaffirm and extend previous research in composition studies. Following this, I outline pedagogical implications based on these results. Lastly, I will discuss the future research that could be conducted based on these exploratory case studies.

Key Results

In this section, I synthesize the results across all the teacher participants and the student participants. I do so via each research question.

Research Question #1 Results

The first research question I posed was what are the mindsets (growth, fixed, or neutral) of individual teachers and students in three composition classes at a Western Pennsylvania institution? Two teachers in the context of this particular study, Lori and Shamim, often displayed “very growth” mindsets, and one teacher, Amber, often displayed a “fixed mindset.” In regard to students in the context of this study, there was a bit more of a range: Darcie often displayed a “fixed mindset,” Karley often had a “growth mindset,” and Samantha often had a “very growth mindset.” While each participant often displayed a particular mindset, they were all more on a continuum rather than having an “either/or” for their mindsets. This is because in this context with these participants, nearly all of them displayed moments of both mindsets. This variety highlights the

complexity of mindsets theory and shows the fluid nature of mindsets in different domains and with different teaching practices and learning tasks for students, which reaffirms Dweck's (2006) claim that mindsets depend on context and domain. This result also hints at the fact that mindsets are not always so dichotomous. Because mindsets are not dichotomous, they may shift and change depending on the task, context, and individual.

Research Question #2 Results

The second research question I posed was: what are the preferred commenting methods of teachers with growth, fixed or neutral mindsets? All three teachers had some shared preferences in their commenting methods and some subtle differences. Amber utilized a "sandwich method" which started with some praise, then moved into discussing a few areas students needed to improve upon and ended by encouraging students to make those revisions/improvements. Lori talked about her commenting methods balancing praise and criticism as well, but also mentioned that she asked a lot of questions to guide her students. Furthermore, she tried not to overwhelm her students by giving too many comments because she believed that would hurt their motivation. Shamim also thought that he should guide his students, but called it being "facilitative" rather than being "authoritarian." Additionally, Shamim discussed the merits of praise because he wanted students to "accept his comments."

A sub component of this research question asked about teachers' purpose in giving questions and what shaped their comments. First of all, every teacher agreed on the purpose of teacher comments as being to "help students become better writers." Likewise, they agreed that their mindsets and their students' mindsets play some role in

shaping their comments. In regard to students' mindset, student participants all suggested that the tone of their comments might change if they knew their students' mindsets. Teachers mindsets seemed to shape their comments, but teachers were not able to explicitly articulate how their mindsets shaped their comments. However, it appeared that when teachers knew student mindsets, they praised more or less depending on if the student had a growth or fixed mindset.

While the teachers mostly agreed on what shaped their comments and their preferred methods of commenting, there was some slight variation. Amber said her previous experiences and identity as an athlete shaped how she gave feedback. Lori said even the time of day and what was going on in her life might affect the types of comments she gave. Lastly, Shamim thought his relationship with individuals affected the types of comments that he gave.

Research Question #3 Results

The third researched I asked was: what comments do students with growth, fixed, or neutral mindsets prefer on their writing? Darcie, who often displayed a fixed mindset, preferred comments that "told her what to fix." Furthermore, she wanted comments that "showed the teacher cared about her writing." Karley, who often had a growth mindset, also wanted comments that helped her revise her writing and went beyond just telling her the writing was good. Samantha, who often had a very growth mindset, just preferred receiving any comments on her writing, but also liked specific, clear comments.

In terms of comments that students did not like, all three participants did not want comments that were not specific and just told them to "fix this" or "develop their ideas."

They wanted an explanation of why they should fix parts of their writing and what they should do to make these revisions.

Research Question #4 Results

The fourth research question posed was: how do teachers with growth, fixed, or neutral mindsets comment on student writing? All three teachers used electronic means to make their comments. Amber and Lori used Microsoft Word's commenting feature, and Shamim used the commenting feature in the D2L course management system. Amber, who often had a fixed mindset, wrote comments on the final draft, and Lori and Shamim, who often had very growth mindsets, wrote comments on the rough draft. It is important to note here that there may be contextual factors that are not accounted for in this study that might have shaped the choices of when to comment. Amber's third assignment was the precursor towards the developed final assignment in her class, so perhaps this was why she commented on the final draft of the third assignment. Furthermore, Lori and Shamims' third and fourth assignment were different and did not build upon one another, which might have played a role in their decision to comment when they did.

