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ABSTRACT

The Impact of Independence: A Look at First-Generation College Student Writers' Help-Seeking Behaviors

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In this qualitative research study, I share first-generation college students' help-seeking experiences with writing tasks and use an affective lens to investigate how first-generation students feel when navigating various help-seeking situations. Often, students' experiences and emotions highlight their commitments to independence. In this study, I found that students' feelings of insecurity and confidence both encouraged and discouraged help seeking with writing, that students expressed determination as a central affect when describing their commitment to independence, and that loneliness is a significant affect in regards to writing help seeking and independence. These findings provide writing center faculty and tutors and first-year composition instructors a framework for interpreting first-generation college students' expressions of confidence, insecurity, and determination. Using this framework, I give suggestions on effectively responding to the help seeking of first-generation students.

Keywords: first-generation college students, help-seeking behaviors, college composition, independence, affect

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Introduction

"Don't hesitate to reach out." "Come to my office hours!" "Let me know if you have any questions." As composition instructors, we naturally encourage students to seek help in our email sign-offs and end-of-class farewells. When students choose to take up these offers, providing the needed help can be time consuming and mentally taxing; however, these moments can help instructors develop positive relationships with students and plan for future lessons with individuals' questions and concerns in mind. Much of a writing instructor's work responds to students' help seeking, whether it looks like responding to emails, engaging with conceptual questions in class, clarifying expectations of assignments, or listening to students' concerns. Because help seeking presents opportunities for instructors to connect with students and support their writing development, it's important for writing instructors to investigate the *hows* and *whys* of students' help seeking with writing tasks.

Understanding help-seeking behaviors may be especially important when working with underrepresented students who face unique challenges in navigating the university and college-level writing. In this study, I focus on the writing experiences and help-seeking behaviors of first-generation (FG) college students in a university writing center because of widespread disciplinary and institutional concerns related to these students' retention, success, and sense of belonging in college. The findings are relevant to anyone who works with first-generation writers.

First, it is important to recognize that the first-gen identity itself is something that is variable and sometimes difficult to identify. The first-generation students in my study are all undergraduates whose parents never completed a four-year degree, though some institutions and

researchers restrict the first-gen definition to students whose parents haven't attended any college (Redford and Hoyer; Nguyen and Nguyen; Nunn 4). FG college students are often overlooked by instructors because, as Marshall states, "the outward manifestations of race and gender are easier to identify than the more difficult markings of class or literacy experience" (231). While this suggests that instructors are unlikely to know if a student is first-generation (unless the student self-identifies), it also raises the question of whether an instructor's knowledge of a student's first-generation status would even be helpful or if it would just lead to inaccurate assumptions. In response to these difficulties, scholars agree that the best step forward is to better understand the range of experiences and challenges FG students face in college composition (Marshall; Borchert; Bond).

Research has shown that FG students often have complicated experiences with and feelings toward seeking help. For example, because FG students experience a weaker sense of belonging on college campuses, they are less likely to view campus resources as theirs or ask questions regarding these resources (Nunn 159-160). Related research suggests that the relationship between FG students' sense of belonging and help seeking warrants further investigation within writing contexts because FG and working-class students are less likely to use writing center services or report that the help they received met their needs (Denny et al.; Bond). Developmental students (a group that can include but is not exclusively FG students) are also less likely to report that they need writing help (Missakian et al.). Due to these findings, I see the need for not only more writing studies research on what FG students' help seeking (or avoidance) looks like in sites of writing instruction but also what FG students personally experience when they seek help with their writing.

Better understanding the help-seeking behaviors and experiences of FG students is important because these students may feel less prepared for college-level writing than their multi-generation classmates. Denny et al. found that "in many ways, working-class students' lives before college have not prepared them for what they encounter on college campuses," and "the colleges they attend are not fully prepared for them either" (68). With both students and universities feeling unprepared, students may experience an out-of-place feeling that is often associated with imposter syndrome (Yamini and Mandanizadeh 71). While multi-generation college students often experience imposter syndrome along with their first-generation classmates, studies have shown that first-gen students experience imposter syndrome more frequently and more severely than other students, "often with deleterious consequences for their mental health, academic success, self-efficacy, and time toward degree completion" (Fisch 239). Efforts to counter imposter syndrome can benefit most, if not all, composition students, while specifically responding to first-gen students' needs.

Along with imposter syndrome, students may also feel dislocated in the classroom due to their own conflicting identities and expectations. While Denny et al. emphasize that first-generation students are certainly capable of adapting to a college's cultural environment, obtaining "middle-class cultural capital" requires time and sacrifice, and instructors can more empathetically interact with students if they are aware of these pressures. FG students may feel like they are exchanging their past for a new identity that likely seems distant or foreign to their families. As a result, succeeding in school may not feel like a complete victory for first-gen students, and that inner conflict complicates the already stressful life of a college student. Because of the way FG college students have to navigate imposter syndrome and emotional, cultural, social, and material factors that impact how and if they ask for help, it's valuable to

investigate FG students' affective experiences seeking help or choosing independence when writing.

In this thesis, I share FG students' help-seeking experiences and use an affective lens to analyze their self-reported accounts. I investigate how FG students feel when navigating various help-seeking situations. What do these emotions tell composition scholars about students' commitments to independence? In this study, I found that students' feelings of insecurity and confidence both encouraged and discouraged help seeking with writing, that students expressed determination as a central affect when describing their commitment to independence, and that loneliness is a significant affect in regards to writing help seeking and independence. These findings provide writing center faculty and tutors and first-year composition instructors a framework for interpreting FG students' expressions of confidence, insecurity, and determination. Using this framework, I offer suggestions for effectively responding to the help seeking of first-generation students.

Theoretical Framework

In order to investigate FG students' help-seeking behaviors, manifestations of commitments to independence, and the affective dimensions of these actions, I theorize both help seeking and independence. I provide extended explanations of these theories using literature from education, psychology, medicine, and writing studies. In this section, I define help-seeking theory, apply it to related studies in composition, and discuss the affective dimensions of help seeking. Next, I introduce theories of independence and analyze how independence and help seeking interact in composition contexts.

