

INCORPORATING COURSE-EMBEDDED PEER TUTORS IN AN  
ACCELERATED DEVELOPMENTAL WRITING PROGRAM

by

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## **DEDICATION**

This dissertation is dedicated to my family: my mother, Marsha; my father, Sam; my father-in-law and mother-in-law, Perry and JoAnna; my grandparents, Edwin and Peggy; my children, Tyler, Hayden, and Kathrynne; and most especially, my husband, Josh. Thank you for your support, your patience, and your love.

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## **ABSTRACT**

This dissertation presents an in-depth case study investigating the developmental writing program at a small, private Christian liberal arts university in the Southwest United States. This developmental writing program featured an accelerated workshop model with course-embedded peer tutors. Research questions centered on understanding the experiences of students enrolled in the developmental writing workshop classes and comparing student success rates (as determined by final course grade) across five consecutive fall semesters. The findings of this research project suggest that the program model may have contributed to increases in student success in first-year writing courses and improvements in freshman-to-sophomore retention. Students enrolled in the developmental writing program indicated that they felt supported and that they appreciated having a designated time and place in which to write and getting multiple perspectives on their writing. Students also indicated that the developmental writing workshop helped improve their grades and helped prepare them to complete college-level writing tasks in the future. In both the interviews and on student feedback forms, most students indicated that they found the course-embedded peer tutor to be helpful, although the extent to which students preferred working with the peer tutor, as opposed to working with a professional tutor in the Writing Center, varied among different subgroups of

students. While not all students expressed satisfaction with the writing program, the majority of student feedback about the program was positive.

keywords: higher education, developmental writing, basic writing, accelerated learning, peer tutoring, course-embedded tutoring, student perceptions

## 1. INTRODUCTION

*“A person who does not control the dominant code of literacy in a society that generates more writing than any society in history is likely to be pitched against more obstacles than are apparent to those who have already mastered that code.”*

– *Mina P. Shaughnessy, Errors & Expectations (1977, p. 13)*

It has been nearly 40 years since the publication of Shaughnessy’s *Errors & expectations: A guide for the teacher of basic writing*, a groundbreaking text that acknowledged an abrupt change in the preparedness of many undergraduate students. Not only did Shaughnessy’s work identify and describe the lack of college readiness of this new group of students, at least according to traditional standards, it also recognized the under-preparedness college administrators and teachers felt in developing and executing effective instructional programs for this new population.

Despite the numerous educational initiatives that have been implemented over the past four decades, millions of students across the country still arrive on college campuses each year without the writing skills required to succeed in higher education or compete in an environment in which economic success is increasingly tied to educational achievement (“Education Pays,” 2013), and colleges continue to struggle to design effective programs for these students. Students who are identified as being under-prepared for higher education have traditionally been diverted into potentially lengthy and non-college-credit-bearing sequences of remedial coursework (Adams, Gearhart, Miller, & Roberts, 2009). Rather than effectively preparing students for college-level classes, these remedial course sequences can actually serve as a “roadblock” to success

and set students on a path to dropping out of higher education altogether (Adams, et al., 2009; Parker, 2012). However, this need not be the case. As developmental educators, our collective wealth of knowledge and our ingenuity empower us to offer more effective and more efficient alternatives for the students in our programs, offering access to improved mastery of “the dominant code of literacy” and the success which might accompany said mastery, rather than perpetuating the implementation of programs that so often serve as obstacles to success. Such a change in strategy has vast implications for students, both in college and beyond.

### **Context of Research and Rationale**

In recent years approximately 17.5% of college students have been placed into remedial English or ‘basic’ writing courses; although that number can be as high as 27.4% for certain demographic groups (Snyder & Dillow, 2015). The diverse backgrounds, abilities, and experiences these students bring with them present challenges for basic writing programs, which struggle to meet the needs of each student and must consider both the educational effectiveness and economic sustainability of potential instructional approaches. Reflecting these concerns, the university that was the site of this case study, hereafter referred to as Institution X, recently underwent a comprehensive re-visioning of the basic writing program in an attempt to blend the adaptability of individualized instruction with the economy of classroom-based teaching. Previously, the program had featured a one-semester remedial writing course for students whose placement scores identified them as lacking sufficient writing skills. Although they earned no college credit for doing so, students were required to pass this course prior to

being permitted to enroll in freshman composition. The remedial writing course emphasized worksheet-based grammatical instruction and was, within Institution X at least, considered to be only minimally effective. For the last fall semester during which this program was in place, fall 2011, only 68% of students enrolled in the course received a passing grade of C or higher. As a result of the institution's ongoing disappointment in the remedial writing course, the program transformed in fall 2012 to adopt a mainstreaming model that aligned with the philosophy of developmental education.

The philosophy of developmental education, per Arendale (2005), "assumes that each student has skills or knowledge that can be developed" (p. 72). In adopting this philosophy, Institution X cast away its previous 'deficit approach' to basic writing students, which attempted to address only what these students supposedly lacked (i.e., grammar skills). In contrast, the revised program emphasized the skills students already possessed and how these could be further cultivated and refined, and it did so using writing assignments assigned for college-credit-bearing courses. The mainstreaming model, inspired by the Supplemental Writing Workshop program at State University of New York at New Paltz (Rigolino & Freel, 2007) and the Accelerated Learning Program of the Community College of Baltimore County (Adams, Gearhart, Miller, & Roberts, 2009), allowed students with lower placement scores to enroll directly in a college-credit-bearing freshman-level course, in addition to taking a required writing workshop course designed to provide supplemental support (Root & Rosenwinkel, 2010). Students in the writing workshop were required to pair the course with one of five specified, writing intensive, freshman-level courses: Freshman Composition, Introduction to Psychology,

American History I or II, or American Government. In fall 2015, 29 of the 69 students in the program chose to co-enroll in Freshman Composition.

The intent of the transition to a workshop model was to improve student success in the developmental writing course, as well as to make the course more meaningful to students, because they could use the workshop to improve writing assignments they were working on for college-credit-bearing courses. While this iteration of the program was improving the percentage of underprepared students who passed *both* the basic writing course and freshman composition, instructors who taught the workshop course unanimously expressed a desire for additional in-class support in working with students one-on-one. Prompted by the professed success of the “embedded writing specialist” model piloted at Oakland University (Oakland University, 2014), course-embedded peer tutors were incorporated into the program in fall 2014 to assist course instructors in offering increased one-on-one writing assistance during class.

During the years immediately prior to and concurrent with the transformation of the writing program, the student population at Institution X also rapidly changed. This small, private, religious Liberal Arts university in the Southwest United States had historically served a student population of under 1,000 students, most of whom were White (non-Hispanic), male, Christian, and well-prepared for college-level work. However, in recent years the student population had expanded to include 2,500 students from a variety of ethnic, cultural, and religious backgrounds, 60% of whom were female. In addition, an increasing number of these students entered the university with entrance-examination

scores that indicated the students were not prepared to meet college-level expectations in math and/or English.

The instructors and administrators of City University of New York struggled to meet the unfamiliar educational needs of new student populations in the 1970s, as discussed in Shaughnessy's work, and faculty members and administrators at Institution X faced similar challenges in the years leading up to this study. After making notable changes to the writing program, which included the development of a student Writing Center; revising the financial aid strategy; and relocating registration, financial aid, accounting, and other student support services to one, centralized location, Institution X publicly reported its highest ever freshman retention rate in December 2015. In the announcement, Institution X cited changes to the writing program as being an influential component in the improvement in freshman retention.

For my dissertation research project, I conducted an in-depth case study investigating the developmental writing program at Institution X, in order to present a comprehensive picture of a developmental writing program that used an accelerated workshop model with course-embedded peer tutoring. While general impressions of the developmental writing program created at this university seemed to be positive, as indicated by the aforementioned article, a systematic investigation was necessary to determine whether or not the program was meeting its goal of fostering student success in freshman-level writing. If, indeed, the program was improving student outcomes, as was being reported, which elements of the program did students perceive as being particularly effective? Existing research supports separately the implementation of accelerated learning models

for developmental writing programs (Adams, Gearhart, Miller, & Roberts, 2009; Rigolino & Freel, 2007) and the incorporation of course-embedded writing tutors (Hall & Hughes, 2008, 2011; Spigelman & Grobman, 2005); however, few research studies have examined programs that combine these two approaches, particularly with undergraduate writing tutors who are not affiliated with a university Writing Center.

### **Research Questions**

My research goals were to address this gap in the literature by investigating the following questions:

RQ1: What were the perceptions of students enrolled in the developmental writing program at Institution X?

RQ1a: How did they feel about having a peer tutor available during class?

RQ1b: What were their understandings of the accelerated workshop model?

RQ1c: How did students perceive themselves as writers coming into the program?

RQ1d: How well did they feel the program was preparing them as writers?

RQ2: How did student success rates (as determined by final course grade) among the following five consecutive fall semesters compare:

Fall 2015, during which course-embedded tutors, all of whom were concurrently enrolled in an internship/training course, were integrated into the accelerated workshop course;

Fall 2014, during which course-embedded tutors were paid hourly and not concurrently enrolled in an internship/training course were first integrated into the accelerated workshop model;

Fall 2012 and 2013, during which the accelerated workshop model was employed without course-embedded tutoring; and

Fall 2011, during which the previous, remedial writing course was in place?

Four of the five fall semesters outlined above demonstrate different models of the basic writing program at Institution X. For each semester, the following quantitative data was collected:

1. Percent of students who passed the developmental writing course, which was evaluated on a pass/fail basis; and
2. Final course grades for freshman composition, separated according to student co-enrollment status (in other words, whether or not the student was co-enrolled in the developmental writing workshop or placed directly into freshman composition).

Collecting this descriptive quantitative information helped me compare student success rates across semesters and between program models, and also allowed me to evaluate how well students in the developmental workshop performed in freshman composition compared to students who placed directly into a college-level writing course.

### **Definitions**

The following terms are used throughout this study:

*Co-enrolled* – refers to students in the developmental writing program who are simultaneously taking a writing-intensive, college-level course that has been designated as a companion course for the writing workshop. This term is also used in this study to refer to freshman composition students who are taking the developmental writing workshop concurrently with the college-level freshman writing course.

*Course-embedded peer tutors* – refers to student writing tutors (usually undergraduate seniors) who attended the writing workshop during every class meeting to tutor students one-on-one during class time. These students were not enrolled in the writing workshop, but were, during Fall 2015, enrolled. Other terms found in the literature for students who perform similar work to what this study refers to as course-embedded tutors include in-class tutors, embedded tutors, writing fellows (the preferred term in Writing Across the Curriculum programs), writing specialists, and writing mentors.

*Developmental writers* – refers to students who, as Shaughnessy observes, are “strangers in academia, unacquainted with the rules and rituals of college [writing and] life, unprepared for the sorts of tasks their teachers [are] about to assign them” (1977, p. 3). These students require more help than traditionally prepared college students in order to successfully complete college-level writing tasks.

Developmental writers are also referred to in the literature as basic or remedial writers; however, this study does not use the term “remedial writers,” because of its association with deficit-based understandings of developmental writers.

*Developmental writing* – refers to basic writing courses or programs designed to prepare underprepared writers to perform college-level writing tasks.

*Remedial writing* - Literature in the field sometimes refers to developmental writing as basic or remedial writing; however, this study only uses the term “remedial writing” when referring to deficit-based attitudes about developmental writers, their abilities, and their potential for success.

### **Theoretical Framework**

In designing this qualitative study, I adopted an interpretive constructivist stance within a naturalistic research paradigm, based on the following understanding offered by Denzin and Lincoln:

Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self. At this level, qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. (2000, p. 3)

So, the focus of research that adopts an interpretive constructivist approach must be to learn about the perceptions of the individuals who are directly involved in the event or phenomenon being studied. This understanding guided me to incorporate student

interviews and end-of-course student surveys as key parts of the data collection process, because interpretive constructionism holds “that the core of understanding is learning what people make of the world around them, how people interpret what they encounter, and how they assign meanings and values to events or objects” (Rubin & Rubin, 2012, p. 19). I believe that one of the best ways for a researcher to explore how individuals interpret their experiences is to interview them, because this allows the participants to share their perceptions in their own words and in ways that reflect the complexity of their experiences. This stands in contrast to systems of research wherein the researcher generates a list of fixed responses from which participants must choose when asked to classify their experiences. In interpretive constructivism, the researcher derives categories of meaning by interpreting the perceptions of participants, as shared using their own words. So, the participants’ representations of reality are presented first and classification follows based on these representations, rather than the other way around.

While conducting this study I was only able to interview half as many students as I originally planned to. (Despite securing grant funding to offer students a monetary incentive for agreeing to be interviewed and receiving institutional permission to offer students extra credit for participating in the study, only five students agreed to be interviewed. This is discussed further in the Methods section of this dissertation.) Therefore, the inclusion of end-of-course surveys became particularly important, because it allowed me to collect information regarding student perceptions of the program from a much larger percentage of students enrolled in the writing workshop.

My theoretical framework followed the definition offered by Denzin and Lincoln and allowed me to incorporate data drawn from email correspondence and conversations with various stakeholders, including administrators, instructors, and student support specialists at Institution X. All of this information helped me understand the larger context, or “natural setting,” within which the participants’ experiences were situated, because these staff members communicated with students directly and were a natural part of the university experience for the student population. I also attempted to keep the participants’ “natural setting” as uninterrupted as possible. I interviewed students individually in a location on campus of their choice. Workshop instructors distributed the end-of-course surveys in the classrooms, which was the students’ natural academic setting.

Additionally, Creswell asserts that research that is conducted using an interpretive constructivist approach attempts to “generate or inductively develop a theory or pattern of meaning” (2013, p. 25). This understanding of the purpose of interpretive constructivist research guided my data analysis and coding process, because I developed categories of meaning based on patterns in the student interviews and end-of-course surveys. This also influenced how I attempted to develop a theory that would explain my findings, as discussed in Chapter 5. Ultimately, any original theory deriving from a singular research project would need to be tested, scrutinized, and further refined, but this is the process through which interpretive constructivist research attempts to develop theories to explain particular phenomena based on the perceptions shared by those who have experienced it.

## **Positionality**

In establishing the context of this study, I needed to reflect on my own situating circumstances. My role as Writing Program Administrator at Institution X raised ethical and positionality considerations of which I remained cognizant throughout the course of this project. First, because I was in a position of authority at the university that was the site of this study, I attempted to equalize social power dynamics as much as possible (realizing they might never be fully equalized) by asking the participants to determine the interview locations. Furthermore, an axiological issue of concern was that, as program director, my job was to make this program successful. To assist in representing my findings accurately and ethically, I remained mindful of this desire to see positive trends and scrutinized the analysis process accordingly. For this reason, triangulation was an essential component of the data analysis process for this study. In this study, triangulation involved the examination and coding of unmarked transcripts by two impartial individuals who were both knowledgeable in the field and familiar with qualitative coding processes. Neither of these two individuals, both of whom were members of my doctoral program research community, were affiliated with the site university or otherwise involved with this study in any capacity.

## **Summary of Introduction**

In sum, the purpose of my dissertation research project was to present a case study of a developmental writing program that used an accelerated workshop model with course-embedded peer tutoring. Data collection, analysis, and representation were conducted using qualitative methodologies. While descriptive quantitative information

was collected and incorporated into the final report, this information comprises just one aspect of the comprehensive program picture that was constructed by this case study and its inclusion does not constitute a positivist approach.

