

“A TREMENDOUS AMOUNT OF EFFORT”: A CASE STUDY OF LITERACY
LEARNING IN ONE ACCELERATED DEVELOPMENTAL ENGLISH CLASS

by

Karen Sutter Doheney
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Committee:

_____ Chair

_____ Program Director

_____ Dean, College of Education and Human
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Karen Sutter Doheney
Master of Arts
California State University San Marcos, 2002
Bachelor of Arts
California State University Long Beach, 1996

Director: Elizabeth G. Sturtevant, Professor
College of Education and Human Development

Spring Semester 2016
George Mason University
Fairfax, VA



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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents, Joan and Richard Sutter, who inspired me to be an educator and scholar. I am so grateful for your support.

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I would like to thank my family, friends, fellow students, colleagues, and professors for their undying support and encouragement through this process. Kyle and Julia, my children, took on so many extra responsibilities to ensure I could focus on my studies. Shaun, my husband, cheerfully supported all my efforts and was an invaluable sounding board for my ideas—I would not be where I am today without you. Senta, Sigrid, and Kirsten, my beloved sisters, held me up when I faltered, and Nancy, Christina, Kathy, and Amy, my wonderful friends, cheered me on when I felt exhausted. Susan, Fahima, and Zainab, and the other students with whom I began this program, struggled along beside me and challenged me to develop as a scholar. Susan Givens and many other faculty members gave so much of their time to me as I developed all the studies that led to this one, and I cannot thank them enough. Thanks, also, to Drs. Sturtevant, Reybold, Galluzzo, and Parsons, who calmed me down and helped me focus on the task at hand, pushing me to greater depths of scholarship. Finally, thanks to my wonderful participants who let me follow them around for months. There would be no study, and no dissertation, without you.

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List of Abbreviations

Marsh Community College	MCC
English Foundations 1	EF1
English Foundations 2	EF2
Developmental Student	DE
Non-Developmental Student	NDE

Abstract

“A TREMENDOUS AMOUNT OF EFFORT”’: A CASE STUDY OF LITERACY LEARNING IN ONE ACCELERATED DEVELOPMENTAL ENGLISH CLASS

Karen Sutter Doheney, Ph.D.

George Mason University, 2016

Dissertation Director: Dr. Elizabeth G. Sturtevant

This dissertation describes the findings of a qualitative case study about literacy learning in an accelerated developmental English class at Marsh Community College (MCC), a multi-campus college located in a mid-Atlantic state, which has accelerated the delivery of its courses in an effort to improve the success rates of its developmental students.

Proponents of acceleration (Adams et al., 2009; Bailey, 2009; Hern, 2012) argue that offering a faster path through required developmental courses expands access to college-level coursework. What is less clear is whether this faster pace gives students the time and instructional support they need to complete the courses successfully. A report released by MCC indicated that while enrollment in the redesigned courses has decreased, developmental students’ pass rates have declined as well (Office of Institutional Research, Planning and Assessment, 2014). The goal of this study was to explore what happens in an accelerated developmental English class in an effort to help

faculty and administrators understand why some students are successful while others are not. The results of the study suggest that students must put forth a tremendous amount of effort to cope with the challenges of literacy learning in a fast-paced developmental English course if they are to be successful in the class.

Chapter One

During a pilot study of an accelerated developmental English class I conducted in Fall 2014, I asked my faculty participant, Lawrence, a veteran instructor of developmental English at Marsh Community College (MCC), to tell me if he thought his students would pass his class. He answered, “It takes a tremendous amount of effort, you know, to get through.” Lawrence was speaking from his experience about the chances his 10 students will successfully complete English Foundations 2 (EF2)— a mid-level, four-credit, accelerated developmental English course offered at MCC. By the time we had our conversation, in week 11 of a 14-week term, it was clear that a only a fraction of these students would go onto the required college-level writing course, which is a prerequisite for other required content courses and which students needed to complete to earn degrees or transfer to a university. Unfortunately, by the end of the term, only four of Lawrence’s 10 students completed the course successfully.

Lawrence isn’t the only faculty member at MCC to experience such low pass rates. When MCC completely revamped its developmental English program to address low success rates of students who required developmental coursework, it aimed to create shorter paths through developmental coursework in hopes of increasing student success, defined as degree attainment and/or transfer to a university, for its developmental students (Virginia Community Colleges, 2011). However, after several semesters in full

implementation, the college discovered that pass rates in the redesigned courses were actually lower than they were in the traditional design. In fact, a report recently released by the college shows a disappointing pass rate of 58% in the redesigned developmental English program (Office of Institutional Research, Planning, and Assessment, 2014).

This dissertation describes a qualitative case study that explores what happens in one accelerated developmental English class at MCC over one semester and how students experience literacy learning—defined as developing the knowledge and using the processes and strategies involved in reading, writing, and researching—in this setting. The goal of this study is to help faculty and administrators at the college develop a more complete picture of the problem of low pass rates in the recently redesigned developmental English program. Additionally, this dissertation provides data about what actually occurs in one classroom at the college to supplement quantitative data the college has gathered about students' performance in its accelerated developmental English classes. The findings of this study suggest that students must exert a huge amount of effort to accomplish literacy learning in this fast-paced course in order to be successful in the class. Further, the ways in which effort is defined and perceived by their teacher(s) and in their own minds influences students' success.

Dissertation Structure

This dissertation contains five chapters. Chapter One begins with a brief history of developmental education and a discussion of college readiness and student success in order to situate the study's topic, the effects of accelerated design on student success, within the context of the purpose and practice of developmental education in the United

States. Chapter One concludes with a description of the problem, the purpose of the study, the conceptual framework guiding the research methods, and definition of key terms. Chapter Two provides a review of the literature on developmental English in higher education settings within the United States, including persistence and retention of students who need developmental coursework, perceptions of success, literacy learning, instructional practices, and effectiveness of developmental approaches using traditional and accelerated designs. Chapter Three begins with a description of a pilot qualitative case study I conducted in the fall semester of 2014 of one accelerated class at MCC that informed the design of the current study described in this dissertation. It concludes with a description of the design and methods of data collection and analysis used in the current qualitative case study. Chapter Four presents the findings that emerged in answer to the two research questions that guided the study: What happens in an accelerated English class? Why are some students successful but others are not? It also provides detailed descriptions of students' experiences, behaviors, and feelings about literacy learning in an accelerated developmental English class. In addition, it addresses a finding about how instructors' perceptions of students' effort might impact students' success in the course. Chapter Five discusses the implications of these findings and offers recommendations for teaching and future research.

A Brief History of Developmental Education in the United States

Developmental education has a long history in higher education. Begun as early as the 1800s, short, preparatory "basic skills" courses were designed to remove the necessity of remediation rather than to provide it (Casazza & Silverman, 1996), a sort of

“antidote” to students’ poor reading and writing skills at universities such as Cornell and Harvard (Butts & Cremin, 1953). However, as more and more “non-traditional” students—women, African Americans, and older students—began to attend college, the necessity to develop more effective basic literacy instruction increased (Cohen & Brawer, 2008). For example, the GI Bill created opportunity and support for servicemen to attend college, an option that many had not considered before, but these students often lacked adequate reading skills for college scholarship, requiring college instructors to rethink their approaches to teaching (Maxwell, 2010).

By the early twentieth century, community colleges became the default destination for many non-traditional students whose academic skills were considered inadequate for college, so these institutions had to create coherent, effective developmental programs in reading, writing, and math to serve the needs of a growing population of students (Cohen & Brawer, 2008). With their open admissions policies that do not require students to take standardized tests like the SAT or have minimum GPAs to be admitted, community colleges have provided more than simply an affordable alternative to university; they have also provided an opportunity for students who could not otherwise reap the benefit of higher education.

Today, almost half of all undergraduate students in the United States attend community college (Juszkiewicz, 2014). Despite their popularity among students, community colleges face mounting scrutiny of their ability to produce graduates who possess the knowledge and skills relevant and valuable to community and global economies. This scrutiny is perhaps especially strong regarding community colleges’

efforts to educate and graduate students who arrive at their first year of college unprepared for academic work. These students, called “remedial” until the late 1980s and now called “developmental” (Higbee, 2009), who begin their first year of college with low reading, writing, and math skills, have increased in number, from 43% in 2003 to 60% in 2010 (Daiek, Dixon, & Talbert, 2012). They are not considered college ready, which is “the level of preparation a student needs in order to enroll and succeed, without remediation, in a credit-bearing general education course that offers a baccalaureate degree or transfer to a baccalaureate program” (Conley, 2008, p. 4). Further, these students struggle to gain academic literacy, the ability to communicate in the discourse of the academy (Maloney, 2003). Subsequently, they face a longer road to degree completion since they often have to take developmental coursework that does not count toward their degree. Additionally, because they also might lack the academic behaviors to navigate college, this road is fraught with barriers to success (Conley, 2008; Daiek et al., 2012).

Developmental Education as a Bridge to College Success

College readiness is now a national goal for high school education, but state educators and policy makers struggle to define this idea. Still, defining this idea is essential because it serves as a “touchstone by which to judge the success of policies and initiatives in achieving well-defined, shared goals . . . to ensure that students receive the multidimensional preparation necessary for success in the global economy” (College & Career Readiness & Success Center, 2014). A recent review of states’ efforts to define college and career readiness conducted by the College & Career Readiness & Success

Center (2014) found that states' definitions are often circular, vague, or tautological, where "readiness" seems to be the absence of a need for remediation. Certainly, without a clear understanding of what a college-ready student looks like, high schools across the nation are at a disadvantage in preparing them. Conley (2008) has written extensively on college readiness, which he defines as the "degree to which previous educational and personal experience has equipped [students] for the expectations of and demands they will encounter in college" (p. 3), a description implying that college readiness is the major responsibility of high schools. Yet, as more students arrive at their first year of college in need of some improvement in reading, writing, or math skills, it is clear that a gap exists between the level of preparation they gained in high school and the level they need to succeed in college.

To leave the discussion about developmental education here might suggest that college educators blame high schools for students who enter without this preparation; however, this attitude, while admittedly prevalent in the halls of higher education, is antithetical to the mission of higher education (Cohen & Brawer, 2008). From this perspective, educators must accept that every first-year college student is making some kind of transition, whether academically, intellectually, or personally, and must develop the skills he or she needs to navigate the institution, new types of learning, and more difficult material no matter where they enter, making the problem of educating these students more complex (Paulson & Armstrong, 2010). For example, developmental students often lack the "soft skills"—defined as knowing where to go for help, studying and note-taking strategies, scheduling personal obligations around academic

responsibilities, and making realistic decisions about personal and professional goals—needed to navigate college effectively (Cohen & Brawer, 2008). Therefore, developmental education programs in community colleges must offer institutional structures that support non-academic challenges students face (Casazza & Silverman, 1996).

Developmental English students face a second barrier: the lack of strong literacy skills needed to succeed in college-level coursework. College literacy requires that students comprehend difficult texts and critically respond both orally and in writing in organized, supported, and correct forms, building vocabulary and analysis skills, and using these skills strategically to understand a variety of genres (Conley, 2005). Further, they must develop strategies for identifying and coping with a series of literacies employed for academic purposes (Paulson & Armstrong, 2010), which are becoming increasingly diverse in today's college classrooms. Trotter (1990) projected that in the twenty-first century, literacy instruction would be found across content areas, even as the need for developmental literacy instruction increased. Indeed, literacy learning and expectations have become more intricate as the list of literacies students must become adept at grows beyond the printed page and onto the screen (Biancarosa, 2012). Still, as Maloney (2003) asserted, while many students begin their first year of college unprepared to read and write at the college level, they are capable of success when their instructors hold them to high standards and help them meet those expectations. As educators move into the twenty-first century, the need to help students develop literacy

for use in their personal, academic, and professional lives has perhaps never been more salient.

Literacy Learning for College Success

The literacy learning students attain and apply to other coursework is, in my view, another essential component of college success for developmental English students; however, knowing what literacy skills and strategies students need or actually attain in college English courses proves difficult. Perin's (2013) review of the literature on literacy skills of developmental students revealed a significant gap in how much we know about college literacy skills in general and developmental students' literacy skills in particular. Clearly, there is a need for a deeper understanding of literacy learning students actually achieve in addition to understanding what they need for college success.

We can begin this process with a working definition of literacy for academic purposes: "the skills, knowledge, and dispositions necessary for academic success" (McDonald & Thornley, 2009, p. 56). According to the opinions of several literacy scholars, a literate person should be able to make interpretations and inferences from what he/she reads (Biancarosa, 2012); apply these interpretations to comprehend a variety of complex texts from a variety of disciplines (McDonald & Thornley, 2009); and bring that transfer of knowledge into other courses and content areas (Maloney, 2003). Flippo's (2011) definition of academic literacy highlights the focus on academic skills that can be applied across multiple discourses, including new literacies such as visual, digital, research, and information technology applicable to school, work, and life. Educators also

assert that college students must develop critical literacy, a concept that Shor (1997) defined as:

Habits of thought, reading, writing, and speaking which go beneath surface meaning . . . to understand the deep meaning, root causes, social context, personal ideology, and personal consequences of any action, event, object, process, organization, experience, text, subject matter, policy, mass media, or discourse.
(p. 129)

Shor's definition reflects the need for applying multiple perspectives and examining personal bias that some literacy scholars feel is needed as readers develop critical thinking skills throughout adolescence and into adulthood (McDonald & Thornley, 2009). This definition can also be applied to multiple disciplines, across content areas, and in many kinds of literacy activities and modes, including print and digital sources that are increasingly complex and diverse (Biancarosa, 2012). Yet it is important to note that these definitions of literacy for academic purposes reflect the opinions of scholars rather than the findings of research. While we can accept the principles behind these definitions, as I do for the sake of my research on developmental college students' literacy, there is little in the way of hard data to support the veracity of these definitions.

Students' Roles in College Success

Another important aspect of student success comes from each student's own contributions, both in terms of academic and affective characteristics. According to Hattie (2009), who reviewed over 800 meta-analyses on the factors relating to academic success for K-12 students, prior academic achievement plays a significant role in how

well students do in future coursework. Other contributors to student success are students' perception of their own performance, having a positive self-concept, and feeling less anxious about their performance (Hattie, 2009). Students also need self-awareness and management skills, which include the ability to assess one's true performance, to manage time, to persist despite difficulty, and to collaborate with peers in learning tasks (Conley, 2008). The National Survey of Student Engagement (2014) also asserted that college students experience faster paced instruction, a deeper interrogation of material, and higher expectations of their ability to make interpretations and provide analysis of information than high school students. College students also likely spend more time reading, writing, and researching for courses than they did in high school (National Survey of Student Engagement, 2014). Ultimately, students must be able to navigate the rigors of college effectively, which entails building relationships with professors and peers and developing membership in a scholarly community, and which necessitates developing a revised understanding of the changing roles of teacher and student from high school to college (Conley, 2008).

One of the most important affective characteristics for success, according to Bandura (1997), is self-efficacy, which impacts a student's ability to persist through challenges. High self-efficacy can affect students' sense of motivation, feelings of optimism, and control over their own lives, giving them the confidence to handle challenging tasks. However, people with low self-efficacy avoid such challenges, believing that they are incapable of improvement (Bandura, 1997). Several studies have examined how students' experiences in college courses affected their perceptions about

their ability to succeed in college (Koch, Slate, & Moore, 2012; Paulson & Armstrong, 2011; VanOra, 2012). The result of these studies suggests that more research is needed to determine how developmental students' feelings and prior experiences affect their ability to be successful in their college studies.

Accelerating Developmental English to Promote Success

Despite tremendous effort by educators and students to bridge the gap between high school and college readiness, even those students who complete developmental coursework are more likely to drop out of college and are less likely than their peers who do not require developmental coursework to transfer to a four-year institution or earn a certificate, with only a third of students who place into developmental reading actually complete their programs, according to a study based on data from over 250,000 students at 57 colleges (Bailey, Jeong, & Cho, 2010). Some educators have argued that part of the reason for high dropout rates for developmental students is the number of exit points—the places at which a student can decide not to continue on to the next course in the sequence— between developmental courses and credit courses (Adams, Gearhart, Miller, & Roberts, 2009; Bailey, 2009; Bailey et al., 2010; Hern, 2012; Mills, 2009). According to some research, students who first attend a community college already face a longer road to degree completion and finish at a rate of only 30% compared to their peers who go straight to a four-year institution, meaning a vast majority of developmental students never finish a college degree (Bowen, Chingos, & McPherson, 2009). Combined with having to complete long programs in developmental coursework, developmental student faces an extended time to degree that could prove disastrous to their success.

As a remedy to the problem of poor completion rates in developmental English programs, some community colleges have adopted accelerated designs—shortened structures intended to decrease the amount of time it takes for students to complete classes—for developmental programs. Course completion data from students attending 21 universities analyzed by Bowen et al., (2009) indicated that when students can make quick progress toward a degree or certificate, they are more likely to complete their programs of study. Thus, advocates of acceleration argue that by helping students through developmental programs more quickly, students are more likely to complete their degree or certificate programs as well.

While there are multiple kinds of accelerated courses, all share the common goal of shortening the path to completion of developmental education. In fact, many accelerated models require that students complete just one developmental course before moving onto a college-level course, which necessitates a complete redesign of some colleges' developmental programs (Hern, 2012). The benefit of this model to the student comes in the shape of a quicker path to completing prerequisites for required coursework (Adams et al., 2009), and to colleges in improved retention rates of students who have an elevated at risk of dropping out of college altogether (Edgecombe, 2011).

Accelerated Design in Developmental English at MCC

One such example of a college that accelerated the delivery of developmental English education is Marsh Community College (MCC), a large, multi-campus college located in a mid-Atlantic state. Until a few years ago, students who entered their first year at MCC without college-level reading and writing skills were, depending upon their

placement test scores, required to pass up to two developmental reading courses and two developmental writing courses in order to qualify for college-level courses. Placement in these courses meant that students had to complete up to 20 credits of developmental coursework before they could enroll in college-level English and some college-level content courses required to complete a degree and/or to transfer to a university. In MCC's newly designed program, developmental English courses are accelerated, meaning that students can qualify for college-level courses if they pass only one developmental English course, English Foundations 1 (EF1, an eight-credit course) or English Foundations 2 (EF2, a four-credit course), which combine reading and writing instruction and are taken over a single semester.

MCC's redesign of its developmental English program focused on three goals: reducing the need for developmental education, creating shortened paths through developmental coursework, and increasing degree attainment and/or transfer to a university for its developmental students (Virginia Community Colleges, 2011). In addition to integrating reading and writing courses, changing its placement testing to align with courses, and providing more comprehensive student support (new student orientation, early intervention for failing students, college success courses, and advising), the college also altered the structure of developmental courses, using accelerated design to decrease the number of exit points between courses—places where students could choose not to continue in the developmental sequences—which the college blamed for poor success rates (Virginia Community Colleges, 2011). However, after several

semesters in full implementation of the redesign, the college discovered that pass rates in the accelerated structure were actually lower than they were in the traditional design.

Recently released statistics indicate that MCC's student pass rates have declined in the new accelerated design of EF1 and EF2: whereas 68% of students ($n = 1709$) on average passed the traditionally delivered courses in Fall 2012, only 58% of students ($n = 854$) on average passed the accelerated courses in Fall 2013 (Office of Institutional Research, Planning, and Assessment, 2014). Clearly, there are some problems with the current accelerated delivery of developmental English courses at MCC in terms of their ability to help students complete them and move on to college-level coursework, a fact that poses a significant barrier to students' overall ability to complete their degrees and/or transfer to universities.

Proponents of acceleration (Adams et al., 2009; Bailey, 2009; Hern, 2012) argue that offering a faster path to completing required developmental courses expands access to college-level coursework, improves students' retention rates, and ultimately leads to success, meaning students earn degrees and/or transfer to a four-year university. What is less clear is whether this faster pace gives students adequate time learn literacy skills and to complete college-level coursework successfully (Edgecombe, 2011; Hodara & Jaggars, 2014). Despite the increasing popularity of using accelerated course structures to address problems with student retention and degree completion at community colleges (Mills, 2009), some developmental educators at MCC have worried that shortening the course sequence deals with only one of the problems developmental students face—a long road

to course completion—while leaving students without the instructional support and time they need to succeed in the reading and writing courses themselves (Doheney, 2014).