Help-Seeking Theory

At its roots in the medical field, help-seeking theory (also known as "health seeking") is related to "illness behavior," which is a term used to describe the way people monitor their bodies, define and interpret their symptoms, take preventive action, or use the health care system (Rickwood and Thomas 174). Similarly, in a nursing context, Cornally and McCarthy define help seeking as the process of someone actively seeking help (whether it be understanding, advice, information, treatment, or general support) from other people (281-282). Social work scholars Poole and Espadas break down help seeking into a "series of predictable steps": self-care, social network, informal helpers, formal helpers, and gatekeepers (165). Since each of these steps are more specifically *sources* of help rather than *behaviors*, it seems appropriate and important to investigate how help-seekers' behaviors may (or may not) vary based on which help source they approach. Education scholars Karabenick and Berger emphasize the importance of paying attention to the kinds of helpers students approach for assistance and why they do so because, to help-seeking students, these helpers are "individuals or other sources that facilitate accomplished desired goals" (238). Based on these definitions and conceptions, help seeking can be understood as an action (or series of actions) taken by a person whose goals and needs influence *whom* they petition for help and *why* they ask that person or source.

Investigating the *whys* behind peoples' choices to seek or not to seek help, social psychologists Bohns and Flynn note that "hot" emotions like embarrassment, face-saving, and social discomfort are major deterrents to seeking help (402). These findings significantly recognize that emotions interact with and influence help-seeking behaviors, since seeking help unavoidably requires a student to be vulnerable by revealing what they may perceive as their personal weaknesses or inadequacies. Bohns and Flynn also argue that even though most helpers have been help-seekers at some point and in some context, helpers often misread a lack of help

seeking as a sign that people do not need help. They suggest that educators who think through situations from the perspective of help-seekers are better able to empathize with the emotions guiding students' actions, more appropriately address help-seekers' concerns, and more accurately understand the *whys* behind help-seeking behaviors or a lack of help seeking.

Help seeking is a complex process that is impacted by emotion, relationships, and the expectations of both helpers and help-seekers. Scholars agree that helpers should differentiate types of help-seeking behaviors and consider the possible motives and goals behind what may appear as an avoidance of seeking help or a lack of needing help.

Help Seeking in Composition

Much of what composition scholars and instructors believe and know about the teaching and learning of writing hinges in part on how writers seek and give support. Since we believe that writing is a social activity, that writing is not natural, that revision is central to developing writing, that habituated practice can lead to entrenchment, and that failure can be an important part of writing development, we consequently care about help seeking (Adler-Kassner and Wardle). With these disciplinary beliefs in mind, attending to help seeking in writing studies advances already-existing aims within the discipline and can respond specifically to the pressing writing concerns of underrepresented students.

Despite this important relationship between help seeking and composition, most of the current research on help seeking comes from the fields of medicine, education, and sociology. Help-seeking theory has rarely been specifically applied to composition studies even when researchers' questions are closely connected to help seeking. Some notable exceptions include Aunkst's recent dissertation on writing help-seeking behaviors and writing self-efficacy, which demonstrates that perhaps writing studies is becoming more aware of help seeking. Additionally,

compositionists such as Missakian et al., Dean, Bond, and Denny et al. have focused on the discrepancies between FG students' expectations and writing center staff goals, and these studies discuss help-seeking behaviors and obstacles and work to measure these factors quantitatively. However, because these studies primarily measure help seeking quantitatively, I see the need for deeper qualitative analysis that more accurately and comprehensively describes first-generation composition students' help-seeking behaviors.

Help-seeking research in composition studies and related disciplines, such as educational psychology, often inconsistently defines and measures help seeking, and these inconsistencies result in conflicting findings. For example, while some composition scholars (Williams and Takaku) and educational psychologists (Ryan et al.) have found that high self-esteem and high self-efficacy positively correlate with help seeking, psychologist Nadler found that those with high self-esteem are more likely to refrain from seeking help. Williams and Takaku, Ryan et al., and Nadler all measured help seeking in different ways and worked with different student groups, so these kinds of discrepancies in findings naturally occur because of varied methods, a lack of a common vocabulary and theory, and limited research on help seeking in writing studies. All this has limited what compositionists can conclude about students' help-seeking behaviors with writing tasks. In response to this issue of conceptual clarity, I have worked to make this investigation replicable by applying an established theory of help seeking to my data.

In this study, I use the vocabulary and principles of help-seeking theory to analyze and organize students' self-reported experiences. In a composition context and for the sake of this thesis, I define help seeking as an adaptive and variable problem-solving process that works to obtain the power to resolve writing concerns. With this definition, I draw and build upon Poole and Espadas's theory of help seeking by recognizing that help seeking not only involves the

person or resource being approached for help but also the specific actions and emotions of the help seeker. I conceptualize help seeking as a process that consists of different actions, and these actions can be broken down into components, such as the *mode* of the help-seeking action itself (e.g., asking a question in class, sending an email, referring to Grammarly's suggested edits, etc.); the *emotion* that the student experienced with this action (e.g., the writer shares a concern rather than a direct question because they feel unsure and insecure, the writer asks for a direct answer because they feel confident and just need a simple answer, the writer feels nervous about the expectations of an assignment and requests models of an assignment, etc.); and the *helper*– the person, place, or thing toward which the help-seeking action is directed (e.g., the self, informal helpers, formal helpers, gatekeepers). Applying these components to a writing context, I work to consistently measure and investigate help seeking across my data.

Help-seeking theory provides the complexity needed to describe and analyze issues in composition by not only acknowledging traditional sources of help but also accounting for the ways that independence, self-care, and non-adaptive help-seeking strategies respond to particular writing needs. For this reason, my research uses help-seeking theory to understand a particular aspect of help seeking: independence. I explore the interrelationships between help seeking, emotion, and independence in FG students' composing lives.

Help Seeking and Affect

Although composition and education scholars peripherally discuss affect–moods, emotions, or dispositions–in the context of help seeking, affect is an under-explored dimension, especially considering some of the contradictory patterns that emerge from current research.

The most common affects investigated in relation to help seeking in composition studies are embarrassment and confidence. Studying undergraduate composition, Mitchell et al. found

that some degree of confidence is required for any help seeking, but students with high writing "self-efficacy"—which Bandura defines as confidence in having the "power to produce results" (3)—are generally more comfortable asking for help from an instructor and ask for this help more directly and quickly. While Mitchell et al. and writing center scholars Williams and Takaku found that students with lower writing self-efficacy and higher anxiety (those who may more obviously need writing help) are the ones seeking help, educational psychologists, such as Pajares and Valiante, conclude that students with high self-efficacy are most likely to seek help with their writing. To understand this discrepancy, it's helpful to note that low/moderate self-efficacy students and high self-efficacy students typically enact different help-seeking behaviors, and the question isn't just *if* they're asking for help but *how*.