The ultimate goal of developing this picture was to contribute to a greater understanding of strategies and program models that may promote student success in developmental education and basic writing, in particular. Cultivating such an understanding is crucial. Millions of U.S. students each year place into developmental writing courses, requiring further preparation to succeed in college. Hinging on their educational success is their future economic success, their ability to provide for themselves and their families. Shaughnessy's words, which introduced this chapter, compel us to be mindful of the role that literacy skills play in student success and to take action to reduce obstacles faced by students pursuing higher education who have not yet mastered these skills. In the context of postsecondary developmental education, this imperative translates as a responsibility to develop programs that foster student success and promote increased literacy skills, to rigorously and systematically examine the effectiveness of these programs, and to spread the word when useful strategies are discovered. Such was the purpose of my project.

## **2. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

My dissertation research project was to conduct an in-depth case study investigating a developmental writing program that used an accelerated workshop model with course-embedded peer tutoring. My research questions centered on understanding the experiences of students enrolled in the developmental writing classes and comparing student success rates (as determined by final course grade) across five consecutive fall semesters to document how evolving models of the developmental writing program, including switching to an accelerated format and incorporating course-embedded peer tutoring, may have contributed to varying student success rates.

Researchers have noted the benefits of peer tutoring for the students being tutored in elementary through postsecondary educational levels (Bloom, 1984; Bowman-Perrott, et al., 2013; Chi, Siler, Jeong, Yamauchi, & Hausman, 2001; Cohen, Kulik, & Kulik, 1982; De Rijdt, van der Rijt, Dochy, & van der Vleuten, 2010; Simmons, Fuchs, Fuchs, Mathes, & Hodge, 1995). A meta-analysis of peer tutoring interventions among elementary and secondary students found that, while peer tutoring is a potentially effective strategy for all students, those with certain disabilities seemed to benefit most (Bowman-Perrott, et al., 2013). It is unknown if these findings transfer to students at the postsecondary level, but the possibility would be of interest to developmental educators who endeavor to design programs that best meet the needs of all students, including students with disabilities (Perin, 2012).

Other aspects related to program design that will be further investigated here include accelerated learning models for developmental education programs, course-

embedded tutoring, and tutor training. Aspects of this literature review that focus more on the student experience include student expectations of college writing and the benefits of talking about writing.

### **Accelerated Learning Programs**

The accelerated basic writing model that is in place at the university that was the site of my study was inspired by the Supplemental Writing Workshop program at State University of New York at New Paltz (Rigolino & Freel, 2007) and the Accelerated Learning Program of the Community College of Baltimore County (Adams, Gearhart, Miller, & Roberts, 2009), although certain programmatic structures have been modified. These accelerated writing programs allow students with lower placement scores to enroll directly in the college-credit-bearing freshman composition course, as opposed to having to take one or more non-college-credit-bearing remedial writing course(s) first. A key feature of these accelerated models for basic writing is that students are provided with intensive supplemental support to help them succeed in the college-level freshman composition course (Adams, et al., 2009; Rigolino & Freel, 2007; Root & Rosenwinkel, 2010).

According to Rigolino and Freel (2007), the Supplemental Writing Workshop (SWW) program at State University of New York (SUNY) at New Paltz allowed students who would previously have been funneled into basic writing courses to enroll directly in specially designated sections of freshman composition. While course objectives and assignments for all sections of freshman composition remained the same, students in SWW sections were required to spend an additional class hour (two hours for ESL

students) in a writing workshop with the course instructor receiving additional help completing these assignments. Students were also required to spend an additional class hour working one-on-one with a writing tutor, the majority of whom were teaching assistants enrolled in SUNY's Master's program. Although this supplemental support was required, students did not receive academic credit for it, and this aspect of the program made some faculty members uncomfortable. Even so, program personnel largely considered the program to be a successful one; qualitative assessments consistently reflected increases in students' sense of agency as writers and quantitative evaluations "showed that students in the SWW program were achieving similar rates of success as their peers using standard benchmarks" (Rigolino & Freel, 2007, p. 64).

The Accelerated Learning Program (ALP) of the Community College of Baltimore County (CCBC) also claimed success, reportedly having "doubled the number of basic writers who succeed in passing first-year composition" (Adams, Gearhart, Miller, & Roberts, 2009, p. 50). Students who placed into basic writing courses had the option of volunteering to join ALP, which allowed them to enroll directly into a designated section of freshman composition. Each ALP section included eight ALP students and twelve students who placed directly into freshman composition. Course content mirrored that of non-ALP sections of freshman composition, and ALP students attended a three-hour companion course taught by the same course instructor to receive supplemental support. This companion course met immediately after the freshman composition class and was required, although ALP students did not receive academic credit for it (Adams, et al., 2009).

Two follow-up studies have examined the effectiveness of CCBC's Accelerated Learning Program. Jenkins, Speroni, Belfield, Jaggars, and Edgecombe (2010) found that students who placed into the highest level of developmental writing but elected to enroll in ALP were "significantly more likely than those who first enroll in the highest level developmental English course...to take and pass English 101 and 102" (p. 15-16). Cho, Kopko, Jenkins, and Jaggars (2012) corroborated this finding and also found that persistence rates (to the next year) were stronger for ALP students than non-ALP students. In addition, Jenkins et al. (2010) investigated the cost-effectiveness of ALP and determined that the cost per student was substantially lower for ALP than the traditional developmental English sequence. In fact, "a rough cost-benefit analysis [found] that the benefits of ALP [were] more than double the costs" (Jenkins, et al., 2010, p. 16).

### **Course-Embedded Tutoring**

The developmental writing program that I studied for this dissertation project incorporated not only an accelerated model, but also course-embedded tutoring. Many titles have been used to describe what my study refers to as course-embedded tutors, including in-class tutors, embedded tutors, writing fellows, writing specialists, and writing mentors. Within many programs, the term "writing fellows" denotes a specific rank of tutor, one who has received specialized training in the theory and practice of writing and/or writing across the disciplines (Macauley, 2014).

The foundation for current conversations about course-embedded tutoring was established in 2005 with Spigelman and Grobman's *On Location: Theory and Practice in Classroom-Based Writing Tutoring*. Much of the literature on course-embedded tutoring

since *On Location* comes out of Writing Across the Curriculum programs (see, for example, Hughes and Hall's special issue of *Across the Disciplines* (2008), "Writing Fellows as Agents of Change in WAC") or Writing Centers (see, for example, Carpenter, Whiddon, and Dvorak's special issue of *Praxis: A Writing Center Journal* (2014), "Revisiting and Revising Course-Embedded Tutoring Facilitated by Writing Centers").

Perhaps because of the close relationship between course-embedded tutoring and Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) programs, a recurrent theme in the literature is how course-embedded peer tutors can help students negotiate academic discourse communities (Grobman, 2005; Mullin, et al., 2008; Severino & Trachsel, 2008; Webster & Hansen, 2014). Webster and Hansen (2014), in their study of a course-embedded tutoring project at the University of Montana, found that writing "tutors encounter opportunities to learn about the methodologies of biologists, economists, and historians, and to grapple with those instances when the literacy practices of one discipline do not map onto another." The extent to which these instances of disciplinary conflict influence the work of course-embedded tutors is debatable. Severino and Trachsel (2008) found that although some course-embedded tutors identified strongly with the concept of specialized discourse communities, and thus believed that majors in a discipline were best prepared to tutor writing in that discipline, the majority of course-embedded tutors viewed academic discursive practices as general skills that can be applied in any course. Conversely, Mullin, et al., (2008) found that being assigned to courses outside the discipline of their major challenged course-embedded tutors' understandings of writing. Tutors may find tutoring outside their disciplines challenging, because reading tasks and

“written and oral communication expectations...differ along disciplinary lines”

(Holschuh, 2013, p. 6).

Another prominent theme in the literature on course-embedded tutoring is negotiating issues of authority. Placing a peer tutor in a classroom alongside a course instructor requires that traditional classroom power dynamics be re-negotiated and clearly defined (Corbett, 2005; Singer, Breault, & Wing, 2005; Spigelman, 2005; Webster & Hansen, 2014). Perhaps because they are already re-negotiating these power dynamics, course-embedded tutoring programs stand poised to extend this scrutiny of academic power structures and challenge institutional language ideologies. For example, Shelton & Howson (2014) take on the white-preferential language politics of the academy in a pilot of an anti-racist writing mentor program that advocates a code-meshing pedagogy in Spring 2015. They acknowledge the riskiness of such an endeavor, and the success of Shelton and Howson’s pilot project may influence how future course-embedded writing tutor program negotiate institutional language politics.

Studies describing the integration of writing tutors into first-year composition courses have reported positive outcomes (Dvorak, Bruce, and Lutkewitte, 2012; Mullin, et al., 2005; Pagnac, Boertje, Bradfield, McMahon, & Teets, 2014). However, few studies have investigated embedding peer tutors in developmental writing courses, despite the fact that Shaughnessy recommended doing so in 1977. Raica-Klotz, et al., (2014) reported that embedding peer tutors who were themselves former students in the developmental writing program was one of many factors that helped improve student passing rates by 21%-48% across multiple semesters. This improvement in student

success rates is impressive, but does not reflect student success in college-credit-bearing courses. At the 2015 South Central Writing Center Association Conference, Jones, Puckitt, Ruiz, Hall, and Rhea reported receiving positive student and tutor feedback after embedding Writing Center tutors in an accelerated developmental writing program. Their preliminary findings suggest that the approach improved student outcomes in both the developmental writing course and freshman composition; however, they have yet to publish a formal analysis of the program. While it is encouraging that they have received largely positive feedback, the program designed by Jones, et al. differs from the program that is the subject of my study, because the course-embedded tutors they assigned to the developmental writing classes were all graduate students who were associated with the university Writing Center. My research study sought to determine if an accelerated developmental writing program using course-embedded undergraduate tutors who are not associated with the university's Writing Center might result in similarly positive outcomes.

### **Tutor Training**

During the fall 2015 semester, the course-embedded tutors who worked in the writing program that was the focus of my study were concurrently enrolled in a semester-long writing tutor training course. Because this was an important feature of the program that directly influenced tutor effectiveness in the classroom, I wanted to review the literature on writing tutor training, and course-embedded tutor training, in particular.

Much of the literature about writing tutor training comes from Writing Center studies, with little consensus expressed regarding the ideal content of a tutor development

program. Given that writing tutoring is situated within academic institutions that hold particular political, philosophical, and practical views of literacy education, the question posed by Vandenberg (1999/2011) is not easily answered: Are writing tutors best served by “tutorial-centered ‘practical’” training programs or a “professionalizing approach that establishes awareness of the specialized discourse of writing center scholarship as a standard of tutor competence” (p. 79)? A review of the literature suggests that the most effective training program for course-embedded tutors in a developmental writing course would incorporate elements of both.

A “professionalizing” approach is compelling, especially given recent, powerful appeals for “antiracist tutor education” (Greenfield & Rowan, 2011), the disproportionate number of students of color who place into developmental education programs (Snyder & Dillow, 2015), and the very real possibility that the majority of students who will be serving as course-embedded writing tutors will be White. Given this context, it would seem crucial that a training program for course-embedded tutors in a developmental writing course encourage tutors to “develop awareness of the ways they have internalized the belief that a particular form of discourse is ‘right’ or ‘natural’ or ‘better,’ and that those who depart from this form are ‘wrong’ or ‘not normal’ or ‘culturally deprived’” (Grimm, 1999, p. 67). Tutor training cannot be done in a “race-neutral” way (Greenfield & Rowan, 2011), and it cannot be accomplished without introducing tutors to the professional conversations in the field.

An emphasis on theory alone would be insufficient preparation for the classroom. Cairns and Anderson (2005), in advocating a “practical” approach to tutor training,

argued that tutor training programs must cover the seven “essential tasks” that course-embedded writing tutors will be expected to perform. According to Cairns and Anderson, these tasks are as follows:

1. Understanding how the program, course instructor, and students define the tutor’s role
2. Negotiating the tutor’s own definition of his/her role with the expectations of the program, course instructor, and students
3. “Enacting the negotiated role as the [tutor] understands it”
4. “Learning about the course material and associated writing tasks”
5. Cultivating a partnership with the course instructor
6. Establishing rapport with students in the course
7. “Looking for additional ways to assist the faculty member and students”

It is notable that Cairns and Anderson’s list emphasizes potential tutor uncertainties about their classroom roles and the need to communicate effectively with course instructors.

DeLoach, Breaux, Angel, Keebler, & Klompien (2014) also underscored the need to articulate clearly the course-embedded tutor’s role in the classroom and relationship to the course instructor. Henry, Bruland, and Sano-Franchini (2011) addressed this issue in developing their course-embedded mentoring program for first-year students. The mentor training program extended throughout the semester, and mentors were provided with specific guidelines that stipulated not only what was expected of them, but also how they should respond if they encountered difficulties working with students or course instructors. Although this program was designed for mentors, rather than tutors, many

structural components of the training program would apply to course-embedded tutor training contexts.

A semester-long training program that runs concurrently with the tutor's assignment as an embedded tutor in a developmental writing course would facilitate the adoption of a "Just in Time" training method (Belzer, 2013). This approach enables the tutor training coordinator to help tutors address tutoring problems as they arise and reinforce tutoring concepts and best practices in the context of tutoring experiences as they are happening. In order to be most effective, tutor training should be supported in not only the formal training program, but also by the instructor of the course within which the embedded tutor is serving (Titus, Scudder, Boyle, & Sudol, 2014). Faculty members should be carefully selected and equally carefully prepared to work with course-embedded tutors appropriately and effectively (Hall & Hughes, 2011).

### **Student Expectations of College Writing**

Because my study adopts an interpretive constructivist stance, the goal of my research was to understand the participants' perceptions and what meanings they assigned to their experiences. Because of this emphasis on understanding students' perceptions of the writing program after their first semester of college study, I wanted to survey the literature regarding what expectations students bring with them to college, specifically regarding college writing.

The literature suggests that student expectations of college writing often do not take into account the various rules and conventions that are specific to writing in academic contexts and within particular disciplines, and these rules and conventions need

to be intentionally articulated to students in order to reconcile student understandings with the expectations of their university instructors (Bharuthram & McKenna, 2012). A 1990 study of how students interpret and approach various college writing assignments concluded that students often relied on shortcuts to complete writing tasks, focusing only on those elements they were given the most credit for producing, rather than demonstrating personal investment in what concepts or skills the assignments were intended to help them learn (Nelson, 1990). A more recent survey of first-year undergraduate students in Canada conducted by O'Brien-Moran and Soiferman, the results of which were presented at the 2010 Hawaii International Conference on Education, concluded that students entering college expect a lot, specifically in terms of learning, from their first-year writing courses. In addition to acquiring a comprehensive mastery of grammar, punctuation, and other mechanical concepts, students also indicated that they expected the course to improve their abilities to incorporate critical thinking strategies into their writing processes (O'Brien-Moran & Soiferman, 2010).

### **Benefits of Talking about Writing**

The primary component of the accelerated model of developmental writing, as implemented at the institution that was the focus of this study, is the supplemental workshop course, which offers students a designated time and place to write and discuss their writing with others, including the course instructor and course-embedded tutor, as well as the students' classmates. This element of the course is based on the assumption that students benefit from discussing their writing with others. For example, Krych-Appelbaum and Musial (2007) found that students perceived that they benefitted from

discussing their writing with classmates and preferred receiving peer feedback on their writing orally, as opposed to receiving this feedback in written form only. This same study also found that students preferred to discuss their writing with someone they trusted to give them feedback that was honest and that would be useful in improving their writing (Krych-Appelbaum & Musial, 2007). When students can discuss their writing with their peers, they are able to get more detailed and thorough feedback from their classmates, and these types of conversations have long been an established component of writing workshop courses (Rothermel, 2004). Students can also benefit from reviewing the work of their peers (Cho & Cho, 2011; Li, Liu, & Steckelberg, 2010; Nystrand, 1984), because the conversations about writing that occur during in-class peer review in writing classes can help students develop writing skills (Nystrand, 1984), and providing comments to others can help reviewers improve their own writing (Cho & Cho, 2011). Talking to others about writing helps the speaker clarify his or her ideas and thought processes, which can, in turn, help improve that student's writing (Rothermel, 2004).