Further, by designating only one of the many components involved in educating college students as the source of failure (long course structures) and addressing only that component in the solution (accelerated course design), MCC cannot hope to see the bigger picture of what developmental students experience in an accelerated course and what it takes for them to be successful. More importantly in my view, this single approach does not address other factors of student success in developmental English courses, including what the students themselves bring to the classroom. Finally, because the institutional report cannot provide reasons for low pass rates or describe the literacy learning experiences, behaviors, and feelings of students who take these courses, more in-depth research is needed to understand why pass rates in these courses are low. Qualitative research, especially case study, is well suited to fill this need because it begins with the purpose of understanding individual experiences and contexts (Stake, 1995), a view that is unavailable through MCC's quantitative data alone. Therefore, this qualitative case study seeks to develop a more complete picture of what students experience in an accelerated developmental class and why some students are successful while others are not.

Purpose

In light of the disappointing pass rates after the first year of MCC's implementation of accelerated developmental English courses, I conducted a qualitative case study to explore what happened in one accelerated developmental English class

during one semester to supplement the solely quantitative data that MCC has gathered about students' performance in accelerated developmental classes. The primary goal of this study was to understand how developmental students' literacy learning experiences— defined as developing the knowledge and using the processes and strategies involved in reading, writing, and researching to produce adequate scholarship—affect their success in an accelerated developmental English course. Its secondary purpose was to help faculty and administrators at MCC develop a more complete picture of how students' experiences, behaviors, and attitudes contribute to their success or failure in the redesigned program. By studying the students in one class at MCC, an instrumental case (Stake, 1995), I hope to provide insight into the larger problem of low pass rates at the college.

Research Questions

My study was guided by two questions:

1. What happens in an accelerated English class?
2. Why are some students successful but others are not?

To answer these questions, I conducted a qualitative case study, which is well suited to help researchers understand both the general and unique characteristics of a class precisely because it is focused on developing a deep knowledge of how such systems work (Flyvbjerg, 2011; Stake, 1995). I studied 10 students in one section of English Foundations 2 (EF2), a mid-range, four-credit accelerated developmental English course combining reading and writing instruction, over a 14-week term in Spring 2015. I observed the class six times, interviewed the instructor, and reviewed course documents

(i.e. syllabus, course objectives, and assignments) to learn what kinds of literacy learning activities students experienced and how they responded to these activities. I also talked to students about their experiences in the class, asking them what they learned about literacy and their own learning styles, how they connected what they learned in the class to other situations, and what motivated them to succeed. Finally, I analyzed students' written work and the feedback they received from instructors to see how they used the writing process, responded to feedback, and evaluated their own progress. My findings suggest that it does indeed take a tremendous amount of effort, on the part of instructors and students alike, to complete an accelerated developmental English class successfully.

This study is important because it provides additional information to MCC administrators and faculty members about students' experiences in the redesigned developmental English program at the college that could help them understand why current pass rates are low. This study also contributes to the literature on the use of accelerated design in developmental education programs in community colleges, which is fairly insubstantial, especially in the number of qualitative studies available, and specifically about students' experiences and literacy learning in these kinds of classes.

Conceptual Framework

Constructivism and social constructivism are the primary theoretical frameworks guiding the study. Constructivists take the view that knowledge is constructed from experience and carries personal meaning that individuals use to understand reality (Stake, 1995). From this perspective, the class, made up of a group of individuals, creates its culture, or set of values that guide interactions and learning, based on the instructor's

understanding of the institution's purpose and developed through his or her interactions with students and their interactions with the instructor and the institution (Tracey & Marrow, 2013). The class, therefore, is a unique cultural creation because of the individual negotiation between a specific teacher and his/her particular students. At the same time, the class is a representation of the larger culture of accelerated English classes at MCC because other instructors also reproduce its procedural culture, meaning its general daily activities and assignments (which are determined through an interaction with the faculty member and the institution), the direct interaction between the instructor and students, as well as the individual experiences of the students in the course. In choosing this setting, one accelerated developmental English class at MCC, for my study, I want to construct a clearer picture of the experiential reality of its members (Stake, 1995).

Social constructivism is the view that knowledge and learning grow from social interactions and are culturally coded (Tracey & Morrow, 2013). From this view, learning happens through the interactions between teacher and students, as well as between students, who share and transform their understanding as they test current knowledge and create new knowledge (Tracey & Morrow, 2013). While this study's boundaries were not inclusive specifically of the instructor's behaviors and perceptions initially, the instructor is still an integral part of the case, an accelerated developmental English class, because she determines the context of students' experiences in the class. Further, due to the nature of the holistic grading in the class, other instructors' behaviors and perceptions impacted the interactions in the class as well. Thus, this study is guided by the view that as the

leader of the class, the instructor creates the social environment in which students learn in part by the choices she makes in instructional approach, assignments, and interactions with students.

Moreover, as students experience learning in a college setting, they must often also make enormous changes to their identities (Paulson & Armstrong, 2010). Students need to redefine their relationships with instructors and alter their own expectations of courses, recognizing and adapting to the differences between high school and college (Conley, 2008). They must develop independence as scholars and individuals, requiring the ability to reflect on past experiences, overcome failures, and build on successes without constant direction from other people (Casazza & Silverman, 1996; Cohen & Brawer, 2008). In this way, the context of the college setting poses its own challenges to developmental learners, a fact that also influenced how I negotiated the setting and the context in which the findings of the study must be placed.

The theory of situated learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991) argues that context shapes educational experience. Lave and Wenger (1991) argued that learning is not merely a process of a teacher conveying knowledge to a learner; rather, it is a social process influenced by the setting of the learning activity. This environment, conceived as both the physical setting and the social circumstances, creates (or inhibits) authentic learning. Under this theory, we can make a generalization that students whose teachers create a rich learning environment, or one in which students are exposed to and participate in authentic literacy tasks that they can transfer to other academic tasks and their personal lives, will likely have high achievement, while students whose teachers fail to do so will

not. Yet knowing how to study the environments where teachers teach and students learn in ways that reveal what elements comprise these rich environments poses a considerable difficulty.

One approach to understanding teaching and learning is to break them down into their components and study each piece separately to determine its contribution. Researchers have used this approach to reveal insights into teaching and learning. For example, Hattie's (2009) synthesis of data related to student achievement showed in quantifiable terms how different factors, from students' intellect, motivation, socioeconomic status, and home life, to teachers' content knowledge, teaching approaches, and personality, to the schools' tracking policies and culture, impact how well students learn. The results of Hattie's work might be taken as a recipe to "fix" what is wrong with teaching and learning. We could simply focus our efforts on improving delivery of factors with the highest effect size—student's self-efficacy, teachers' relationships with students, socioeconomic status (Hattie, 2009)—and raise achievement. However, neither Hattie nor any classroom teacher is naïve enough to believe that improvements to some isolated factors can really repair the whole educational experience for students. What if we looked at each situation a bit more closely to study the setting from the perspective of the people who inhabit it? If we accept that the learning environment impacts the learner (Lave & Wenger, 1991), it makes sense that any study we undertake as education researchers must begin with an understanding of that setting. This notion of culture, in the anthropological sense, incorporates people's actions, knowledge, and creation, but in a broader sense, it also includes how they use language

and conceive of meaning (Luttrell, 2010). These ideas are central to my research both in terms of guiding theory and approach to the current study.

In addition to these theoretical assumptions, my research is influenced by my training and experience as a developmental educator, which informs my knowledge framework and guides my inquiry. I acknowledge the possibility of my identity creating difficulties in my research approach. For example, because the culture I am studying is familiar, I understand that I run the risk of believing I know more than I really do about its internal workings, which Descartes (1999/1637) deemed arrogance, and which, he warned, would create a false understanding of the problem being studied. Yet, equally problematic, invading unfamiliar space might doom me to sheepishness in my inquiry, and promote adherence to the status quo, thereby preventing useful inquiry (Descartes, 1999/1637). The danger of either position is a limited, biased view of a problem that narrows the inquiry from the outset and makes the study itself a mockery of scholarship. Therefore, assuming that I cannot “un-know” what I know about developmental education and literacy (Heshusius, 1994), I understand that I must develop an honest portrait of the “subjective I’s” that I bring in this inquiry (Peshkin, 1988). This process involves acknowledging that I am an insider in the field and institution that I study, so there is little emotional or cultural objectivity between my participants—faculty members and students—and myself.

Leigh (2013) addressed this dilemma in her research by imposing distance on herself. In her research, she adopted an outsider stance so that she could avoid “unintended positioning, shared relationships and disclosure,” (p. 2) which she felt would

“bring a further degree of clarity” to her “position and identity within the field” (p. 2). While I disagree that I have to “impose distance” on myself to conduct a quality study, Leigh’s admonition caused me to ask myself some questions about how my insider position might affect my research. However, I neither can nor want to reject this part of my researcher identity because this knowledge lies at the very heart of what I do as a researcher (Luttrell, 2010) and contributes to the impetus for the study itself. Therefore, I acknowledge my insider position to create a useful awareness of the pitfalls and promise it contains.

Stake (1995) described several case researcher roles that affect the design decisions they make. Of these, the role of case researcher as interpreter, who “recognizes and substantiates meaning” (p. 97) fits the most closely with my purpose for the study. Stake defined the role this way: “Whoever is the researcher has recognized a problem, a puzzlement, and studies it, hoping to connect it better with known things. Finding new connections, the researcher finds ways to make them comprehensible to others” (p. 97). Ultimately, this inquiry is framed by my desire to understand why few developmental students at MCC are succeeding despite enormous effort by the administration, faculty, and students themselves.

Definitions

I use several terms in this proposal: success, college readiness, developmental students, traditional developmental courses, and accelerated developmental courses. Each of these terms is defined below.

Success. Success and student success are both terms used by MCC to describe institutional goals of retention, where students' enrollment rates from semester to semester and from year to year remain steady, or increase, indicating that students are persisting through degree or program goals and ultimately completing them. In this sense, the institutional definition of success coincides with Conley's (2008) definition, which is students' ability to complete "entry-level courses at a level of understanding and proficiency that makes it possible for the student to consider taking the next course in the sequence" (p. 4). Another way to understand success is how well a student is able to understand the content of the course and apply the key intellectual concepts outside of the class setting, in addition to being able to navigate the college culture and participate fully in the scholarly community (Conley, 2008). This definition emphasizes the personal and intellectual development of the student. In my report, I use the institutional definition of success, specifically limited to whether or not students passed EF2, to answer my research questions because it is in line with MCC's definition of success.

College readiness. Conley (2008) defined college readiness as "the level of preparation a student needs in order to enroll and succeed, without remediation, in a credit-bearing general education course that offers a baccalaureate degree or transfer to a baccalaureate program" (p. 4). College readiness requires four key elements: cognitive strategies, content knowledge, academic behaviors, and contextual skills and knowledge (Conley, 2008). Cognitive strategies needed for college include analysis, interpretation, precision, and critical thinking in problem solving. Content knowledge comprises awareness and basic understanding of each content area's major theories and core

knowledge, which often must be demonstrated in writing. Academic behaviors incorporate self-assessment of academic performance, time management, persistence, and collaborating in learning. Finally, contextual skills and knowledge entails developing a new understanding the roles of teacher and student and ability to navigate roles and structures of the institution.

Developmental students. Over the years, several terms have been used to describe college students who require improvement in reading, writing, and math skills in order to be college ready. Although the term “remedial” has fallen out of use in most college programs, educators still use it to refer to students who perform below expectations for college academic performance (Paulson & Armstrong, 2010). This term suggested a cognitive deficiency that required fixing and was often associated with a medical model of diagnosing, prescribing a cure, and testing whether or not the student was cured (Casazza, 1999; Higbee, 2009). Other terms used to describe students who require additional instruction to improve academic skills are “underprepared,” or “misprepared,” terms that suggest blaming previous educational institutions for failing to do the job properly in the first place, or “at-risk,” which seems to predict failure for students out of hand (Paulson & Armstrong, 2010).

“Developmental,” the term used in this dissertation, focuses on multiple aspects of student learning and development theory and reflects the needs of the whole student (Higbee, 2009). I use it in this dissertation partly because it is the preferred term of MCC, and partly because it is common in the literature on programs designed to bridge the academic and social skills gap students bring into their first year of college.

Traditional developmental courses. For the purpose of this dissertation, “traditional” developmental programs are defined as those structures that focus on increasing students’ acquisition of basic skills in reading, and writing using multi-level course structures (Grubb et al., 2011). Many traditional developmental programs use mandatory placement testing to determine which of a series of courses students should take. This series usually involves basic, intermediate, and transfer-level courses, and can comprise anywhere from nine to 20 credit hours for completion (Edgecombe, 2011).

Accelerated developmental courses. Accelerated developmental courses are specifically designed to shorten the time it takes for students to complete courses based on a belief that traditional developmental programs are fundamentally broken (Hern, 2012). Accelerated courses do not necessarily alter the requirements or material delivered in the courses, and they require the same number of course hours as traditionally delivered courses. Edgecombe (2011) defines five types of course acceleration: compressed courses, paired courses, curricular redesign, mainstreaming with support, and basic skills integration.

In the next chapter, I review the literature on developmental English in community higher education settings, including persistence and retention of students who need developmental coursework, perceptions of success, literacy learning, instructional practices, and effectiveness of developmental approaches using traditional and accelerated designs.

Chapter Two

The gap between the skills many students entering their first year of college have and what they actually need to navigate the intellectual and personal challenges they will encounter impacts student success in several ways. Research shows that while many students successfully complete developmental coursework, developmental students are still less likely than their peers who do not require developmental coursework to complete a degree (Virginia Community Colleges, 2011). To increase student success, which many institutions define as improving persistence rates, increasing retention from semester to semester and year to year, and enhancing graduation and degree completion or transfer to universities, community colleges scrutinize their developmental courses to find the cracks through which students are slipping. Several researchers have identified developmental education programs as one of those cracks (Adams et al., 2009; Bailey, 2009; Bailey et al., 2010; Edgecombe, 2011; Mills, 2009).

Persistence and Retention as Markers of Success

Persistence and retention rates are central to institutional definitions of student success, and understanding the factors that influence these rates could prove vital to making informed decisions about programs and interventions (Fike & Fike, 2008). Placement in developmental coursework that increases time to degree is thought to pose a challenge to students' persistence and retention rates (Mills, 2009). However, placement

alone does not always account for lowered persistence rates. When Fike and Fike (2008) followed cohorts of first-year students from an urban college in Texas over the course of three years, they found that more than half of first-year students who were placed in and enrolled in developmental math and reading courses dropped out after their first year. Increased retention rates at the college were correlated with successful completion of developmental reading and writing courses, suggesting that overcoming persistence challenges requires more than assessment and placement into developmental tracks (Fike & Fike, 2008). In a more recent study, Crisp and Delgado (2014) used data from the Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study, conducted from 2004 to 2009, to measure how likely students who take developmental English and math courses (DE, $n = 940$) were to persist through community college and transfer to a university compared to their non-developmental peers (NDE, $n = 1830$). Controlling for remediation variables, the researchers used post-matching hierarchical generalized linear modeling (HGLM) to analyze students' persistence rates from semester to semester and transfer rates to university. They found a slight advantage in year to year persistence rates at the community college for DE students (79%) compared to NDE students (77%); however, they also discovered that participation in developmental coursework correlated with reduced odds of transfer to a university within six years, with students who participated in developmental English courses being the least likely to transfer. This finding is of particular significance because the study population consisted only of students who expressed an intention to transfer.

These studies broaden the evidence base for assessing developmental education programs' effectiveness by painting a more complex picture of what "student success" means. If community college administrators and faculty choose to look at persistence data alone, they might define success in a narrow way—success at this institution—instead of seeing it from the perspective of the students—success in completing individual goals. Just as important, when developmental education programs are implemented in the absence of other support systems, students are less likely to gain any benefit from these programs (Daiek et al., 2012). This means that the institution itself must create policies that allow the college to partner with students in their academic journeys in multi-dimensional ways (Casazza & Silverman, 1996; Cohen & Brawer, 2008). Further, it requires that the institution must understand the differences between how it defines success and how other stakeholders, namely students and faculty, do. I review several studies that look at these perceptions in the next section.

Students and Faculty Members' Perceptions of Success

To broaden the idea of what success means, some researchers are going straight to developmental students, studying how experiences in actual courses affect their perceptions about their ability to succeed in college (Koch et al., 2012; Paulson & Armstrong, 2011; VanOra, 2012). Two of these studies, Paulson and Armstrong (2011) and VanOra (2012) looked at how students viewed success, how they went about achieving it, and what they considered to be barriers to success. Paulson and Armstrong used metaphor analysis, a cognitive linguistic framework, as a way to understand students' perceptions of developmental reading and writing coursework. Their analysis of

128 student surveys exposed students' tendency to see academic literacy as a product rather than a process and to have negative perceptions of writing and reading. Further, students' understanding of the goals for reading and writing often did not match teachers' perceptions of these goals, while students' motivation to complete classes often came from the desire to avoid failure. In his interview study of 18 developmental writing students, VanOra (2012) revealed several challenges that these students must overcome to be successful in college, from multiple demands on time, to the difficulty of the work they faced, and finally to poor teaching. On the theme of difficult work, students often described the frustration of working hard but not understanding the material despite their efforts. Some students described writing as "torture," saying it caused them more anxiety than other kinds of assignments, and that it just plain "sucked" (p. 27).

Taking a slightly different approach to their discussions with students, Koch et al. (2012) examined three students' perceptions about their experience of taking a sequence of developmental courses at community colleges. They interviewed students individually for 30 minutes using semi-structured protocols framed by Bandura's (1997) theory of self-efficacy with questions that were "broad enough to encourage participants to describe experiences but narrow enough to provide specific data" (Koch et al., 2012, p. 69). The researchers identified five meta-themes that cut across each participant: students' affective perceptions of being placed into developmental courses; their academic perceptions of the skills they learned and their need for extra support; the behaviors they exhibited to navigate their educational experiences; the resources offered by the college they used; and perceived benefits of completing developmental

coursework. Students in this study expressed complex perceptions of their experiences from negative reactions to being placed in a developmental class to positive and negative experiences in the classes. They seemed surprised about not feeling judged by their teachers and fellow students regarding their low skills in reading, writing and math. However, they also felt that help was not readily available either from the teacher outside of class or through the tutoring center on campus, which was often overflowing. Despite these negative perceptions, all three students revised their initial negative feelings about taking developmental classes to actually believing their placement was warranted, in terms of both scholarly maturity, i.e. behaving like a student and doing the work, and increasing academic skill.

Taken together, the findings in these three studies emphasize the need for developmental instructors to take a more direct role in communicating the purposes for learning, in addition to teaching the processes of learning. Looking at the experiences of students taking developmental classes illuminated why students often have so much trouble through the educational experience, and how these experiences affected their ability to succeed. Finally, these studies underline the importance of understanding how students' experiences might affect their motivation and perseverance through college. The implications of these studies taken together are significant, putting the obligation on college administrators and developmental education faculty to develop a broader understanding of how students' perceptions of their experiences in developmental classes can be a real barrier to their success.

Successful developmental education programs consist of many elements, but a crucial factor is faculty who teach the courses (Di Tommaso, 2010; Farakish, 2008; Karp & Bork, 2014; Roueche & Snow, 1977). Faculty determine whether instruction is delivered as a set of instructions to follow or as a collaboration between faculty and students, and if the environment is positive, encouraging, and process driven, or skills-based and disconnected from students' personal learning goals (Roueche & Snow, 1977).

Several studies concluded that positive teacher-student interactions are an essential component of students' motivation (Di Tommaso, 2010; Farakish, 2008; Karp & Bork, 2014). Using classroom observations of six sections of a developmental writing course and student ($n = 20$) and faculty ($n = 4$) interviews, Di Tommaso (2010) explored how several non-cognitive variables, including socioaffective factors (e.g. views of self, and others) and situational factors (e.g. finances and college surroundings), impacted developmental students and influenced their educational experiences. Di Tommaso's analysis of interviews with students about their interactions with their teachers revealed that socioaffective factors—images of self, peers, and teachers—had a greater impact on their educational experiences than situational factors—finances, jobs, and time management. Specifically, she found that having a faculty role model who connected to students on a personal level helped students understand and navigate college. Positive faculty interactions also seemed to mitigate negative student characteristics, such as learned helplessness, and accentuate positive behaviors, such as self-direction (Di Tommaso, 2010). Looking more closely at what developmental faculty do to help students make it through, Farakish (2008) investigated the practices of two community

college teachers credited with high student success in their developmental writing courses. Through her analysis of observations, interviews, and documents, conducted over the course of a semester, Farakish found that how teachers responded to students' non-cognitive needs as well as academic needs were essential components of developmental students' success. Additionally, the two teachers made specific efforts to establish positive relationships with their students. They encouraged students to be accountable and independent in their learning, gave high levels of relevant feedback, and modeled scholarly behavior.