Besides the general method and time, I also asked a question about the location of teacher comments. Amber's comments were mostly in the margins, but she did have one end comment and one intertextual comment. All of Lori's comments were in the margins, and all of Shamim's comments were endnotes.

An important component of studying these comments was also what level of attention the comments appeared to focus on. Amber, who often displayed a fixed mindset, had the most surface level comments in the study. However, she still had more substance comments than surface comments. Lori, who had often a very growth mindset,

had nearly all substance comments, and Shamim, who also often had a very growth mindset, had a balance between substance and surface level comments.

Lastly, I asked a question about the purpose of teachers' comments. Amber's comments mostly had the purpose of problem identification and advising/telling, but she had editing comments as well. These purposes might again be because she was commenting on the final draft of the essay. Alternatively, Lori asked a lot of guiding questions in her comments. Shamim only made one comment at the end and the purpose of this comment was praise and problem identification/advising/telling. On some level, each participant had at least a few comments that appeared to be growth-oriented and a few that were fixed-oriented. I believe this again highlights the fluid and contextual nature of mindsets.

Research Question #5 Results

The last question I posed for this study was about how students with different mindsets processed and applied teacher comments. All three students, who had various mindsets, seemed to be open to comments; though, they all expressed different experiences with reading them. Darcie reported relief that she did not receive a bad grade on her writing. As a result, she was open to revising her future writing based on her teachers' comments, and she appeared to approach these comments with a growth mindset. This view varied from her interview transcript. Darcie also reported little emotion when she discussed revising her writing. Karley was pleased with the comments she received, felt "good," and stated she would revise her writing based on Shamim's comments. Samantha, on the other hand, was "frustrated" and "confused" but stated 25

times that she would revise her writing to meet genre expectations, reach her audience, and make her writing clearer.

Like the processing of comments, when students viewed and utilized comments in revision, they drew on multiple mindsets. Samantha, who often had a growth mindset in her interview, had moments where it appeared she viewed comments with both a growth and fixed mindset. The fixed mindset came when she had negative emotional reactions such as confusion or frustration. However, she also had moments of growth mindset where she was determined to figure out how to address these comments. Samantha also showed that she might be revising with a growth mindset because she did the most revisions out of the three participants with 14 total revisions. Karley, who displayed a growth mindset by having positive reactions to the comments, appeared to approach the revisions that Shamim suggested with more of a fixed mindset. She only did total two revisions and Shamim commented on four areas for her to improve upon. Darcie had no follow-up draft, so it is tough to say what revisions, if any, that she did.

Implications for Extending Previous Composition Research

Given these results, I now turn to discussing how these case studies reaffirm and extend previous research in composition. By examining student mindsets in an FYC context, this provides new insights into how they affect teaching and learning in these courses. I offer five ways that the results of this study have extended understandings of response in composition research, as well as research on mindsets.

Mindsets as a Theoretical Framework

Previous research in responding to student writing has argued that response is a time-consuming factor, which impacts comments that are given (Anson, 2012) and that a

host of factors shape how teachers might respond to student writing, including unconscious gender bias (Haswell & Haswell, 1996), teacher attitudes about response (Gellis, 2002; Paterno, 2002), teachers personalities (Callahan, 2000; Carrell, 1995) and the contexts in which the response happens (Straub, 2002). In my study, there appeared to be moments when teachers would give comments that are growth or fixed and it did not matter what mindset they often displayed. While this does not give nice, neat, tidy categories of mindsets, it does offer a way to view certain types of comments that teachers give. If teachers are trying to help students identify problems and advise them to change those problems, then that is more growth and process based. If teachers are editing more, this is more fixed and product based. I mean not to critique, but rather ways we can conceptualize comments and what might be shaping them.