Some studies have suggested that talking about writing, while it may help improve comprehension of content, does not help improve the writing of students for whom English is a second language (Franken & Haslett, 1999; Gilliland, 2012). However, other studies have found that conversations about writing help students for whom English is a second language construct meaning (Dowse & van Rensburg, 2015), and that these conversations help support the students' writing, as well (Dowse & van Rensburg, 2015), particularly if the second-language-learner actively engages in the

conversation and takes notes of planned revisions during the conversation (Williams, 2004).

### **Summary of Literature Review**

Overall, this review of the literature found that accelerated learning models for developmental writing courses have proven to be effective for certain groups. Similarly, course embedded tutoring in writing classes has shown positive results, although few studies have combined such tutoring with an accelerated developmental writing model, particularly using undergraduate peer tutors who are not affiliated with a university writing center. Because tutors with this background would not receive training through a writing center, a careful selection process and training program must be in place. My review of the literature suggested that the most effective training program for course-embedded peer tutors in a developmental writing workshop course would incorporate elements of both a ‘professionalizing’ approach that introduces tutors to tutoring theory and writing center scholarship and a tutorial-centered ‘practical’ approach that would prepare them for the specific work they will be doing, including working with the classroom instructor and engaging in conversations with students about writing. Recent studies suggest that students entering college have high expectations of what they will learn in their first-year writing courses, and engaging in conversations with peer tutors in workshop-style writing courses can help foster this learning.

### **3. METHODS**

This project followed the methodology of a case study, because I was examining a specific case “bounded by time and place...within a real-life, contemporary context...through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information” (Creswell, 2013, p. 97). I investigated an accelerated developmental writing program that incorporated course-embedded peer tutors at a single university in fall 2015. Thus, the parameters of time and place were clearly defined: a single program within a single university during the fall 2015 semester. Both qualitative and quantitative data were drawn from multiple sources, including student interviews, student surveys, conversations with course instructors and university personnel, and quantitative reports about student success rates for multiple past semesters, which allowed me to contextualize success rates for fall 2015.

#### **Theoretical Framework**

In structuring this qualitative case study, I adopted an interpretive constructivist stance within a naturalistic research paradigm. Guidance for understanding this framework was derived from multiple sources, including Denzin and Lincoln (2000), Rubin and Rubin (2012), and Creswell (2013), as discussed in Chapter 1. Researchers who adopt an interpretive constructivist stance create representations of authentic lived experiences, attempting to make sense of these phenomena based on observing and recording various elements of them and understanding the perceptions of the individuals who experienced them. Because I adopted this perspective, I wanted to understand not only what the participants experienced, but also how they interpreted these experiences

and how these experiences were situated within the context of the “case,” as defined by the parameters of this study.

The framework of interpretive constructivism guided how I organized this case study, what I believed to be knowable about this subject, the research tools and strategies I chose, and the questions I asked on surveys and during interviews. For example, I conducted student interviews in an on-campus location of the student’s choice, so as not to disrupt the student’s “natural setting” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 3) any more than necessary. During these interviews, I asked students what their perceptions were about various aspects of the developmental writing program, including the incorporation of course-embedded peer writing tutors and the ability to co-enroll in freshman composition. I listened carefully as the students shared their experiences and their attitudes about those experiences, for while I cannot know if the program helped them be more successful than they would have been otherwise, I can learn whether or not these students believed the program was helping them succeed.

The emphasis I placed on interviews is itself a crucial aspect of the interpretive constructivist stance, because this framework maintains “that the core of understanding is learning what people make of the world around them, how people interpret what they encounter, and how they assign meanings and values to events or objects” (Rubin & Rubin, 2012, p. 19). My interest in surveying and interviewing students enrolled in the writing workshop course stemmed from this desire to understand the expectations and experiences of these stakeholders and the meanings they assigned to the program itself.

Although I did gather and present descriptive quantitative data regarding student success rates in the developmental writing program across the last several fall semesters, this does not constitute a positivist approach, because those data were not used to represent a singular, fixed truth (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). On the contrary, in this study descriptive quantitative information constituted just one piece of a very complex puzzle, all of which needed to be considered in order to present a comprehensive description of this case.

### **Research Questions**

This case study sought to present a detailed picture of a developmental writing program that used an accelerated workshop model with course-embedded peer tutoring. The site for this study was a small, private, religious Liberal Arts university in the Southwest United States that, in fall 2012, transitioned from a traditional model of basic writing to an accelerated model inspired by the Supplemental Writing Workshop program at State University of New York at New Paltz (Rigolino & Freel, 2007) and the Accelerated Learning Program of the Community College of Baltimore County (Adams, Gearhart, Miller, & Roberts, 2009). The intent of this transition was to improve student success in developmental writing courses, as well as to make these courses more meaningful to students. Prompted by the professed success of the “embedded writing specialist” model piloted at Oakland University (Oakland University, 2014), course-embedded peer tutors were incorporated into the program in fall 2014 to assist course instructors in offering increased one-on-one writing assistance during class.

General impressions of the developmental writing program were positive, and the university issued a public statement declaring that improvements in freshman-to-sophomore student retention were due, at least in part, to revisions in the writing program. However, a systematic investigation was necessary to determine whether or not the program was, in fact, meeting its goals. Existing research supported separately the implementation of accelerated learning models for developmental writing programs (Adams, Gearhart, Miller, & Roberts, 2009) and the incorporation of course-embedded writing tutors (Spigelman & Grobman, 2005); however, few research studies have examined programs that combine these two approaches, particularly with undergraduate writing tutors who were not affiliated with the university Writing Center or a WAC program. My research goals were to address this gap in the literature by investigating the following research questions:

RQ1: What were the perceptions of students enrolled in the developmental writing program?

RQ1a: What were students' perceptions of the peer tutor's role in the classroom?

RQ1b: What were their understandings of the accelerated workshop model?

RQ1c: How did students perceive themselves as writers coming into the program?

RQ1d: How well did they feel the program was preparing them as writers?

RQ2: How did developmental writing student success rates (as determined by final course grade) among the following five consecutive fall semesters compare:

Fall 2015, during which course-embedded tutors, all of whom were concurrently enrolled in an internship/training course, were integrated into the accelerated workshop course;

Fall 2014, during which course-embedded tutors, paid hourly and not concurrently enrolled in an internship/training course, were first integrated into the accelerated workshop model;

Fall 2012 and 2013, during which the accelerated workshop model was employed without course-embedded tutoring; and

Fall 2011, during which the previous, remedial writing course was in place?

These research questions reflect the theoretical framework of this study, because RQ1 and its sub-questions, RQ1a-RQ1d, emphasize the perceptions of students in the developmental writing program. Interpretive constructivism requires the researcher to document the perceptions the individuals who experienced the phenomena being studied, to understand the meanings those individuals assigned to their experiences, and to interpret this data and ultimately present a representation of the phenomena situated within a representation of its natural context. Thus, RQ2 was designed to help me provide the greater, natural context within which to understand the perceptions that would be shared in response to RQ1 and RQ1a-RQ1d.

## **Research Design**

To address these research questions, I conducted a qualitative case study per Creswell (2013) and Merriam (1998), although some descriptive quantitative information was collected, as well. According to Creswell (2013), a case study incorporates detailed information drawn from multiple sources to examine a real-life case in which the parameters of time and place are clearly defined. The purpose of this case study was to present a detailed picture of the developmental writing program at one institution during fall 2015, thus the parameters were clearly defined. I also selected a case study approach because it allowed me to draw from multiple sources of information, including interviews, surveys, observations, conversations with university personnel, and institutional program reports, in order to understand the context of this case, per Creswell (2013).

Some elements of this case study, most notably the interviews, were phenomenological in nature, per Creswell (2013) and Van Manen (2014), exploring the lived experiences of individuals who had first-hand knowledge of the developmental writing program; however, the emphasis of this study was to present a picture of the program in fall 2015 as a defined case bound within specific parameters (Creswell, 2013). I analyzed descriptive quantitative information regarding student success rates for past fall semesters, as well, in order to situate the success rates for fall 2015 in that context. One feature of the naturalistic paradigm is a recognition that “reality constantly changes” (Rubin & Rubin, 2012, p. 14), and the purpose of this case study was to document that change across multiple semesters and, through an in-depth study of the fall

2015 semester, investigate programmatic elements that influenced those changes and the meanings these elements held for students involved in the program.

Additional information that I gathered in order to understand the larger context of this case, or the “natural setting” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 3) within which the participants’ experiences were situated, included data drawn from conversations with and emails from administrators, instructors, and staff members at University X. I collected and analyzed this data primarily after having collected and analyzed the student interviews, end-of-course surveys, and quantitative data pertaining to student success rates. In accordance with Creswell’s assertion that research adopting an interpretive constructivist approach attempts to “generate or inductively develop a theory or pattern of meaning” (2013, p. 25), I used the data collected from university personnel in an attempt to develop one or more possible theories that would help explain my research findings because the university personnel I communicated with all have first-hand knowledge of the case and interact directly with students enrolled in the developmental writing program. I discuss these theories in Chapter 5, fully acknowledging that any original theory or theories deriving from one individual research project require further testing and refining before being accepted. However, this process is in sync with how research using an interpretive constructivist framework attempts to understand the perceptions of individuals who experienced particular phenomena, understand and describe the greater context within which these phenomena are naturally situated, and then develop one or more theories for understanding and explaining these phenomena based on this process.

## Methodology

In order to present an in-depth understanding of the developmental writing program, multiple forms of data were collected, including instructor and institutional reports, interviews with students, and student surveys. The following matrix shows how the qualitative data I collected through the individual interviews (see Interview Protocol in Appendix A) and the end-of-course surveys (see Survey Instrument in Appendix B) align with the sub-questions for RQ1: RQ1a-RQ1d.

Table 1  
*Qualitative Data Collection Matrix*

Research Question	Data Collected to Address this Question
RQ1a: What were students' perceptions of the peer tutor's role in the classroom?	1) Interview Protocol: Topic Domain II, Q1 & Q3; and Topic Domain III, Q1 & Q2 2) Surveys: Items 4-8
RQ1b: What were their understandings of the accelerated workshop model?	1) Interview Protocol: Topic Domain I, Q1 & Q4; and Topic Domain II, Q4 & Q5. 2) Surveys: Items 1, 3, & 8
RQ1c: How did students perceive themselves as writers coming into the program?	1) Interview Protocol: Topic Domain III, Q1 & Q2 2) Surveys: Not addressed
RQ1d: How well did students feel the program was preparing them as writers?	1) Interview Protocol: Topic Domain I, Q2 & Q3; Topic Domain III, Q3; and Topic Domain IV, Q3 2) Surveys: Items 2 & 8

My second major research question (RQ2) required me to compare student success rates, as determined by final course grade, across multiple fall semesters during which various evolutions of the developmental writing program were in place. To facilitate this comparison of student success rates, information was compiled from end-

of-semester instructor and institutional reports according to the following matrix, which lists quantitative data collected for each semester according to which program model was in effect at the time.

Table 2  
*Descriptive Quantitative Data Collection Matrix*

Semester	Program Model	Data Collected
Fall 2015 and Fall 2014	Accelerated workshop model with course-embedded tutors	1) Percent of students who earned credit for the developmental workshop course, separating data for those who were and were not co-enrolled in the freshman composition course; and 2) Percent of students who earned credit for the freshman composition course, separating data for those who were and were not co-enrolled in the developmental workshop course.
Fall 2013 and Fall 2012	Accelerated workshop model without course-embedded tutors	1) Percent of students who earned credit for the developmental workshop course, separating data for those who were and were not co-enrolled in the freshman composition course; and 2) Percent of students who earned credit for the freshman composition course, separating data for those who were and were not co-enrolled in the developmental workshop course.
Fall 2011	Traditional remedial writing model	Percent of students who earned credit for the remedial writing course only.

Compiling these descriptive quantitative data allowed me not only to compare student success rates across multiple semesters in the developmental writing course, but also allowed me to compare student performance in freshman composition for students co-enrolled in the developmental workshop and students who placed directly into the freshman composition course. This helped me understand how well the developmental workshop course supported student success in a college-credit-bearing writing course, which was the purpose of the workshop format.

Additionally, I conducted face-to-face, semi-structured, responsive interviews (Rubin & Rubin, 2012) with five students who were enrolled in the workshop course. Students enrolled in the course who agreed to participate were interviewed once at the end of the course (see Appendix A for interview protocol).

My original plan was to interview ten students in fall 2015, and I secured doctoral-research-support funding from my graduate institution that enabled me to offer students a financial incentive for participating in the interviews. Unfortunately, (and most unexpectedly), students were not interested in the monetary incentive, and only one student agreed to be interviewed. At the beginning of the spring 2016 semester, I received support from the site institution to try a different tactic, and I offered students who had been enrolled in the workshop during the previous semester extra credit in their spring-semester English course, which would have been either freshman composition (if they had not been co-enrolled in it before) or an introductory literature course. Students were not motivated by this incentive, either. This failure to generate student interest or cooperation was a complication I had not anticipated, and ultimately, I was able to collect only one student interview from fall 2015. I added this to four student interviews I had collected using the same interview protocol in fall 2014, during which the writing program structure closely mirrored the fall 2015 structure. This resulted in a total of five student interviews I was able to collect and analyze as part of this study.

Workshop instructors distributed an end-of-semester survey to students in multiple sections of the developmental writing course. My original intent was to have the survey distributed in all sections of the course; however, the instructors for two of the

five sections did not distribute the survey. Of the 43 students enrolled in the three sections of the developmental writing course in which the survey was distributed, 35 completed the survey. The end-of-semester survey contained both free-response items and items that required a response on a Likert-type scale (see Appendix B for student survey).

I organized and filed data for the interviews and survey both electronically and in hard copy. I read through the interview transcripts and survey responses and annotated these documents to form initial codes within the context of this case, per Saldaña (2013). Specifically, during my first coding cycle I was looking for data that related to my research questions. Once I identified initial trends, I developed naturalistic generalizations, grouping the most frequently occurring and significant themes into categories organized around my research questions. A sample of this coding framework can be found in Appendix C, which displays excerpts from Sofia's interview responses sorted by research question and annotated with initial codes.

After my initial coding cycle, I performed an additional coding cycle using the new code scheme. Following this coding cycle, I corroborated my findings via triangulation. In this case, triangulation involved having two researchers who were familiar with this content area, but who were not otherwise involved in my study, read through and code unmarked copies of the interview transcripts and survey data. These codes were then compared with the codes I had previously identified. Finally, data was prepared for presentation by organizing it according to the final code scheme within the category of each research question.

## **Instruments**

My theoretical framework of interpretive constructivism guided the development of my interview questions (see Interview Protocol in Appendix A), because I focused on asking open-ended questions that emphasized the participants' perceptions of their experiences. For example, in Topic Domain III, the first question asks students what elements are important to them when working with a writing tutor. Because these were responsive interviews, I was able to follow-up the participants' responses to this question by asking them to connect their expectations with their actual experiences working with the course-embedded tutor, if they had not already done this when answering the initial question. Ultimately, this line of questioning is focused on answering RQ1a regarding the students' perceptions of the course-embedded tutors by giving me an indication of whether or not the students perceived that the course-embedded tutors were meeting their expectations regarding writing tutoring.

The end-of-course survey (see Appendix B) allowed me to collect some quantitative information regarding student perceptions via the Likert-type items on the survey. This provided a larger context of student perceptions within which to situate the individual perspectives that were shared with me through the interviews I conducted. The open-response item on the survey reflects the theoretical framework of this study, because it does not prescribe a response, but instead allows survey respondents to share any aspect of their experiences using their own words. An explanation of how individual items on the interview protocol and end-of-course survey line up with each research question can be found in Table 1 on page 35.