With a focus on the contrast between expectations and actual behaviors of students, Karp and Bork (2014) conducted semi-structured interviews with 97 students and 72 faculty and staff members involved in a student success course at three community colleges. They found that expectations for students' behavior differed from the roles these students often played. The researchers used the themes of "fluidity" and self-awareness to describe how students understood and adapted to the expectations of community college, how often teachers gave feedback to redirect students' behavior, and how students interpreted the various new roles they each played in a college setting. Further, the researchers recommended that students needed to redefine their academic habits and develop a new "toolkit" of strategies for approaching and completing college work. They concluded that for students to alter their roles in each new situation they encounter effectively, these adaptations needed to be explicitly taught by instructors.

What is clear from these studies is that faculty who teach developmental courses play an important role in correcting the lack of clarity between their expectations and

students' understanding and ability to meet those expectations. For students to adopt appropriate roles successfully, faculty should consider helping developmental students develop a realistic understanding the college's specific culture by engaging in them scholarly discourse, showing collegial respect and commitment to their learning (Karp & Bork, 2014). In light of these findings about how students and teachers often define and experience success much differently from each others' and from institutions' definitions, it is important to delve more deeply into these differences. The point of departure for students and teachers versus the institution seems to be completing developmental course work rather than simply persisting at the college from year to year (Crisp & Delgado, 2014), whereas between students and faculty, it lies in the need for a more realistic understanding of what it means to succeed in college (Di Tommaso, 2010; Karp & Bork, 2014), and, more specifically, what it takes to succeed in a developmental English class and what it means to develop the literacy learning needed for success in college. In the next section, I look at various definitions of college literacy.

College Literacy

In addition to helping students understand and navigate college culture and their own experiences with academic tasks, developmental English educators must also help students achieve the literacy learning that they will need for academic success in college. Broadly speaking, college literacy requires that students are able to employ close reading skills to comprehend difficult texts and critically respond, both orally and in writing, in organized, supported, and correct forms (Conley, 2005). Further, they must build vocabulary and analysis skills, and use these strategically to understand a variety of

genres (Conley, 2005). However, as noted by Perin (2013) in her review of the literature on literacy skills of developmental college students, little is known about what these students can do and how faculty address students' strengths and weaknesses in reading and writing. Perin analyzed 43 studies on assessment and instruction in developmental English and uncovered a significant gap in how much we know about developmental students' literacy skills. Further, she questioned the rigor of much of the current scholarship and called for studies that can develop a literature base for college-level literacy as robust as those that exist in K-12 and adult literacy fields. Ultimately, Perin's efforts revealed a need for more sustained, quality research in the literacy skills developmental students possess when they enter college and the skills they attain once they complete developmental coursework.

This lack of a clear description of literacy skills students should possess in college has led many researchers to look elsewhere for an understanding of the reading, writing, and research skills college students need to succeed academically. In their study of success rates of developmental students in college-level courses, Crews and Aragon (2007) determined that since underprepared students arrive at their first year of college without having attained college-ready literacy by the end of high school, they would begin with definitions of adolescent literacy, a strategy that I borrow here as well. McDonald and Thornley (2009) defined adolescent literacy as "the skills, knowledge and dispositions necessary for academic success" (p. 56). Literacy needed for academic work includes thinking, reading, writing, and research skills and strategies.

Throughout adolescence, students must develop their ability to make interpretations and inferences from what they read, going beyond mere summary of a text to understand its implicit meaning as well as its explicit meaning (Biancarosa, 2012). Further, students must be able to adapt reading practices to develop multiple strategies for applying their interpretations to comprehend a variety of complex texts from a variety of disciplines (McDonald & Thornley, 2009) and be able to transfer knowledge of reading and writing strategies into other courses and content areas (Maloney, 2003). Finally, students must be able to express themselves clearly and correctly in writing, using a variety of forms appropriate to the expectations of content area teachers (Conley, 2005). Scholars still struggle to understand how adolescent students make the transition from everyday literacy to academic literacy, a concept that emphasizes the application of skills across multiple discourses, including visual, digital, research, and information technology literacies that students will encounter in school, work, and life (Flippo, 2011). However, the fact remains that once they arrive at their first year of college, they will be expected to navigate these activities (Conley, 2005).

Given the multiple layers of learning necessary for academic literacy, it might be no surprise that high schools struggle to help students gain these skills and strategies. Results from the Program for International Student Assessment (2009) results revealed that 18% of 15 year-olds in the United States failed to achieve reading literacy at a Level 2, the basic level PISA deems necessary for students to achieve by the time they complete high school to avoid struggling with reading all their lives. When these struggling readers become college students who need developmental assistance in their first year of college,

educators must find ways to bridge this gap, all the while worrying that even if students make significant progress in developmental courses, this progress might not be enough to meet the demands of college-level work (Bailey, 2009).

As adolescents transition to college, the definition of literacy becomes even more complex, moving from sets of skills into something much broader. They must develop habits of thought, reading, writing, and speaking which go beneath surface meaning...and mere opinion, to understand the deep meaning, root causes, social context, personal ideology, and personal consequences of any action, event, object, process, organization, experience, text, subject matter, policy, mass media, or discourse. (Shor, 1997, p. 129)

Shor's definition of critical literacy reflects the need for applying multiple perspectives and examining personal bias that readers must develop in adulthood (McDonald & Thornley, 2009; McLaughlin & DeVogd, 2004). Critical literacy, in this sense, is similar to critical thinking skills that can be applied to multiple disciplines, across content areas, and in many kinds of literacy activities and modes, including print and digital sources that are increasingly complex and diverse (Biancarosa, 2012). As developmental learners gain the ability to navigate these diverse skills, they can make an important transition from passive to active learners (Paulson & Armstrong, 2010). Since what these skills actually are remains unclear (Perin, 2013), an important goal for developmental English programs is to define is the level at which essential literacy skills, knowledge, and dispositions are in evidence once students complete the developmental process. However, given the incomplete understanding reflected in the literature of the

literacy learning first-year college students must have to succeed, along with what research does suggest about complexity of literacy learning tasks, defining these levels is difficult. What we can do is look at how current instructional approaches impact literacy learning in developmental English classes to see if there are more or less effective practices in place. I review the literature on instructional practices in developmental English in the next section.

Instructional Practices in Developmental English Education

While the purpose of developmental education in literacy is to improve students' reading and writing skills, the presence of remedial pedagogy in developmental courses can block this goal (Grubb et al., 2011). Remedial pedagogy centers on the notion that instructors should break down a complex process in order to make it easier for students to learn and master each step in the process, but it can result in over-simplification of the process, taking the purpose for reading and writing out of context (Graham & Herbert, 2011). Further, developmental English courses frequently offer non-academic material, preferring the kinds of books that are entertaining and considered appealing to modern audiences in an attempt to motivate students who are often considered non-readers (Grubb et al., 2011). However, these kinds of texts do not provide adequate models of the academic texts that developmental students are likely to encounter in later coursework.

In addition to offering high-quality reading instruction, developmental English programs must also address writing, but often, these skills are separated (Graham & Herbert, 2011).

The notion that reading and writing should be developed separately became popular in the 1970s, advanced by the argument that composition should arrive from

students' experiences and that writing should emerge as an expression of the writer's identity (Coles, 1974). This kind of thinking might have influenced many developmental English programs' decision to offer separate reading and writing courses. However, when Graham and Herbert (2011) studied how reading can be an effective tool for improving writing, they noted that reading and writing share a reciprocal relationship where writing instruction also improves reading skills, particularly in the area of comprehension. Their meta-analysis of 95 experimental and quasi-experimental studies of the effects of writing on reading in 1st through 12th grade students used strict inclusion criteria to find studies that included at least one writing assessment that showed the impact on a reading measure in the experimental group. Selected studies included activities such as students answering questions about text in writing, taking notes on a text while reading, summarizing text, and writing short or extended responses to reading. The researchers excluded studies where the control group received writing instruction and used eleven quality indicators to ensure that the studies they included in their meta-analysis were high quality. Graham and Herbert found that writing about reading improved comprehension for students in 2nd through 12th grade, with statistically significant positive effect sizes in 94% of the studies. They also found that weaker writers and readers also benefitted from writing about reading with 83% of the studies showing a statistically significant positive effect for comprehension. These findings have serious implications for developmental English programs. Namely, programs that separate reading and writing instruction might deprive struggling readers and writers of a valuable tool that helps them improve reading comprehension, a skill they can use in many of their college classes in addition to

English, by perpetuating the notion that writing and reading are separate activities and should be developed separately.

Writing instruction in developmental English programs might also be problematic in terms of alignment with college-level courses. Grubb et al. (2011) noted that many basic writing courses did not cover expository, analytical, or research-based writing, preferring to teach personal narrative. However, when personal narratives dominate writing assignments, students cannot learn more formal structures of academic writing. Further, if the goal of writing instruction is simply to produce error-free sentences and paragraphs, rather than a holistic form of communication of a specific message with a particular purpose to a defined audience (Grubb et al., 2011), students will not understand the larger context of the act of writing, as a knowledge-creating activity (Reither, 2000).

When seen in the light of filling a literacy skills gap so that students can succeed in academic tasks in college, developmental English classes that do not have solid curricular alignment with gatekeeper courses will leave students still unprepared when they finally arrive in college-level courses (Grubb et al., 2011). These findings are echoed in research about college-level courses as well. As part of a three-part study to examine the writing skills of first-year college students, Prior (2012) conducted a content analysis of 29 course syllabi from a first-year writing course conducted in Fall 2006 at a large research university in the Southeast to understand the alignment between the accepted components of good writing and students' actual writing skills. The syllabi showed little variability in in terms of global writing concerns such as critical thinking, writing argumentatively, using the writing process, crafting thesis-driven writing supported by

evidence, and conducting research and documenting sources, but there was variability in the emphasis on using correct grammar and mechanics, translating text for use in writing, and in revising essays. However, these variations were not associated with changes in students' writing skills as assessed in the second part of the study Prior conducted.

In this second part of her research, Prior used an *ex post facto* design to examine the changes evident in 360 first-year college students' writing upon completion of first-year composition in the fall semester of 2006 at the university. She compared the students' initial writing ability in high school, based on SAT scores, with their performance on a similar essay written after the completion of the first-year composition course to assess what changes occurred in students' writing between the end of high school and the completion of English 101. She found that scores on the post-essays were nearly identical to the initial SAT scores and concluded that taking one composition course has almost no impact on first-year students' writing skills.

These studies raise important questions about how instruction is delivered in developmental English courses. What is the role of curricular alignment between developmental English content and college-level English content and students' ability to achieve the level of literacy learning necessary for success? How much exposure to literacy learning do developmental students need in order to improve their literacy skills? Admittedly, these are difficult questions to answer, yet given that developmental education programs are under fire for failing to prepare students adequately (Bailey, 2009; Mills, 2009), these elements must certainly be considered in any plan to improve them. However, as Grubb (2001) noted, there is "very little discussion about . . . what

goes on in the [developmental] classroom . . . or whether it stands a chance of bringing students up to college level' (p. 4). The passing of over a decade shows educators and administrators still asking these questions and looking for answers, and yet perhaps answers to these kinds of questions are precisely what are missing when well-intentioned institutions implement redesigned developmental education programs.

Because students in developmental writing courses often struggle to develop an academic voice, master college writing skills, and develop positive attitudes about scholarship, they need explicit models and authentic practice in these processes to make the transition from developmental to college-level courses (Maloney, 2003). College literacy learning requires instructional approaches that build up thinking, reading, writing, and research strategies rather than breaking them down into skills and drills. This process "is most successful when imbedded within the context and tasks of the actual reading, writing, research, and study at hand" (Flippo, 2011, p. 398). Considering that a majority of students who enter college do not possess the writing skills necessary to be successful in college and beyond (Defazio, Jones, Tennant, & Hook, 2010) developmental English instruction cannot afford to focus on basic skills alone because, as McClenney (2004) said, "If students don't succeed in developmental education, they simply won't have the opportunity to succeed anywhere else" (p. 15). With this important warning in mind, we move now to a closer review of developmental English programs in the next section.

Traditional Developmental Education

For the purpose of this review, “traditional” developmental programs are defined as those structures that focus on increasing students’ acquisition of basic skills in reading, and writing using multi-level course structures. Grubb et al. (2011) reviewed traditional developmental structures at 13 community colleges, finding that many of these programs used mandatory placement testing to determine which of a series of courses students should take. This series usually involves basic, intermediate, and transfer-level courses, and can comprise anywhere from nine to 20 credit hours for completion (Edgecombe, 2011).

The body of literature about the impact of developmental education on student success highlights its uncertain effect. For example, some studies suggest that taking developmental coursework cannot entirely overcome weak academic skills (Bailey, 2009; Bailey et al., 2010). Based on his review of studies on the effectiveness of developmental education, Bailey (2009) concluded that while developmental coursework in writing, reading, and math generally does not harm students, it does not really help students with very weak skills to improve.

Defining “good” developmental English programming is not easy and can change from context to context. In designing a developmental reading and writing course at Brooklyn College that would help students connect academic literacy with their personal, academic, and career goals, Maloney (2003) described five objectives needed in effective developmental English education: using rhetorically varied texts; creating clear thematic and topical connection to other general educational requirements; building collaboration

and interaction between texts, assignments, and fellow students; emphasizing students' experience and insight in assignments; and exposing students to a variety of writing situations to build confidence and creation of thoughtful texts. In these guidelines, Maloney emphasized that good developmental English design creates a learning network that supports and develops knowledge-making practices, allowing students to build a wide conceptual framework of the types and purposes of reading that connect to other activities such as synthesizing ideas in writing.

Several studies of the effectiveness of traditional developmental English education demonstrate that students can benefit from these courses. In their study of the effectiveness of a mid-level developmental writing course offered at a community college, Southard and Clay (2004) compared developmental students (DE, $n = 58$) who were placed into the course on the basis of a placement test and non-developmental students (NDE, $n = 792$) and found that pass rates for the College Composition course were higher for DE students (74%) than for NDE students (63%). Further, there were no significant differences between the average grades for NDE students who completed College Composition (79%) and DE students who completed College Composition (77%). Southard and Clay concluded that the mid-level developmental English course was adequately preparing students to succeed in college-level English.

A similar study, conducted by Crews and Aragon (2004), also looked at academic performance of developmental English students. As in Southard and Clay's (2004) study, Crews and Aragon looked at performance in the short term by analyzing developmental students' final grades in the college level composition course, but they expanded their

study to also include long-term performance in other college courses by collecting students' cumulative GPAs. The researchers examined the academic performance of developmental students attending a mid-western community college over a three-year period. Controlling for a list of demographic factors, the researchers conducted a *t* test to predict whether there was a difference between the cumulative GPAs of developmental and non-developmental students and found that there was no significant difference between these two groups of students, leading them to conclude that the developmental English program at the community college was preparing students to succeed.

In their study of English students attending a large, urban community college, Goldstein and Perin (2008) wanted to know whether developmental students performed at a similar level as their peers who were designated “college ready” according to a placement test. In the study, 65% of the students were placed into one of three developmental English courses (level 1, a grammar course, level 2, a fundamentals of academic writing course, or level 3, a course that focused on short essays and analysis), and another 24% of students placed into level 4, the first credit-level course required for an associate's degree, which the researchers designated as Group One. The remaining students placed into level 5, a college-level course, and were designated as Group Two. As students completed their required English courses, their pass rates were documented as “passing” (a C or better) or “not passing” (D or below, excepting incompletes or withdrawals, which were excluded from the study). All students ($n = 590$) were tracked into a content area course, Introduction to Psychology, which was defined by the researchers as having high literacy demands: reading and comprehending complex text

and writing research papers. Using binary regression analysis of students' placement in developmental (Group One) or college-level English (Group Two) and their final grades in Introduction to Psychology, the researchers concluded that there was no significant difference between the two groups in their performance. As in previous research on the effectiveness of developmental English courses (Crews & Aragon, 2004; Southard & Clay, 2004), these results suggest that the developmental English program was effective in helping underprepared students succeed in a content course with high literacy demands.

Since much of the public debate over developmental education has focused on program effectiveness, many studies have looked at how students perform once they have been through developmental educational programs (Bahr, 2012; Bailey et al., 2010; Crews & Aragon, 2007; Jenkins, Jaggars, Roska, Zeidenburg, & Cho, 2009). These studies tend to suggest that proper placement into programs and the sequence of coursework can have a significant impact on retention and success. Yet, while these studies confirm that developmental education can contribute to student success, the fact remains that developmental students still face many barriers to completing degrees. In fact, research suggests that developmental students complete degrees at a much lower rate than their non-developmental peers (Mills, 2009). Such uneven results increase the pressure on researchers to find additional reasons for the low student success rates.

A good deal of research on traditional developmental education looks at program design, sequences, and timing of taking courses. To investigate the potential relationships between course-taking behavior and success, Crews and Aragon (2007) followed a

sample of students ($n = 669$) attending a mid-western community college over a three-year period who were directed to take a developmental writing course. They collected data about students' GPA and success rates in gatekeeper courses compared to their non-developmental peers. An interesting difference emerged when the researchers looked at students' cumulative grade point average at the end of the three-year study. Participants who took the developmental writing course within the first semester of enrollment had a higher cumulative GPA and mean grade in English 101 than nonparticipants. However, participants who took the developmental writing course after their first semester of enrollment showed lower cumulative GPAs than nonparticipants' GPAs. These results suggest that the timing of course taking can affect course grades and overall GPA (Crews & Aragon, 2007).

The timing of course taking continues to garner much attention from researchers. Bahr (2012) gathered data from the Chancellor's Office of the California Community College system of three cohorts of first-year students ($n = 101,871$) enrolled during the fall semesters of 2001 through 2003 in developmental writing courses at 105 California community colleges. Looking at students who completed developmental coursework up to five levels below college-level English, with specific emphasis on attempts to complete the next level, Bahr analyzed patterns of course-taking behavior, including delays between courses, passing and not passing, mean credit load of coursework, skipping courses in the sequence, and duration of enrollment. Analysis of the data revealed no discernable exit point. In fact, though the numbers declined gradually at each step, a majority of students attempted each next step in the developmental sequence.

Studies of course-taking behavior generally emphasize that students' persistence rates correlate positively with passing courses, as well as a positive association with attempting the next course in the sequence without a delay (Bahr, 2012; Crews & Aragon, 2007). In contrast, Bailey et al. (2010) found that the long sequences of developmental coursework could actually lower the chances that students completed degrees or transferred to universities. Similarly, in their study of student success in the transition between developmental education programs and college-level coursework in the Virginia Community College System (VCCS), Jenkins et al. (2009) found that many students who tested into developmental coursework were not progressing to gatekeeper courses, and that the reasons for this varied from failing developmental coursework or not taking developmental coursework even though it was recommended, to simply leaving the institution before courses were attempted. This finding, echoing Bailey et al. (2010), is troubling since developmental education is supposed to bridge the gaps that prevent students from succeeding in college-level work.

Despite its worthy goals, developmental education has been criticized as a poor investment that wastes time and money (Bailey, 2009). Of particular concern raised in these studies is the fact that failing a course early on in the sequence correlates strongly with students' likelihood of failing subsequent courses or exiting the developmental sequence altogether (Jenkins et al., 2009). However, this analysis also points to the unclear results such studies return, the failure to answer questions about why students fail courses, and an increase in the need for other kinds of research into developmental education, namely what happens in the developmental classroom that affects student

learning. Additionally, when study after study questions the effectiveness of traditional models of developmental education, both at the program level and within classrooms (Bahr, 2012; Bailey, 2009; Bailey et al., 2010; Crews & Aragon, 2007; Jenkins et al., 2009), it becomes necessary to rethink program design. As more and more community colleges rethink the design of their developmental programs, targeting long course sequences seems to make sense given the research reviewed here, making acceleration a possible solution to increasing student success in developmental English education programs. In the following sections, we delve into the literature on accelerated design.