Extends Understandings of How Students Process and Apply Teacher Commentary

Previous research on response has examined how students process teacher comments (Straub, 1997) and how teachers commentary impacts revision by finding that they largely depend on the individual student, context, and if comments are positive and focused on ideas (Ferris 1997; Tregalia, 2008; Wingard & Geosits, 2014). Darcie, Samantha, and Karley all engaged with comments in individualized and contextual ways. Using the framework of mindsets shows why and how they might be engaging with those teacher comments. Darcie often had a fixed mindset in the study and then cared the most about grades. However, after receiving a desirable grade she appears to view teacher comments in a growth mindset way by being open to them and stating that she will use them to revise her writing. Furthermore, Samantha often had a very growth mindset, but there were times when she viewed her comments in a fixed way by being frustrated and

confused. However, she also viewed those same comments with a growth mindset and ultimately appeared to view her revisions from those comments with a growth mindset by doing all the revisions that Lori suggested. Lastly, Karley processed her comments with a growth mindset by finding them helpful and stating that she would use them to revise. However, she appeared to view the revisions with a fixed mindset, as she only does half of them. I believe these results indicate that mindsets in a particular context with a particular situation could be the reason that students are engaging or not engaging with some comments and revising or not revising based off comments. It is worth noting that there certainly could be more reasons by students are processing and applying comments in particular ways that are not focused on within the methodology of this study. However, it does not change the fact that mindsets offer a new lens through which to view students' processing and application of these comments.

Reaffirms Teacher Mindsets Might Shape Student Mindsets

In her article "Mindsets for Equitable Education," Dweck (2010) argued that teachers' mindsets may have an influence on student mindsets, so it is important for teachers to be aware of how this concept might impact their students. In my study, the mindset that teachers often have matched up nearly perfectly with mindset students often had. This may be because of the limited number of participants. However, it is also possible that teachers, unconsciously, may be influencing how students view their writing ability and skills. Therefore, this reaffirms Dweck's (2010) claim that it's important for teachers to understand how their mindset might impact a students' mindset.

Offer Another Potential Way to Measure Mindsets

Mindsets have traditionally been measured via questionnaires and surveys (Dweck, 2006). I purposefully chose to use interviews to discover which mindsets teachers and students often had. I thought this decision allowed the fluid and contextual nature of these mindsets to become more apparent and moved them beyond a binary. My co-author and I first did this with an unpublished study on graduate student writers, by looking at interviews that were designed to understand students' learning transfer, writing development, and later, mindsets (Driscoll and Powell, 2018, in preparation). However, in the current study, I started with mindsets questions and looked at them in one semester only. I thought the opened-ended manner of interview questions that I formed out of mindsets questionnaires allowed for nuance descriptions of mindsets. Additionally, I asked about participants views on different aspects of teaching composition and writing genres/tasks. Again, I thought this would open up the door for nuance in their answers and also to see if the mindset would shift with different contexts or domains. I have included these questions in Appendix B, so others can use it as a method for measuring mindsets and to encourage further research to strengthen the interview questions to continually consider how mindsets shift and are fluid.

Mindsets are Contextual and Along a Continuum

Dweck's (2006) work on mindsets suggests they are domain and context specific. My case studies appear to reaffirm this fact. Amber and Darcie often had fixed mindsets, but each also had several moments of growth mindsets, and with certain aspects of their teaching and learning, they believed they could improve. Furthermore, Karley, while mostly growth-oriented, had a moment of a fixed mindset with personal genres. Lori and

Samantha had many moments of very growth mindsets, but also had moments where they were fixed – either with their approach to teaching in the case of Lori, or with their view of a few teacher comments with the case of Samantha. These varying mindsets suggested to me that individuals fall more along a continuum and can have moments with growth and fixed mindsets depending on the task, moment, context, and situation. This extends Dweck’s research to suggest that we should approach the categorization of mindsets as not an “either/or” but a “degree to which” they are a particular mindset.

Pedagogical Implications

While mindsets are fluid, individual, and contextual, I do think they offer one framework to understand responding to student writing in FYC contexts. It appears that teachers and students are interacting with teacher comments in ways that suggest growth and/or fixed mindsets. Because of this, I offer several pedagogical implications detailed in the following sections.

Mindsets and Composition Teacher Training

I believe that mindsets could an important concept to add to composition teacher training. Because each teacher participant had moments of growth and fixed mindsets, and these moments cause a shift in perspective and different kinds of interactions through comments or what they thought of particular tasks. Therefore, I think teachers could benefit knowing that about their teaching. Dweck (2014) already has professional development for teachers built around the idea of teaching mindsets. I think that extending this professional development with the results of my study would also be necessary. In particular, I would suggest having teachers think of their mindsets along a continuum, and also understand that mindsets can be contextual, fluid, and individual.