## Participants

The feedback survey (see Appendix B) was distributed in three of the five sections of the developmental writing course at the end of the fall 2015 semester. Instructors for the remaining two sections did not distribute the survey. Of the 43 students enrolled at the end of the semester in the three sections of the developmental writing workshop course in which surveys were distributed, 35 submitted responses to the survey. All 29 of the students who were co-enrolled in the developmental writing course and the freshman writing course during fall 2015 completed the survey, while only six of the 40 students who were taking the developmental writing course without co-enrolling in the freshman writing course submitted survey responses.

I conducted individual interviews with five students enrolled in the developmental writing workshop to capture a more in-depth understanding of their experiences. All students enrolled in the workshop course were invited to participate; however, only one student from fall 2015 agreed to be interviewed. I had previously interviewed four students in fall 2014, and those four interviews were combined with the one interview from fall 2015 to comprise the bulk of the qualitative interview data represented in this study.

Four of the students who agreed to be interviewed for this study were traditional undergraduates: Bianca, Sofia, Spicy, and Kaitlyn, all of whom self-identified as female. One interviewee, Tony, was non-traditional and self-identified as male. Of the four traditional student interviewees, one was admitted to the university provisionally, and three of the four were first-generation college students. Three of the traditional students

were admitted to the developmental writing program based on their scores on the SAT Verbal section, which ranged from 420-490 with a mean score of 460 for the group. The fourth student was placed based on an ACT English score of 19 and an ACT Reading score of 20. The high school GPAs of these four students ranged from 2.94 to 3.93 on a 4.0 scale, with a mean score of 3.44.

Placement test and high school GPA information is not available for Tony, the non-traditional student who was interviewed for this study. Tony was a student veteran who was born and raised in Puerto Rico. He had been in the U.S. army for ten years prior to coming to college. Because Tony did not attend a U.S. Department of Education school in Puerto Rico, his grades and test scores were not on file with the university. Instead, Tony had been placed according to information that was available from his military records. Although student veterans are not required to take developmental coursework, even if they place into it, Tony elected to enroll in the writing workshop, because English was his second language. In fact, Tony revealed to me that when he enlisted in the army, he spoke no English at all, and he wanted as much opportunity to improve in his use of English as possible.

Like Tony, one of the four traditional students who were interviewed for this project, Bianca, spoke English as a second language. Both of these two students spoke Spanish as their first language. Tony, Bianca, Sofia, and Kaitlyn all self-identified as Hispanic and/or Latino/a. Spicy, who like Tony and Kaitlyn chose her own pseudonym, self-identified as Black or African American. Spicy, Bianca, and Kaitlyn were all pre-nursing students, hoping to be accepted into the highly competitive nursing program at

University X. Tony also planned to stay at University X, hoping to go into the secondary education program and become certified to teach Spanish and P.E. Sofia was the only student who did not plan to remain at the site institution, because although she had been admitted into the Kinesiology program, she wanted to specialize in athletic training, a program not offered at University X.

### **Data Collection**

I conducted the research for this case study in fall 2015. I selected a fall semester for this project because, at the campus being studied, enrollment in developmental writing courses is much higher in fall semesters compared to spring, typically requiring five or six sections of developmental writing courses in the fall, versus only one in the spring. Thus, fall semesters offered a better opportunity to interview students involved in the program. It also offered a more representative sample, due to the disproportionate number of students enrolled in the course during the spring semester because they failed it during the fall semester.

Students who were enrolled in the program and who agreed be interviewed were interviewed once at the end of the semester. For accuracy, I digitally recorded and transcribed these interviews. A one-page student feedback survey was distributed to three of the five sections of the developmental writing workshop class. This survey included both free-response and Likert-type items. Instructor reports were collected at the end of every semester, detailing final course grade information for all students, so that student success rates across all sections could be compared. These data were available for the past four fall semesters, and was also collected for fall 2015, which allowed for

comparison of student success rates across semesters during which the program was evolving.

### **Data Analysis**

For this case study, I conducted the data analysis and representation according to the following design. After conducting and transcribing all interviews, I read through these documents in hard copy and annotated them to form initial codes. These codes were grouped into categories developed around my qualitative research questions (RQ1 & RQ1a-RQ1d). I then performed a subsequent, focused coding cycle with attention to these thematic similarities (Saldaña, 2013) and looking for patterns within each research question category.

I corroborated these findings through a process of triangulation, during which two outside researchers read through and coded unmarked copies of the interview transcripts. I first provided these outside researchers, both of whom were doctoral students who were familiar with coding qualitative research, with a list of my qualitative research questions (RQ1 & RQ1a-RQ1d), which we discussed prior to the outside researchers' analysis of the data. I asked them to identify and mark any phrases in the interview transcripts that seemed to directly relate to one of the qualitative research questions, and then to code these by indicating in a word or short phrase how that response related to the question or what perspective on the experience the student seemed to be expressing. The codes identified by these researchers were then compared with those I had previously identified to check for thematic consistency.

After confirming my coding scheme via triangulation, I synthesized the data and prepared it for representation by codeweaving, a process of integrating “key code words and phrases into narrative form” (Saldaña, 2013, p. 248). I first organized interview excerpts according to categories based on my qualitative research questions (RQ1 & RQ1a-RQ1d) and the sub-categories that had emerged based on code patterns within each larger research question category. Then I wrote all sub-category codes on cards and experimented with how their arrangement might best represent their conceptual relation to each other. This process determined how I organized the narrative representation of interview findings. For example, the first sub-question for Research Question 1 (RQ1a) centered on understanding students’ perceptions of the peer tutor’s role in the classroom. The final sub-category codes that emerged for responses that addressed this research question were “Helpful,” “Approachable,” “Readily Available,” “Knowledgeable,” “Increased Classroom Instruction,” “Less Intimidating,” and “Desire for Expanded Role.” Through the code-weaving process, I decided to combine the first three codes into one discussion section when representing my data, because they made more sense when represented together. I also determined the order in which the other codes would be represented during the code-weaving process by trying to determine a natural and logical relationship between the ideas represented by the codes.

Survey data were analyzed in two ways. First, free-response items were compiled, coded and integrated according to the same procedures I used for analyzing interview transcripts, explained above, because this survey item addressed my qualitative research questions (RQ1 & RQ1a-RQ1d). Second, demographic information and

responses to Likert-type items were manually entered into Excel for evaluation. These items provided a context for understanding the qualitative data shared in the free-response survey item and in the interviews. Using Excel, I found the mean response for each Likert-type survey item, and then separated the responses into categories according to the student's self-identified race/ethnicity, sex, admit status, and freshman composition co-enrollment status. I then tallied the mean response for each question within each of these subgroups, looking for any seemingly meaningful variation in student responses when divided into these categories. These findings were documented in a graph for my final report.

The final piece of information I used to develop an in-depth case study of this program was a comparison of student success rates across five consecutive fall semesters, from fall 2011 to fall 2015, in order to answer RQ2. For each of the four semesters (fall 2012 to fall 2015) during which the accelerated model was in place, I compiled the following information:

1. Percent of students who earned credit for the developmental workshop course, separating data for those who were and were not co-enrolled in the freshman composition course; and
2. Percent of students who earned credit for the freshman composition course, separating data for those who were and were not co-enrolled in the developmental workshop course

For fall 2011, prior to implementation of the accelerated model and during which co-enrolling in freshman composition was not an option for students, I reported the percent

of students who earned credit for the remedial writing course only. The above information was presented in a graph in the final report, and this allowed me to contextualize student success rates for the fall 2015 semester by comparing them with previous semesters. This information also helped me understand how successful students who place into the developmental writing workshop were in freshman composition compared with students who placed directly into the freshman composition course. This provided valuable insight into how well the developmental writing workshop was supporting student success in college-credit-bearing writing courses, which was, after all, the goal of the accelerated program.

### **Summary of Methods**

This descriptive quantitative information incorporated into the final report provided a context for understanding the student voices shared through the interviews and surveys that were featured in this study. Integrating data from each of these sources allowed me to present a comprehensive and meaningful picture of an accelerated developmental writing program with course-embedded peer tutoring at a small, private university in fall 2015. The parameters of time and place were clearly defined within this case study, although some information from previous semesters was analyzed to provide a context within which to interpret student success rates (as determined by final course grade) for fall 2015. There were many complex pieces of this ‘case study puzzle,’ including student interviews, student surveys, instructor observations, and quantitative data on student success rates, but only by collecting and analyzing all of this information

could I present a holistic understanding of the accelerated basic writing program with course-embedded peer tutoring currently being used at the site institution.

## 4. RESEARCH FINDINGS

In keeping with the philosophical framework of this study, this chapter is organized using an interpretive constructivist lens. Qualitative data regarding student perceptions are discussed first, because of the value interpretive constructivism places on learning how people interpret the world around them and assign value to their experiences. The bulk of this qualitative data, presentation of which is organized according to research question (RQ1 & RQ1a-RQ1d), were drawn from the interviews I conducted with students, and some information from the open-response item on the end-of-course survey is included here, as well.

Following the discussion of qualitative data, I have presented and discussed quantitative data regarding student perceptions of the program (also in response to RQ1 & RQ1a-RQ1d). This quantitative data was collected via Likert-type items on end-of-course surveys that were distributed to students in developmental writing classes and provides a context within which to understand the individual student perspectives shared in the interviews and on the free-response item on the end-of-course survey.

The final piece of information discussed in this chapter is a comparison of student success rates across multiple fall semesters in response to RQ2. This quantitative data were drawn from institutional records, and it allowed me to provide a context within which to understand the individual student perspectives shared in this chapter.

### **RQ1: Students' Perceptions of Developmental Writing Program**

Because this study adopted an interpretive constructivist framework, the most important aspect of the data collection process was conducting interviews with students

who were enrolled in the developmental writing program at University X. This emphasis on interviews is crucial, because interpretive constructivism holds “that the core of understanding is learning what people make of the world around them, how people interpret what they encounter, and how they assign meanings and values to events or objects” (Rubin & Rubin, 2012, p. 19). In order to honor the perspectives students shared with me during their interviews and to privilege authentic student voices, I have included many extended direct quotes from the interviews here.

### **RQ1a: Students’ Perceptions of Peer Tutor’s Role in the Classroom**

The students who were interviewed for this project shared their impressions of the course-embedded peer tutors and their role in the classroom. Some attributes of the peer tutors that students shared an appreciation for include the tutors’ helpfulness, approachability, availability, and knowledge of writing. Students also shared that they perceived that the course-embedded peer tutors increased the amount of instruction they could receive during class and that having the peer tutor available in class was less intimidating than other options for receiving tutoring in writing. In fact, some of the interviewees seemed to value the peer tutors’ help so much that they wanted their role to be expanded beyond just in-class tutoring.

**Helpful, Approachable, and Readily Available.** Overall, the students seemed to perceive that the course-embedded peer tutors were approachable and helpful. Tony, an English as a second language student, repeatedly stated that he found the peer tutor to be “very helpful.” He also shared that he felt comfortable approaching her for help, because he saw them both as being “in the same boat,” because they were both students. Like

Tony, Bianca spoke English as a second language and valued the peer tutor's help. She shared that the tutor could help her check for spelling errors and to make sure the paper made sense, because sometimes she would "get things confused." She appreciated that the tutor was available to help her with specific aspects of writing in which she knew she needed help.

Kaitlyn recognized that the peer tutor assigned to her section of the developmental writing class made the effort to be available to help during class time, even when regular class was not being held. For example, during the week that had been set aside for students to have individual conferences with the instructor, the peer tutor was still available during class time in the regular classroom. Kaitlyn noted how helpful this was:

For a week we had interviews with [the workshop instructor]. So, on the days when we didn't have class, because he was going over our portfolios with us, we could spend time with [the in-class tutor]. It was only me and another student that went, but we got to talk to her and get to know her better, and she helped us out a *lot*. I was working on my 8-page research paper at the time, and she helped me out a lot.

Kaitlyn needed help completing a required assignment for her freshman composition course, and this was a rare instance in which the regular instructor would not have been available during the time designated for the workshop. Fortunately, the availability of the peer tutor helped Kaitlyn and the other student get the help they needed.

**Knowledgeable.** One of the reasons the students gave for finding the course-embedded tutors helpful was that they saw the peer tutors as being more knowledgeable

about academic writing than other peers or friends may have been. For example, Sofia made the following comments about the peer tutor assigned to her section of the workshop:

The tutor that's in there—if I ever need help, I'll go to him. He always comes around asking if we're okay or if we need any help...It's a lot better than having a peer, like a friend, because they don't have the whole knowledge of English, and they don't, like, know if it's a grammatical error or, like, if the [formatting and structure] is really good. So, I wouldn't say I don't trust them (friends), but I wouldn't base my paper off their comments to me. I would rather have a teacher or tutor edit my paper.

Similarly, Spicy remarked that the course-embedded peer tutor she had worked with was “just as accurate as” the workshop instructor. Spicy indicated that this was because the peer tutor was “a senior. She knows the professors; she knows what they're looking for.” For example, the tutor was able to help Spicy rephrase certain passages of her research paper to accommodate the stylistic preferences of her freshman composition instructor. Spicy found this additional insight the tutor had to be “very helpful,” and she shared that she spent a lot of time working with the tutor, both in and out of class. So, while the students who were interviewed indicated that the course-embedded tutors' status as peers made them approachable, the knowledge and experience the peer tutors brought with them made their assistance more valuable than help from other students or friends may have been.

**Increased Classroom Instruction.** Tony, a student veteran who was several years older than the other students interviewed for this study, also stated that he found the peer tutor to be approachable, and he added that he appreciated the convenience of having help during class and doubling-up instructional time:

I feel that it's better if you have them in class because you are *there*, and he or she can help the professor, because he's only one, of course. And they're very approachable. You ask them, and they just wanna help you, and they're so *eager* to help you. It's like they are waiting for you to ask them to help you. And I feel it's better [to have the tutor available] in class because you're right there, and that's what you do in that class.

Tony viewed the peer tutor's role in the classroom as helping both the students and the instructor by increasing the amount of instructional time each student could receive, demonstrating an understanding that there are natural limits to how much one instructor alone can help a classroom full of students workshop their writing. Tony was not the only student to comment on this. Bianca shared a similar perception of the course-embedded tutoring:

I like it. Because, you know, one teacher trying to help everybody out is a very hard thing to do, and so I feel like, you know, if she's not available, there's always the tutor here, and she has a lot of knowledge, and she's nice...I like to have her available in class. Because, like I said, there's lots of students, and in the class that we're in, it's not even that long, so I feel like having her there helps everyone, so that it's not just one person trying to get to *everybody* in that amount of time.

The original impetus for adding the course-embedded peer tutors to the developmental writing course was to increase the amount of one-on-one instruction each student in the workshop could receive after instructors expressed frustration with the expectation that they should, as Bianca said, “get to everybody in that amount of time.” So, Tony and Bianca recognized the purpose of having the peer tutor available and indicated that, in their perceptions, the presence of the peer tutor was achieving this intended purpose.

**Less Intimidating.** Some students indicated that having the tutor available in class not only increased the amount of classroom instruction each student could receive, but was also a less intimidating option for receiving tutoring than other tutoring possibilities. For example, when I asked Spicy what she thought about having a peer tutor available in class versus having a tutor available outside of class, she shared the following:

Spicy: Yes, because even if I, because sometimes life will get in the way.

[Laughs] Or like, personally, too, I could convince myself not to go find her, but when she’s right there, I mean, five feet away, it’s a lot easier to raise your hand or have them see you are confused, versus having to muster up the courage to walk down there. It’s also nice to see her converse with other students and the professor and the setting is more comfortable.