Accelerated Developmental Education

In the past decade, institutions of higher education have focused their efforts on making changes in curricular and program design to promote student success. New models of developmental literacy programs, such as acceleration, attempt to alleviate the long wait many developmental students have faced in the past between taking non-credit basic skills reading and writing courses to being able to take credit courses. Accelerated courses are restructured to streamline instruction toward quicker completion of a program or a degree/certificate (Edgecombe, 2011). For example, in one program, developmental students registered for a first-year composition course along with a writing workshop that gave them additional time with an instructor or a tutor to go over material and learn skills (Hern, 2012). Other accelerated models offer one developmental course before a student moves onto a college-level course. The benefit of this model to the student comes in the shape of a quicker path to completing prerequisites for required coursework (Adams et al., 2009). Further, accelerated models have been linked to improved retention rates of

students who were previously at risk of dropping out of college altogether (Edgecombe, 2011). Advocates of acceleration argue that by helping students through developmental programs more quickly, students will be more likely complete their degree or certificate programs as well (Adams et al., 2009; Bailey, 2009; Bowen et al., 2009; Hern, 2012).

There are five types of course acceleration found in the literature: compressed courses, paired courses, curricular redesign, mainstreaming with support, and basic skills integration (Edgecombe, 2011). The first three models represent one popular method of acceleration that emphasizes course restructuring, and is largely based on a belief that traditional developmental programs are fundamentally broken (Hern, 2012). In a compressed course design, students complete required developmental courses in a shortened time. Perhaps students would take one developmental course over eight weeks then move into the second course in the following eight weeks, allowing them to complete the sequence in one semester instead of two. In a paired course model, a cohort of students registers for a developmental English course along with a content course that has high literacy demands. Instructors then work together to scaffold assignments from the content course, providing specific help with skills and concepts. Curricular redesign is a larger scale acceleration model where the number of courses needed to complete the developmental sequence is reduced and the newly designed course is aligned specifically with general education courses.

The second two models, mainstreaming and basic skills integration, are designed to quicken progress toward a degree by bypassing traditional developmental courses altogether (Edgecombe, 2011). Instead of taking developmental courses, students are

placed directly into college-level courses and offered supplemental workshops and tutoring. Basic skills integration also includes a co-teaching model, where developmental faculty help general education faculty to scaffold assignments. The benefits of these models include allowing students to engage in more challenging material than traditional developmental coursework offers; develop a higher level of collaboration and peer support; be exposed to high achieving students; and earn college credits that count toward degree completion (Adams et al., 2009).

Accelerated models for developmental English courses attempt to address the concerns about students' course-taking behavior, along with the high level of attrition of developmental students. The problem of attrition rates of developmental students from college seems to be partially related to skills, both academic and non-cognitive, and partially related to fatigue, which impacts lower-skilled developmental students disproportionately due to the longer sequences of coursework they must take to achieve college-level competency (Bahr, 2012). While this problem seems to be understood conceptually by educators and intuitions, particular points where fatigue and skills acquisition cause students to drop out is more difficult to pinpoint. Bahr's (2012) study tried to determine the points at which students placed in lower skill courses "suffer a differential loss of skill," (p. 662) meaning that the courses were actually harming their skill acquisition process. However, he surmised that the students in the study who must take multiple developmental courses that do not count toward degree or transfer simply give up on their educational goals. If this is the case, then community colleges are not doing students any favors by forcing them to take developmental courses.

Accelerated structures for developmental education counter the lengthy process of taking courses that do not count towards degree progress. There are several examples of similar structural changes in developmental English programs that attempt to remove barriers to success caused by course sequencing. Community colleges in California have been offering accelerated formats for decades. In a quantitative investigation of the success rates (defined as passing the course with a grade of C or better) of students taking accelerated format classes, Santa Monica College's Instructional Research department looked at enrollment data from 1994 to 1999 and found that students in six-week accelerated general studies classes had higher success rates (80%) than their peers who took traditional 16-week format classes (65%) (Logan & Geltner, 2000). In another quantitative study, researchers at the City College of San Francisco found higher success rates for students who concurrently enrolled in a learning community of eight-week sessions of developmental reading and developmental English classes—a 60% success rate—than for students who enrolled in a traditional 16-week developmental English class—a 52% success rate (Spurling, 2001). While these results are impressive, it is important to note that in the first study, Logan and Geltner (2000) looked at success rates of non-developmental general studies courses rather than developmental ones, and in the second study, Spurling (2001) compared a developmental learning community that offered supplemental reading instruction to a stand-alone developmental English class. Such results are not generalizable to the kinds of accelerated developmental English classes offered at many community colleges and specifically, those offered at MCC, which are the subject of study in this dissertation. Still, such impressive sounding

successes could entice administrators at community colleges to see acceleration as a solution to poor success rates in their own developmental education programs. Further, like these studies, there are plenty of others that look at the success rates of students taking accelerated format classes in general studies, often at private universities and in four-year degree programs (see Scott & Conrad, 1992; Seamon, 2004; Wlodkowski, 2003). Again, however, these studies' findings are not applicable to developmental education.

More recently, research on the effects of acceleration in developmental English education has shown promising results by using mainstreaming. Mainstreaming is a popular choice in accelerated design because it allows students who placed into developmental courses to enroll in college level courses if they show successful completion of their high school English courses (Bailey et al., 2010). For example, one community college in California implemented mainstreaming, allowing students who place into higher-level developmental courses to register in college-level English along with a small group class taught by the same instructor who provided additional instructional support (Hern, 2012). These policies demonstrate innovative thinking about how colleges can partner with students to determine their own level of college readiness and work towards their goals on their own terms, allowing developmental students to make the choice about whether to mainstream or to take a more traditional approach to literacy learning.

Another example of mainstreaming is the Accelerated Learning Program (ALP), a course structure for teaching developmental writing at the Community College of

Baltimore County (CCBC). Adams et al., (2009) described how the idea for creating the ALP came from an informal review of data about the pass rates of students in a basic writing course (ENG 052) and the subsequent credit course (ENG 101), which revealed low pass rates for basic writing students in the gatekeeper course. Of particular concern was that when students did not pass the basic writing course on the first attempt, their pass rates for the gatekeeper decreased even more, and this pattern continued with each additional failed attempt to pass the basic course. The ALP was designed, in part, to stop the “leakage” of students between the sequences of developmental writing coursework by placing developmental students directly into first year composition classes and providing them with additional writing and reading support (Adams et al., 2009).

Students’ pass rates during a two-year pilot of the ALP, between 2007 and 2009, revealed some benefits to student success. In comparing two groups of students, the control group, who took the regular sequence of ENG 052 then to ENG 101, and the pilot group, who volunteered for the ALP, there is a marked improvement from 39% of control group passing English 101 after two years to 63% of ALP students passing in two years. The ALP attributed its success partly to the effect of cohort learning, which, similar to a learning community, helps students form useful learning relationships with their classmates. Small class size, which is common in college writing courses, is even more impactful in the ALP model because the companion course hones in on the eight most vulnerable students in English 101 classes. Finally, due to its better pass rates, Adams et al. (2009) claimed that ALP would be more cost effective than traditional models of developmental education.

Another model of accelerating students through developmental coursework is “compression,” which means that developmental courses are restructured to have fewer units, fewer courses, and ultimately, less chance for students to slip through exit points between courses. Berkley City College's (BCC) developmental English program previously comprised four non-credit classes, leaving many students stuck in a cycle of failing and repeating courses before they could advance to college-level English, so the college streamlined the program's design, along with rethinking how the courses were taught and evaluated (Hern, 2012). Instructors at BCC aligned developmental course material with the rubric for college-level English, evaluating student work through blind portfolio reads and advancing students to college-level courses based on their portfolio performance.

An interesting problem emerged as the portfolio review process evolved, when BCC instructors discovered the placement test students were given to assess their college readiness seemed to draw an arbitrary line between students placed in mid-range developmental and low developmental courses. This insight spurred the college to create a semester-length developmental course that led directly to college English, effectively changing the college’s program from a four-course to a one-course progression. Chabot College and Solano College put similar models into action with promising results (Hern, 2012).

Accelerated developmental designs are relatively new, and the body of research on the effectiveness of these programs is only just developing. Still, evaluation of these programs is essential since getting students through developmental courses faster just to

see them fail once they get into college-level coursework is not going to work. Three principles that drive good accelerated developmental coursework described by Hern (2012), a leading advocate and expert on accelerated design, provide a first step to program evaluation. First, courses should implement a “backwards design” (see Graff, 2011) that aligns with students’ educational pathways. Second, developmental classes should reject “remedial pedagogy,” and instead offer challenging, authentic material and use scaffolding to guide students through tasks. Finally, developmental education must provide intentional support for non-cognitive issues and work to ameliorate feelings of fear, alienation, and lack of motivation that often cause low retention and completion rates. Additionally, Hern emphasized that developmental efforts need to be practiced institution-wide, bought into by entire departments, and committed to by instructors.

In her investigation of the effectiveness of developmental writing courses at a community college on the west coast, Rose (2007) conducted an action research study lasting one semester using qualitative and quantitative methods to compare students’ performance and perceptions in two traditional 18-week classes and two accelerated nine-week classes. Rose used observation, student interviews, student’s final course grades, and survey data to answer to her research questions about the features of an accelerated developmental writing class that teachers and students believed helped them succeed and the differences between traditional and accelerated formats. Grades earned by students in traditional and accelerated formats showed little difference, with 82% ($n = 58$) and 79% ($n = 57$) respectively earning a C or higher in the course, indicating that students in both formats were equally successful in completing the course. Using qualitative data, Rose

identified other specific markers of effective accelerated programs that students credited with helping them succeed. Features of accelerated courses such as developing student-teacher and peer relationships quickly, providing more opportunities to collaborate, increasing student confidence through faster assignment completion, and getting teacher feedback more quickly were all credited as benefits of acceleration. Rose also found that students who enrolled in the accelerated developmental course appeared to be more motivated, collaborated more with peers, and would seek more help from instructors than students who enrolled in the traditional developmental course. Finally, Rose discussed her finding about the importance of the teacher's role in creating a supportive environment and helping students develop trusting, collaborative relationships with peers, using class time effectively for writing process activities, and staying motivated throughout the class.

It is important to note that in Rose's (2007) study, accelerated classes met every day for nine weeks, while the traditional classes met every other day, a fact that contributed to the students' perceptions of faster relationship building and quicker feedback. Not all accelerated developmental schedules are designed this way. For example, at MCC, classes meet every other day, twice a week. Further, students in this college were given a choice between taking an accelerated or traditional format class, a choice not available to developmental students at community colleges that have done away with traditional format course, as in the case with MCC. Rose's findings certainly suggest that students who self-select an accelerated class might also be different than students taking traditional formats since they showed more motivation, collaboration, and

help-seeking behaviors. If developmental students are not given the choice of which format to take, success rates could be lower for students who might have needed the more traditional, slower format course.

Overall, studies of accelerated design in developmental coursework show positive results for students. In their study of course completion rates for students who took a compressed developmental English course, Sheldon and Durdella (2010) found that 87% of students who took the eight to nine week course succeeded (defined here as completing the course with a C or better) versus only a 57% success rate for students taking a full semester course. In another study of success rates in a compressed model of developmental English, students had higher success rates than their peers who took the traditional course: 58% of developmental students who took the compressed course passed compared to only 25% of students who took the traditional developmental model courses (Brown & Ternes, 2009, as cited in Edgecombe, 2011).

In contrast, Hodara and Jaggars (2014) found that while acceleration provides increased access to college-level courses for developmental math and English students, it can also have negative consequences for students' performance in those classes. In their regression discontinuity analysis of data from City College of New York over a six year period from 2001 to 2007, they found students who took shortened-sequence developmental English courses were 9.7% more likely to enroll in college English, and 6% more likely to complete it, than their peers who started in longer developmental course sequences. They found similar increases among developmental math students, who were 3.5% more likely to enroll in college math and 3% more likely to complete it,

compared to their peers who took traditional sequences. However, when they looked at pass rates for college English between students who took accelerated developmental writing classes, they found these students were 2.5% less likely to pass than similar students who took longer sequence developmental English courses. While this number seems negligible, the researchers interpreted these results as suggesting that one developmental writing course might not be sufficient to prepare students for college-level English. They also admitted that while their analysis showed positive results, the gains are modest for student persistence and should be weighed against the costs to pass rates, which are lower, if only slightly.

Though the body of literature that covers accelerated developmental programs is not extensive, there are some promising improvements for students, especially in terms of retention and persistence (Brown & Ternes, 2009, as cited in Edgecombe, 2011; Sheldon & Durdella, 2010). However, some doubt remains about the level of literacy learning that students gain (Hodara & Jaggars, 2014). Additionally, the literature on acceleration contains some significant limitations. First, most of the studies we have are not longitudinal, and have been conducted by the faculty who implement the programs. Another limitation, cited specifically by Adams et al. (2009), is that their study does not look at the quality of ALP students' writing specifically to determine whether their higher pass rates could be attributed to bias in favor of the program. This is also a limitation in many of the other studies available (see Rose, 2007; Sheldon & Durdella, 2009). Additionally, as Adams et al. noted, their method of recruiting students for the ALP courses might have led to an unrepresentative sample since as volunteers, ALP students

might be more motivated than their peers who did not volunteer. Several of the studies involving mainstreaming or taking compressed courses (see Rose, 2007; Spurling, 2001) also share this limitation. Another limitation in acceleration studies is represented in Hern's (2012) review, which mostly describes the practices of community colleges and presents very preliminary data in support of the claims of success. Further, faculty members who are true believers that acceleration is the answer to fixing developmental education collected most of the data in these studies in only one or two courses, and while one does not doubt their hearts, the fact is the methodology is limited.

Summary of the Literature

The studies reviewed in this chapter reveal, at best, a cloudy picture of developmental English education and whether or not it actually benefits students' literacy learning and student success, defined by the institution by year-to-year retention, degree-completion rates, and/or transfer to a four-year university. Additionally, many of the studies in this review also use only quantitative research methods with data sources such as placement test scores, GPAs and pass/fail rates to determine success rates, leaving out important data that could help researchers, faculty, and college administrators understand what happens in the classrooms and what students themselves do that might contribute to students' success. The review further reveals that community colleges that move to accelerated design in their developmental English programs have some success in getting students through the sequence of courses, but doubt still remains as to what students actually take away. This doubt combined with the report of MCC's own disappointing student pass rates in their recently redesigned accelerated developmental English

program—58% in Fall 2013—supports the need for more research. Moreover, the lack of qualitative research that describes the experiences of students in accelerated developmental English classes limits our ability to understand the factors that contribute to student success within these programs. It is to help fill this gap that I entered into this current study. In the next chapter, I describe a pilot study conducted in Fall 2014 that informed the design of the current study, and the design and methods of data collection and analysis used in the current qualitative case study of an accelerated developmental English class in Spring 2015.

Chapter Three

This qualitative case study explored the experiences of community college students taking an accelerated developmental English class at Marsh Community College (MCC). All names in this report are pseudonyms chosen by the researcher and shared with participants in the study. Based on recent research touting the effectiveness of accelerated designs for developmental education (Virginia Community Colleges, 2011; Mills 2009), MCC's administrators have made the decision to accelerate the delivery of developmental English education to improve success, defined as improved retention and degree completion or transfer rates, for the college's developmental students. MCC's developmental English redesign centered on three goals, including reducing the need for students to receive developmental education, creating shortened paths through developmental coursework to increase access to college-level coursework, and increasing degree attainment and/or transfer to a university for its developmental students (Virginia Community Colleges, 2011). The redesign involved a complete overhaul in the way the college assessed students' need for developmental education and replaced the previous placement assessments with a new placement test. The courses themselves were also altered, integrating reading and writing instruction into single courses rather than having students take separate reading and writing courses. Finally, over the past several years, the college has been steadily providing more comprehensive student support, including

revamping its new student orientation, providing early intervention for failing students, requiring all students to take a college success course, and creating a comprehensive advising system for enrolled students.

The college opted to use accelerated design to decrease the high number of courses in the developmental sequence, which the college blamed for poor student success rates (Mills 2009; Virginia Community Colleges, 2011). MCC's newly designed program allows developmental students to qualify for college-level English courses if they pass one developmental English course, English Foundations 1 (EF1, an eight-credit course) or English Foundations 2 (EF2, a four-credit course) taken over a single semester. This new path through developmental English cuts out a maximum of 12 credits of coursework for students placing into the lowest level developmental course (EF1) and a maximum of six credits for students placing into the mid-level developmental course (EF2).

After several semesters in full implementation of the redesign, researchers at MCC discovered that pass rates in the accelerated structure are lower than they were in the traditional design. In Fall 2012, 68% of students ($n = 1709$) on average passed the traditionally delivered courses, but in Fall 2013, only 58% of students ($n = 854$) on average passed the accelerated courses (Office of Institutional Research, Planning, and Assessment, 2014). The lower pass rates are distressing, especially considering that a goal of the redesign was to increase access to college-level courses. Higher failure rates pose a significant barrier to developmental students' overall ability to complete their degrees and/or transfer to universities. In the sections below, I describe the methods used

in the current study, a term that refers to the qualitative case study of one EF2 class I conducted at MCC in Spring 2015 in the confines of this dissertation. Additionally, I describe a study I conducted of one EF2 class at MCC during Fall 2014, which helped me to refine my methods for the current study and is referred to as the pilot study in the rest of this dissertation.

Purpose of the Current Study

While the institutional report points to a problem with students' current pass rates in the redesigned courses, the picture it provides is limited. It cannot tell faculty and administrators what is happening within these courses, or what students experience and contribute, to help them understand why current pass rates are low, nor does it describe what successful students do. These pieces of information are essential if the college is to address the problems brought to light by the 2014 report. To answer these questions, more in-depth research is needed. Qualitative case study is well suited to fill this need because its purpose is to understand individual experiences in specific contexts (Stake, 1995), a view that is unavailable through MCC's quantitative data alone.

Primarily, this study seeks to understand how their literacy learning experiences—defined as developing the knowledge and skills and using the processes and strategies involved in reading, writing, and researching—affect students' ability to succeed in an accelerated developmental English course. A second purpose of this study is to help MCC's administrators and faculty develop a more complete picture of how students' experiences, behaviors, and feelings contribute to their success or failure in the redesigned program. Ultimately, I hoped to provide insight into the problem of low pass

rates at the college by examining students in one EF2 class over the course of a 14-week semester, making this an instrumental case study (Stake, 1995). Qualitative case study methods are appropriate for this investigation because they allow deep inquiry into a specific, bounded system that can provide insight into the experiences of the actors during a particular time in a specific setting, offering a holistic, empirical, and field-based process emphasizing what is observable in the natural setting of the case (Stake, 1995).

Research Questions

My inquiry is framed by two questions that help establish some practical boundaries for my research:

1. What happens in an accelerated developmental English class?
2. Why are some students successful but others are not?

Although I have placed certain boundaries around my inquiry with my questions, I have also deliberately posed them as open-ended and broad in scope to avoid placing artificial limits on my observations of students' experiences in this setting (Agee, 2009). As I undertook my study, I accepted the possibility that my questions would evolve, revealing new dimensions for consideration and study, so I was open to adding to and revising my questions as I continued through my inquiry (Charmaz, 2010; Luttrell, 2010). Over the course of the study, I found that my research questions were sufficient directors of my investigation, offering me a focused guide in my data collection and analysis without limiting my ability to delve into fruitful lines of inquiry, so I did not need to change my original research questions as the study progressed.

Boundaries in the Current Study

This qualitative case study of one class, a bounded system, framed and “described in a certain way (for a certain purpose)” (Cilliers, 2001, p. 141), aims to understand the case—one EF2 class—and its actors—the students and instructor—as part of that case. As such, the study necessarily contains boundaries, or areas of particular investigation and interest that were studied, as well as limitations, areas that were not studied (Reybold, Brazer, Schrum, & Corda, 2012). The research questions created several boundaries within which I conducted my study. The first research question necessarily created a boundary for my study because I chose to study one EF2 class, focusing my investigation on the experiences of students taking the mid-level developmental course. Further, because I studied a particular EF2 class, taught by a particular instructor and including students enrolled in that class, my investigation speaks specifically to these actors’ experiences, attitudes, and behaviors. Finally, my questions placed a boundary around the phenomena I studied; specifically, I was interested in students’ experiences and what successful students did.