Since high self-efficacy students are more likely to use self-regulated problem-solving strategies, they still approach instructors but often resolve their concern through a quick conversation or question (Mitchell et al.). On the other hand, educational psychologists and composition scholars have found varying results with students who have low-to-moderate writing self-efficacy–these students seek writing help more in some situations and less in others (Ryan et al.; Mitchell et al.; Williams and Takaku). For example, when student writers feel embarrassed about their writing abilities, asking for help can feel like they are "exposing their vulnerabilities" and can consequently lead to students avoiding or resisting situations where they are "imposing on others" (Bohns and Flynn 402). Contrasting embarrassment's common effects, social psychologists Gino et al. found that anxiety can lead to greater reliance on others' advice, since anxiety has been linked to low self-confidence.

These findings on affect and help seeking within a composition context are currently limited, but based on existing findings within writing studies and related fields like educational

psychology, we can tentatively conclude that while some degree of confidence is required for any help seeking, students with high writing self-efficacy are more comfortable asking for help from an instructor (and do so, directly and quickly), while those with low to moderate writing self-efficacy have been found to seek writing help more in some situations and less in others. Generally, anxiety encourages students' help seeking while embarrassment encourages help avoidance. I draw on this existing literature to better understand the affects associated with help seeking.

Theories of Independence

Autonomy, self-reliance, and self-regulated learning are all terms closely related to independence in psychological or educational studies. In the field of developmental psychology, independence is synonymous with "autonomy" and "self-reliance" and refers to the degree to which an individual behaves or makes decisions without relying on others (Van Petegem et al.). Within these disciplines, independence is conceptualized as a positive quality that can involve help seeking. For example, Newman, an education scholar, recognizes that self-regulated learning is not learning alone or in isolation but knowing whom, when, and why to ask for help with tasks so that students are prepared to become more self-reliant and independent as a result of their help seeking.

In the context of educational psychology and in connection to first-generation college students, independence is commonly understood as motives and values that are in direct contrast with interdependent motives and values. Psychological studies have defined interdependence as valuing and being motivated by others' needs (Phillips et al.; Hecht et al.; Chang & Wang; Stephen et al.; Tibbetts et al.). For example, an interdependently motivated student will pursue higher education with the goal of giving back to their community or assisting family members,

while motives of independence are conceptualized as a focus on "personal development and achievement" (Tibbetts et al. 636). Scholars have found that motives and values of first-generation college students are generally more interdependent, the motives and values of higher education in the United States traditionally promote independent values and reward students who demonstrate independence, or the ability to academically perform without outside help. Most studies which have investigated independence and first-generation college students have focused on the cultural mismatch and social identity threat which result from FG college students valuing interdependence within academic institutions that value independence (Phillips et al.; Hecht et al.; Chang & Wang; Stephen et al.; Tibbetts et al.). These relationships between interdependence, independence, and higher education position independence as a value and motive that is clearly linked to a student's worldview, values, and cultural identity.

Independence and Help Seeking in Composition

While Hecht et al.'s, Chang and Wang's, Stephen et al.'s, Tibbetts et al.'s, and Newman's studies have primarily connected first-generation college students and interdependence, FG students' interdependence doesn't necessarily translate to seeking help–in fact, education scholars have found that FG students are less likely to seek help and rely on others within academic institutions. For example, Phillips et al. found that students who view themselves as culturally interdependent are less likely to communicate and stand up for their individual needs when they feel like their interdependence conflicts with a college's cultural ideals of independence. Chang and Wang found that FG students often exhibited independence due to the pressure and motivation from their family to be "self-reliant, resilient, and emotionally stoic and tough . . . to survive and persevere" (291), while middle-class and upper-class students generally exhibited independence because of their desires to be self-expressive, pursue personal

interests, and gain a sense of freedom (280). These differences highlight how relational concerns and different perceptions of independence inhibit FG students' help-seeking behaviors, despite what seems like a potential positive connection between interdependence and help seeking.

In writing center studies, independence is generally conceptualized as a sign of development and the positive result of seeking writing help. For example, Larkin identifies independence as "the goal of writing center consultations" and concludes that writing help should lead students to eventually no longer require additional support. Similarly, Sabatino and Rafoth describe writing centers as a resource that helps students from varied backgrounds and abilities to become independent scholars, and North names writing centers' primary goal to be the empowerment of writers by providing tools that allow writers to move forward in writing endeavors without relying on others for assistance. In writing studies, scholars seem to agree that independence is a positive goal for student writers and that students can become more independent by using and learning from writing help sources.

With these current conceptions of writing independence in mind, I investigate the affective dimensions of FG students' reports of their help-seeking behaviors and the role that affects associated with independence plays in their writing help seeking. In this thesis, I adopt and slightly adjust Van Petegem et al.'s definition of independence. When I say "independence," I refer to the degree to which an individual behaves or makes decisions without relying on others. Additionally, I posit that in the context of FG students and their writing, it is important to consider what determines this degree of reliance or autonomy. Independence is not only a degree of relying on oneself or on others but the result of various circumstances and motives. I conceptualize independence as a state in which a student works to resolve writing issues without external help, whether they perceive this state as a necessity or as a choice.

By analyzing the relationships between independence, affect, and FG students' descriptions of help seeking, I explore how 1) FG students' feelings of insecurity and confidence can both encourage and discourage help seeking, 2) some FG students view a determination to be independent as a choice while others view it as requirement, and 3) loneliness is an important and under-studied aspect of independence that can negatively affect FG students' help-seeking behaviors.

Methods

The current research draws on data collected in 2021 under the supervision of Dr. David Stock. This mixed-methods study explored first-gen students' help-seeking behaviors with writing tasks and their experiences with Brigham Young University's Research and Writing Center (RWC). Initial analysis led me to notice that more than half of the students expressed a commitment to independence that inhibited their help-seeking behaviors. This pattern pushed me to return to the data with new research questions that guide this present study: How does FG college students' commitment to independence affect their help-seeking behaviors? What motivations and helpers allow FG college students to navigate a personal commitment to independence and seek writing help? What are the affective dimensions of students' commitments to independence? How are these affects manifest in FG students' help-seeking behaviors?

Data Collection

I analyzed the transcripts of six focus group interviews and three personal interviews with FG students. While designing my methods to collect these interviews, I was primarily influenced, both conceptually and methodologically, by Denny et al.'s and Bond's studies of first-generation students' writing needs. Both of these studies highlighted differences between

the help students received from the writing center and the help they expected or requested, so I included related questions in my interview protocol.