Constant Dialogue with Students About their Mindsets

In this consideration for teachers about their mindsets, I believe that teachers should continually consider their students' mindsets in similar contextual, fluid, and individual ways. Teachers could do this in a variety of ways that work for the individual students in the context of their FYC courses. For example, teachers could have students write reflectively about certain genres they are engaging with throughout the semester and see what their mindset might be toward each new genre. They could do the same with other parts of the course such as informal writings, peer review, and even types of feedback on their writing. Therefore, this could help teachers consider their interactions with their students. If students are more growth with one genre and more fixed with another, then this might change how a teacher comments on a draft of that writing or how they talk to the student about that writing. If writing comments is supposed to be individual and contextual, then knowing students' mindsets with that particular genre would go a long way in helping teachers write more individual and contextual comments on that genre.

Fixed Mindsets and Success

Prior research has often found that when individuals have a fixed mindset they are not successful, but I believe my study highlights potential ways teachers can help fixed students succeed. In my study, these individuals did do several actions that could be interpreted as successful. For instance, Darcie had a fixed mindset with improving her writing because she only wanted to improve to get a better grade and needed the grade to motivate. As anyone in education knows, earning good grades are the goal of nearly all students. Grades are a part of assessing learning, so Darcie's view cannot be viewed in a

negative light. Knowing a student's focus on the grade may even help teachers construct comments that lead to the student focusing on improving writing to earn a better grade.

Likewise, I mention that Amber commented more on surface/local concerns than other participants. However, she still had more comments on substance/global concerns than on surface/local concerns. While we do not want to see teachers become editors, a few comments on editing could be good for particular students and their needs. I think it is important to highlight where having a particular fixed mindset might be used in a beneficial way and for teachers to consider how to best interact through comments or other parts of the class to help promote student success regardless of students' mindsets.

Future Research

This dissertation examined how teachers and students with certain mindsets interacted with responding to student writing in the context of a specific assignment. While it has shown that a few participants have particular interactions with responding to student writing in a context and that mindsets can shift within that context, it was not the goal of this study to find generalizable patterns as that is outside of the purview of case study methodology. In fact, I recognize the messiness of this study and instead conclude this dissertation by suggesting that my study opens the door for further research that builds deeper understandings of mindsets in FYC classes and with responding to student writing.

My first suggestion is for future work to continue working on methodologies that use mindsets but avoid the binary categorization and account for contextual and individual differences. As I mentioned in the limitations of Chapter 3, observations may be another methodology that could account for the individual and contextual nature of

this disposition. I think observations show another task a person is engaging with that may be affected by their mindset. Furthermore, I would also suggest researchers use more member-checking practices to try and accurately represent the participant, and in doing so, I believe they will see that participants will have different mindsets at different moments and different contexts. This also would better account for researcher bias if the researcher often displays a mindset that is different than her or his participants.

To account for the fluid and contextual nature of mindsets, I also suggest that future research looks at different types of writing and writing across different courses within in the same semester. This study focused on one assignment, but it is entirely possible that mindsets might be more fluid and contextual than my study suggests, and this could be examined across several contexts in one semester. It may also be possible that in one context the mindset of teachers and students stays very consistent.

Besides one semester, mindsets could impact students and teachers over several years. Therefore, future work should do longitudinal research on how mindsets affect development in different contexts for longer periods of time. Response may also be impacting this development, and therefore, this might also be a useful practice to look at for long-term writing and teaching development. Essentially, I mean that studying mindsets and response together, may have implications for learning transfer and writing development. Difficult longitudinal work would tell us about how these concepts, working in tandem, affect the long-term success of our students or even their teachers.

Lastly, I narrowed the focus on this study to mindsets and response; however, because responding to student writing is so individual and contextual there may be other factors shaping how teachers comment and how students process and apply these

comments. In this study alone, participants mentioned the time of day, what is going on in their lives, and their previous experiences/identity as factors that shaped either the way that teachers commented or the ways in which students processed and applied those comments. Furthermore, I believe other dispositions such as self-efficacy or ownership could impact responding to student writing. There are many factors not examined in this study or the literature on response that could shape this practice and further research will highlight these other factors. In a similar vein, these same factors may shape mindsets – i.e. identity, previous experiences, other dispositions, etc., may be factoring into how an individual has a mindset in a particular context. More research will surely flush out these possibilities. Ultimately, because mindsets and response are so individual and contextual, they offer important and interesting options for future work. With these two concepts, the possibilities are endless.