Importance of the Current Study

This study contributes to the literature on the use of accelerated design in developmental English education programs in community colleges, which is currently fairly insubstantial, especially in the number of qualitative studies available, and specifically about students’ experiences in the classes. Moreover, this study is important because it provides additional information to MCC administrators and faculty members

about students' experiences in the redesigned developmental English program at the college that could help them understand why current pass rates are low.

Further, this case study helps build understanding the experiences of students taking one accelerated developmental English class and identifying patterns of behaviors and attitudes of successful and unsuccessful students, so the findings of this study could be useful to researchers, administrators, and faculty in developing logical generalizations about related cases and particular phenomena in developmental English education programs (Patton, 2002). Whether or not others choose to make use of my findings in this way, taking a qualitative approach to this inquiry allowed me to focus on what actually happened in the EF2 setting and to understand the complicated interactions inherent within it that led, or did not, to students' successful completion of the class (Stake, 1995).

In the sections below, I describe my pilot of a qualitative case study of a different EF2 class taught by a different instructor at a different campus of MCC that I conducted in Fall 2014, which helped me to refine my research questions and methods for the current study. Hence forth, it will be referred to as the pilot study.

The Pilot Study

Using qualitative case study design described by Stake (1995), Maxwell (2013), and Patton (2002), and a two-cycle data analysis method described by Saldaña (2013), I studied 10 students in an EF2 class taught by Lawrence, a veteran developmental English teacher at MCC, to learn how the instructor approached teaching and how students experienced and applied literacy learning. I began my pilot study with two questions:

1. What is it like to teach and learn in EF2, an accelerated developmental English course?
2. How do experiences of learning in EF2 prepare students with the literacy skills they need to succeed in college-level courses?

Upon completion of data analysis, I recognized that I had not collected sufficient data to make credible statements about the teaching aspect of my first research question. Further, my second research question about preparing students to succeed in college-level classes proved unanswerable based on the data I collected. Therefore, I focused my findings on the second half of the first research question about students' learning experiences in the class. Analysis of these data revealed three themes related to students' learning experiences in the class: students' ability to make connections between the literacy learning in the class and other literacy tasks outside the class; students' level of dependence on their instructor for direction in completing literacy tasks; and students' facility with collaboration as a strategy to engage in literacy learning.

Setting. I chose to study EF2 over the lower course, EF1, partly due to ease of access in scheduling, but also because enrollment rates for EF1 are lower than for EF2 (Office of Institutional Research, Planning, and Assessment, 2014). Since one of my research goals was to understand students' learning experiences, it made sense to choose a setting with greater enrollment numbers, making EF2 a "site that would yield the most information and have the greatest impact on the development of knowledge" (Patton, 2002, p. 236). This class met twice a week for two hours each session over a 14-week term, another example of acceleration, since MCC offers this course as a "dynamic"

session that starts later than its usual 16-week semester. This double acceleration created an interesting, unique situation under which to observe literacy learning since students technically had less time to accomplish tasks than their peers in other sections of EF2 who got 16 weeks of instruction. Further, this EF2 class could be considered a “critical case,” which Patton (2002) described as being able to provide a dramatic picture of a problem, where “if it happens there, it can happen anywhere” (p. 236). Therefore, while one would not be able to make broad generalization from the case, the findings from the study of a critical case could reasonably be applied to other similar cases as “logical generalizations” (Patton, 2002, p. 236).

Participants. I used purposive selection to choose my faculty participant, a decision that largely constructed the context of study setting because it simultaneously defined whose perspective and experiences would be studied and created boundaries around my study (Reybold, Lammert, & Stribling, 2013). I selected Lawrence, a veteran developmental English teacher who has also taught college-level composition courses. Having worked with Lawrence for several years, I knew him to be a well-qualified teacher, meaning he had the experience, education, and reputation in the department of being effective. Thus, I could focus less on his qualifications and approaches to teaching the class, and more on how the students learned from him, which was my main focus. I have purposely left out detail in this report about my faculty participant to shield his identity.

Initially, there were 11 students enrolled in the class, but by the conclusion of the study, one student had withdrawn. The 10 remaining students, eight women and two men,

were a diverse group in terms of age, life experience, and ethnic background. However, since sex, age, and ethnicity were not of particular interest to my study, I did not address these factors specifically. I state it here only because this group is a fairly accurate representation of developmental students at MCC.

I observed all 10 students enrolled in the class, but I only interviewed three students and analyzed assignments from six students based upon students' consent to be involved in that part of the study. Because they were exceptionally well suited to provide insight into the experiences of developmental English students at MCC, the student participants in the pilot were an essential element to understanding the class as a critical case (Patton, 2002). Yet each student was also unique, so it made sense to delve into particular behaviors and attitudes of specific students, viewing certain student participants as nested cases, "documenting individual experiences and outcomes" within the larger bounded system of the class (Patton, 2014, p. 384). Rainie, Marie, Angela, and Sasha all presented interesting behaviors, attitudes, and literacy skills, and so I explored more deeply into my analysis and interactions with them, describing their experiences and utterances in more detail in my report.

Observations. I conducted four classroom observations each lasting between 30 and 50 minutes for a total of two hours and 40 minutes. During my observations, I adopted the role of non-participant observer, aiming for the stance of an "onlooker" in the observation "continuum that varies from complete immersion in the setting as a full participant to complete separation from the setting as a spectator" (Patton, 2002, p. 265). My goal in this choice was to avoid influencing my results either indirectly by setting up

a series of expectations for my student participants, which they might try to meet to please me or fit in to my study, or directly by helping students with literacy skills they were not learning in the class.

During observations, I hand wrote field notes, noting the time in five-minute increments. During each increment, I focused my attention on one student or group of students, recording literacy learning activities, utterances by students, and interactions between students and peers, instructor and students, and tutor and students, so I was able to observe all the students for at least a few minutes during each session. I concentrated on recording what I saw and heard students doing and saying rather than what I thought about activities and utterances, so my field notes contained description of activities and quotations of students' utterances.

Interviews. To help me understand how Lawrence approached instruction and planned the course, I interviewed him for about 30 minutes before my first observation using open-ended questions that I allowed him to see before we completed the interview, a strategy that helped him feel better prepared to give the interview since he was nervous about being audio recorded. In this semi-structured interview, Lawrence answered my questions about his students and planning his course schedule, giving me a foundational understanding of what to expect in the class prior to my first observation, which was the purpose of this initial interview. In addition to this interview, I also had four conversations with Lawrence after each class observation, each lasting about 15 minutes that I did not audio record due to Lawrence's reticence about being recorded. I did write memos after each conversation to record the content of our conversation.

To help me understand how students felt about literacy learning experiences in the class, I asked all 10 students in the class for interviews, but while six of them initially agreed to be interviewed, only three of them kept their interview appointments with me. I interviewed each of my three student participants for about 20 minutes each. Since my student participants were first-year college students, falling between the ages of 18 and 20, I used a few strategies for interviewing adolescents because I recognized that they were in a similar period of transition in their stage of development (Paulson & Armstrong, 2010). Eder and Fingerson (2003) argued that allowing adolescent interviewees to steer the conversation could help them feel more comfortable and could ensure that the interview was driven by participants' wish to express their experiences rather than simply by my desire to pull out specific responses. Therefore, I used open-ended prompts beginning with "tell me about" rather than more evaluative questions so that they could enter the conversation wherever they wanted to.

During interviews, students often required prompting to give complete answers. For example, in response to my initial prompt, "Tell me about a skill that you have learned in English that you have applied to another class," Sasha said, "It was a SDV class...it was a prewriting. When you have to study for a test, you want to write about it so that you can remember the information." Because this answer implied that Sasha ascribed a different meaning to prewriting—for example, as a kinetic study strategy to learn information from a textbook—than I did—as the planning stage in the writing process—I had to follow up with several other questions about what she meant by prewriting. However, rather than taking on the teacher role and correcting her

misperception during the interview, I tried to ascertain her definitions and experiences. Eventually, this strategy paid off when Sasha went into deep detail about her experience with the annotated bibliography and the difficulties she encountered with putting someone else's ideas into her own words (paraphrasing) and finding information on a website that would help her make a specific argument (incorporating sources and supporting a main idea) all of which are essential literacy skills are related to EF2's course objectives.

Documents. As I discovered in another study I conducted about the difference between students' confidence levels in their literacy skills and their instructor's evaluations of their literacy skills (Doheney, 2014), perceptions vary greatly between faculty and students, and even from student to student. Therefore, rather than relying on solely on students' self-report about their levels of literacy learning, I also collected writing samples from six student participants to provide additional evidence to support my interpretations (Patton, 2002). Writing samples included two assignments, a narrative essay written in the first three weeks of the term, and an annotated bibliography, completed at the end of week 11. These assignments were vastly different in terms of the literacy skills they demonstrated, but each offered a partial picture of students' ability to write in different genres, to organize their ideas around their own experiences and a specific prompt, and to adapt their writing to meet personal and academic purposes for writing.

Analysis of data and findings in the pilot study. Directly after each of my classroom observations, I had informal conversations with Lawrence to go over what we

both thought was happening in the class; then I wrote up field memos that described our conversations and allowed me to reflect on the observation. Memo writing creates a transitional phase between data collection and analysis where the researcher reviews processes, acknowledges assumptions, and begins formulating analytical strategies (Charmaz, 2010). Memos also help to draw out understanding of participants' experiences and provide a clear evidence-base for interpretations (Saldaña, 2013). I used these memos as points of connection between my data sources, both in acknowledging the facts of my observations—what students said and did, how Lawrence interacted with them—and the interpretations I was beginning to formulate on the basis of these facts.

To analyze data, I employed the two-cycle coding method—First Cycle Coding, Post-Coding Transition, Second Cycle Coding— described by Saldaña (2013), which necessitates multiple, deep passes through the data, allowing a rich picture of the data to emerge. My first attempts at analysis of my observation and interview data were constructivist in nature and therefore geared toward discovery, almost as if I were reading and experiencing my observations for the first time, in order to achieve a ground up understanding of my data that balanced both my participants' meanings and my meanings as the researcher (Charmaz, 2010).

In my first cycle of analysis, I settled on broad descriptive terms that I took directly from my notes about students' literacy activities—"writing process," "research," "reading," and "transferring"), their behaviors and interactions ("off-task," "on-task," "avoiding," "independence," and "collaborating"— and their experiences of literacy learning—"understanding," "confidence," "self-assessment," and "struggle." During

initial coding, I also underlined specific activities and utterances that reflected the level to which students exhibited literacy learning and interactions. For example, under the descriptive code, “collaborating,” I underlined, “One student reads her paper aloud to the group, and then I hear them talking about their topics for the compare/contrast paper” from my field notes. Because I saw the students’ shared reading of a peer’s paper as an exemplar of collaboration by developing literacy skills through negotiating, I saw a pattern emerging: the code of “collaborating” was also intricately tied to the code of “writing process.” However, since I also observed several students who did not engage in collaboration, I had to question if using collaboration contributed generally to students’ successful literacy learning or only for certain students in the class.

During second cycle coding, I used pattern coding to find connections between initial codes that I could develop into themes (Saldaña, 2013). My analysis revealed three patterns: “connection,” “dependence,” and “collaboration.” The connection theme linked two smaller themes in the data. First, students’ awareness of, compliance with, and performance on course procedures and assignments as highlighted in the initial code of “on-task,” and second, students’ ability to understand how literacy learning in the class could impact later learning and professional goals, as underscored in the initial theme of “transferring.” The dependence theme related to level of students’ individual interactions with and reliance on the instructor, the tutor, their peers, and themselves in their literacy learning, drawn from the initial codes of “off-task,” “struggle,” and “independence.” Students who exhibited a higher level of “off-task” behavior tended to rely on prompting from Lawrence to a greater extent than their peers who were more willing to work

independently or to rely on peers. Finally, the theme of collaboration emerged clearly from the initial codes of “collaboration,” “understanding,” “self-assessment,” and “writing process.” To a certain extent, students’ engagement in peer collaboration reflected their recognition that literacy learning can be achieved at least partly through negotiation as well as their willingness to rely on peers to provide the support rather than solely on the instructor or going it alone.

Document analysis provided an additional source of information on students’ literacy learning. I evaluated the annotated bibliography using several course outcomes: demonstrate critical thinking skills with college-level material; identify, evaluate, and document sources properly; and demonstrate use of pre-reading, reading and post-reading skills with college-level texts. My analysis of the annotated bibliographies showed that students met these outcomes with varying levels of competence. For the most part, students were able to find credible sources, summarize their contents, and plan out how they would use sources in the subsequent argument paper. For example, Rainie found a book on her topic—depression—and established that its author was “one the world’s foremost authorities on depression,” showing that she understood that information must come from a credible source. In her annotation, she also wrote, “I chose this topic because understanding depression is not as simple as many people may think,” establishing at least one purpose for her writing, to develop people’s awareness about the complexity of depression. Angela also showed a highly developed understanding of how her sources would fit into her writing, making the connection between the information in the sources and how she could use it to support her assertions in the argument paper in

which she would later use the sources in the annotated bibliography. However, other students were less successful. Although Sasha saw connections between her sources and the points she wanted to make in her argument paper, she had difficulty summarizing her sources. Mari showed difficulty evaluating the credibility of sources, appealing to the authority of the college library rather than really assessing the source's features: "It is [from] a database given by the college."

Limitations in the pilot study. Upon completion of data collection, I recognized that this system is indeed an interesting, fruitful case to help me answer my first research question about how students experienced literacy learning in accelerated developmental English. However, it was not the right setting to help me understand my second research question about whether or not it prepared them for college-level coursework. After I analyzed the data, I was able to discover some behaviors of students whose efforts at literacy learning were successful, which I had not considered as a goal of the study before. Therefore, the first critique of the methods I employed in this study center upon development of the study's scope, which "sets empirical and theoretical limits on the extent to which an inference can be generalized" (Goertz & Mahoney, 2009, p. 307). Whereas I had initially formulated a causal scope with my second research question, I could not maintain a causal connection between EF2 literacy learning and success in later courses because these direct relationships were not present, and were in fact impossible to predict since I could only observe what students did or did not do that seemed to contribute to their literacy learning in the class. Based on this critique of the pilot study, I altered my research questions to reflect a more appropriate scope for the current study.

Below, I describe other limitations in the pilot study and how these methods were revised for the current study.

Several limitations impacted my findings in the pilot study. Good qualitative case study research must develop from an intimate understanding of the details in the system over time (Flyvbjerg, 2011). Understanding this requirement, I initially intended to conduct my study over the full 14-week semester, which would have given me ample opportunity to develop a thorough conception of students' experiences in this case. However, due to time constraints, both Lawrence's and mine, I was only able to study the class over six weeks, limiting my ability to form the deep knowledge about the case that I initially sought. When I conducted the current study, I restructured the timing to ensure I was able to study the class for the whole duration of the 14-week term.

Although I was able to make limited generalizations about the class, the initial research questions guiding the study could not be answered given the data I collected. Part of the problem was the limited number of student participants who agreed to be interviewed. Six students initially signed up for interviews, but only three kept their appointments, and due to time constraints, I was unable to reschedule the remaining students.

Another problem was that my plan to interview each student twice could not be completed within the time frame. For example, I interviewed students as they were in various stages of completing the annotated bibliographies, and I was able to learn about how they approached reading and research tasks, transferred these skills to assignments in other classes, and envisioned using the assignment to support their arguments.

However, I was not able to follow up with these students to see how they experienced writing the argument paper, which would have given me insight into how they were transferring skills between assignments within the class—the annotated bibliography as a pre-writing assignment for the argument paper.

Ineffective document collection and analysis also limited my findings. I evaluated writing samples using EF2 course outcomes, but in retrospect, course outcomes proved to be a poor substitute for a rubric when evaluating the samples. For example, the first assignment (narrative essay) showed elements of processed writing, EF2's second course objective, but judging how students' efforts in this particular example met course outcomes was difficult. The course objectives are fairly nonspecific in terms of the writing strategies that students should be able to employ, and since narrative is not considered an academic form by some (Grubb et al., 2011), determining its value as a "college-level text" as required in the course objective was not possible. Further, my analysis of students' writing in the pilot study needed to be more purposeful. To improve the process for the current study, I altered my approach to document analysis, using instructor feedback based on a rubric designed for use in holistic evaluation of students' writing. I also collected documents from students at several points in the term, and I broadened my collection to include informal and formal assignments. Finally, I focused document analysis on two specific purposes: first to supplement my observation and interview data with students' reflective writing and second to see how students engaged in the writing process. Both of these purposes will be addressed in more depth in the following sections, which provide a detailed description of methods for the current study.

Current Study Methods

Case study allows researchers to study a specific problem with a larger context and assumes that studying one case allows researchers to form comparisons to other cases in similar settings and to use these comparisons to make generalizations (Ragin, 1997). By choosing qualitative case study as a design, I made a decision to study a particular bounded system (Flyvbjerg, 2011): The case, one class, is a bounded system of integrated parts—the course objectives, the faculty member, the students, and the assignments—that make it a complex entity worthy and appropriate for study. Therefore, qualitative case study is an appropriate design for this inquiry because my primary goal is to understand what students taking an accelerated developmental English class experience and what elements of that experience contribute to their success.

Research Relationships

Because the case under study in this investigation is a class, composed of an instructor and students, I took a complex view in my descriptions of the setting and participants, using Luttrell's (2010) term "research relationships," which encompasses not only a description of the setting and participants involved, but also how I viewed and navigated my own role in the setting and how I defined and developed relationships with my participants. I describe these elements and offer explanations for my methods and choices in the sections below.

The class. Stake (1995) asserted that the primary focus for selection in an instrumental case study should be to maximize the opportunity to learn from the case, choosing the case that is most likely to help the researcher understand the problem. I

selected one EF2 class because according to institutional data, this course has higher rates of retention and higher enrollment numbers (Office of Institutional Research, Planning, and Assessment, 2014), increasing the number of students I was able to study. This class met twice a week for two hours and 15 minutes each session over a 14-week term in Spring 2015. As in the pilot study, this class also involved a kind of double acceleration because students in the class had a shorter number of weeks to accomplish their literacy learning than their peers in other sections of EF2 who received 16 weeks of instruction in the regular term. It is important to note here that students enrolled in the 14-week and 16-week EF2 sessions received the same number of contact hours with their instructor. Still, the shorter number of weeks in the term created a unique situation under which to observe literacy learning in an accelerated class structure.

During the 14-week term, students in the class were required to complete multiple reading, writing, and research tasks, showing proficiency in the following course outcomes by the end of the semester:

1. Demonstrate the use of pre-reading, reading, and post-reading skills with college-level texts.
2. Pre-write, draft, revise, edit, and proofread college-level texts.
3. Expand vocabulary by using various methods.
4. Demonstrate comprehension by identifying rhetorical strategies and applying them to college-level texts.
5. Analyze college-level texts for stated or implied main idea and major and minor supporting details.

6. Demonstrate critical thinking skills when reading and writing college-level texts.
7. Write well-developed, coherent, and unified college-level texts, including paragraphs and essays.
8. Identify, evaluate, integrate, and document sources properly.

According to the course syllabus, students were required to read nine articles, one 244-page novel, 24 selections in a collection of essays, and 95 pages of reading and writing instruction in their course textbook. They were also required to write eight paragraph-length posts to an online forum due throughout the semester, 13 journal entries between 350-375 words each, also due throughout the semester, two in-class essays (one at week two and one at week 14), a summary-response paper, a research paper, a literary analysis paper, and two reflective essays. These essays and papers were included in two portfolios, the midterm portfolio completed at week five and the final portfolio completed at week 13. Portfolios were graded holistically using a common rubric (APPENDIX A) created by faculty members at the campus, a practice unique to this campus of MCC, as its other campuses do not employ holistic grading or use a common rubric for evaluation of developmental students' work.

Students who successfully complete EF2 earn four credits, but these credits do not transfer or count toward degree programs. The course is graded as pass/fail, with a third designation, re-enroll, being possible for students who show significant progress toward achieving course objectives but whose instructors believe still need more instruction to meet those objectives in a satisfactory manner. Students who earn an "R" for re-enroll do not earn credit for the class; thus, an "R" equates to a failing grade. In Fall 2012, under

the traditional developmental design, 66.3% of students taking the mid-level developmental reading course ($n = 929$) passed and 69.7% of students taking the mid-level developmental writing course ($n = 821$) passed. In Fall 2013, under the accelerated system, 63.3% of students taking the mid-level EF2 course combining reading and writing instruction ($n = 662$) passed (Office of Institutional Research, Planning, and Assessment, 2014).