To recruit for this study, I contacted 452 students from BYU's First-Generation Student Organization and all first-year BYU students who self-identify as first-generation students. Sixteen students agreed to participate in a focus group interview, so I conducted six focus group sessions over nine days. Since the majority of my participants were first-year students, the thoughts and experiences found in the data may not be representative of older, more experienced students. Each student attended a single focus group, and the groups were self-assigned based on availability. While one of the focus group sessions unexpectedly turned into a personal interview since only one participant came, each of the other five groups had two to six participants. All of my interactions with participants (focus groups, RWC consultations, and interviews) had to be remotely conducted over Zoom due to COVID-19. This, at times, may have affected students' participation and their ability to follow and contribute to conversations due to technological difficulties and distracting environments. At the time of these focus groups, I also was an undergraduate writing consultant at the RWC. Consequently, when I introduced myself to participants, they were aware of my association with the RWC and my student status. My identity as a peer to these students and my connection to the resource I asked students to describe and critique likely impacted participants' comments.

The six focus group interviews were semi-structured; I referred to a list of set questions, but I often changed their order and asked follow-up questions to respond to what students shared (Appendix B). At the end of the focus groups, I invited students to participate in a 30-minute writing consultation with the RWC and then meet with me for a 15-minute follow-up interview to discuss their experience receiving help from the writing center (Appendix C). Dr. Stock

interviewed one of the three students who participated in a RWC consultation because I had worked as the student's tutor, and we did not want the student to feel pressured when reporting on her experience.

Data Analysis

After observing tensions between students valuing independence, seeking help, and dismissing but relying on parental help, I used MAXQDA to code my data. (See Appendix D for a link to my codebook.)

With questions concerning the relationship between FG students' writing help seeking, independence, and affect in mind, I used the transcripts to investigate how first-generation composition students' reflections on their help-seeking behaviors could inform and be informed by current theories on help seeking. For this reason, I used Poole and Espadas's definition of help-seeking theory as a jumping-off point for my codes. I used their help-seeking steps—self-care, social network, informal helpers, formal helpers, and gatekeepers (165)—as structural codes (content-based or conceptual phrases that represent the topic of the data [Saldaña 84]). These structural codes allowed me to first organize and categorize the different kinds of helpers referred to in the interview transcripts according to Poole and Espadas's schema. After coding the focus group and personal interview transcripts for the people, places, and things that participants refer to for writing help, I used process codes to capture the behaviors surrounding these sources of help (e.g., seeking clarification on expectations, following a class structure). Process coding uses gerunds to suggest action in the data, and this approach helped me identify students' actions relative to sources of writing help (Saldaña 96).

To better understand what first-generation students are doing around these people, places, and things when seeking writing help, I segmented the data by talking turns. I first coded full

talking turns that referenced a writing help source by labeling the segment with the speaker's pseudonym. I allowed myself to apply more than one structural code to a talking turn, but each structural code had exclusive content that covered the context and identified a writing help source. Focusing on the data covered by structural codes, I then applied process codes that would cover the speaker's description of the actions they took when seeking help. When applying process codes, I roughly segmented my data by sentence; sometimes I segmented by clauses that delivered a message (having both "theme" and "rheme") since many sentences were long and packed with multiple actions (Paltridge 129). This segmentation allowed me to apply a single process code to each segment, so even if a student mentioned several behaviors associated with a particular source of help, each process segment was mutually exclusive.

As participants described their help seeking with writing tasks, I recognized that help-seeking behaviors were closely connected with emotions. I relied heavily on Watson et al.'s PANAS scale for coding language to name the affects–emotions, moods, and dispositions– in my data and guarantee that I had a full range of positive and negative affects (Appendix A). On the original scale, some names are clearly emotions while others are more dispositional. Using the PANAS scale as a starting point for my affect codes, I grouped and collapsed similar affects based on what I saw in my data and added some *in vivo* codes, such as "insecure." Because of the connection between help seeking and emotions, I assigned at least one affect code to each process code so that I could analyze the emotion associated with different actions. I assigned affect codes based on the emotions explicitly recalled by the participant and those I could infer from their emotionally connotative language and other contextual details they provided in the transcripts (Saldaña 105). Based on my coding rules, process codes could have multiple affect codes assigned to them because I found that it was often impossible to accurately capture the

participant's emotion around a help-seeking experience without using multiple codes (e.g., when a student summed up her experience at the writing center, she described her mingled nervousness and appreciation). This importantly leads into my findings and implies that emotions are a key and complex aspect of seeking writing help. These coding groups (pseudonym codes, structural codes, process codes, and affect codes) allowed me to associate the first-generation students' behaviors and actions with various sources of help and the emotions they reported along with those actions.

As I coded my transcripts, I noticed that participants often described valuing their independence in writing tasks. Some would describe this independence as a necessity and means of academic survival, while others would describe their writing independence as self-efficacy and choice. As I coded FG students' help seeking, I found that independence could serve as a lens to help me interpret the information I was gathering on help seeking. I analyzed segments by evaluating which help-seeking behaviors (process codes) and emotions/dispositions (affect codes) were most closely related to the concept of independence. Since I define independence as working without the help of external resources or people, I analyzed the overlap between frequently reported emotions and the help-seeking behaviors that seemed most closely connected to independence (practicing skills, motivating self, asking questions, avoiding, etc.) so that I could describe how affects may manifest in actions. In this way, my coding addresses independence as a concept, even though it was not a concept for which I originally coded, and allows me to talk about relationships between FG students' sources of writing help, help-seeking behaviors, and affects associated with help seeking. In this thesis, I avoid quantitative representations of my coding, especially representations that might compare coded segments

across participants. Such representations could be misleading since I did not directly ask students questions about help seeking and independence in the focus groups and interviews.

Findings

Literature on FG students' help seeking suggests discrepancies between the writing help these students want and the help that they receive (whether it is too prescriptive, not prescriptive enough, etc.) (Denny et al.; Bond). While these tensions can make writing help sources more aware of FG students' writing needs and help-seeking motives, my findings add to composition research's understanding of FG's help seeking. I found that FG students' help-seeking behaviors and affects may manifest commitments to independence, so analyzing these affective dimensions revealed how emotion can both motivate and disincentivize help seeking with writing tasks.

In this section, I discuss three main findings that emerged from the data:

1. The contrasting affects of insecurity and confidence can both motivate and discourage FG students' help seeking.
2. Determined FG students may seek help, or they may try to write independently. In either case, some students feel compelled to be determined while others see determination as a choice.
3. Loneliness is often associated with first-generation students' help seeking.