Brandy: Mm-hmm. So, you said “muster up the courage to walk down there.” Is it an intimidating thing to –?

Spicy: Yeah, to introduce my papers with all their faults to someone I don't know, and be like, "Hey, these are my questions." Sometimes I don't know to ask everything I want to ask. So, I know [they're] here for this purpose, but I don't want to waste [their] time with all these problems or whatever... I don't know how to explain that thinking, but having her in class is so, I think more advantageous.

Brandy: It's less intimidating?

Spicy: Mm-hmm. And easier access.

Spicy was unlikely to seek tutoring outside of class, because she felt intimidated by the process of sharing her "papers with all their faults" and worried about wasting the tutors' time. As she admitted, it would have been easy for her to talk herself out of going to the Writing Center or seeking out other tutoring opportunities on campus. Presumably, if a peer tutor had not been available to Spicy during her workshop class, she would have received little or no tutoring beyond the one-on-one help that the writing workshop instructor could have provided. In a traditional writing program that did not include a workshop-style course, she is unlikely to have received much one-on-one writing instruction at all.

**Desire for Expanded Role.** All of the students who were interviewed indicated that they valued at least some aspects of the peer tutors' role in the classroom, and two interviewees suggested that they would like to see the peer tutors' role expanded. For example, the peer tutor who worked in Kaitlyn's class elected to give a lesson to the entire class one day. Doing so was optional, and this particular tutor was the only one

who elected to teach an entire class session herself. Kaitlyn valued the lesson so much, that she wished the peer tutor had taught more classes:

I thought she was going to have, like, another day when it was just, like... whatever she wanted to teach us. Actually, when she did teach us, it did help me. She was giving us good advice about methods to use when writing long papers. It did help me. I kind of wish she had gotten an extra day to teach us something else, because she is a student currently and an English major, and I think it helps, because she understands. So, I wish she would have gotten, like, an extra day.

Tony, too, seemed to want more interaction with the course-embedded tutor assigned to his class. In his case, he wanted the tutor to be available by email outside of class, although he seemed conflicted about infringing on the tutor's time that way:

They can also help you outside of class, like uh, if you can send them an email... I know they are students and they are busy all the time, especially doing that, it makes them more busy than a regular student. But uh, if they are acting like a tutor, then they have to be able to help inside of class, outside of class, anytime that you actually need help, even if you send them up a message, and they can answer your question via email. No, I believe that they can do that, because... I believe that it's not fair to – to think that all they are are tutors. So, I'm gonna ask them all the questions I have anytime. No, no, they're busy, too. But that'll be an easy way for them to help, too. Email is easy. Whenever you are home or you are outside of class, answer a question with email.

Tony seemed genuinely conflicted when discussing this with me. I could tell he valued the tutor's help and wanted that help to be available via email outside of class, but he also understood that the tutor was a student, like himself, and very busy, and he did not want to impose too much on the tutor's time.

### **RQ1b: Students' Perceptions of Accelerated Workshop Model**

As part of the individual interviews, I asked students what they thought about the format of the workshop course and being required to enroll in the workshop alongside their college-credit-bearing courses. Many students elected to direct their responses on the open-ended question on the end-of-course survey toward this aspect of the writing program, as well. The majority of responses, both in the interviews and on the surveys, indicated positive perceptions of the program, and there were several distinct elements of the program that students highlighted as being particularly useful and/or important to them: feeling supported, having a time and place in which to write, and having the benefit of getting multiple perspectives on their writing. There were a few students, however, who expressed dissatisfaction with the writing program model, either because they perceived that it offered too much remediation or that it did not offer enough.

**Feeling Supported.** Some students indicated that the workshop format made them feel supported in the work they had to do for their other courses. Two anonymous respondents on the end-of-course surveys indicated that this was the case for them:

Student 1: I enjoyed the support given by the professor and the peer tutor during class.

Student 2: I really liked the fact that someone was there for me 1-on-1, helping me with what I needed.

During his interview, Tony stressed emphatically that this was one element of the program that was particularly meaningful for him:

Having this class and this tutor is very helpful, because it makes me feel like, “Okay, I have all the help that I need there,” and I know that I can count on them. So, I really, really like it, and it's very, very helpful, especially for me. Like I said, I wanna improve my English, and I'm a person who likes to ask questions. ‘Cause I need to know more. That's what I'm here for.

These responses, which emphasize someone being “there for” them that they could “count on,” indicate that there was an emotional aspect to the support they were receiving. This suggests that the workshop offered more than knowledge-based or content-specific support to students. It also provided a sense of security or the perception that there was a safety net of sorts. It offered an environment in which someone cared about their success.

**A Time and Place to Write.** Another aspect of the workshop format that students appreciated was that it created a time and place that was set aside to write and to ask questions about writing, as suggested by Tony’s comment about how he “likes to ask questions.” In fact, for Tony being able to ask questions was an important part of the learning process. He made this point more directly when discussing the experiences he had writing in the army:

When [I was] in the army, I was a leader, and I had to write [unclear]. So, that was something that I had to do like, a lot, and I didn't have help, you know, because...in the army...they don't help you with that. It's not like in here. And it's very different from when I was there, writing all of that stuff that I needed to, for other people, you know, and I felt bad, 'cause, this was for someone else, and they gonna read it, and they gonna feel like, "This guy's my leader, and he doesn't even know how to write," you know. So, I was very concerned about that. And now this experience, compared with that, compared with class, in school, is totally different, because every time I'm writing something, I'm learning. Because I can ask questions.

In the responses on the end-of-course surveys, two other students mentioned the benefit of having a designated time to write and being able to ask questions. One noted that "having time to work on our papers for other classes helped improve my work," while the second stated, "I like that I had time in class to peer review papers and ask questions of the professor." Bianca, Spicy, and Kaitlyn also discussed these benefits of the writing workshop during their individual interviews, although their reasons for valuing the extra time to write and ask questions varied somewhat:

Bianca: For my [freshman comp class], for our research papers and stuff, we [are required] to write, we don't go over it much in class, and basically just—he gives us like an intro. He introduces us to the idea that we're gonna be writing about, you know? And, uh, the topic. But we don't do much writing in class. We do other things, and so, in the writing workshop, that's

where if I have any questions or anything, if I don't know if I'm writing something the right way, or if it isn't structurally correct, that's where I get to ask questions. And I know that the professor is, like, "you can ask me anything," um, but, usually those days [in freshman comp] I'm pretty busy. So, those days when I do have the [workshop] class I have the time to ask questions, and I like that.

Spicy: [The workshop] is a class where I can work on mechanics and such, reinforce any ideas introduced by my [freshman comp] professor, and umm, have time to work on my paper. Because with everything else, it can be hard to find time outside of school or in school, but when you're in that setting, the purpose is to write. So, even if I wanted to wander off and do something else, I have, umm, that's what I'm supposed to do in that class. So, I find it very helpful.

Kaitlyn: I could bring in my work to class, and that was most of the time that I would be working on it. And I had a LOT of help from [the workshop instructor] and [the peer tutor], and they would give me their opinions, and I think that really helped my grade a lot. And I think my [freshman comp] teacher saw my work improving. My grades definitely got better.

These students appreciated having a designated time and place to write and ask questions, because, as Bianca stated, there was not always time in their other classes to have all of their questions answered. As suggested by Spicy's response, these college students seemed to have considerable constraints on their time outside of class, and they perceived

that they benefitted from having a designated time and space in which to write.

Furthermore, the writing workshop provided a valuable environment in which to devote time to writing, because as Kaitlyn noted, the instructor and peer tutor were readily available to offer guidance and support throughout the writing process.

**The Benefit of Multiple Perspectives.** In the preceding comment, Kaitlyn also mentioned that getting the opinions of the workshop instructor and the peer tutor helped improve the writing she was doing for her freshman composition class, and this speaks to another perceived benefit of the workshop format. It allowed students to get multiple perspectives on their writing. Spicy directly addressed how this aspect of the program helped her improve her writing:

I like the perspective differences from my [freshman comp] professor, and then [the workshop instructor], and then the student assistant. So, I get all their perspectives, all these ideas shaping my writing and helping me formulate how I want it to go, like all those eyes catching things I've missed or things I could add. That shapes up my paper, and I like it a lot. I'd call it a safety net, but like, it's the levels I go through to produce a final paper that's the best it can be.

The workshop instructor and peer tutor provided Spicy with two more sets of “eyes catching things” she may have missed and offered two additional perspectives that helped her develop her writing. Because she had previously indicated her hesitation to visit the Writing Center or seek out other tutoring opportunities outside of class, Spicy would have been unlikely to have received the benefit of getting multiple perspectives on her writing had she not been enrolled in the workshop course.

**Student Dissatisfaction: Too Much Remediation or Not Enough?** Not all students found the accelerated workshop format ideal, however. Sofia indicated that she would have personally preferred to take a semester-long remedial course prior to enrolling in freshman composition:

I would personally [prefer to] wait [to take freshman comp] because my writing skills aren't as good as others, I'd say...I feel like I would like to get my basics, like grammar, and [the structure] of writing a paper before, like, having another class that's overwhelming, writing all these papers...I feel like, if I had a whole semester of it, I would know a lot more to transfer it to [freshman comp] a lot better.

Sofia was the only student who indicated this preference for more remediation, although she was not the only student who found the course unsatisfactory. A few students indicated lack of satisfaction with various aspects of the course on the Likert-type items on the end-of-course survey; however, only one respondent offered any explanation for her negative opinion on the free-response item. This single survey respondent stated, "I personally feel as if this class only covered topics that are already discussed in my other courses. I do not feel as if this course challenged me in any aspect as far as my writing goes." So, while Sofia seemed to feel that she was being challenged too much and wanted the instructional pace to be slowed down, one survey respondent had the opposite reaction and did not feel challenged at all.

### **RQ1c: Students' Initial Perceptions of Themselves as Writers**

In order to better understand how the developmental writing program influenced students' writing abilities, I wanted to get a sense of how students saw themselves as writers coming into the program, which is why I developed RQ1c. The perceptions the five students I interviewed shared with me represented a variety of previous experiences with and attitudes about writing, and most of these attitudes and experiences seemed to be positive. Kaitlyn and Sofia shared that they had confidence in their writing abilities coming into college, while Bianca and Spicy shared that they enjoyed writing and reflected upon how writing for enjoyment related to academic writing. Tony's background is presented individually, because his status as a non-traditional student was unique among the five interview participants involved in this study.

**Confidence.** For example, Kaitlyn shared that, although neither of her parents went to college and her father had not graduated from high school, she had been in the National Honor Society and had graduated as "distinguished." She had "really liked [her] English courses in high school," which she attributed to having "an awesome teacher in high school." Although she admitted that "it was the hardest class that [she had] ever taken," she claimed to have "really, really enjoyed it, [because] he taught [them] a lot." As a result, Kaitlyn "really felt confident in that area" when she came to college.

Sofia shared Kaitlyn's confidence in her abilities in English courses, although placing into developmental writing seemed to have shaken her perception of herself as a good writer, as she expressed during her interview:

I'm really good at English, like, it's one of my favorite subjects. Buuut... I'm not necessarily a good writer, obviously, since I'm in the writing workshop class... Other than that, I'm pretty good in English... My grades [have] been good, like always.

Sofia had been placed in an alternative English program designed for, as she described, “more creative students” from second grade through her junior year in high school. According to Sofia, this program de-emphasized writing by having students read books and then discuss or demonstrate how they interpreted them, rather than writing about them. She had enjoyed the program—because she felt that she was good at it; however, it had not prepared her for the writing she would be expected to do in college. She admitted that she struggled to organize her ideas and that she did not enjoy writing, because she felt like she was supposed to produce a perfect final draft right away, which she could not do. This perception suggests that she had not learned how to go through the processes of brainstorming, drafting, editing, and revising, and it offers some insight into why she felt that she needed more remediation before enrolling in freshman composition, as previously discussed.

**How Writing for Enjoyment Relates to Academic Writing.** Unlike Sofia, both Bianca and Spicy indicated that they enjoyed writing, or at least, certain types of writing. Bianca spoke most fondly of academic writing, and research writing, in particular:

I enjoy writing. I think it's nice, a way to get my thoughts out, my ideas, and also when I find something I like, like in a research topic or something, then it's just really easy for me to write about it, because it's interesting to me... I don't have

very good grammar. It's gotten a lot better since I took the class, but like, I tend to look more at the content, rather than the grammar, 'cause those things I can usually, like, fix in my mind as I'm reading. But I do understand that it's just as important—that they're both very important in getting a point across in order for the idea to be clear for the reader.

Bianca's comment revealed an understanding of multiple elements of writing, including an awareness of audience, the importance of both content and grammar, and the need to proofread. She seemed to view grammar as a tool for communicating her meaning effectively to her reader. Spicy had a similar view of grammar, although she also seemed to perceive it as something that threatened her creativity:

For writing, I used to really enjoy poetry, just writing it for myself in the past. But once I started getting in high school, it was more structured, and it almost felt like writing was there to give you something to do, whether necessary or not. So, that with everything else I had to do, like, in high school I fell off from everything I used to do like...writing poetry or anything. But I find pleasure in writing sometimes, because I like to talk, and it's like talking in written form, and I felt satisfaction in seeing it executed properly...But, um, sometimes I like creativity, and the writing isn't always clear if, with grammatical errors and grammar and such.

So unlike Bianca, Spicy perceived academic writing as something that conflicted with the more creative writing she preferred. When she discussed academic writing, she emphasized structure and the need to avoid “grammatical errors.” Even when she

acknowledged that she “felt satisfaction in seeing it executed properly,” her choice of phrase conveyed the idea that academic writing was something very specific and there was a single, correct, “proper” way to do it. All of this she positioned in direct opposition to her natural creativity.

**Tony’s Non-Traditional Background.** The four young women who were interviewed for this study, Spicy, Bianca, Sofia, and Kaitlyn, were all traditional undergraduates attending college in the fall semester immediately following their graduation from high school. The only non-traditional student who was interviewed for this study was Tony, and he had a unique background, which influenced how he perceived himself as a writer coming into the program. Tony grew up in Puerto Rico and had served in the United States army for ten years before matriculating to college. Unlike the other students who were administratively placed into the developmental writing program based on SAT or ACT scores, Tony joined the program voluntarily. Tony identified himself as someone who was still learning English, because when he joined the army, he spoke only Spanish. Although he communicated clearly in English while speaking with me, Tony indicated that he struggled with being able to perform academic literacy tasks in English:

My English has been improving, because...I started learning English 10 years ago... and now that I'm here in school, I'm doing new stuff that I haven't done in a long time, because I graduated from high school 18 years ago. So, now I'm reading books, um, learning more about writing, especially in the workshop class, which is very, very helpful, because I needed it. And... I really love it. Because

ah... now I can see that I can do stuff that I didn't know that I could do, like reading, like writing, and stuff, and I wanna keep on doing it, you know? I can't stop doing it now.

Here, Tony expressed some concern about his ability to complete academic reading and writing tasks successfully, both because he graduated from high school 18 years ago and because he had only begun to learn English 10 years ago. Tony recognized that his literacy support needs were significant. His comments indicate that he felt the workshop program not only offered the support that he needed, but also improved his self-confidence, helping him realize he could do things he had not previously believed he could do.

#### **RQ1d: Students' Perceptions of Preparation Offered by the Program**

Like Tony, several other students expressed positive opinions of the support offered by the developmental writing program and how it was preparing them to meet college-level reading and/or writing expectations. Specific ways in which these students reported that the writing program was helping them develop as writers included noticing an immediate improvement in grades, anticipating the ability to write with less external support, improvements in the ability to structure their ideas in writing, and an improved ability to conduct and use research to complete academic writing tasks.