Faculty participant. Though my primary selection was the class, I also used purposive selection (Reybold et al., 2013) to choose a highly qualified faculty participant who taught the course. I considered a number of factors in choosing an instructor who I considered highly qualified, meaning that he or she has the educational background and training to teach both reading and writing courses, extensive experience teaching developmental students, some experience working in the redesigned courses at MCC, and whom other faculty and administrators at MCC considered an effective instructor. The college typically offers several sections of the class each semester, taught by a number of instructors who are considered qualified to teach developmental English. Because I work at MCC, and have good relationships with the dean of the college and faculty members who teach developmental English, I was able to choose a highly qualified instructor who taught the class during the study period. This selection was important because it created boundaries around my study—in choosing one teacher’s class over another, I also chose not to study another class—and determined at least one perspective driving the investigation (i.e. the specific instructor’s perspective of her students and how she chose to run her class) (Reybold et al., 2013).

Following talking to several colleagues and examining the class schedules for the college, I selected Dr. Goode, a veteran developmental English teacher at MCC who also has a doctorate related to reading and writing instruction. Dr. Goode's reputation as a quality instructor at the college as well as her years of experience working at MCC, teaching in both the traditional and accelerated developmental course structures, allowed me to focus less on her qualifications and approaches to teaching the class, which was not the primary focus of the study, and more on how the students learned from her, which was my main focus. I have purposely left details out of this report about Dr. Goode to shield her identity as part of our agreement to allow me to study her class.

After I received permission to conduct my study from the Human Subjects Research Board at George Mason University and from MCC's Office of Institutional Research, I contacted Dr. Goode via email asking her if she would be willing to allow me to observe her classes, interview her, and collect samples of her students' work. When we met at the beginning of the term to nail down the specifics of my study, I was immediately struck by Dr. Goode's confidence in her approach to the class, her knowledge of the research on developmental English education and pedagogy, and her level of preparation for the class. What's more, she was open to allowing me access to students as a participant observer so that I could talk to them during class workshop time when she was not lecturing or directly teaching.

While this study's boundaries were not inclusive specifically of the instructor's behaviors and actions, the instructor was still an integral part of the case because she determined the context of students' experiences in the class by choosing assignments,

instructional material, and driving the pace of and approach to instruction. Therefore, I sought a collaborative relationship involving shared decision making with Dr. Goode, seeing her a stakeholder in the research setting (Patton, 2002). My goals in soliciting input from Dr. Goode were to broaden my understanding of students' experiences, to increase my access to students during class time, and to balance my own observations of them with Dr. Goode's observations to develop a more complete picture of their behaviors and attitudes about literacy learning in the class. In receiving this input, I was also able to identify another component of the class, the instructor's perceptions of students' effort, that ended up being an important finding in the study related to student success, albeit not one I initially set out to discover.

To ensure a positive relationship with my faculty participant, I also tried to avoid acting like the "expert," and was cautious to avoid giving the impression to her students that Dr. Goode was under my authority. Therefore, I sought active collaboration with Dr. Goode during the study. A strategy I used in the pilot study, where Lawrence and I co-constructed our interpretation of observational data during informal conversations we had after each observation session, also helped me to maintain a co-investigator relationship with Dr. Goode. During our post-observation conversations, Dr. Goode and I went over what each of us experienced and observed students doing and saying, how we thought the lesson went, and what we thought all of that meant. By getting Dr. Goode's input about the class, I was able to put my observations into the larger context of her experiences as the instructor, filling in the gaps in my own limited observations. For example, Dr. Goode was a wealth of knowledge about the challenges students were facing in their personal

lives that might have been the reason for a student's numerous absences or lack of preparation. This insider information was not readily available to me as a researcher, but without it, I might have made very different readings of student behavior during my observations.

Student participants. Studying developmental students is difficult and requires awareness about how to overcome eventualities of attrition by student participants, due to failure, withdrawal, or failure to complete the course (Perin, 2013). Developmental students at MCC, as in other colleges, are a diverse group who enter the college needing varying levels of skills development (Cohen & Brawer, 2008). All MCC students are required to take a placement test for English and math, and must enroll in any required developmental courses within their first semester. According the MCC's report, 522 students, about 61%, who attempted EF1 or EF2 ($n = 854$) passed the course in the fall semester of 2013 (Office of Institutional Research, Planning, and Assessment, 2014). The report also showed that developmental students taking the mid- and lower level courses had fairly high failure rates, with 273 students, about 32%, earning an "R" (re-enroll) or a "U" (unsatisfactory). Withdrawal rates for these classes were fairly low, however, with 59 students, about 7%, withdrawing within the first 60% of the course. One of the pieces of information of interest to my study was how students' pass, failure, and withdrawal rates in Dr. Goode's EF2 class compared to the data gathered by MCC, since comparisons and logical generalizations can be made from this case to other cases (Ragin, 1997). Dr. Goode's class began with 17 students of which three withdrew within the first 60% of the course (about 17%), five passed the course (about 29%), and nine

failed the course (about 53%), meaning withdraw rates and failure rates in Dr. Goode's class were higher than the institutional average at MCC.

My student participants were selected from those enrolled in the section of EF2 taught by Dr. Goode in Spring 2015. These students, part of a class that represented a critical case, or a setting that represented the wider issues under study (Patton, 2002), dramatically illustrated the problem at the heart of MCC's high failure rates, which was also a necessity for this study because limited resources restricted my inquiry to a single setting. Additionally, several students participants exhibited unique attitudes and behaviors that allowed me to enrich the findings, using certain student participants as nested cases, those "documenting individual experiences and outcomes" within the larger bounded system of the class (Patton, 2014, p. 384). These student participants are described in detail in Chapter Four.

Upon gaining permission to conduct my study, and after I met briefly with Dr. Goode to get a sense of the class, I talked to students in person before class began on my first observation day, asking them to consider being in my study. In order to get the highest number of student participants possible, I allowed them to choose the extent to which they wished to participate in the study. In the pilot study, I had written my consent form in such a way that allowed students to opt into the whole study, allowing me to collect documents, interview them, and talk to Lawrence about their performance in the class, or to withhold consent, essentially opting out of the whole study, which lowered the number of students in my participant pool. In the current study, I used two consent forms. First, I asked students to allow me to observe them during class time, collect

copies of their assignments, and talk to Dr. Goode about their performance in class, giving them an informed consent form to sign if they agreed to be in the study. Ten of the 17 students enrolled in the class consented to be in this part of the study. Second, I asked students to consider giving interviews, one at about midterm and one at the end of the class, and I explained to them that I would ask them to sign a second consent form, allowing me to audio record interviews. Allowing students to opt out of interviews, which seemed to be the major reason some students did not participate in the pilot study, while still giving consent to let me observe them, look at their work, and talk to their teacher about their performance, increased the amount of data I was able to collect for each student in the class from which to draw conclusions about their experiences in the class.

My student participants, seven men and three women, were all at least 18 years old, nine were between 18-24 and one was over 50 years old. As in the pilot study, I did not collect specific demographic data because such factors were not of particular concern to the current study. Through observation, document analysis, and conversations or interviews with students and Dr. Goode, I was able to learn that several students had taken EF2 during Fall 2014 but were unsuccessful, making this their second attempt to pass the class. I also learned that several of the students faced significant personal and academic challenges, including being single parents, working, living on their own, and having learning disabilities. In order to maintain a positive relationship with my student participants, I was careful about establishing my position with my student participants. I understood that our relationships were prone to fall into researcher/researched and

professor/student binaries described by Eder and Fingerson (2003), where the powerful researcher and professor position could inhibit or even shut down the weaker researched/student.

Through the pilot study, I learned that students could be reticent to give interviews, so in the current study, when I followed up with students at midterm to give interviews, I offered them another choice, to have a group interview lasting about an hour or to give an individual interview lasting about 15 minutes. Seven of my 10 student participants indicated they would be willing to give interviews, five choosing to give a group interview, and two opting for individual interviews. However, only four students actually completed an interview, which I conducted as a group interview during week eight of the term. I made numerous other attempts to contact the other three students to reschedule midterm interviews, but was unsuccessful.

My initial belief about the low numbers of student interviews I was able to complete was that students were not very comfortable with me. As a non-participant observer, I sat in the back of the room and did not engage with students for much of the study because I did not want to interfere with Lawrence's instruction, and although I made every effort to engage students in conversation after class was over, students were polite but uninterested in being interviewed. In designing the current study, I planned to address this issue by being part of the class from the start of the term, observing the class more often and for longer periods of time, and approaching students for interviews sooner and with more purpose than I did in the pilot study, which I thought would make my presence less awkward or intrusive. I also planned to take a more active role in the class,

moving from non-participant observer to participant observer (Patton, 2002). In this way, I determined to embrace my position as an insider, rather than try to limit or hide it as I had in the pilot study, by being part of the students' experience of the course from the outset (Leigh, 2013; Peshkin, 1988).

I believe that the change in my role in the current study yielded a more positive, active relationship with my student participants. For example, while students were engaged in workshop activities or small group discussions, I would move around the room and listen in, asking questions and making small observations about the work students were doing. Because my goal was to probe into the student's or groups' activity rather than direct the conversation or teach, I kept my comments neutral, saying things like, "How is it going over here? How did you answer Dr. Goode's question?" These conversations, lasting no more than two minutes, allowed me to collect more specific observational data about students' activities and attitudes than I was able to in the pilot study. However, interview rates were still low, with only four of my 10 participants keeping interview appointments, so I had to alter my initial hypothesis about why students were reticent. I address this new hypothesis in my descriptions of data sources used in the study in the sections below.

Researcher Identity

I chose to study this class at MCC for two reasons. First, I wanted to observe how students experience literacy learning so that I could develop my understanding of the particular challenges they faced in this setting since MCC's institutional report seems to indicate that there are significant problems with student success in the course. Second, I

work at MCC and have taught in their developmental English program, so I have an insider's knowledge of the course structures, both traditional and accelerated, and of MCC's student populations and institutional culture. I have also developed a strong rapport with the head of institutional research, the dean of the department, and the faculty members who teach in the developmental English program, smoothing my access to this setting. However, since I work at the college, part of my obligation in conducting this study must be to negotiate the balance between my roles as a researcher and an insider at the college (Leigh, 2013). To ensure that the participants' contributions to the study were authentic and not unduly influenced by my insider position, I used strategies to emphasize their contributions over the course of the study, which I describe in detail in the sections below.

Understanding the challenges students face in accelerated coursework is important to me both as a researcher and a teacher. As a researcher, I have already examined several components of the new classes—institutional changes to improving student success, instructors' approaches in teaching, attitudes about teaching accelerated classes, and qualifications to teach the classes, as well as students' assessments of their learning—and these informal investigations, which I wrote as a doctoral student, have led me to believe that students are the least studied yet most important element of the student success equation at MCC. Much of the research we do have about students—in the literature and from MCC's institutional reports—uses quantitative data that tells us how many students attempt, pass, or fail developmental English classes, which, again,

highlights the fact that there is a problem but cannot help researchers understand the deeper components, students' experiences and behaviors that promote or prevent success.

As a teacher, I am committed to helping students to gain the knowledge, skills, and strategies they need to read and write well for college work. The redesigned courses make this task more challenging in some ways, most obviously by shortening the time teachers have with students while increasing the requirements of the courses themselves since they now include reading and writing instruction. Despite the bigger challenge of teaching these courses, the need to help students does not disappear. In fact, it only becomes more important. Gaining a deeper understanding of what helps students succeed could have important implications for my practice and for other instructors who teach at MCC or at other colleges that use accelerated design in the college.

Data Sources for the Current Study

My study data consisted of field notes from six classroom observations, for a total of 13.5 hours, six informal conversations directly after each observations session and one longer interview with my faculty participant, a single group interview with four student participants, analysis of several examples of students' written work, including two portfolios containing expository and reflective writing, two in-class essays, one written at the beginning of the term and one written at the end of the term, eight informal online discussion board posts, and 13 informal journal assignments posted in an online forum, and analysis of instructors' written feedback given on the two portfolios under the holistic grading practice that was part of the class. Data collection began in week three of the 14-week term and lasted through week 14.

Observations. Since the primary goal of case study is to reach understanding, observations are an important data source (Stake, 1995). Additionally, Adler and Adler (1998) asserted that observation provides hard evidence that can increase the rigor of studies that use other sources of data. I used observations of students during class time to provide an important source of evidence upon which to base my interpretations about students' literacy learning experiences, defined as developing the knowledge and using the processes and strategies involved in reading, writing, and researching. Patton (2002) warned that to be an astute observer is at once vital and difficult in the field, perhaps especially so when the researcher must enter a culture with which she is unfamiliar, and so it requires a certain amount of training to do well. Here, coursework and study of qualitative inquiry methods and theories along with my previous experiences in researching developmental educational programs at the college provided ample training in the classroom as well as in the field. By the time I conducted the observations for this study, I had already completed multiple observations in developmental class settings, including the pilot study I used to refine my methods for the current study.

Further, my experience as a developmental educator at MCC proved to be an asset in my inquiry. I came into the study field with a highly developed understanding of the culture, both institutional and in the developmental English setting, based upon years of experience teaching at the college and in developmental English programs, factors essential in developing analysis of the discourse in the study setting (Quinn, 2010). As a long-time faculty member, I was very aware of the unique culture each classroom develops in terms of its expectations for faculty and student interactions, values, and

procedures. Quinn (2010) described culture as “the largely tacit, taken-for-granted, and hence invisible assumptions that people share with others in their group and carry around inside them, and draw upon in forming expectation, reasoning, storytelling, and performing a plethora of other ordinary cognitive tasks” (p. 239).

In one sense, my position as an insider in the culture unlocked these tacit understandings (Leigh, 2013), but in another sense, I had to combat the bias of my insider position, specifically that part of me that is a faculty member and developmental English educator. Thus, my approach to my observation was a negotiation between my position as research, defined by my desire to understand what was happening in the class and how students navigated their experiences to be successful or not, and by my position as a teacher, defined by my desire to help students learn and be successful. The extent to which I was successful in maintaining a strict researcher position is difficult for me to judge, but I can say with some certainty that I sustained a vigilant attitude as I recorded field notes, concentrating on recording only what I saw and heard and waiting to record my own thoughts about these data in analytic memos I wrote after each observation.

Saldaña (2013) described analytic memos as “a place to ‘dump your brain’ about the participants, phenomenon, or process under investigation my thinking and thus writing and thus thinking even more them” (p. 41). I used memo writing robustly to record not only about what I was thinking about and seeing during my observations, but also to question myself about what I was writing down, what I might have missed, and how I needed to adjust my technique for the next time. For example, after my first classroom observation in week three, I wrote about an interesting conversation I had with

three students, Sara, Ed and Maggie. During our quick conversation (only about a minute long), they told me that they did not like to read because they found reading boring, and I recorded his statement in my notes, yet I found myself feeling judgmental about Ed and Maggie's attitudes about reading. However, since I had to move onto other students and keep writing down what I saw and heard in the class, I did not have time to explore this statement or my reaction to it.

When I wrote my analytic memo later that day, I went back to that section of my field notes, reread them, then used this particular conversation to ask myself a few questions. I first explored my own judgmental feelings: If these students found reading boring, I thought, they would certainly be doomed in this class and even in their wider college experiences because college requires a lot of reading, not all of which students would find interesting. I think this attitude was an outcropping of my identity as a teacher, coming from a place of knowing what students would face in college and from my own bias toward reading and readers. Simply put, I like to read and I like people who read. In contrast, during this same conversation, Sara expressed that she liked to read, saying that she enjoyed Shakespeare and *The Odyssey*. I found that my attitude about Sara was much more positive than about Ed and Maggie, and my memo writing helped me to acknowledge and examine this attitude. From my researcher's perspective, I was able to understand that I was already developing a conclusion that Ed and Maggie would be unsuccessful while Sara would likely be successful, a bias that was obviously dangerous to my inquiry. I continued to write analytic memos throughout the study, paying particular attention to my own attitudes and biases that threatened to contaminate

my research processes and findings, an activity that I believe helped me maintain self-awareness and acknowledge my own subjectivity (Peshkin, 1988).

The six classroom observations I conducted resulted in 13.5 hours of field notes and provided a useful source to examine what actually happened in an accelerated developmental English classroom that is difficult to find in existing literature. Further, it allowed me to learn how students' interactions with the instructor, each other, and the course material, as well as how their own behaviors and attitudes in the class, might have impacted their success in literacy learning. I conducted my first observation in the third week of the term and continued my observations through week 11, for a total of six two-hour and 15-minute visits during Spring 2015. I had initially planned to conduct my first observation in the first week of class because I was anxious to develop rapport with students and study the class over as long a period as I could. However, Dr. Goode thought that it would be better for me to come when the students were a bit more acclimated to the class, a suggestion which I took because I did not foresee a later start to my observation period as interfering with my ability to complete the six observations I wanted to conduct and because I wanted to maintain a positive relationship with Dr. Goode.

In the pilot study, I conducted four classroom observations each lasting between 30 and 50 minutes, positioning myself as a non-participant observer so that I could avoid influencing my results (Patton, 2002). Unfortunately, I believe that my efforts to avoid influencing my results actually created an awkward research relationship with the students in the class and might have been the reason so few students agreed to give

interviews. Therefore, in the current study I adopted a participant observer position (Patton, 2002), moving from simply writing notes about what students were saying or doing to also talking to students during class workshops, time when Dr. Goode allowed students to work on reading, writing, or researching activities individually or in groups. During these short conversations, not lasting more than two minutes, I asked students about work they were doing but did not offer instruction assistance or interrupt Dr. Goode's instruction. In this sense, I believe making the small concession to Dr. Goode about my observation start time paid off because she was very supportive of my research and allowed me lots of access to students during workshop time, something I did not have in the pilot study.

Observation strategies. During my observations, I developed two observation strategies, one that I used during more passive observations as a non-participant observer and one I used for more active observations as a participant observer (Patton, 2002). For my more passive observations, I sat in the back of the room where I had, for the most part, a good view of students. I viewed the room like the face of a clock, dividing it up in small sections composed of two or three students, and I handwrote field notes, noting the time in five-minute increments. During each increment, I focused my attention on this small section, recording descriptions of students' literacy learning activities—reading, writing, or researching tasks—interactions between the instructor and students, and interactions between students and their peers. To keep my notes focused, I used my research questions—what happens in an accelerated English class and why are some students successful but others are not—to guide my observations. Specifically, I looked

for how students interacted with literacy skills, tasks, and assignments in the class, how they proceeded when they learned a new literacy skill (e.g. annotating, outlining, editing), how they handled literacy tasks they found difficult (e.g. comprehension, thesis statement writing, revision), what they did when they were required to work independently, and how often and from whom they sought help. I also made it a point to record anything a student said in class, including Dr. Goode's comments to maintain the context and content of the conversations. I also wrote down anything I heard students say to each other, though often these utterances were difficult to understand because students kept their voices low so as not to interrupt Dr. Goode's instruction. Recording student comments meant that I often had to break from the clock format of my observational cycles, but once I completed recording students' utterances, I would go back to where I left off so that I could maintain my record of each of my 10 participants' activities.

This strategy of dividing up the room like a clock, scanning sections of the room and recording my notes in five-minute intervals, allowed me to record a substantial amount of data for each of my participants; however, even with this strategy, I was unable to get very much information about several students in the class during my passive observations. First, my position sitting in the back of the room prevented me from being able to see two of my participants, Breanna and Andy, very well. The class was held in a computer lab, so computer screens blocked my view of students sitting in the front of the room. Further, having computers in the classroom also prevented me from shifting my seat, something I was able to do in the pilot study when I needed a clearer view of my participants, due to how students arranged themselves in the room and the capacity of

room itself. Still, I was able to record their comments and answers to Dr. Goode's direct questions, which is the bulk of passive observational data I collected about these two participants. Second, while most of 10 of my student participants were present for the bulk of my visits, several of them missed quite a bit of class. Sara and Ed were only present for three of the six observations, and Paul and Connor were present for four of six observation periods. Fortunately, I was able to collect other kinds of data—interviews, conversations, and documents—about students, so I had other evidence from which to draw conclusions about their literacy learning experiences in the class.