The Discouraging and Encouraging Effects of Insecurity and Confidence on Help Seeking

FG composition students' help seeking is closely connected to emotions, and significantly, certain emotions can encourage or discourage help-seeking behaviors and influence whom students approach for writing help. In this section, I explore how insecurity and confidence, two of the most common affects that composition research connects to help seeking,

manifest themselves in participants' descriptions of their help-seeking behaviors and demonstrate the significant connection between FG students' emotions and help-seeking choices.

Insecurity

For the sake of this study, I define "insecurity" as a student feeling unsure or unconfident in the quality of their writing or their writing help-seeking attempts. I used "insecurity" as an *in vivo* affect code while analyzing my focus group data because of its prominence in the transcripts. Although generally categorized as a more negative emotion and associated with anxiety and embarrassment, students' expressions of insecurity were surprisingly connected to both positive and negative help-seeking experiences in my data.

On the positive side, insecurity often fuels students' efforts to seek help and improve their writing abilities. The majority of students feel like they're behind on skills that their classmates already seem to have, and they feel a pressure and responsibility to catch up. For example, a couple students feel inclined to express their writing insecurities to instructors at the beginning of a course and see their feelings of insecurity as an impetus to work with others. Flora, a first-year student, mentions to her professors that she takes in content "a little slower" but is "willing to catch up." Motivated by insecurity, Flora feels encouraged to practice literacy and writing skills. Similarly, Peter, a business student, makes an effort to read a lot of books since he can't ask his parents for help with his writing. Lily, a first-year student, shared, "I just feel like at this level I could have known more" and that "there are also things that I could have taken upon myself to learn." When faced with this kind of insecurity, students also seem comfortable independently exploring help resources and practices outside of their instructor. Lily noted that "showing [writing weaknesses] to other people is . . . a hard thing to do," and Ingrid, an international student, believes that she can learn on her own and "build" her own vocabulary.

While students often experience insecurity as motivation to seek writing help, this emotion can also lead to more negative help-seeking results or avoidance of help seeking. Students sometimes feel self-conscious about how they communicate writing concerns because they worry about being judged or not being taken seriously while expressing these concerns. Students resist seeking help when their insecurity is coupled with a fear of judgment or dismissal. Ruben, a bioinformatics student, feels frustrated by instructors or TAs dismissing his questions and stating that they have already explained the assignment when he seeks clarification. When he feels like his classmates understand the assignments, he feels insecure that his professors think that he is "joking in a way" or doesn't take the assignment seriously. When feeling dismissed and insecure, Ruben avoids future help seeking–"I don't want to send [professors or TAs] an email or talk to them because I feel like they're just going to backlash at me."

Students' insecurity coupled with a more specific fear of being judged as a first-generation college student also negatively affects their help-seeking behaviors. A few students said they worried about being misunderstood or judged because of their first-gen status and consequently avoid seeking help because they don't want to deal with help sources' assumptions about what they, as FG writers, do and don't know. Repeatedly, students mentioned that past negative responses to help seeking have made them feel "dumb" or they fear seeming "dumb." Peter thinks that he and other first-gen students struggle with asking for help because "we don't want to appear different, and we don't want to appear 'weaker' or 'less smart' because we go to resources." Peter noted that there is a stigmatization of turning to school resources because sometimes it feels like people may assume that those resources are only there for people "who don't know how to write or for the people who don't know anything." For Margaret, a transfer

student studying genealogy, the title “first-generation college student” has a negative connotation–“The first time I actually heard that phrase, it was like, ‘Oh, it sounds like you're a first-generation student, so you don't know what you're doing.’” Because of that experience and association, she doesn’t want people to know that she’s first-gen because they may assume that she’s incompetent or ignorant.

While insecurity coupled with fear commonly leads to avoidance of help seeking, insecurity coupled with comfort seems to encourage it. Fearing negative responses to their help-seeking efforts, students often prioritize working with writing help sources that make them feel comfortable and secure when they communicate their concerns. With comfort and security as priorities, students often turn to family members. For example, Ruben shared, “I rather just stay at home or ask my cousin or something.” Like Ruben, Margaret had a negative experience while seeking writing help. Her new help-seeking process includes her family: “I'll tell my family what the format is. We'll all look it up together. And then I have them help me with my essay so that, that's what we do at our house.” She shared that this approach felt more helpful than her experience at the writing center.

When navigating uncertainty and feelings of insecurity, participants are often drawn to comfortable and familiar help sources, even though they recognize that their family members are not always the most qualified or productive resource for writing help. Lily shared, “I struggle with asking for help” and “I like to get help from people I know, like my family,” but she says this is hard because she’s a first-gen student: “My parents are like, ‘I dunno what you're expecting.’” Other students are drawn to the familiarity of their friends but still feel unsure of whom to reach out to and unsure of an assignment’s expectations due to cultural and language differences. Mariana, a multilingual student, shared her struggles getting help from friends with

her writing: “Because they are native speaker, I asked them to read through it . . . sometime it will be very frustrated for me because I asked her for help, but they are not really willing to help me because they feel like they are not qualified to do that.” John, a multilingual international student, also shared that when he seeks help from native English speakers, they don't seem to understand his concerns, and he doesn’t understand the points they’re trying to express in their feedback.

On the other hand, 12 students said that insecurity in their abilities causes them to avoid relying on their family members or other familiar sources for writing help and motivates them to seek support from others. Peter’s parents historically didn’t have answers to his college-related questions, so he chooses not to ask them anymore when he feels insecure in his writing abilities because it feels “kind of pointless.” Instead, he shared that when he needs writing help, he does his best by asking his writing teacher for help. Simeon, an international student, shared a similar sentiment: “I can't ask my parents [for writing help], so I have to ask other sources. So, it kind of, like, motivates me.”

Overall, students’ expressions of insecurity are closely tied to how they seek help (or don’t seek help) with their writing. Building an affective framework for help seeking, we might note that insecurity has at least two dimensions. While insecurity at times plays an important role in helping students realize that their writing endeavors require or would benefit from working with a writing help source, it can also interact with a fear of judgment and overpower motivation to seek help.

Confidence

Scholars in composition have conflicting opinions on whether a student’s confidence in their ability to successfully complete writing tasks or seek help encourages or discourages help

seeking, and this makes confidence an interesting affect to explore (Williams and Takaku; Mitchell et al.; Pajares and Valiante).