#### **Improved Grades and Anticipated Ability to Write with Less External**

**Support.** Sofia saw an immediate benefit of the program in terms of an improvement in her grades, and she also seemed to anticipate being able to write her own papers, presumably with less outside assistance, in the future:

Grades have been going a lot higher lately, so, they're good. I like it...If I didn't have the workshop class, oh gosh! (laughing) I wouldn't have known about, like, the Writing Center or anything. So, yeah, I would be writing papers – bad papers – on my own...I think they're helping me a lot, because my papers are getting a LOT better. Like, my grades are increasing, and I definitely notice that...I think it would be – if I were to go on, I think I would be able to, be capable of writing my own papers.

At the end of her statement, Sofia proudly confided that she believed she would eventually be capable of writing her own papers; however, she also acknowledged that the program helped her become aware of support services on campus, such as the Writing Center. This suggests that even though the program helped her in the short term by helping her get better grades on writing assignments and improving her self-confidence, she also learned where and how to seek out help in the event she needs assistance in the future. This constitutes a benefit that could potentially continue to help Sofia successfully complete writing tasks throughout her college experience.

**Improved Ability to Structure Ideas in Writing.** Like Sofia, Bianca indicated that the workshop helped her improve her grades in her freshman composition class. Additionally, Bianca offered details regarding the specific elements of writing that the workshop helped her improve:

I feel like [the workshop is] very effective. Well, it has been for me. Like I said, my grammar was pretty bad. I wasn't very good at using commas; I felt like sometimes I overused them,... as well as I said, structure-wise, my uh... writing

was kinda all over the place. But now I've gotten like, they taught us the P.I.E. Yeah, and that has helped me a lot...If I hadn't been in [the workshop] class, I probably wouldn't be getting the grades that I'm getting in my [freshman comp] class. (laughing) Yeah, the professor and student teacher, they help me a lot.

One of the specific elements of writing that Bianca discussed with me was structure. She admitted that she struggled with being able to organize her ideas effectively. The workshop instructor addressed this by teaching Bianca the Point-Illustration-Explanation (P.I.E.) method for organizing and developing a paragraph. This is a specific strategy that Bianca will be able to use in many future writing contexts.

Kaitlyn also stated that the workshop helped improve the structure of her writing; however, she focused on the overall structure of entire essays, rather than individual paragraphs:

I definitely write different now. I always pick three things that I'm going to write about, like for my thesis, and I like them, and I write my strongest, um, usually what I know the most on first. Then I'll try to do research for the second two...So, my papers are a lot stronger than they were coming in, and um... This is what the student teacher taught us about – start with what you have the least information on and go to what you have the most information on, and it makes your paper stronger. So, she was telling us about that, and that helped me a lot, too...Your last body paragraph is like insurance.

Although Kaitlyn entered the course with a clear strategy for organizing her writing, the course-embedded peer tutor helped Kaitlyn understand that reversing the order in which

she discussed her main points would improve the effectiveness of her writing, because it would leave her audience with the strongest point. Kaitlyn's ability to articulate this, seeing the final body paragraph as "insurance," for example, indicated that Kaitlyn learned to conceptualize how she organized her writing as a rhetorical choice.

**Improved Ability to Conduct and Use Academic Research.** The interviewee who most directly discussed the ways in which the writing workshop was or was not preparing students for future academic writing tasks was Spicy. Spicy focused on how the course had improved her ability to conduct research online and to incorporate this research into her writing:

I think [the workshop is] very effective. Like, I look at my essays from the beginning, and I can see the progression and, uhm, I feel like I can definitely see where I need to be. I've seen how to use the research online in the library, which they try to get us to do in high school, but I didn't really see the purpose in it, and it wasn't really necessary. But in this college class, it just clicked how much is right at your fingertips for a paper, how to gather the information, how to set it up. And I know that all of the professors will be looking for these things from these classes, and the whole writing system that [the university has] made just goes hand in hand, and so I get the idea of what they want here... It helps me produce the best paper I can.

For Spicy, what seemed to "click" was the philosophy of writing in academic contexts, particularly regarding the expectations instructors had concerning students' use of research in academic writing. Spicy mentioned that she had been introduced to academic

research in high school; however, the need to conduct research did not seem to have been connected to specific writing tasks. So, the connection between research and writing had not “clicked” for her before. Spicy indicated that by teaching her to access online research through the library and then use that research in her writing, the writing program had prepared her to meet the writing expectations at University X. This enabled her to “produce the best paper[s]” she could, because she better understood what was expected of her.

### **Responses to Likert-Type Items on End-of-Course Student Survey**

In addition to collecting in-depth data by conducting interviews with five students enrolled in the developmental writing course to answer my qualitative research questions (RQ1 & RQ1a-RQ1d), I also wanted to get a snapshot of other students’ perceptions in order to place the interview data within the context of overall student experiences in the developmental writing program. To help me gather this information, the workshop instructors distributed an end-of-semester survey to students in multiple sections of the developmental writing course. I asked the course instructors to distribute the survey, rather than distributing it myself, in order not to disrupt the students’ natural academic setting, per my theoretical framework (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Originally, I intended to have the survey distributed in all five sections of the course; however, the instructor for two sections did not distribute the survey. The survey was completed by 35 of the 43 students enrolled in the three sections of the course that received the survey. The survey contained both free-response items, which I included in the student interview data, and items that required a response on a Likert-type scale (see Appendix B for student survey).

The Likert-type items on the student survey asked students to rate their agreement with a series of seven statements on a scale from “Strongly Disagree” (1) to “Strongly Agree” (5). Students could also indicate a “Neutral” (3) opinion of the statement. The seven statements, shown on the tables accompanying this section as “Item 1” through “Item 7,” were as follows:

1. I feel the Writing Workshop helped me be more successful in my other classes. (Corresponds with RQ1b.)
2. I feel that this course has helped me improve my writing. (Corresponds with RQ1d.)
3. I feel that this course is worthwhile. (Corresponds with RQ1b.)
4. It is helpful having a peer tutor available during class. (Corresponds with RQ1a.)
5. Regarding writing tutoring, I prefer to visit the Writing Center. (Corresponds with RQ1a.)
6. Regarding writing tutoring, I prefer working with a peer tutor in class. (Corresponds with RQ1a.)
7. Regarding writing tutoring, I prefer both visiting the Writing Center and working with a peer tutor in class equally. (Corresponds with RQ1a.)

These items were designed to help answer my qualitative research questions, as indicated above, and provide a larger context for understanding the individual experiences and perceptions shared during the individual student interviews. Item one speaks directly to an element of the accelerated workshop model, and thus helps answer RQ1b, by seeking

to determine to what extent students did or did not perceive that the developmental workshop course was helping them be successful in their college-credit-bearing course(s). Item two addresses RQ1d by assessing the level to which students perceived that the developmental writing course was helping them improve as writers. Item three helped me determine the extent to which students did or did not perceive that the program had value, which again speaks to RQ1b. The responses to items four through seven helped me understand to what extent students did or did not find the course-embedded peer tutor helpful, particularly in relation to Writing Center tutoring, a service which is also available at the site institution, and thus all four of these items were directed at answering RQ1a.

The following table provides an overview of the results from the end-of-course survey and includes mean responses for each item, first for all respondents, then with respondents separated according to four demographic categories. Students were asked to self-identify according to sex and racial/ethnic identity. The categories given for racial and ethnic identities were developed using the same language students used to identify themselves, which reflects the value my theoretical framework places on the voices of individual research participants. “Provisional” and “Standard” refers to whether the student met all regular criteria for admission (“standard admit”) or was admitted to the university provisionally due to having inadequate high school GPA and/or standardized test scores (“provisional admit”). “Co-enrolled” and “Not Co-enrolled” refers to whether or not the student was simultaneously taking (co-enrolled in) freshman composition during the semester in which he/she was enrolled in the developmental writing workshop.

Table 3

*Student Responses to Likert-type Items on End-of-Course Survey (Fall 2015)*

	<i>n</i>	<u>Mean Response</u>						
		Item 1 <sup>a</sup>	Item 2 <sup>b</sup>	Item 3 <sup>c</sup>	Item 4 <sup>d</sup>	Item 5 <sup>e</sup>	Item 6 <sup>f</sup>	Item 7 <sup>g</sup>
All Respondents	35	4.06	4.29	3.8	3.86	3.49	3.74	3.68
Male	16	3.81	4.25	3.75	3.81	3.56	3.5	3.25
Female	19	4.26	4.32	3.84	3.95	3.42	3.95	4
Provisional	12	3.67	4	3.58	3.17	3.67	3.58	3.58
Standard	23	4.26	4.43	3.91	4.26	3.39	3.83	3.7
Co-enrolled	29	4.1	4.28	3.75	4.03	3.41	3.76	3.55
Not Co-enrolled	6	3.83	4.33	4	3.16	3.83	3.67	4.17
White/Caucasian	12	3.5	3.83	3.41	3.67	3.17	3.5	3.42
Black/African American	6	4.33	4.67	4	3.5	4	3.5	3.5
Hispanic/Latino/a	15	4.4	4.47	4	4.27	3.47	4	3.8
Other Race/Ethnicity	2	4	4.5	4	3.5	4	4	4.5

1<sup>a</sup>Course improved success in other courses. 2<sup>b</sup>Course helped improve writing. 3<sup>c</sup>Course is worthwhile. 4<sup>d</sup>Helpful having peer tutor during class. 5<sup>e</sup>Prefer Writing Center. 6<sup>f</sup>Prefer peer tutor in class. 7<sup>g</sup>Prefer both Writing Center and peer tutor equally.

This table shows that, in general, student perceptions of the developmental writing program tended to be positive. However, there were some interesting differences in student perceptions. Students who were admitted provisionally were less likely to indicate that the course helped them be more successful in their other classes than students who were regularly admitted; the mean response to Item 1 for these groups was 3.67 and 4.26, respectively. Provisional admits were also less likely to indicate that the presence of the peer tutor was helpful (Item 4) when compared with students who were

regularly admitted to the university, with response rates of 3.17 and 4.26, respectively. Students who self-identified as Black/African American showed a preference for receiving tutoring in the Writing Center, rather than working with the in-class peer tutor (mean response of 4 on Item 5 compared with mean response of 3.5 on Item 6), whereas students who self-identified as Hispanic/Latino/a preferred working with the in-class peer tutor as opposed to visiting the Writing Center (mean response of 4 on Item 6 compared with mean response of 3.47 on Item 5). Students who self-identified as White/Caucasian showed lower overall satisfaction with the course, being less likely than their peers to indicate that they perceived that the developmental writing course helped them be more successful in other courses (mean response of 3.5 on Item 1, compared with 4.33 for students who identified as Black/African American and 4.4 for students who identified as Hispanic/Latino/a), that it helped them improve as writers (mean response of 3.83 on Item 2, compared with 4.67 for student who identified as Black/African American and 4.47 for students who identified as Hispanic/Latino/a), or that the course was worthwhile (mean response of 3.41 on Item 3, compared with a mean response of 4 for both students who identified as Black/African American and Hispanic/Latino/a).

The differences in student responses according to admission status and self-identified race/ethnicity prompted me to further break down the survey response data according to both criteria. While findings for regularly admitted students were unremarkable, there were differences in the mean responses of students who were admitted provisionally when further dividing this group according to students' self-identified race/ethnicity, as shown in the following table.

Table 4

*Responses to Survey Likert-type Items for Students Admitted Provisionally, Separated According to Student's Self-Reported Race/Ethnicity*

		<u>Mean Response</u>						
	<i>n</i>	Item 1 <sup>a</sup>	Item 2 <sup>b</sup>	Item 3 <sup>c</sup>	Item 4 <sup>d</sup>	Item 5 <sup>e</sup>	Item 6 <sup>f</sup>	Item 7 <sup>g</sup>
White/Caucasian	4	2.5	3	2.5	1.75	3.25	2.75	3.25
Black/African American	3	4	4.33	4	3.33	4	3	3
Hispanic/Latino/a	4	4.25	4.5	4	4.25	3.5	4.5	4
Other	1	5	5	5	4	5	5	5

1<sup>a</sup>Course improved success in other courses. 2<sup>b</sup>Course helped improve writing. 3<sup>c</sup>Course is worthwhile. 4<sup>d</sup>Helpful having peer tutor during class. 5<sup>e</sup>Prefer Writing Center. 6<sup>f</sup>Prefer peer tutor in class. 7<sup>g</sup>Prefer both Writing Center and peer tutor equally.

The data provided in this table is notable, because it suggests that students who were both provisionally admitted to the university and who self-identified as White/Caucasian indicated the lowest level of satisfaction with the developmental writing course (mean responses of 2.5 on both Item 1 and Item 3) and with the course-embedded peer tutoring element, in particular (mean response of 1.75 on Item 4). However, this table reveals that the preference for Writing Center tutoring over in-class peer tutoring does not hold true for all students who were admitted provisionally, as was suggested by Table 1. On the contrary, students who self-identified as Hispanic/Latino/a and who were admitted provisionally indicated that the in-class peer tutor was helpful (mean response of 4.25 on Item 4) and that they preferred to work with the peer tutor as opposed to visiting the Writing Center (mean response of 4.5 on Item 6). Students who were admitted provisionally and who self-identified as Black/African American tended to indicate a

more neutral opinion of the peer tutor (mean response of 3.33 on Item 4), although they tended to view the program as worthwhile, overall (mean response of 4 on Item 3), and perceived that it helped them improve their writing (mean response of 4.33 on Item 2).

In general, the end-of-course survey data suggested that most students had a favorable impression of the developmental writing program. Some groups indicated a preference for visiting the Writing Center as opposed to working with the in-class peer tutor, while other students preferred working with the course-embedded peer tutor. The most notable discrepancy in these findings was the low level of satisfaction that was indicated among students who were both admitted to the university provisionally and who self-identified as White/Caucasian. Unfortunately, only one of these respondents offered any explanation for her negative opinion of the course on the survey's free-response item. As previously shared in the discussion of students' perceptions of the accelerated workshop format, this student stated, "I personally feel as if this class only covered topics that are already discussed in my other courses. I do not feel as if this course challenged me in any aspect as far as my writing goes." Without further investigation, it is impossible to know if this perspective was shared by the other students in this sub-group, but it does explain the dissatisfaction expressed by one of these four students.

### **RQ2: Comparison of Student Success Rates across Multiple Fall Semesters**

The next set of descriptive quantitative data I collected were student success rates across multiple fall semesters. This allowed me to compare student success rates over several years as the program evolved in response to RQ2. Having this data also enabled

me to compare student performance in freshman composition for students co-enrolled in the developmental workshop and students who placed directly into the freshman composition course. The benefit of this is that it helped me understand how well the developmental workshop course supported student success in a college-credit-bearing writing course, which was the purpose of the workshop format.

The data shown in Table 5 were compiled from end-of-semester instructor and institutional reports. It includes the following information:

For fall 2015 and fall 2014, during which the accelerated workshop model incorporating course-embedded tutors was in place:

1. Percent of students who earned credit for the developmental workshop course, separating data for those who were and were not co-enrolled in the freshman composition course; and
2. Percent of students who earned credit for the freshman composition course, separating data for those who were and were not co-enrolled in the developmental workshop course;

For fall 2013 and fall 2012, during which time the accelerated workshop model was implemented without the inclusion of course-embedded tutors:

1. Percent of students who earned credit for the developmental workshop course, separating data for those who were and were not co-enrolled in the freshman composition course; and

2. Percent of students who earned credit for the freshman composition course, separating data for those who were and were not co-enrolled in the developmental workshop course;

For fall 2011, prior to implementation of the accelerated model and during which co-enrolling in freshman composition was not an option, percent of students who earned credit for the traditional remedial writing course.