Since I took on the role of participant observer in the current study, I was also able to collect what I call active observational data, by which I mean that I was not only recording what I saw and heard, but also actively engaging my participants in the study setting to get at more specific information about their experiences in the class. As I previously described, this active observation took the form of short interactions and conversations with students during workshop time, where Dr. Goode allowed students to work individually or in groups on a literacy learning activity. During this time, I would make my way around the room, leaving my notebook aside and just concentrating on listening to students as they spoke to each other or to me. As I approached students, individually or in groups, I asked an opening question—Hi, how's it going over here? —to check on whether or not they seemed receptive to talking. I purposely passed by students who seemed deeply engaged in a task such as writing a draft or reading to avoid interrupting or disturbing them. I also made it point never to interrupt or disturb a student who was in the midst of a conversation with Dr. Goode, and I always gave way to Dr.

Goode when she approached a student group. Additionally, on the occasions that a student asked me a question about the literacy task—how to do something, when an assignment was due—I told them they should ask Dr. Goode. After each short conversation with a student or a group of students, I would return to my seat in the back of the room and write down a description of what students and I talked about and what I saw them doing (e.g. annotating a text, editing their own writing, evidence of being prepared for class, collaborating with peers or working alone). Then I would approach another student or group of students and begin the process again.

My primary goal in these conversations was to deepen my access to and understanding of students' experiences in the class and to gather more specific data about their attitudes and behaviors. A secondary goal was to establish a friendly rapport with students, helping them to see me as person interested in their experiences rather than as another authority figure or teacher. These conversations provided a vital window into students' experiences, attitudes, and behaviors in several ways. First, as I stated previously, my seat in the back of the computer lab classroom prevented me from being able to see two of my students, so being able to talk to them several times during the six observational periods helped me to gather specific information about their experiences. Second, I was able to get a close look at the literacy tasks each of my 10 participants was doing, including seeing their level of preparation for the task, whether they had a clear understanding of what they were supposed to do and whether they were doing it correctly or effectively, and how they were using resources from the class, including help from peers and instructor, online resources, and example texts and exercises. Third, these

conversations proved an invaluable extra source of information that supplemented interview data, which proved to be as problematic to complete for this study as it was in the pilot study.

Interviews. Qualitative case study relies heavily on observation of the setting to derive understanding; however, there are instances where the researcher's ability to observe is limited. Additionally, the qualitative researcher strives to present "multiple views of the case" (Stake, 1995, p. 64). Using interviews is one way to acquire these views. Quinn (2010) described qualitative interviews as conversations, making a distinction between traditional views of interviewing in the social sciences, which she described as equivalent to "face-to-face survey research" due to its tendency to focus more in interviewer's questions than interviewee's contextual meaning-making (p. 241). Quinn's methods for discourse analysis intended to "mine implicit meaning" from interviewee's responses to questions by using follow-up questions that are derived organically from the interviewee's responses (p. 241). In this way, she hoped to understand the culture that underlies the discourse; that is, she wanted to understand participants' assumptions and experiences in a certain setting that were at once indicative of the interviewee's knowledge about the subject under investigation and of his or her understanding of that culture. Quinn was careful to add a caveat, that interview data could not make such implicit understandings fully explicit; however, it could provide "relatively rich and frequent clues to these tacit understandings" by members of the culture (p. 243). Like Quinn, I view interviews as conversations, prompted by research questions to be sure, but also guided by interviewees' responses and a shared interest in

the culture. I also view understanding that culture as essential to developing a greater understanding of the experiences of students in accelerated developmental English classes at MCC, which is why my first research question, what happens in an accelerated developmental English class, is not simply a descriptive question, but also an analytical one. Therefore, I included interviews as part of this case study to provide access into members' experiences not available to me through observation.

Because the focus of my study was on students' experiences in the class rather than on the Dr. Goode's teaching, I developed different approaches to interviews with my faculty and student participants. According to Kvale (2006), my position as researcher automatically puts me into the position of power in the researcher/researched binary, so I was careful about how I managed my interviews, considering how I would negotiate the relationships with my different participants, faculty member and students, and thinking about the questions I would ask them. For the current study, I planned to conduct two semi-structured interviews with Dr. Goode, in week five and at the end of the 14-week term, in addition to having several informal conversations with her after each of my observations. However, due to some setbacks caused by bad weather, I was only able to conduct one formal interview with Dr. Goode after the term had ended. I also faced setbacks with student interviews. I had planned to interview each of my 10 student participants twice during the semester, at week five and week eleven, in groups or individually, but I was only able to interview a group of four students once during week eight, partly due to bad weather which forced the college to close, and partly due to students' reticence to give interviews. I audio recorded and transcribed formal interviews

with both Dr. Goode and student participants, but for informal conversations with Dr. Goode, I took notes and wrote analytic memos that helped me record and process the content of the conversations (Saldaña, 2013).

Faculty interview strategies. After I got permission to conduct my study, I met with Dr. Goode in order to set up our expectations for the study. We talked for about 30 minutes, and discussed the goals for the study and the days that she thought it would be best for me to come to the class based on what I was hoping to accomplish. Specifically, I wanted to observe classes in which reading strategies, writing processes, and research approaches were taught. Dr. Goode was very interested in my study, especially in what we could learn about why some students were successful while others were not. As we negotiated the days I would come to class to conduct my six observations, we also set up a tentative schedule for our formal interviews, collection of students' work, and access to facilities at the college, including her course's online site where students posted their work and Dr. Goode posted grades and meeting space where I could conduct student interviews. Dr. Goode also suggested some other data I might want to collect, such as students' informal writing assignments, reflective writing, copies of holistic portfolio evaluations, and final in-class essays, since these could support my second research question.

Since my faculty member participant was also my colleague, I had a deceptively equal relationship with her, meaning that we had the same amount of authority in certain settings, the classroom being one and the college being the other. However, in my other position as researcher, it was possible that Dr. Goode, my faculty member participant,

could respond to me as the more powerful in the relationship, believing that I occupied the more powerful position in the binary of interviewer/interviewee, and so could steer the conversation more directly than my participant could. As Kvale (2006) argued, an interviewer should not be fooled into believing that an interview is a wholly benevolent form, and as my experience with Lawrence in the pilot study showed, even interviewing a colleague could produce feelings of nervousness. Lawrence was initially very nervous about interviewing with me, asking to see that interview questions in advance so that he could prepare for answers. Part of Lawrence's nervousness was caused by the fact that I planned to record the interviews. Additionally, based on a few things he said prior to our interview, I believe he did not want to appear unprepared or unqualified. He told me that he had not taught the course I was observing for a while and so he felt uncertain that he was going to do a "good job."

While Lawrence rallied and was able to proceed with the interview and subsequent conversations, displaying more than adequate preparation and qualifications, my experience in working with him primed me to be cautious about the way I approached Dr. Goode, especially in how I proposed interview protocol and follow-up conversations. As in the pilot, I proposed two formal interviews in the current that would be audio recorded and several post-observation, unrecorded conversations, but this time, I planned the formal interviews for the middle and end of the study rather than right at the beginning. I made this change for two reasons. First, I wanted to build up my relationship with Dr. Goode, a colleague at the college where I work, but who taught at a different campus, so we did not know each other very well. By planning to have the first formal,

recorded interview in the middle of the study, around week five, I thought I would have ample time to build a trusting, open relationship with Dr. Goode, in which she was able to see herself as a co-researcher rather than simply a participant, creating equality between us.

The second reason for the change in the formal interview structure was to correct a problem I encountered in the pilot study. In the pilot, I conducted a semi-structured interview with Lawrence before my first class observation. My goal in conducting this interview before I entered the class was to help me understand the context and content of the course before I did my first observation, which it did. However, I also developed a biased view of the students in the class because several of my questions involved getting Lawrence's assessments of weak and strong students. I believe that my initial impressions of the class were strongly influenced by Lawrence's assessments of who was going to do well because he or she was "strong" and who might have trouble because he or she was "weak." This conclusion is not a slight against Lawrence's assessment, nor is it a judgment about his need to label students, which was clearly part of his instructional strategy. However, in the current study, I believe that entering the classroom with no preconceptions about who would do well and who might not went a long way to preventing me from developing such bias. Additionally, focusing my first few interactions with Dr. Goode on informal conversations where we planned which days I would come, talked about her approach to teaching, in general, and what she hoped to learn from the students, allowed her to co-construct the inquiry with me (Charmaz, 2010).

Overall, I had six informal conversations with Dr. Goode, each lasting about 15-20 minutes, after each of my six classroom visits. After students had left the classroom, Dr. Goode and I would talk about specific actions and utterances I observed, a practice that provided me with a way to check that my observations were on the right track. For example after one class toward the end of the study, we talked about a draft exercise the students were doing for their literary analysis papers. During class, I noticed that Franklin was very active in writing down his ideas the theme of women's ambition and oppression in the novel they were reading. When I talked to him about his ideas, he was able to verbalize a coherent statement that he could use as a thesis statement; however, when Dr. Goode asked him to share his thesis with the class, the statement he read was incoherent, awkwardly worded with malapropisms. In our conversation after class, I asked Dr. Goode what she thought about Franklin's thesis. Dr. Goode explained that while Franklin often had very good ideas and was able to express them well orally, his writing showed a tendency to over-complicated sentences in a way that actually made his meaning less clear, a tendency that Dr. Goode pointed out to him numerous times in his other writing and tried to help him correct, but which he persisted in making. Having Dr. Goode also notice Franklin's tendency to express himself more clearly using speech than in writing gave me additional insight into a pattern I had noticed before in my observations of Franklin.

Upon completing each of my conversations with Dr. Goode, always following class observations, I wrote an analytic memo to provide a record of the conversation as well as to help me process that day's observation. In a broad sense, analytic memos are

any kinds of writing a researcher does outside of recording field notes (Maxwell, 2013). These writings help the researcher to remember, process, and analyze the components of the study, becoming another data sources that can be coded and included in the report (Maxwell, 2013). Since our conversations always dealt directly with our observations of that day's lesson, as a way to co-construct our interpretations of literacy learning in the class, the memos were useful places to begin the process of theorizing my data and to develop more refined observations strategies and data collection processes.

For this study, memo writing helped me to construct its future direction as well as to record my impressions of what I was learning with each observation. A benefit to memo writing is that it can be eminently open-ended, allowing me the space to explore and broaden my inquiry, to expose the possibilities without imposing limits before I have to get down to the business of analysis and write the more focused interpretations (Charmaz, 2010; Saldaña, 2013). I also found writing memos helpful in reminding myself of my researcher role and purpose, keeping me focused and alert to the possibilities of my research methods, both good and bad.

In our formal interview at the end of the semester, Dr. Goode and I talked about her expectations for the class, students' final performances, and what students did that made them successful or unsuccessful in the class. Using a semi-structured interview protocol, I began the interview with questions about what Dr. Goode hoped her students would learn from the final portfolio (APPENDIX C). I hoped to learn how Dr. Goode used the assessment and how it aligned with the course's objectives and her own teaching approach. These goals aligned with both of my research questions in that the instructor's

expectations and plans for the course, as well as how students are assessed, form the basis of the students' experiences and ability to be successful in the course (Cohen & Brawer, 2008). To focus more specifically on my second research question, why are some students successful but others are not, I also asked Dr. Goode about what she thought successful students had in common to ascertain what skills, attitudes, or behaviors she viewed as essential to their success and compare it with what I observed students doing in the class. I also asked several follow up questions to probe Dr. Goode's responses to my questions in order to get at more specific information about her plans or ideas. For example, at one point, Dr. Goode talked about her goal to get students to reflect on their performance in order to be able to understand where they needed to improve. I wanted to know if she thought students were realistic in these self-assessments, so I asked her to comment on how accurate she thought students were in their assessments. Her answer, "It depends on the student. I think the students who stuck with the process did very well," gave me insight into what she credited as successful student behavior—a student who used the writing process.

We also talked about Dr. Goode's feelings about her success rates in the class. This part of the conversation developed organically from the content of her responses to my questions; that is, I did not plan to ask her about her feelings about students who did not pass the class since the instructor's role was downplayed in the current study. However, her answer to my question about how students performed on the final portfolio was surprisingly emotional. She said she felt disappointed because not enough of her students did well, and that even the students who passed could have done better. I wanted

to understand what the source of her disappointment was—was she disappointed in her students or in herself—so I asked her to tell me about what she thought contributed to certain students not doing as well as they could have. She told me that she felt her students might have done better if they had more class time to learn and practice writing skills. This idea about having more time was prevalent in my conversations with Dr. Goode and in my conversations with students. In approaching my interview with Dr. Goode as a guided but fluid conversation, I was able to delve into her reactions and responses in a way that opened up connections between her experiences and observations, my observations, and the students' experiences.

Student interview strategies. For my student participants, I employed strategies for interviewing adolescents offered by Eder and Fingerson (2003), who advocated allowing adolescent participants to steer the conversation in order to help them feel more comfortable. Therefore, in my group interview with four students, I used open-end prompts beginning with “tell me about” and “how do you feel about” to encourage them to determine how they would enter the conversation we had about their experiences creating the midterm portfolio, their feelings about reading and writing, and whether they used skills and strategies they learned in creating the portfolio in other classes (APPENDIX D). In this way, I was able to allow the interview to be driven by participants' experiences in a way that more directed questions would not allow (Eder & Fingerson, 2003). My goal was to be able to ask follow-up questions that could help students expand on their answers to give me more detail that I could use to gain insight

into their experiences. I also wanted to compare what students said in the interviews with what I noticed them doing and saying during my observations.

In the current study, I offered students the opportunity to interview in small groups as well as individually, a decision I made to solve a problem I encountered during the pilot study when interviewing students individually. Two of the three students I interviewed in the pilot study gave me very short answers to my open-ended prompts, and I found myself having to ask multiple follow-up questions to pull out more detail. Both students, I noticed, were shy when it was just the two of us in the interview session, but I noticed that both of them were very outgoing with peers during class, often collaborating with fellow students and talking openly with them.

My goal in offering students the chance to meet in a small group of not more than five students was to help them feel a bit more comfortable (Eder & Fingerson, 2003). This strategy paid off in the current study; I was able to interview my four participants for nearly one hour during which I got a significant amount of detail about their approaches to and uses of literacy learning. In addition, students volunteered more detail often without my having to probe as they added to what one of their peers said. For example, when I asked about reading for the summary response paper, David said he did not remember the assignment, so he could not answer my question at first. Then Maggie described her choice of essay and described the story she wrote about, prompting David to remember the assignment, after which he was able to describe his reading process and how he tackled the summary. I did find that I still had to ask lots of follow-up questions, but these were more organic in the current study than they were in the pilot since I wasn't

trying to pull a more complete answer from students. Instead, I was asking questions about students' specific responses to delve into the implicit meaning of their answers. For example, Maggie talked about how long it took her to write the summary because she had to read and reread the essay she was summarizing to make sure her summary was accurate, so I asked her how she felt about having to spend so much time on the reading. My interest here was not simply to obtain more detail, but to make a connection with something she told me in class, that she found reading boring. Being able to link Maggie's interview responses with my observation helped me to develop my understanding of her attitude about reading (that it was boring) and the actions she took to succeed in class despite her feelings (rereading the text). Finding these kinds of connections in multiple data sources was essential to answer my second research question about why some students are successful.

I initially planned to conduct two sets of interviews with students after they had completed each of the two major assessments, the midterm portfolio and the final portfolio, because I wanted to see if and how they adapted their attitudes and behaviors between these milestones of the class. I also planned to make these interviews short, in duration, about 15 minutes long for individual interviews and about one hour for group interviews of no more than eight students. My goal was to correct a limitation in the pilot study, where I interviewed students as they were in various stages of completing the annotated bibliographies, only one of four assessments of the course. During the interviews, I was able to learn about how they approached reading and research tasks, transferred these skills to assignments in other classes, and envisioned using this task in

their argument papers for the class. However, due to time constraints, I was not able to follow up with these students to see how they experienced writing the argument paper, which would have given me insight into how they were transferring skills between assignments within the class—the annotated bibliography as a pre-writing assignment for the argument paper. By using a more robust interview strategy in combination with observational data and document analysis in the current study, I hoped to develop homogeneity of data to posit some conceptual and general causal relationships (Goertz & Mahoney, 2009) between students’ literacy learning experiences and their success (or failure) in the class, something I was unable to achieve in the pilot study.

Further, I hoped that allowing for shorter interviews might encourage more students to participate since one of students’ major objections to giving interviews in the pilot study was lack of time to give a 30-minute individual interview. Despite this alteration from the pilot study, I still had trouble getting students to complete interviews in the current study. Of my 10 student participants, four gave an interview during week eight, just after they completed the midterm portfolio. Observation data I collected in the current study suggested that students did not want to spend time out of class to give interviews, but their reasoning for this reticence differed from student to student. For example, one student, Rob, who had initially agreed to participate in the group interview we scheduled right after class one day, never showed up at our meeting, later explaining that he just felt too tired after class “to keep talking about English.” Another student, Andy, who had also initially said he would give an individual interview, showed some anxiety when I followed up with him a few days later to ask when he would be available.

He said that he felt “it wouldn’t be fair” to him to ask him to take time away from doing work for the class to give an interview. Breanna, another student who also agreed to give an individual interview, also never showed up to our meeting, despite indications via email that she was willing to talk.

Even when I offered to shorten the interview time or allow students to fill out a questionnaire in print or via email rather than give an in-person interview, students still did not complete interviews. Considering that all of my interactions with students in the class were positive, and that I had no trouble getting them to talk to me during class time, I concluded that the research relationship I developed with my student participants was not the main factor in their decisions to interview or not. Instead, I believe students were just hard pressed to find or make the time outside of class to interview. Also, by the time the class was getting ready to turn in final portfolios, five of my 10 participants had stopped attending the class, and though I tried to contact them via email to ask for a second interview, I never heard back from them. Thus, I was unable to complete the second student interview after students completed the final portfolio.

Certainly, the lack of more robust interview data was a blow because I hoped to use interview data to help me reconstruct experiences of all of my participants in the class. However, I was able to collect other kinds of data through active observations when I talked to students about their literacy learning experiences during class workshops (described in the section on observational strategies above) and in the informal writing assignments students completed in the course. These informal assignments were often reflective in nature, asking students to comments on their reading, writing, and research

learning and processes, as well as to evaluate their strengths and weaknesses and develop a plan to address these. While they could not replace interview data, these informal assignments did provide insight into how students felt about and approached literacy learning.

Documents. In addition to discourse, often defined as spoken language (Quinn, 2010), the documents a group of people produces are important sources of information about a culture because they can provide information about things not easily observed (Patton, 2002; Stake, 1995). For example, Patton (2002) described how he was able to understand interactions between different people who worked together in a charitable foundation more fully because he reviewed letters and program records, concluding that without this data, he would have missed vital clues about the behavior of the organization's staff. My goal for document collection was different from Patton's, but the importance of the use of documents remains the same. Documents produced by the instructors and students in a class revealed vital information about how students responded to literacy tasks, beyond whether or not they could reproduce skills or follow guidelines about format and grammar. Access to students' written work helped me to draw conclusions about behaviors, including uses of process, reliance on resources, and completion of requirements, that might have contributed to their success or failure in the class. Having access to documents also allowed me to check self-reports about their literacy learning, including self-assessments of strengths and weaknesses, students made during interviews or in class.

Initially, I planned to collect documents from all students in the class at critical junctures, beginning, middle, and end of the course, including examples of process writing (i.e. outlines, drafts, and revised essays) to assess students' literacy learning. Also, I planned to develop an in-class diagnostic essay prompt, which students would complete on the first day of class, asking students to assess their current literacy levels based on their experiences and comfort level with reading and writing. My goal was to make documents a more central piece of the current study than they had been in the pilot study, through which I could evaluate students' literacy learning. However, my plan for document collection changed in several ways after I talked to Dr. Goode and negotiated the parameters of the study.

First, Dr. Goode explained that the developmental faculty at her campus used a common diagnostic prompt, a fact that I did not expect since my campus had no such common assessment. Since my purpose for collecting a diagnostic was to correct a limitation in the pilot study—namely that I had no way of judging literacy learning that took place in the class because I had no examples of students' work prior to instruction—I readily agreed to use the common diagnostic, which provided a view of students' writing before instruction began, as well insight into their perceptions about overcoming obstacles in life. Therefore, I found using my diagnostic prompt unnecessary, and I decided to collect copies of this diagnostic essay along with copies of the final in-class essay that Dr. Goode told me she would give in week 14 of the term. Having these two examples of students' writing bookended the class nicely, allowing me to see if and how students made certain kinds of improvements to their writing, including staying focused

on a given topic, creating and sticking to a thesis, developing topic sentences and supporting them with relevant evidence, and using correct grammar and format to write coherent sentences.