More than half of the students feel some confidence in their writing abilities, and consequently, seeking writing help can feel unnecessary or not worth the time, according to a couple of them. Brock, a transfer student, shared, "I tend to not ask for help." He chooses not to go to the writing center, for example, because he's busy and feels comfortable with his writing. Students also sometimes recognize the worth and quality of their writing but still worry that it perhaps doesn't match the professor's expectations, so they are nervous to ask clarifying questions. These patterns demonstrate that for FG students, the underlying issue isn't always a lack of confidence in their writing abilities. Nine students feel some level of confidence and comfort in their writing abilities, but there are prominent fears and concerns about how others perceive their abilities. Regina, a student who feels very confident as a writer, sometimes feels defensive and wary of seeking help because she's the first in her family to attend college: "It makes me feel like a little bit vulnerable and, like, open to attack or anything . . . when I'm trying to ask for help from someone." Confidence in writing abilities coupled with a lack of confidence in a help source can lead to even more hesitance when seeking writing help. For example, when Margaret visited the writing center, she felt confident that her paper "really did work" but felt like the writing tutor's feedback didn't focus on or respond to the needs of her paper, so she has chosen not to return for help.

While a few students' confidence discourages their help seeking, a couple others' confidence drives them to get the help they need. Flora remarked, "I know for me, individually, it took a lot of confidence to just reach out and actually, like, really ask for help." Help sources also have the power to inspire confidence in students as they respond to student writing. This

may not necessarily motivate initial help seeking but can encourage future help seeking by creating a positive experience for the student. For example, students feel more confident asking questions when they are proud of aspects of their paper and when they receive answers that help them feel empowered to move forward. Four students felt validated and more confident after being reassured by a help source about a fear or concern they have about their writing. When Flora struggled with a research paper, she asked her professor for help and "he really broke down everything." This experience boosted Flora's confidence, and she now feels more comfortable receiving support from other research resources, like the library. After visiting the Research and Writing Center, Lily shared, "I think even just having [the writing consultant], like, confirm that my ideas were like valid . . . that was helpful." She also expressed that the confidence she developed from that experience has encouraged her to continue seeking help with her writing: "I feel like I'll be less anxious if I keep going back [to the writing center]."

In all, these examples demonstrate how feelings of confidence can disincentivize help seeking and encourage more independent work as students perceive themselves as capable writers and worry about others seeing them as less capable because of their help seeking. Contrastingly, confidence can also motivate help seeking because a few students associate receiving answers and feedback as something that affirms their capability of succeeding with writing tasks. Understanding a range of interpretations for students' confidence helps instructors develop a framework to interpret some of the common affects and help-seeking behaviors that FG students exhibit. Because of this affective framework, I can be more aware that every student displaying or expressing confidence is not necessarily experiencing writing or seeking help with their writing in the same way or that they are driven by the same motives.

Determination as Survival and Determination as Choice

For the sake of this study, I define "determination" as a student's resolve to write, develop writing skills, or seek help with their writing. "Determined" was one of my most commonly used affect codes when analyzing transcripts. When discussing their determination with writing and help seeking, students sometimes referred to interdependent goals and values, such as giving back to their community or making their family proud, but more commonly focused on independent goals. The affect of determination plays a prominent role in how students describe their self-motivation with writing tasks and how they push themselves to seek writing help. Perhaps most interestingly, students' expressions of determination highlight important differences in how student writers conceptualize agency when writing independently or seeking help. While a couple students are determined to be academically independent because of a personal resolution, others describe their determination to be independent as necessary for survival. Similarly, six students' determination to seek help felt compelled, while four students saw it simply as a choice. These agentic differences demonstrate contrasting dispositions and motivations that FG students can have when approaching writing tasks.

Determination to be Independent or Seek Help as a Choice

Students' determination sometimes led to help seeking in writing tasks as students acknowledged that they need to reach out to others because they can't get anywhere without the help. Students who recognized that they need others' help to succeed often connected this problem-solving and determination back to their parents, who also have motivated them to seek help. Ingrid, a multilingual international student, shared, "My parents are the ones that always tell me if you don't understand something, just go out and ask people. It's hard for me to ask for help, but I just decided I want to understand things and if I can't on my own, I'm just going to go

and ask." Simeon, another multilingual international student shared a similar thought–"Well, because I can't ask my parents, so I have to ask other sources. So it kind of, like, motivates me."

Even though some families encourage relying on others, other students avoid help sources because they recognize determination as an important cultural attitude to themselves and their families. A couple students described satisfaction and honor in accomplishing tasks on their own, and this determination sometimes motivated them to avoid writing help sources. Lily shared that as a Pacific Islander, "it's not usual to ask for help." She says that for her, this is "a prideful thing" because she feels like "there's a lot of triumph in overcoming things by yourself" and putting on "a strong face."

Some student behaviors are less shaped by family and more by individual determination. Several students determinedly push themselves to seek support in the writing process and ask follow-up questions. In these moments, determination overrides insecurity and allows students to ask for help. For example, when reflecting on his experience at the Research and Writing Center, Ruben shared that he eventually understood the writing tutor's feedback, but he needed to hear the explanation. He advised writing help sources to "go slow and make sure that the person is understanding." When the tutor first asked Ruben if he understood, he shared, "I was going to say, 'yeah,' even though I had no idea of what [the tutor] just said." Determinedly, however, Ruben asked for the tutor to repeat himself, and he was able to understand. His determination helped him choose to seek the help he needed in the moment.

Determination to be Independent or Seek Help as Survival

Contrastingly, other students feel like independence is their only option when they struggle with writing, so they feel compelled to work without external help. A couple students express a determination and a commitment to find answers to their questions and consequently

avoid help sources and work independently when help sources didn't sufficiently answer their writing questions. For example, Brock shared that his experience at a writing center was unhelpful. He "actually" wanted the help because he was working on "a really big paper," but he was told that it "looked fine" when he asked how to make it better. Because of that response, he felt like he had to solve his writing problems on his own and hasn't gone back to the writing center. Margaret, another student who had a negative experience at a writing center, shared that she felt forced into independently working on her writing when her writing center appointment "wasn't very beneficial." She stated, "I basically still had to figure it out myself because they didn't know how to help me."