Table 5

*Comparison of Student Success Rates across Multiple Fall Semesters*

	Percent of Students Earning Credit for the Course (Final Grade of C or Higher)			
	<u>Developmental Writing (DW)</u>		<u>Freshman Composition (FC)</u>	
	Co-enrolled in FC	Not Co-enrolled in FC	Co-enrolled in DW	Not Co-enrolled in DW
Fall 2015	83% (n=29)	87% (n=40)	76%* (n=29)	89% (n=154)
Fall 2014	98% (n=60)	85% (n=13)	95%* (n=60)	84% (n=122)
Fall 2013	89%* (n=45)	88% (n=8)	92% (n=45)	93% (n=82)
Fall 2012	76%* (n=46)	69% (n=29)	82% (n=46)	86% (n=95)
Fall 2011	n/a	68% (n not avail.)	n/a	81% (n not avail.)

\*percentage of co-enrolled students who passed both DW and FC

As Table 5 shows, student success rates in all semesters during which the workshop model has been in place were higher than they were during the last semester in which the traditional remedial model was being used. Notably, in fall 2011, 68% of students who placed into developmental coursework in English earned credit for the remedial writing course alone during their first fall semester. However, in fall 2012, 76% of students who placed into developmental coursework in English earned credit for *both* the remedial writing course and the college-credit-bearing freshman composition course during their

first semester. This number increased to 89% in fall 2013 and further increased to an impressive 95% in fall 2014. However, it decreased in fall 2015, when only 76% of students who placed into developmental writing passed both writing courses during their first semester. Various academic and non-academic factors may have contributed to the decrease in student success rates in fall 2015. These will be discussed in Chapter 5.

During fall 2012 and fall 2013, success rates were comparable between co-enrolled and non-co-enrolled students in both the developmental writing course and freshman composition. So, students were equally successful in the workshop, regardless of whether or not they had paired it with freshman composition, and students passed freshman composition at a comparable rate, regardless of whether or not they had placed into developmental writing upon entering the university. Fluctuations in this pattern appear in later semesters. During fall 2014, co-enrolled students in both courses were more successful overall than their non-co-enrolled peers. In fall 2015, success rates were comparable between both groups in the developmental writing course, while students who placed directly into freshman composition had higher success rates than their peers who were co-enrolled in the developmental writing workshop. Looking across all semesters, no one group consistently outperformed or underperformed their peers. This suggests that students who place into any group have comparable chances of being successful in their writing courses during the first semester, and success rates for all groups were consistently higher during fall semesters in which the accelerated workshop format was in place when compared with the last semester during which the traditional remedial writing model was being used.

## **Summary of Findings**

In general, students enrolled in the developmental writing workshop expressed positive opinions of the writing program, indicating that they felt supported and that they appreciated having a designated time and place in which to write and getting multiple perspectives on their writing. While the students I interviewed shared mostly positive attitudes about themselves as writers coming into the program, although not necessarily in relation to academic writing, specifically, most of them indicated that the developmental writing workshop helped improve their grades and helped prepare them to complete college-level writing tasks in the future. In both the interviews and on student feedback forms, most students indicated that they found the course-embedded peer tutor to be helpful, although the extent to which students preferred working with the peer tutor, as opposed to working with a professional tutor in the Writing Center, varied among different subgroups of students. While not all students expressed satisfaction with the writing program, the overwhelming majority of feedback I received about the program was positive.

## 5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

My dissertation research project was to conduct an in-depth case study investigating the developmental writing program at University X, a small, private Christian liberal arts university in the Southwest United States. My research questions centered on understanding the experiences of students enrolled in the developmental writing workshop classes and comparing student success rates (as determined by final course grade) across five consecutive fall semesters. For the most recent two fall semesters I studied and during which I collected my interview data (fall 2015 and fall 2014), this developmental writing program featured an accelerated workshop model with course-embedded peer tutors, while the previous two semesters (fall 2013 and fall 2012) featured the accelerated writing workshop model without course-embedded peer tutors. During the fall semester before that (fall 2011), the program offered only a traditional, semester-long remedial writing course. The accelerated model allowed students who placed into basic writing to enroll directly into freshman composition, while taking a mandatory writing workshop course for additional support, rather than having to take a semester-long basic writing course prior to being allowed to enroll in a college-credit-bearing composition course. I gathered data from all five semesters in order to document how evolving models of the developmental writing program, including switching to an accelerated format and incorporating course-embedded peer tutoring, may have contributed to varying student success rates.

The accelerated basic writing model at University X saw largely positive outcomes in terms of student success during the first four fall semesters in which it was in

place, in many ways mirroring the success of the programs that inspired it. For example, according to Rigolino and Freel (2007), qualitative assessments of the Supplemental Writing Workshop (SWW) program at State University of New York (SUNY) at New Paltz reflected increases in students' sense of agency as writers and "showed that students in the SWW program were achieving similar rates of success as their peers using standard benchmarks" (p. 64). Similarly, qualitative interview and end-of-course survey data from my study confirm that students in the developmental writing program at University X gained confidence in their writing abilities, while quantitative institutional reports reveal that these students also achieved comparable, and in some cases greater, rates of success in freshman composition as their non-co-enrolled peers.

This success is also in line with what has been reported regarding The Accelerated Learning Program (ALP) of the Community College of Baltimore County (CCBC)—which, like the program at University X, notably increased the percentage of basic writers who successfully pass freshman composition (Adams, Gearhart, Miller, & Roberts, 2009, p. 50). Additionally, two follow-up studies examined the effectiveness of CCBC's Accelerated Learning Program and found that the program increased students' success in subsequent composition courses (Cho, Kopko, Jenkins, & Jaggars, 2012; Jenkins, Speroni, Belfield, Jaggars, & Edgecombe, 2010) and increased freshman-to-sophomore persistence rates (Cho, Kopko, Jenkins, & Jaggars, 2012). This last finding is notable, because University X had credited the revised writing program as being one of several influential factors in its recent increase in freshman-to-sophomore retention.

Unlike SUNY's SWW and CCBC's ALP, the developmental writing program at University X also incorporated course-embedded peer tutors who were themselves undergraduate students. Multiple studies have reported that integrating writing tutors into first-year composition courses can yield positive outcomes (Dvorak, Bruce, and Lutkewitte, 2012; Mullin, et al., 2005; Pagnac, Boertje, Bradfield, McMahon, & Teets, 2014); however, none of these studies investigated embedding peer tutors in developmental writing courses, despite the fact that Shaughnessy recommended this approach in *Errors and Expectations* (1977). One study that did look at embedding peer tutors in basic writing classes at Saginaw Valley State University found that doing so improved student passing rates by 21%-48% across multiple semesters (Raica-Klotz, et al., 2014). This improvement in student success rates is impressive and is consistent with the improvement in student success reported at University X; however, the study by Raica-Klotz, et al., does not reflect student success in college-credit-bearing courses and involves peer tutors who were themselves former students in the developmental writing program. The program at University X, because it combines course-embedded tutoring with an accelerated workshop model, demonstrated an ability to increase student success in not only the developmental writing course, but also the college-credit-bearing freshman composition course.

University X is not the only institution blending course-embedded tutoring with an accelerated model. At the 2015 South Central Writing Center Association Conference, Jones, Puckitt, Ruiz, Hall, and Rhea described receiving positive student and tutor feedback after embedding Writing Center tutors, all of whom were graduate students, in

an accelerated developmental writing program. Their findings, which have yet to be formally published, suggest that the approach improved student outcomes in both the developmental writing course and freshman composition. While it is encouraging that such a program would observe positive outcomes and receive largely positive feedback, the program designed by Jones, et al. (2015) could not be implemented at all institutions, because the course-embedded tutors Jones, et al. assigned to the developmental writing classes were all graduate students who were associated with the university Writing Center. Many smaller institutions, University X included, do not, for various reasons, have a body of graduate students who are available to staff a Writing Center or work as course-embedded writing tutors. Thus, in my study, I sought to determine if an accelerated developmental writing program using course-embedded undergraduate tutors who were not associated with the university's Writing Center may result in similarly positive outcomes.

Despite the general success of the program across the four years covered by this study and during which the accelerated workshop model with course-embedded peer tutors was in place at University X, there was a noticeable drop in student success rates during the fall 2015 semester. While it is certainly possible that this decrease in student success was due to a problem within the program itself, there are also potential academic and non-academic explanations for this fluctuation derived from within the fall 2015 freshman cohort. The most obvious academic explanation is under-preparedness. During each of the semesters covered in this study, students were placed into writing courses according to the same three-tiered system. Those with an ACT Reading/English score at

or above 21 or an SAT Reading/Writing score at or above 480 placed directly into freshman composition. Students whose ACT and SAT scores were between 14-20 or 410-470, respectfully, were co-enrolled in both the developmental writing workshop and freshman composition. Students who had an ACT Reading/English score at or below 13 or an SAT Reading/Writing score at or below 400 were placed in the developmental writing workshop only, which the students were required to pair with one of four designated college-level courses other than freshman composition (American Government, Introduction to Psychology, United States History to 1877, or United States History from 1877). This placement rubric is also outlined in the following table.

Table 6  
*English Course Placement Rubric*

SAT/ACT Scores	Course Placement
ACT Reading/English score at or above 21 or an SAT Reading/Writing score at or above 480	Freshman Composition
ACT Reading/English score of 14-20 or an SAT Reading/Writing score of 410-470	Co-Enrolled: Developmental Writing Workshop paired with Freshman Composition
ACT Reading/English score at or below 13 or an SAT Reading/Writing score at or below 400	Developmental Writing Workshop paired with freshman-level course other than Freshman Composition

During the fall 2015 semester, only 42% of the students who placed into the developmental writing workshop were co-enrolled in freshman composition. The remaining students' placement scores were too low to qualify them to co-enroll. Comparatively, in fall 2014 and fall 2015, 82% and 85% of students who placed into the workshop were co-enrolled, respectively. In fall 2012, 61% of workshop students were

co-enrolled. Of these four semesters, fall 2012 and fall 2015 saw the lowest student success rates, as determined by final course grades, as well as the highest percentages of students who placed in at the lowest writing level.

However, academic under-preparedness alone would probably not account for the substantial drop in student success rates among students who placed in at the middle, or co-enrolled, level during fall 2015. After consulting with each instructor who taught the writing workshop and/or freshman composition in fall 2015 (one of whom left teaching altogether after that semester, while another flatly refused to teach a freshman writing course ever again), I suspected that there might be non-academic explanations for the drop in student success rates during the fall 2015 semester. Here is an excerpt from an email one workshop instructor sent to me regarding her experience that semester:

Attendance and student behavior, coupled with what seemed to be more severe writing deficiencies, made for a less than stellar overall performance for the class. I'm used to needing to have more energy, attention, and a broader skill set to teach this class. I actually like that aspect of it. But no amount of attention or skill made a difference in many of the situations of these students. Here's a rough breakdown: 1) one was asked to permanently leave the university [for misconduct]..., 2) one did not know TH meant Tuesday/Thursday and only came on Tuesday for several weeks before I figured it out and discussed it with her, 3) one did not turn in a single complete writing assignment, and 4) two of this group had a very difficult time writing in English (J. McIntosh, personal communication, September 9, 2016).

This instructor also shared that several students missed class at “a much higher rate” than usual, regularly saying they were sick or had overslept.

After speaking with the other course instructors, all of whom shared similar stories, I wanted to know if behavioral anomalies among this freshman class had been observed elsewhere at the university. I contacted, via email, the Director of Student Success, who works with students who need accommodations or who are struggling for personal or medical reasons. While no specific data were available, because that office does not track requests for services according to students’ classification, she was able to confirm via email correspondence that the fall 2015 freshman class was “challenging.” She recalled working with a number of students who “were very immature and emotionally not ready for college,” as well as a number of students who were academically under-prepared.

I subsequently spoke with several other administrators and staff members, all of whom confirmed the problematic nature of the fall 2015 freshman class. Each person with whom I spoke had a different anecdote to share, regarding everything from an increase in students requesting mental health services to spikes in online bullying and an increase in students sneaking pets into the residence halls. While individually these accounts may be dismissed as anecdotal, taken as a whole they suggest what could be a problematic pattern. This would not be the first time a university struggled to meet the needs of a student population whose preparedness for college was inconsistent with what that university had previously experienced; Shaughnessy documented just such a situation in *Errors and Expectations* (1977). In sum, the general consensus at University

X, at least among the stakeholders with whom I communicated, was that rather than reflecting something about the program model itself, the drop in student success rates in fall 2015 had more to do with the low academic skills and lack of maturity this particular class of incoming freshman brought with them to college.

This study also revealed that the lowest level of satisfaction with the developmental writing program, and with the course-embedded peer tutors, in particular, came from students who self-identified as White, and this trend was amplified for students who both self-identified as White and who were provisionally admitted to University X. In an attempt to explain this phenomenon, I shared this finding separately with two deans, two student support coordinators, and one adjunct instructor who teaches the writing workshop course every semester. Two of these professional staff members were African American and three were White, non-Hispanic. I recorded and documented these conversations and the email correspondence I received, so that I could review the exact language that was used later, rather than trying to rely on memory.

This process reflects two aspects of my theoretical framework. First, interpretive constructivism values the authentic voices of individuals who have experienced and/or observed the phenomena being studied, and I therefore made an attempt to record the perspectives of university personnel who interacted directly with students enrolled in the developmental writing program to understand what their perceptions were regarding what they observed during the fall 2015 semester. While these data are secondary to the accounts shared by students who experienced the phenomena first-hand, it provided a few

possible explanations for what my findings reveal regarding student experiences and student success during fall 2015 (see Recommendations for Future Research).

Second and as previously discussed in Chapters 1 and 3, Creswell states that research that adopts an interpretive constructivist approach attempts to “generate or inductively develop a theory or pattern of meaning” (2013, p. 25). Thus, I developed possible theories that would help explain my research findings based on the observations and collective anecdotal evidence provided to me by university personnel who interacted directly with students enrolled in the developmental writing program in fall 2015. I am, of course, fully aware that these theories originate from an individual research project, and therefore will require further testing and refining. However, collecting these perspectives and developing potential explanations for my research findings based upon them helped me determine potentially useful directions for future research.

### **Limitations**

This study had certain limitations. First, the sample population being studied was small, with only five students who were enrolled in the program agreeing to be individually interviewed. Additionally, the end-of-course surveys were distributed in only three of the five sections of the writing workshop. In an attempt to disrupt the classroom environment as little as possible, distribution of the surveys was entrusted to the classroom instructors, one of whom forgot to distribute the survey in two sections of the course. While this provided data from more than half of the students enrolled in the course, it offers an incomplete picture of student reactions to the program. In particular, while all co-enrolled students were able to complete the survey, the majority of

developmental writing students who were not co-enrolled in freshman composition did not have the opportunity to respond to the survey, creating a noticeable gap in the data I was able to collect as part of this project.

Second, the fall 2015 freshman cohort appears to have been an anomaly in terms of the students' academic under-preparedness and lack of maturity, as reported by multiple faculty and staff members at University X. It is possible that this unexpected shift in student population had a confounding impact on the results of this study. If the fall 2015 freshman cohort had been more consistent with previous freshman classes, I may have seen different results for the last year of data collection. Despite these limitations, this study offers potentially valuable information regarding how students who place into developmental writing classes perceive an accelerated, workshop-style developmental writing program that incorporates course-embedded peer writing tutors.

### **Implications for Practice**

This study demonstrated that the accelerated workshop model with course-embedded peer tutoring was largely perceived by students as being beneficial, and it could, then, be considered an option for developmental writing programs at small universities that regularly admit students with some degree of academic under-preparedness. Such a program attempts to blend the effectiveness of individualized instruction with the efficiency of classroom instruction. While the design of similar programs at other universities may sometimes allow the student to have the same instructor for both the workshop course and freshman composition (Rigolino & Freel, 2007), this is rarely the case at University X, and the program still showed largely

positive outcomes. This suggests that when course scheduling and lack of adjunct availability make it difficult to ensure that students have the same instructor for both courses, as was the case at University X, a viable alternative is to allow students to enroll in any section of either course, regardless of instructor. At University X, program components and curricula were closely coordinated across all sections, and this would seem to be an essential aspect of a workshop-model program in which students may have different instructors for each of the two courses.

