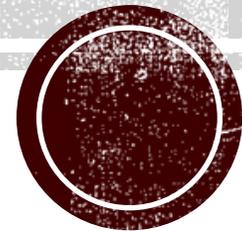# Agricultural Media Writing Students' Self-Perceptions of their Writing Abilities

Dr. Holli R. Leggette, Katy Lane, Dr. Tobin Redwine,
Dr. Theresa Pesl Murphrey

TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY ®

AB0173

Introduction

- Deep writers are reflective revisionists who have the ability to elaborate and engage their audience.

- Writing apprehension and self-efficacy influences one's ability to become a deep writer.

(Lingwall & Kuehn, 2013).

Purpose

- Document agricultural media writing students' self-perceived writing abilities

Method

- Students enrolled in an advanced media writing course ($N = 21$)

- Completed Lingwall and Kuehn's (2013) **Media Writing Self-Perception** questionnaire ($\alpha = .73$) during the fifth week of class before a lecture about deep writing and how to become a deep writer

  - Elaborative/surface
  - Reflective/revisionist
  - Writing self-efficacy
  - Writing apprehension
  - Social media/professional
  - Total MWSP

Findings

Elaborative/Surface

18 to 31	Deep writer who thinks about what he or she writes and enjoys it
6 to 17	Doesn't think much about writing
-13 to 5	Tends to just write to complete a task, "without necessarily enjoying, learning and thinking" about the task

- How much one "think[s] about the writing process" while writing
- Positive feelings … associated with writing tasks, improving writing ability, and learning about writing

$$(M = 13.33, \ SD = 6.97)$$

(Lingwall & Kuehn, 2013, p. 19)

Findings

Reflective/Revisionist

13 to 25	Deep writer who reworks the product "to make it the best … with as much preparation for writing as you can take"
0 to 12	Doesn't "think much about preparing to write … occasionally work[s] to revise"
-19 to -1	"Tend[s] to just write … a single draft, without changing it … may procrastinate as a writer and write just a single draft without spending time thinking"

- How much one works to develop drafts, "including whether or not you plan time to write, whether or not you engage preparation writing skills, and how much you like to revise your drafts"

$$(M = 6.19, SD = 5.21)$$

(Lingwall & Kuehn, 2013, p. 19)

Findings

Writing Self-Efficacy

25 to 39	Sees oneself "as a confident writer who masters the skills of writing"
12 to 24	"Feel[s] fairly competent as a writer," but thinks some areas of the writing skill set can be improved
3 to 11	Tends to have low confidence in one or more writing skill areas

- "Level of confidence in your writing skills, including things like spelling, punctuation, grammar, organization, paragraph development and thinking about your intended audience."

$$(M = 29.33, \; SD = 5.35)$$

(Lingwall & Kuehn, 2013, p. 19)

Findings

Writing Apprehension

18 to 31	Experiences significant anxiety and worry when thinking about writing tasks
6 to 17	Experiences moderate to low levels of anxiety and worry about writing
-13 to 5	Approaches writing as an enjoyable task without anxiety or worry

- Level of anxiety and worry when working on writing tasks
- The higher the score, the more anxiety and worry experienced when working on a writing task

$$(M = 1.48, SD = 6.74)$$

(Lingwall & Kuehn, 2013, p. 19)

Findings

Social Media/Professional

18 to 28	Sees "informal writing in social media as skilled and good enough … to use on the job"
8 to 17	"Think[s] that some social media writing is good, but … need to do more formal writing on the job"
-4 to 7	Believes that social media writing is different from professional writing and that professionals must use more effective writing skills on the job than they do in social media writing among friends.

- To what level one believes that informal writing (e.g., texting, Twitter, Facebook) is the same quality of work-place writing
- The importance of professional writing in one's career

$$(M = 5.90, \; SD = 4.24)$$

(Lingwall & Kuehn, 2013, p. 19)

Findings

Media Writing Self-Perception Total

45 to 112	"Tend[s] to manifest all these positive elements" in thinking about writing
10 to 44	"Experience[s] moderate enjoyment" writing, has confidence in writing skills. Doesn't spend time preparing for writing tasks, see value in revisions, or see social media writing and professional writing as different
-88 to 9	Not happy with one's writing, doesn't like formal writing, may avoid writing and analyzing writing tasks, may experience high writing apprehension and feel low confidence, may believe informal writing (e.g., texting, social media) is career worthy—even when punctuation, grammatical, and spelling errors exist. May not care about writing at all.

- The higher the score, the more writing enjoyment, confidence in writing skills, desire to learn and analyze the topic, willing to add topic detail, planning, reworking, revising, and taking a professional approach to writing in the profession

$$(M = 41.48, SD = 19.58)$$

(Lingwall & Kuehn, 2013, p. 19)

Conclusions

- Surface-level writers who do not engage in reflection while preparing to write or do not spend quality time revising

- Confident writers who enjoy writing and experience low anxiety and worry related to writing

- Social media writing is different than professional writing

Recommendations

- Engage students in reflection as part of the course assignments

- Integrate multiple drafts for each assignment to encourage students to engage in the revision process

- Create curriculum that challenges deep-level writers but accommodates surface-level writers who need instruction to encourage deep-level writing

Future Research Plans

- Replicate the study in each media writing course at Texas A&M

- Explore students' self-perceptions of their writing abilities in other agricultural communications programs

- Investigate how high impact experiences influence students' self-perceptions of their writing abilities

- Investigate the influence of structured reflection exercises on students' ability to write beyond surface level

Questions

Holli Leggette, Ph.D.
hollileggette@tamu.edu