First-gen students often believe that improving writing has to be done independently. Eleven students described practicing writing skills and doing their best as a lot of independent work (e.g., reading books, expanding vocabulary). When students described their weaknesses or feelings behind those weaknesses, they would often describe practice as a personal solution they were determined to follow through with, and they expressed that they see potential to independently build their writing skills. Ingrid, when reflecting on her experience as a first-gen student, shared that she has had to personally develop skills that she maybe would already have if her parents had attended college. She emphasizes that this reality doesn't define her–"I can learn on my own." FG students also demonstrate determination as they often have to independently problem-solve in order to succeed when finding quiet places to work, developing relationships with professors, and navigating college-level writing expectations.

FG students commonly express determination when discussing their experiences with writing. Building an affective framework for help seeking, it is clear that determination has at least two dimensions. Often, FG students' determination leads them to independence or seeking

help. Along both of these paths, some students feel like their determination is necessary for survival in higher education and others see it as a choice.

Loneliness and Seeking Help

Aligning with other scholars' findings on help seeking, students' expressions of insecurity, confidence, and determination are prominent in the transcripts. However, the affect and behaviors of loneliness are ever-present in the transcripts but not as prominent in current composition research, making it an important affect to investigate.

Participants often experience academic loneliness. As noted when discussing insecurity, several students, such as Ruben, fear "looking dumb," and this insecurity often moves toward loneliness when participants feel motivated to independently figure out writing tasks because "everyone else" seems to know what they are doing. Lily expressed loneliness through comparison–"I feel like I didn't get to learn that depth of what other people learned."

When describing differences they perceive between themselves and multi-generation college students, some participants feel different from others in their writing abilities due to financial constraints–either because they needed to take time working to save up for school and are more distanced from their high school writing experiences, or they have needed to work more hours throughout their college experience in order to pay tuition, and this limits the time they can spend on writing projects and development. Lily also described, "I am learning to fill in my papers how the professors want me to," and that has been a negative experience because she "just never had to do that before," and she's "trying to learn it" but feels like she's "learning it a little bit too late. Not too late, but later than everybody else." When more than half of the students see differences between themselves and other students, they feel behind and consequently, lonely.

Most first-gen students recognize that they've gotten pretty far on their own, and this demonstrates that loneliness is not an unfamiliar experience and feeling for FG students in their educational journeys. They often described feeling different from family members and different from classmates and say that this feeling of difference impeded their seeking help from both of these potential sources. Peter shared that sometimes during peer reviews, it's hard for him not to compare how he writes with how others write, and he notices that he writes "differently." Sometimes he wonders whether this difference means that he doesn't know as much as his classmates or isn't "as smart as them 'cause they write so well." With writing in general, he says it's easier to feel like "maybe you don't belong as much because you're just comparing how you are to other people."

Another difference that FG students perceive between themselves and classmates is that while MG college students are more likely to have connections at the university because of their parents' experiences, FG students are entering an institution without those prepared relationships that could help counter academic loneliness. Peter shared, "If your parents went to the same college as you, like, they know a professor or someone that really helped them. And so maybe that could be difficult, not actually having the connection with anybody here. Not, not knowing anybody pretty much." Without built-in support systems or guides to develop those support systems, students can feel isolated in their college coursework.

While students sometimes link loneliness to how they motivate themselves to work, they rarely link this to help seeking–rather, students acknowledge that they feel behind and are learning late, and for those reasons, they feel motivated to catch up and teach themselves. Within a writing context, loneliness can also complicate help seeking when students are given assignments that don't feel relevant or highlight that their experience/identity is not what

professors expect. Some participants noted that this leads to inconclusive and awkward exchanges when trying to communicate and resolve issues with professors. Regina shared, “Our teacher was like, ‘Ask your parents why they chose to go to the college that they went to.’ And I was like, ‘Well, my parents didn't go to college . . . I can’t do that assignment.’ And [the teacher] was like, ‘Oh, we'll just like figure something out.’” Regina felt like the writing assignment was inaccessible and isolating to her as a first-gen student and that her identity and life experience simply weren’t considered.

Because of its prominent presence in first-gen students’ college-level writing experiences, I suggest that scholars continue to study students’ feelings of loneliness, how they connect to independence, and how they can impact FG students’ help seeking behaviors with writing tasks. When adding loneliness to my affective framework, I don’t have as many possible interpretations of students’ expressions of loneliness at this point, so further research would strengthen this section of the framework and help instructors interpret these expressions and more effectively ask FG students about loneliness they experience. While experiences with loneliness closely relate to imposter syndrome (“a self-concept that one's record of accomplishments is not due to ability” or “the secret conviction that one is truly less intelligent and competent than one appears” [Yamini and Mandanizadeh 71]) and scholars like Fisch have already closely associated imposter syndrome with FG students’ experiences, it’s helpful to look at loneliness specifically because it is a significant affective aspect of feeling like an imposter. Loneliness doesn’t necessarily encompass the entire experience of imposter syndrome, but identifying loneliness as one of its symptoms could help instructors and others better identify and understand the condition.

Discussion

While analyzing participants' responses to questions about their writing help-seeking behaviors, it became clear that FG students often describe their choices to seek help or work independently not just as actions, but as affects–emotions, moods, or dispositions. All FG students felt insecure, confident, determined, and/or lonely to some extent as they navigate concerns with college-level writing. This is significant because what can be considered both positive and negative affects can provide more depth and nuance to what instructors may perceive as a low level or a lack of help seeking. Figure 1 summarizes these findings.

Figure 1.

Affect Expressed	Help-Seeking Action Taken	Possible Interpretation
Insecurity	Seeks help	FG student feels insecure in their writing abilities but comfortable with their source of writing help.
	Doesn't seek help	FG student feels a combination of insecurity and fear of judgment.
Confidence	Seeks help	FG student feels confident in their ability to communicate with a help source and receive help with their writing.
	Doesn't seek help	FG student feels confident in their ability to write successfully and consequently does not feel the need to seek writing help.
Determination	Seeks help	FG student feels determined to seek help because they associate choosing help with choosing academic success.
	Doesn't seek help	FG student feels compelled to be determined and independent because independence seems required for academic survival in an institution of higher education.
Loneliness	Doesn't seek help	FG student feels motivated to independently figure out writing tasks because "everyone else" seems to know what they are doing.
		FG student feels different from both family members and classmates. This feeling of difference and loneliness impedes seeking help from both of these potential sources.