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Appendix A

Teacher Consent Form

Dear Teacher Participant:

I am conducting research on how mindsets towards teaching impact the kinds of comments teachers give on student writing. You are eligible for this study because you teach English 101 at IUP and are enrolled in the mentoring program for teaching associates and temporary faculty.

For this study, you will be asked questions in an interview about your mindset and your comments. This interview will be semi-structured and will last approximately 30-40 minutes. You will also be asked to share your comments for students who participate in the study. Additionally, I may conduct “member-checking,” which means I may contact you outside of the study to make sure that I’m accurately representing you in the study. Lastly, I may follow-up with our interviews via email to ask additional questions. This interview will provide you with the opportunity to further reflect on your commenting strategies and your mindset.

Risks are minimal for your involvement with this study. If you choose to participate in this study, you will not experience any risks that are greater than the ones you might experience in your everyday life.

Participation in this research study is completely voluntary. You have the right to withdraw at any time or refuse to participate entirely without jeopardy to your academic status or standing with the university. You may choose not to answer any question during the interview. Your identity will remain confidential and only the researcher will know your name. If data is presented from this study, you will be given a pseudonym to protect your privacy. Please also note, that if students share any information, good or bad, about the quality of your instruction that this information will not be shared with any members of the IUP English Department, or the entire institution of IUP.

If you have any questions about the survey, please contact me via phone: Roger Powell: 701-610-1373, via email at r.powell@iup.edu. You may also contact my faculty sponsor, Dr. Dana Driscoll at 724-357-3968 and dana.driscoll@iup.edu with any questions you have. This project has been approved by the Indiana University of Pennsylvania Institutional Review Board for the protection of human subjects (phone 724-357-7730).

VOLUNTARY CONSENT FORM:

I have read and understand the information on the form and I consent to volunteer to be a subject in this study. I understand that my responses are completely confidential and that I have the right to withdraw at any time. I have received an unsigned copy of this informed consent form to keep in my possession. I am a temporary faculty or teaching associate enrolled in the mentoring program for the IUP English Department, and I am teaching English 101 in the fall of 2017. I understand that if I withdraw from this interview, which can be done by simply

stating that you would like to withdraw, and any data from the interview will be destroyed immediately.

Name (PLEASE PRINT)

Signature:

Date:

Appendix B

Student Consent Form

Dear Student Participant:

I am conducting research on how mindsets towards learning impact how students react to teacher comments and use them to revise your writing. You are eligible for this study because you are a student enrolled in English 101 at IUP.

For this study, you will be asked questions in an interview about your mindset towards learning impacts how you react to teachers' comments and revise your writing based on these comments. This interview will be semi-structured and will last approximately 30-40 minutes. You will also be asked to share your drafts before and after you have received feedback and also engage in a think aloud protocol where you first share your teacher comments with me and then describe what you are thinking about as you read comments on your writing. This think-aloud protocol will also last approximately 30-40 minutes. Additionally, I may conduct "member-checking," which means I may contact you outside of the study to make sure that I'm accurately representing you in the study. Lastly, I may follow-up with our interviews/think-alouds via email to ask additional questions. This interview will provide you with the opportunity to further reflect on how your mindset may impact your reactions to teacher comments and your revisions from comments.

Risks are minimal for your involvement with this study. If you choose to participate in this study, you will not experience any risks that are greater than the ones you might experience in your everyday life.

Participation in this research study is completely voluntary. You have the right to withdraw at any time or refuse to participate entirely without jeopardy to your academic status or standing with the university. You may choose not to answer any question during the interview, questionnaire, or think aloud protocol. Your identity will remain confidential and only the researcher will know your name. If data is presented from any of the above-mentioned methods, you will be given a pseudonym to protect your privacy. Your teacher will not know if you do or do not participate in this study.

If you have any questions about the study, please contact me via phone: Roger Powell: 701-610-1373 or via email at r.powell@iup.edu. You may also contact my faculty sponsor, Dr. Dana Driscoll at 724-357-3968 and dana.driscoll@iup.edu. This project has been approved by the Indiana University of Pennsylvania Institutional Review Board for the protection of human subjects (phone 724-357-7730).

VOLUNTARY CONSENT FORM:

I have read and understand the information on the form and I consent to volunteer to be a subject in this study. I understand that my responses are completely confidential and that I have the right to withdraw at any time. I have received an unsigned copy of this informed consent form to keep in my possession. I am at least

18 years of age or older and I am enrolled in an English 101 course in the fall 2017 semester at IUP. I understand that if I withdraw from this interview, which can be done by simply stating that you would like to withdraw, and any data from the interview will be destroyed immediately.