Similarly, this study found that carefully selected undergraduate peer tutors who are not affiliated with a university Writing Center can be trained to be effective and useful additions to the program in the form of course-embedded writing tutors. During the first year in which student writing tutors were embedded in the developmental writing workshop classes, the peer tutors were paid an hourly wage for this service. However, during the following year, the peer tutors enrolled in a for-credit course during the semester in which they were working as course-embedded writing tutors. One benefit of this change was that it reduced program costs; however, of arguably greater significance was the benefit to the peer tutors, who now earned experiential learning course credit (a graduation requirement at University X) and had ongoing support and training throughout their tutoring experience. Class time for the tutoring course was divided between the students' tutoring work and weekly training sessions with the program director. These sessions emphasized practical tutoring strategies and also offered a background in tutoring and composition theory. Importantly, these sessions offered the program director an opportunity to provide the tutors with timely support in addressing any problems they

were facing in the classroom. Verbal feedback from the peer tutors suggested that this structure greatly contributed to the tutors' own learning, as well as their perceived effectiveness in the classroom.

While most students who were enrolled in the developmental writing workshop seemed to appreciate the presence of the course-embedded tutors, a fair number indicated a preference for working with a professional tutor in the Writing Center. This would suggest that, although Writing Center programs are expensive, they are an important resource for many students who place into developmental writing courses. Course-embedded peer tutors should thus be considered a useful supplement to, but not a substitute for, Writing Center services on campus.

### **Rationale from Previous Research**

The preceding recommendations regarding course-embedded tutor training derive from a previous research study I conducted, a phenomenological case study investigating the experiences of the course-embedded peer tutors who worked in this same developmental writing program in fall 2014, the semester during which they were paid hourly for this service. The tutors I interviewed during that study were able to connect the skills they were developing through their work as course-embedded tutors with specific career goals, and they also recognized that they were gaining valuable interpersonal skills and that their work as writing tutors was developing their own understanding of writing practices. However, the findings of that study suggested that in order to optimize the tutors' opportunities for learning and growth, certain programmatic structures must be present. Such structures include providing ongoing training throughout the semester, for

example, in the form of a semester-long tutor training course that runs concurrently with the tutors' work in the classroom. This ongoing training and support can not only improve the experiences of the course-embedded tutors, but may also increase their effectiveness in the classroom, thereby improving outcomes for students enrolled in the developmental writing course.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

This study defined student success primarily in terms of students' final grades in individual courses, and this success was recognized as a contributing factor in increased freshman-to-sophomore retention at University X. A logical next step would be a longitudinal study that examines how students in this type of program do in subsequent coursework and how well they retain beyond the sophomore year.

Because the sample size in this study was relatively small, it would be worthwhile to repeat the project with a larger sample population. Additionally, responses on the end-of-course surveys suggest that White students, and particularly students who both self-identified as White and who were provisionally admitted to University X, were the most likely to indicate a low level of satisfaction with the course and the course-embedded peer tutor. Further investigation is needed with this specific demographic group to determine why their perceptions seemed to be so negative.

In general, all five individuals who work for University X with whom I communicated (two deans, two student support coordinators, and one adjunct instructor who teaches the writing workshop course every semester) had the same two theories to explain why they thought White, non-Hispanic students might be less satisfied with the

course than their African American and Hispanic peers. The first theory that was suggested was that being placed into developmental coursework, in a way, makes the student feel side-lined or marginalized. They believed that while the African American and Hispanic students are more likely to have experienced this at some point before, White, non-Hispanic students are less likely to have experienced it previously. Recent national statistics indicate that students of color are overrepresented in developmental writing courses (Snyder & Dillow, 2015), which lends credence to the second theory my colleagues posited: that this was likely the first time for the White, non-Hispanic students that they were placed in a situation in which they were in the minority. The adjunct faculty member who regularly teaches the developmental writing course reported that the African American and Hispanic students often knew one or more of their classmates already through sports or other organizations, and they tended to be more social before, during, and after class. According to this same instructor, the White, non-Hispanic students were less likely to know any of their classmates, and they tended to be far less social during class.

A recent study found that Mexican American college students who felt marginalized by the university's culture were less likely to persist and had lower life satisfaction than their peers (Ojeda, Castillo, Meza, & Piña-Watson, 2014), and the same may hold true for students in other demographic groups. This is suggested by the findings of another study that determined that not only was a student's race/ethnicity a predictor of university satisfaction, but that a student's religion plays a notable role, as well (Bowman & Smedley, 2013). This study found that "non-religiously affiliated students and

religious minorities have diminished well-being relative to that of mainline Christian students, and the gap for non-religious students is twice as large as that for religious minorities” (Bowman & Smedley, 2013, p. 753). It is possible that this trend could be exacerbated at a university such as University X, which culturally and academically identifies as Christian, but which is attended by an increasing number of students who identify as Muslim, Jewish, or atheist. Thus, religious alienation offers an additional possible explanation for the student dissatisfaction observed in my study. While all of these theories, which are not mutually exclusive, offer potential explanations for the student dissatisfaction I discovered, further research is needed to confirm whether or not these theories truly explain the students’ attitudes, how pervasive such attitudes may be among this demographic group, and what, if anything, might be done to promote program satisfaction and academic investment for these students.

With the exception of the demographic group just mentioned, the end-of-course survey data and information gleaned from individual interviews suggested that most students had a positive impression of the course-embedded peer tutors. Some demographic groups did, however, indicate a preference for visiting the Writing Center as opposed to working with the in-class peer tutor. It would be worthwhile to determine if this preference was because the Writing Center was staffed by professional tutors, rather than students/peers, or because the Writing Center offered relative privacy in which to ask questions and receive help. Similar questions might be explored with students who strongly preferred working with the peer tutor. Is this preference because of the convenience of the tutor already being available in class or because the tutor was a peer?

The interviews I conducted suggest some of all of this might be the case, but these questions could be explored more directly. Doing so may help program directors design developmental writing courses that more closely meet the needs and preferences of various student populations.

### **Summary of Discussion and Conclusions**

My purpose for conducting this case study was to present a comprehensive picture of the developmental writing program at University X and to determine to what extent the program was or was not achieving its goal of fostering student success. My research questions focused on understanding the experiences of students who were enrolled in the developmental writing workshop classes for the freshman cohort of 2015, and I also compared student success rates (as determined by final course grade) across five consecutive fall semesters during which this program was in place. My findings suggest that this program model, which features an accelerated developmental writing workshop course and incorporates carefully selected and trained course-embedded undergraduate tutors, can promote student success in first-year writing courses and may help improve freshman-to-sophomore retention.

Across the four years covered by this study and during which this model was in place, the developmental writing program at University X saw improvements in student success when compared with the final year of the previous, traditional remedial writing model. In spite of the general trend being positive, there was a noticeable drop in student success rates during the fall 2015 semester, the last semester covered by this study. Rather than reflecting something about the program model itself, however, this

fluctuation is more likely reflective of the low academic skills and lack of maturity the fall 2015 freshman cohort brought with them to college.

Student perceptions of the program, in general, and of the course-embedded peer tutors, in particular, were largely positive. The lowest level of satisfaction was reported by students who self-identified as White, and this dissatisfaction was amplified for students who both self-identified as White and who were provisionally admitted to the university. While there are multiple possible explanations for this trend, further research is needed in order to confirm the cause of this problem.

Overall, this study demonstrated that an accelerated workshop model with course-embedded peer tutoring can be an effective and efficient option for developmental writing programs at small universities. Such a program can promote success in first-year writing courses for students who enter college with some degree of academic under-preparedness. These students, of whom there are millions each year, require additional support to successfully complete college literacy tasks. Providing this support and thus reducing the obstacles to success faced by these students should be considered an ethical imperative for universities that admit students despite documented literacy challenges. What is at stake is not only the students' educational success, but also their future economic success, their ability to support themselves, provide for their families, and contribute to their communities.

## APPENDIX SECTION

### Appendix A

#### Interview Protocol - Student Individual Interview

(conducted at the end of the semester)

Campus:  
Interviewer:  
Interviewee:  
Date:  
Start time:  
End time:  
Location:  
Notes:

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#### Pre-Interview

A. Introductory Narrative: Thank you for meeting with me today. The purpose of this study is to understand the experiences of students enrolled in a writing course with a course-embedded peer tutor and mandatory one-on-one tutoring with a professional tutor outside of class. This interview will take about 45 minutes; is that okay? Would it be alright if I contacted you with follow-up questions after our interview today? How would you prefer that I contact you if I do have follow-up questions?

B. Welcome Script: Welcome and thank you for your participation. As you know, I am Brandy Alba, Director of the Undergraduate Writing Program here at Concordia. Before we get started I just want to thank you, again, for agreeing to discuss your experiences with me. I also want to encourage you to be honest in your responses. What you share with me today will be used only for the purposes of this research study and to improve the experiences of future students in writing programs such as this one. Your responses will remain anonymous, and nothing you share with me today will be used against you in any capacity. Do you understand or have any questions about that?

C. Informed Consent: IRB Statement – This study will involve minimal risk and discomfort. The probability of harm and discomfort should not be any greater than your daily experiences as a college student. Risks may include emotional

discomfort from answering interview questions; however, you have the right to skip any questions which you do not feel comfortable answering. Are you comfortable continuing with the interview?

D. Other Permissions: To facilitate documentation and analysis, may I digitally record this interview? [Get signed release form.] Do you have any artifacts or documents from your experiences as a student in this program that you would like to share with me today?

E. Interview Overview: Our interview will not exceed 45 minutes in length. During this time, we will cover four (4) topics: your overall experiences in your writing courses this semester, your impressions of specific features of the writing program, your understandings of college composition, and your evolving understanding of yourself as a writer. While I value the many diverse aspects of your position, my focus only extends to aspects of your experiences related to the writing program. Thus, I may occasionally need to redirect your response or prompt you to a subsequent question, so that I can respect our focus and your time while remaining within the 45-minute time expectation.

F. Introduction/Rationale: I requested to interview you because you are currently enrolled in the Writing Workshop. When responding, please orient your answers from the point-of-view of your role as a student in one of those courses. If you have additional experiences or insights that you would like to share with me, you are welcome to tell me about it in any remaining time at the end of the interview or in a follow up email correspondence.

G. Goals & Expectations: My goal in conducting this research is to learn more about your experiences as a student in the Writing Workshop and to help to improve the experiences of future students enrolled in college writing courses.

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### **Topic Domain I: Overall Experiences in the Writing Program**

1. Overall, how do you feel about your writing courses this semester?
2. How well do you feel this semester has prepared you for the writing you will need to do in the future?
3. What challenges have you faced this semester? How did you respond to those challenges?
4. Would you recommend co-enrolling in 0201 and 1316 to someone else? Why or why not?

### **Topic Domain II: Impressions of Specific Features of the Writing Program**

1. How helpful was it to have a peer tutor available in class?
2. How helpful was the professional tutoring you received outside of class?
3. Did you prefer one or the other, or were both equally helpful?
4. What do you think the best feature of the freshman writing program at Concordia is?
5. If you could change anything about the freshman writing program at Concordia, what would you change? Why?

### **Topic Domain III: Understanding of Issues Related to Composition**

1. When you work with a writing tutor, what elements are important to you?
2. Is there anything either the in-class tutor or professional tutor could do to improve their helpfulness to you?
3. How well do you feel this program is helping you prepare for the writing you will need to do in the future?
4. If you could create a metaphor comparing college writing to anything, what would you compare it to? "College writing is \_\_\_\_\_." Why?

### **Topic Domain III: Evolving Understanding of Self as a Writer**

1. In what specific ways has your writing changed this semester?
2. At the beginning of this semester, did you see yourself as a writer? (If answer "yes," follow up with "how so?" If answer "no," follow up with "why not?")
3. Has that changed during the course of this semester? Can you explain?

### **Conclusions:**

1. Before we conclude this interview, is there anything else you would like to share with me?
2. Post Interview Comments and/or Observations:

## Appendix B

### Writing Workshop Feedback Form

Please rate the following statements related to your experiences in the Writing Workshop course:

	Strongly Disagree	Neutral	Strongly Agree
1. I feel the Writing Workshop helped me be more successful in my other classes.	1	2	3
2. I feel that this course has helped me improve my writing.	1	2	3
3. I feel that this course is worthwhile.	1	2	3
4. It is helpful having a peer tutor available during class.	1	2	3
5. Regarding writing tutoring, I prefer to visit the Writing Center.	1	2	3
6. Regarding writing tutoring, I prefer working with a peer tutor in class.	1	2	3
7. Regarding writing tutoring, I prefer both visiting the Writing Center and working with a peer tutor in class equally.	1	2	3
8. What else would you like to tell the program director about your experiences in this course (especially regarding what worked well or what could be improved)?			

Please respond to the following (for statistical purposes only):

1. Are you co-enrolled in ENG 1316: Academic Research and Writing this semester? (circle one)      YES      NO
2. Were you admitted to Concordia provisionally? (circle one – if unsure, circle “NO”)      YES      NO
3. Do you identify as male or female? (circle one)      MALE      FEMALE
4. How do you identify yourself according to race/ethnicity? \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix C

### Sample of Qualitative Coding Process

RQ1a: How did students feel about peer tutor's role in classroom?	RQ1b: What were student understandings of the accelerated workshop model?	RQ1c: How did students perceive themselves as writers coming into the program?	RQ1d: How well did students feel the program was preparing them as writers?
<p>Sofia – “The tutor that’s in there, if I ever need help, I’ll go to him. [code: tutor – helpful] He always comes around asking if we’re okay or if we need any help...It’s a lot better than having a peer, like a friend, because they don’t have the whole knowledge of English, and they don’t, like, know if it’s a grammatical error or, like, if the forming is really good. So, I wouldn’t say I don’t trust them [friends], but I wouldn’t base my paper off their comments to me. I would rather have a teacher or tutor edit my paper.” [code: tutor - knowledgeable]</p>	<p>Sofia – “I would personally [prefer traditional approach and] wait [to take freshman comp] because my writing skills aren’t as good as others [code: remediation], I’d say...I feel like I would like to get my basics, like grammar, and [the structure] of writing a paper before, like, having another class that’s overwhelming, writing all these papers...I feel like, if I had a whole semester of it, I would know a lot more to transfer it to [freshman comp] a lot better.” [code: remediation] [code: dissatisfaction]</p>	<p>Sofia – “I’m really good at English, like, it’s one of my favorite subjects. Buuut... I’m not necessarily a good writer, obviously, since I’m in the writing workshop class...Other than that, I’m pretty good in English...My grades [have] been good, like always.” [code: background - positive experiences]</p>	<p>Sofia – “Grades have been going a lot higher lately, so, they’re good. [code: benefit – grades] I like it...If I didn’t have the workshop class, oh gosh! (laughing) I wouldn’t have known about, like, the writing center or anything [code: writing center]. So, yeah, I would be writing papers – bad papers – on my own.”</p> <p>“I think they’re helping me a lot, because my papers are getting a LOT better. Like, my grades are increasing [code: benefit – grades], and I definitely notice that...I think it would be – if I were to go on, I think I would be able to, be capable of writing my own papers [code: future writing].”</p> <p>“When I go to the writing workshop... I tell her my ideas, and we write them down... so my paper can flow, because my paper never flows, but she helps me a lot... [A] key would be just asking me questions [code: benefit – talking about writing]...”</p>

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