Confidence and Insecurity

Instructors who understand how confidence and insecurity can discourage help seeking can work to create relationships and environments in which FG students' insecurity encourages them to seek help rather than avoid it. When FG students are insecure but also comfortable with a help source, they are more likely to seek writing help, which is why they often turn to family members. Instructors can foster familiarity with students so that students perceive instructors and other sources (like writing centers) as both expert *and* comfortable help sources. Writing instructors can develop familiarity instead of fear in several ways, but a good place to start would be forecasting or demonstrating what can take place during their office hours or a writing center consultation (e.g., how to arrange appointments, where they take place, how long the meeting will take, what kinds of questions they can ask, how they should prepare, etc.). Low-stakes first meetings can also increase comfort levels. If students are invited to meet with the instructor for a short introductory conference in their office at the beginning of the semester, students know where to go and can remember that they felt welcome there when they need help in the future.

These recommendations align with Nunn's research on first-year, first-generation college students' academic belonging in university spaces. Nunn found that FG students perform and feel better if they feel like they belong, and this belonging can be partially cultivated by not just inviting students to participate and use resources but by offering mentorship and help that recognizes that "first-generation students do not know what they do not know, so they cannot be expected to come up with all the right questions to ask" (167). Preparing and easing students into these help-seeking scenarios also shifts responsibility for belonging from students to institutions of higher education.

Determination

In addition to intentionally fostering familiarity, instructors can communicate that independence isn't students' only option. Often, the students who feel compelled in their determination to be independent feel embarrassed because they feel like they don't know what they're doing when everyone else does. In these scenarios, students seem to view independence as the only option to save face and avoid exposing vulnerabilities or asking seemingly obvious questions about language. Since feeling unable to ask questions publicly in class can contribute to students' determination to work independently, instructors can introduce other avenues of communication that feel less exposing while emphasizing that students aren't expected to figure out everything on their own. This could look like sending out surveys or evaluations to collect students' questions privately or anonymously and gauge the class's understanding and learning by involving multiple voices, not just those who are determined to seek help.

Loneliness

As instructors invite and listen to concerns from a variety of students, they can also mindfully respond to students' help-seeking attempts in a way that addresses the loneliness that FG students often experience. FG students are often coming into composition classrooms feeling like they are behind and different from their classmates, and this feeling of difference and loneliness is exacerbated when an instructor's or writing center tutor's feedback or explanation is rushed, overcomplicated, or confusing. Brushing over content or instruction communicates that the help source thinks the information is common knowledge, and this can make it more isolating for a student to reveal misunderstanding or confusion. Instructors can slow down their responses, check for understanding, and acknowledge the validity of the student's question.

Paying attention to the emotions guiding help-seeking behaviors can help instructors better understand the motivations and fear behind students' actions. It is important for composition instructors and other sources of help, such as writing center consultants, to be aware that not all insecurity is necessarily undesirable or will deter help-seeking behaviors. Similarly, not all student confidence positively leads to writing help seeking. This awareness could impact instructors' assumptions and how they respond to manifestations of students' affects. Understanding or anticipating the different emotions that students bring to a help-seeking situation helps instructors more accurately meet and respond to the writing needs and concerns of students.

Conclusion

My research contributes to scholarship on FG college students and help seeking by demonstrating that various affects present in students' help-seeking experiences (confidence, insecurity, determination, loneliness) can influence students' decisions to seek help or write independently. I found that "positive" affects like confidence and determination do not exclusively lead to positive help seeking, nor do "negative" affects like insecurity and loneliness always lead to negative help seeking. These common affects also resist easy correlations with independence, since students reported various emotions to accompany exhibitions of both independence and reliance on others for support.

Moving forward as a writing instructor, I now have a framework to interpret some of the common affects FG students exhibit. I know that expressions of confidence might mean my students feel confident in their abilities and do not feel the need to ask, or they don't feel confident in their writing but confident in their ability to communicate with a professor and ask questions (or something else entirely). When students exhibit insecurity, maybe they are more

driven to ask for help because they recognize how they want to improve, or they feel fearful to ask because of negative past experiences seeking help. While a couple students feel determined to work independently because of cultural beliefs, familial values, or personal goals, others are determined to seek help because it feels necessary to academic survival. This affective framework allows writing instructors and tutors to look beyond the surface or beyond the causes they automatically associate with various affects or help-seeking behaviors.

While students ultimately choose whether they will or will not seek writing help, understanding the nuanced affects that students experience in help-seeking situations causes me to argue that help sources can do more to encourage and support help seeking. An affective framework may help us ask first-generation students better questions to better understand their emotions and experiences around help seeking.

Appendix A

Watson et al.'s PANAS (Positive and Negative Affect Schedule) Scale

1. Interested
2. Excited
3. Strong
4. Enthusiastic
5. Proud
6. Alert
7. Inspired
8. Determined
9. Attentive
10. Active
11. Distressed
12. Upset
13. Guilty
14. Scared
15. Hostile
16. Irritable
17. Ashamed
18. Nervous
19. Jittery
20. Afraid

Appendix B

Focus Group Questions

1. How do you all feel about writing in general? How do you feel about college-level writing at BYU?

2. Did you feel prepared for writing at BYU? If so, what helped you feel prepared? If not, why not?

3. What kinds of writing have you done at BYU?

4. Who can share a positive experience about writing at BYU? What happened, and what made it positive? Can anyone else relate?

5. Who can share a negative experience about writing at BYU? What happened, and what made it negative? Can anyone else relate?

6. What makes writing difficult for you? How might those difficulties differ from students who don't identify as first-generation college students?

7. What's your top concern about college-level writing, and why?

8. Who in the group asks for help with their writing? Whom do you ask, and why? How comfortable are you asking for help with your writing?

9. Who has helped you the most with writing at BYU?

10. How many of you have visited the Research and Writing Center? Why have you visited (for individual writing consultations, or to use handouts or other resources)? What's been helpful? What hasn't been?

11. For those who haven't visited the RWC, why haven't you?

12. Regardless of whether you've used the RWC, what kind of help do you expect from it? Why is that kind of help important to you?

13. What do you think the RWC could do to help first-generation college students with their writing?

Appendix C

Follow-up Interview Questions (for those who visited the RWC)

1. How many times did you visit the RWC in the last few weeks or month (since the focus group meeting)?

2. What kind of help did you receive during your RWC visit? What kind of help were you hoping to receive?

3. What was helpful about your visit? What wasn't?

4. How, if at all, has your RWC experience changed your perception of writing?

5. Would you visit the RWC again? Why, or why not?

6. What changes would you recommend for RWC services that would better meet your needs or the needs of first-generation college students?

7. Is there anything else you'd like to share about your RWC experience?

Appendix D

Codebook

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