Name (PLEASE PRINT)

Signature:

Email that is best to contact you:

Date:

Appendix C

Teacher Semi-Structured Interview Protocol

1. Tell me a little about your teaching background/training.
2. How would you describe yourself as a teacher?
3. Tell me which statement you agree more with and why:
 - a. Statement 1: Some people are born to be writing teachers and can do so with very little effort.
 - b. Statement 2: Anyone can become a writing teacher with enough practice, training, and persistence to improve their practice.
4. Do you think your teaching ability has improved over time?
 - a. Follow-up: Do you think you can continue to improve your teaching over time?
5. Are there particular aspects of teaching writing that you do not feel like you can improve upon?
 - a. Potential Follow-up: If so, what are they and why? If not, why?
6. What are your thoughts about having your teaching observed by more experienced faculty?
7. Do you observe other teachers?
 - a. Follow-up: What do you gain from that?
8. Do you think it's important to read pedagogical articles?
 - a. Follow-up: Do you read articles about teaching?
9. Do you to reflect on your teaching? If so how?
10. Do you think all students can learn to be better writers? Why or Why not?

11. Do you think the way you view your teaching and ability to improve your teaching alters the way you comment on student writing? If so, how? If not, why?
12. Do you think student mindsets affects your comments? If so how? If not, why?
13. What's the purpose of commenting on student writing?
14. When do you give comments on student writing? Drafts? Final papers? Both?
And why?
15. Describe the types of comments you give to student writing.
 - a. What do you focus comments on?
 - b. How would you describe the tone of your comments?
16. A brief scenario here: Student A believes that her writing abilities can never get better. She thinks that some people are born to write, and some aren't. They turn in an essay that is poorly organized and several points need to be further developed. Student B believes that her writing abilities can always be improved through hard work and persistence. Everyone may not be able to be the best writer who ever lived, but everyone can improve their writing knowledge and skills to be better. She also turns in an essay that is poorly organized and several points need to be further developed. How would you comment on each one of these students' writing?
17. What are your thoughts on using technology to comment on student writing?
18. What factors impact how you comment that you have not discussed so far in this interview?
19. Any other response methods you use besides commenting?

Appendix D

Student Semi-Structured Interview Protocol

1. Tell me a little about yourself, where are you from? What are thinking about majoring in?
2. Which statement do you agree with more, and why?
 - a. My intelligence is something very basic about me and I either have it or I don't.
 - b. My intelligence is something I can develop over time with effort and hard work.
3. Do you think you can improve your academic skills and/or knowledge over time? Why or why not? How might you improve them?
4. How would you describe a good writer?
5. Another statement, tell me which one you agree more with and why:
 - a. Good writers are born that way and it shouldn't take much effort to develop their abilities.
 - b. Good writers develop their talent with hard work, effort, and overcoming obstacles and failures in their writing.
6. Which describes you better:
 - a. I'm not a good writer and I just don't think I can improve upon my skills and writing.
 - b. I may not be a perfect writer, but I feel I can always improve my writing skills through hard work, persistence, and practice.

7. What are your thoughts about not doing well on a piece of writing? What does that tell you about your writing and yourself as a writer?
 - a. Follow-up to this: Does your views about yourself as a writer change with different type of writing?
 - b. Follow-up: Does your views about yourself as a writer change given what's going on in your life?
 - c. Follow-up: Does how you view yourself as a writer determine how hard you work on that piece of writing?
8. What are your thoughts on writing different genres (kinds) of essays?
9. Have you received comments on your writing from a teacher before?
10. If you have, can you describe what those comments usually told you to do?
 - a. What are the most helpful comments for you as a writer?
 - b. What are the least helpful comments/feedback for you as a writer?
11. Does the way you view yourself as a writer impact the types of comments you like to get?
12. Let's say a teacher gives you really harsh or rude comments, what is your reaction?
13. Why do teachers give comments?
14. Do teacher comments help you with your revision?
15. What do comments tell you about a teacher?
16. What do comments tell you about your writing?
 - a. What do comments tell you about yourself as a writer?

Appendix E

Student Think-Aloud Protocol

For each comment, please tell me three things:

1. What does this make you think of?
2. Do you think this is going to affect your ability to revise your paper?
3. And are you feeling any emotions as you read the comment?