After observing the class for several weeks, I decided to alter my goal for how I wanted to use documents in my study. Instead of using students' assignments as a way to evaluate their writing ability, I wanted to use them to understand how they used processes and resources to improve. Another change I made to my original plan in the current study was to collect documents only from the 10 participants in my study rather than from all students in the class since I was trying to develop a portrait of successful students in an accelerated developmental class. In this way, I was able to develop more complete portraits of the students in my study, using their documents to deepen my understanding of their interactions with the writing process and class resources.

In addition to collecting evidence of processed writing as I had planned in my initial document collection, I was also able to collect commentary by professors. In our first conversation, Dr. Goode explained that her campus used holistic evaluation of two major portfolios, the Midterm Portfolio, which included the summary/response paper and a reflective letter, and the Final Portfolio, which included the summary/response paper, the research paper, the literacy analysis, and a reflective letter. Both portfolios also contained evidence of processed writing, including pre-writing activities such as brainstorming, graphic organizers, and outlines and revised drafts with feedback from the instructor. During holistic evaluation, two developmental English professors on the campus assessed essays and commented on students' process and then portfolios were

assigned an overall score of 1 (unacceptable) to 4 (exceeds expectation), using a rubric designed by developmental English faculty at the college (APPENDIX A). I collected portfolios from each of my participants—with the exception of those who did not submit one—along with copies of rubrics completed by faculty. I was able to use the feedback of these other instructors to support the core theme in my findings, relating to their perceptions of students' effort in creating portfolios.

More importantly, as I read through Dr. Goode's and the other professors' comments, I realized that these assignments could reveal more relevant answers to my second research question, why are some students successful but other are not, if I focused on looking at how students used resources and processes than if I evaluated the assignments as I had originally intended. For example, several of the students who completed the Midterm Portfolio did not use the writing process effectively. For example, Franklin, who ended up not being successful in the class, made very few revisions between drafts, concentrating on making grammar and spelling corrections rather than more global changes to development or to clarification of ideas, as suggested by Dr. Goode in her margin comments and endnotes on his drafts. Franklin showed the same pattern in his Final Portfolio, and in both portfolios, Dr. Goode and the other evaluators commented on his weak response to revision in their evaluations.

Finally, I was able to collect several informal writing assignments from students, which I was not expecting when I planned data collection for the current study. Students in the class wrote multiple informal assignments in which they reflected about readings in the course textbook and other texts, commenting on their reading, writing, and research

learning and processes, and in some cases evaluating their strengths and weaknesses in these processes. Some assignments even asked students to develop a plan to address student success behaviors, such as developing good study habits or avoiding procrastination. I collected eight paragraph-length online posts and 13 page-length journal entries from each of my 10 participants, though several students posted very few of these required assignments. Some of the informal writing assignments supplemented interview data I collected. For example, during our interview, Maggie told me she preferred to read short texts because they took less time to read. In her online post, Maggie wrote that she hated to read in high school and had a hard time staying focused. Combined with the conversation during class when she told me she found reading boring, these pieces of information congeal to develop a picture of a student who finds reading difficult and might even have deeper comprehension issues.

In addition to providing self-evaluation of literacy learning and student success strategies, these posts helped complete portraits of successful students, who, for the most part, had much higher completion rates than their unsuccessful peers. For example, Rob and Breanna, both successful students, complete all eight online posts and all 13 journal entries, but David and Paul, who were unsuccessful, each only completed two of the eight online posts and very few on the journal entries. Certainly, it is unsurprising that students who did not complete all assignments for the course were unsuccessful; however, perhaps these completion rates are only indicators of a greater problem rather than the problem itself. To understand the extent to which students' experiences, behaviors, and attitudes about literacy learning impacted their success in an accelerated developmental English

class, I performed extensive analysis of interview, observation, and document data, which I describe in the next section.

Data Analysis Methods for the Current Study

To analyze my data, I used a model described by Saldaña (2013) that involved a three-phase, two-cycle coding method—First Cycle Coding, Post-Coding Transition, Second Cycle Coding. Using two-cycle coding, which is “a heuristic—a method of discovery that . . . stimulates [the researcher’s] thinking about the data” necessitates multiple, deep passes through the data, allowing a rich picture of the data to emerge (Saldaña, 2013, p. 39-40). During the first cycle in the process, the researcher makes several passes at the data using any of a series of coding methods in a first cycle with the goal of “taking ownership of the data,” which entails recognizing their unique features and making initial analytic approaches that uncover them (Saldaña, 2013, p. 58). Then, during the second cycle, the researcher tries to find links between the data in order to establish patterns and synthesize meaning from the data (Morse, 1994). These cycles are connected in the Post-Coding Transition and analytic memo writing, which Saldaña described as the mortar that glues the bricks of data coding together and allows thematic synthesis to occur. Charmaz (2010) also encourages the use of memos to help the researcher make the transition between data collection and analysis. As a result of my analysis, I found that how students are able to cope with the challenges of literacy learning in a fast-paced course is relevant to whether or not they are successful in the class. I describe my data analysis methods specifically in the sections below.

First cycle coding. During first cycle coding, I used initial coding to analyze field notes from observations, transcripts of interviews, and students' documents. Initial coding, or "open coding," helps the researcher to keep an open mind about the data and uses a combination of *In Vivo* coding, process coding, values coding, and descriptive coding (Saldaña, 2013). Initial coding is particularly useful for analyzing interview transcripts (Charmaz, 2006), but it was also useful for observation and document data because it allowed me to discover the data and achieve a ground-up understanding of my data, balancing my participants' meanings and my meanings as I read through each data set (Charmaz, 2010).

I began with a neutral reading, refraining at first from making marks or assigning codes and desiring only to get a feeling about what was there. During this reading, I noticed that my first set of field notes centered heavily on descriptions of the Dr. Goode's lessons, a fact that surprised me since I had not intended to concentrate on her teaching and wanted to focus on what students were doing and saying. In fact, even in places where I recorded Dr. Goode asking direct questions, there were very few student responses. As I read through this set, I found several places where I wrote, "students are quiet," or commented about how a particular student was sitting quietly and looking at Dr. Goode, but no one was offering answers to her questions about material in her lesson. These comments appeared often in the first set of field notes, but less often in subsequent sets. As I reread my field notes, I wondered if I simply was not describing my observations well or if students in the class perhaps were having trouble connecting in the class. I looked at the analytic memo I had written after my conversation with Dr. Goode

to check my observation notes and discovered that we had talked about how “passive” students seemed that day. I had even asked if she thought their quietness was typical or if they were just off that day, and she told me that it was a pretty typical day. Once I checked all of my field notes and read the analytic memos, I felt comfortable assigning the descriptive code “passive” when I found examples of this kind of behavior—quiet listening even when Dr. Goode asked students questions about material she was teaching— in my field notes.

Once I completed the first reading of all my data, including field notes, student interview transcripts, and documents, I wrote notes about my impressions of the data, using these impressions to develop provisional organizational categories, broad issues in my data that I wanted to investigate further (Maxwell, 2013). These categories were very wide in the first cycle: what happened in the class and what students did and said. For the first category, what happened in the class, I looked for elements generated by the class requirements such as assignments, lessons, reading and writing instruction, and work load. The items in this category allowed me to understand the pace of the course, a factor important to my first research question. For the second category, what students said and did, I looked for behaviors students exhibited and words they used in conversation and in their writing to talk about their literacy learning experiences, which helped me to identify data useful to answering my second research question. I used initial coding to describe each of these examples in my data, writing my codes in pencil in the left margin of each page of data. I tried not to limit my coding to particular types of codes, a benefit of using initial coding since it allows an open-ended approach that seeks similarities or

comparisons in the data (Charmaz, 2006), and worked steadily through each page, writing a code on nearly every line of data. During this process, I also used a pencil to underline phrases that I could use to exemplify or illustrate the code.

In this initial coding cycle, there were some lines of data that were not coded or marked. Some of these unmarked lines described Dr. Goode's lecture and thus were useful to provide context to students' actions and utterances but beyond that were not essential to answering my research questions or highlighting elements of the study that I needed to consider more deeply. In this case, the lack of a code because itself a code, where blank lines denoted context. Other lines were not marked because I did not have a clear idea about if and where they fit my research questions. In order to continue with my first cycle coding, I left these lines blank, making a mental note to examine them during the post-coding transition. Upon completing the first cycle of coding, I developed 74 codes.

Several were *In Vivo* codes, which are words that come from the participants in the study (Saldaña, 2013), described students' interactions with or attitudes about literacy learning. For example, several students used the words "boring" and "enjoy" when they talked or wrote about reading. They also used words like "improve" and "struggle" when they engaged in self-evaluative writing that described their process of literacy learning, "reading is a struggle for me" or their level of effort, "if I work hard, I know I can improve." Instructors' *In Vivo* codes tended to relate to students' performance, especially with regard to evidence that students did or did not use the writing process: "can do better," "work harder," and "effort."

I also used process codes, which connote action in the data and often imply change over time (Saldaña, 2013). I found process codes to be useful particularly in coding my field notes, though I did also use them in interview and document analysis. For example, students often attempted to explain literacy processes and skills during class and in their writing and interviews. I found many instances where I recorded students answering questions or making comments about how to go about active reading or writing a thesis statement or even developing better study habits. I coded these examples with the word “understanding,” using the –ing verb to show a developing process of gaining knowledge rather than as a descriptive code more appropriate to evaluation, as in, “This student shows understanding of how to write a thesis statement.” Other examples of process coding similarly tried to connote on-going action. I used “collaborating” to imply that students were actively engaged in sharing ideas and strategies rather than the more static “collaboration.” A process code I found particularly useful was “self-correcting,” a code I used several times in conjunction with the code “understanding” since my data suggested that students who engaged in self-correction, perhaps by trying to answer a question again that they had previously gotten wrong or by noticing a mistake they had made and correcting it, were actively involved in the process of developing their understanding.

The majority of the codes were descriptive, using a word or short phrase to summarize the topic of the data (Saldaña, 2013). For the most part, descriptive codes helped me section my data into categories that were useful to answer my research questions. My first research question centered on describing what happened in the class,

so I used codes such as “reading process” and “writing strategy” to help me locate data, especially observational, that dealt with what students in the class experiences in terms of literacy learning. However, I also used descriptive codes to describe students’ behavior, as in the codes “late,” which I used to describe when a student walked into class after its start time. I also used descriptive codes to highlight data that dealt more broadly with students’ experiences. The codes “time” and “workload” both describe topics about the class’s pace and number of assignments, which students often addressed when they talked or wrote about their experiences in the class.

Finally, I also used several versus codes during first cycle coding. Versus codes “identify in dichotomous or binary terms the individuals, groups, social systems, organizations, phenomena, processes, concepts, etc., in direct conflict with each other” (Saldaña, 2013, p. 115). During my first pass through my field notes, I notice that my descriptions of students’ activities were often in opposition. For example, when I conducted my cycles of observation, spending five-minute intervals watching a section of the class where two or three of my participants were sitting, I often noticed some students looking at websites, using smart phones, or working on material for other classes while others were listening to Dr. Goode’s lectures, answering her questions, and taking notes. I described the first kind of behavior as “off-task” and the second as “on-task,” codes that allowed me to easily identify instances of these behaviors. Because my second research question deals with successful versus unsuccessful students, it seemed appropriate to place these codes in a binary, where students where “off-task vs. on-task.” I also used versus coding to show places where students substituted one process or skill for another,

often creating an ineffective use of the process or skill. For example, in their assignments, students often wrote about using “revision” to improve their writing, but analysis of the documents indicated that they were talking about “editing,” correcting mistakes, and not revision. Based on my experiences as a developmental English teacher, I recognized students’ common tendency to think of revision and editing as the same thing, a tendency that often prevents students from making meaningful revisions because they concentrate of fixing errors rather than improving organization, development, or clarity of ideas. Therefore, I used a versus code, “revision vs. editing,” to label examples of students making this switch.

Post-coding transition. Once I completed the first cycle, I felt a bit overwhelmed and even confused, not by what I had found, but by how much. On one hand, I found that I had rich data, more than ample to help me draw conclusions about students’ literacy learning experiences in the class. On the other hand, managing the 74 separate codes was difficult. First, the codes, while useful in helping to establish some important ideas and to reveal some unexpected ideas, also splintered my data so that the relationship between what I had written in my field notes or what a student told me about a similar experiences in an interview felt divided. My organizational categories, what happened in the class and what students did, created artificial separation between students’ actions, utterances, and writing and the context of the class. This separation can be a limitation, creating what Maxwell (2013) calls analytic blinders that can lead a researcher to ignore the contextual relationships in the data. To combat this threat, he advised using connecting strategies, which help put the data fractured by coding and categorizing back into context, a step

Maxwell asserted is necessary to build theory. While I believe that creating the organizational categories was ultimately a useful strategy for first cycle coding, helping me to manage copious amounts of data and to find broad groupings through which to systematize my analysis, I also needed to rebuild the contextual relationship.

To find new avenues of analysis and make new connections in the data, Saldaña (2013) advocated the use of a transitional phase after first cycle coding “to cycle back to your first coding efforts so you can strategically cycle forward to additional coding” and data analysis (p. 187). When I completed first cycle coding, I reread all of my margin notes and copied down each code I had used in each data set. From this list of 74 codes, I began to remove unhelpful or redundant codes. An examples of a code I removed was “reflecting,” which I decided was redundant since I also had “self-evaluation,” a code that more accurately described students’ efforts to determine what their strengths and weaknesses were and create plans to address them. I also removed several versus codes, “off task v. on-task” and “prepared v. unprepared” because I felt the comparison and judgment they implied was unhelpful to my research. I simplified these codes to “off-task” or “unprepared,” two descriptive codes that I thought would help me identify student behaviors that might negatively affect their performance in the class.

When I finishing simplifying my code list, ending up with 49 codes, I used code capping (Saldaña, 2013) to categorize my initial codes into substantive codes, which are descriptive in nature and generated inductively (Maxwell, 2013). The goal of code mapping is to create connections in the data by finding related codes and sorting them into categories (Saldaña, 2013). I started with broader codes that appeared often in my

data set, such as “understanding,” “self-evaluation,” “challenges,” and “using processes,” and began to collapse other codes into these categories. For example, under the code “challenges,” I included codes describing personal challenges (i.e. learning disabilities or family trouble) and literacy learning challenges (difficulty with comprehension or difficulty writing a thesis). I also needed to create new categories that described what students were doing during class and outside of class, “student behaviors,” (i.e. being late to class, collaborating with peers, asking and answering questions, and turning in assignments) and what they said about literacy learning activities, “attitudes about literacy learning” (i.e. “boring,” “hate,” “scared,” “enjoy,” and “interesting”). I also developed codes to describe instructors’ feedback to students, including “perceptions of effort” and “advice for improving.” In all, I created 15 substantive categories through this process. I found that this process helped me to rebuild the relationships within my data by forcing me to look at how what students did or said related to the happenings of the class, making my next phase of data analysis more manageable and focused. Further, it helped me to hone in on a emerging theme: how students demonstrated and described their literacy learning efforts and how instructors evaluated students’ efforts, ideas which I further explored in second cycle coding.

Second cycle coding. In the second cycle, the researcher tries to develop thematic organization in the data by reorganizing first cycle and transitional codes and reducing the total number of codes to develop major categories that will be the main focus of the study (Saldaña, 2013). Using the 15 categories I developed during the post-coding transition, I created pattern codes, which are “explanatory or inferential codes . . . that

identify an emergent theme, configuration, or explanation. They pull together a lot of material into a more meaningful and parsimonious unit of analysis” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 69). Pattern coding is a natural follow-up to initial coding that can lead to the development of themes and causal relationships in the data (Miles & Huberman, 1994). To establish patterns, I looked at codes that appeared most often in the data and determined how these codes fit together across all my data sets.

During this cycle, I uncovered distinct patterns in the data relating to students’ behavior in class, their feelings about completing literacy tasks, and how they negotiated challenges. For example, I found that the process code “understanding,” which I found in my first cycle of coding and kept as a substantive category in the post-coding transition, appeared in my field notes, in transcripts of student interviews, and in students written work, often coinciding with other codes, “using processes” and “connecting.” The co-occurrences of these codes led me to interpret theme of actively connecting to literacy learning as an essential component of students’ behavior. Another example of a pattern that emerged in the study came from students’ own word choice. In their reflective essays in both portfolios, several students referred to “struggle” with one or more literacy learning activities and their desire to “improve,” words that often (but not always) coincided with “self-evaluation,” a code that described when a student identified specific strengths and weakness in his or her literacy learning or study skills and developed a plan to address them. Students who engaged in this second process of self-evaluation were more likely to be successful in the class. As I completed this cycle, I also identified the

occurrences of the instructor's and evaluators' comments about the level of effort they attributed to students' portfolio composition, solidifying the code "perceptions of effort."

My final step in the second cycle of coding was to go back through my field notes, to find evidence to support my emerging interpretations. First, I counted certain kinds of behaviors that I observed students doing, some of which Dr. Goode also expressed concern about when we talked after our observations and again in our formal interview at the end of the term. In first cycle coding, I used several descriptive codes to label students' behaviors during class— i.e. "late," "unprepared," and "off-task." I also used a different color of highlighter to mark each time a student asked or answered a question during my observations of formal lesson times when Dr. Goode was teaching the whole class. My goal in counting these codes was to find an objective way to measure certain behaviors that most educators would find negative, as in the case of being late, unprepared, or off-task, or positive, as in the case of being actively engaged during lessons as evidenced by asking and answering questions. This kind of evidence also helps establish "incontestable description," which consists of illustrations of the case with which no reasonable person would disagree (Stake, 1995, p. 62).

Second, I used a color-coding system to mark relevant passages in my field notes, quotes from interviews, and selections from students' reflective writing that stood out as evidence of themes to provide thick description that could give readers the ability to develop an "empathetic understanding . . . conveying to the reader what experience would convey" (Stake, 1995, p. 39). Using a different color to represent each theme, I underlined long passages in each data source that exemplified as best as possible my

interpretation of students' perceptions and experiences in the class, and specifically of those I found which seemed to accompany successful students and unsuccessful students.

I found this process both rewarding, because I was satisfied that I could provide evidence sufficient to support my interpretation, and difficult, because I realized my own limitations in being able to garner a complete understanding of students' experiences, behaviors, and feelings, both in how I recorded my observations—I found plenty of holes where I could not reconstruct the observation completely—and in how students answered interview questions and wrote about their literacy learning experiences. I was able to fill some of these gaps by referring to my analytic memos in which I recorded more complete descriptions of some of my observations and interactions with students, but some of my notes remained foggy and incomplete. My final interview with Dr. Goode also proved very useful in filling in other gaps, particularly with regard to understanding the challenges students faced. Students talked to me and wrote about these challenges in their reflective assignments to some extent, but Dr. Goode was able to provide a bit more detail and context as well. In some ways, these gaps were unavoidable, partly due to my own limitations as an observer, and partly due to my design decisions, both in terms of purposeful boundaries framing my study and in limitations I experienced along the way. I describe the boundaries in the study in depth in the following section and will address limitations in Chapter Five.

Quality in the Current Study

Throughout my process of developing the study, collecting data, and conducting data analysis, I was careful to follow several guidelines for performing a quality study,

that is, one that provide sufficient evidence to make a case that others would find convincing and credible (Maxwell, 2013). I refer to the processes I used as “quality” checks rather than using the term “validity,” favored by Maxwell (2013) and Patton (2002) or “validation,” a term Stake (1995) used, but several qualitative researchers use the term quality (O’Reilly & Parker, 2013). While I did face new limitations in data collection and analysis that restrict my findings in the current study, I developed its parameters with full awareness of its scope to fulfill my original purpose and answer my research questions (Goertz & Mahoney, 2009). Maxwell (2013) and Stake (1995) described several ways to achieve quality in qualitative research. I followed several of their suggestions in conducting the study.

Managing subjectivity and analyzing data. I believe that the methods of data collection and analysis I described in this chapter, based on significant revisions to the pilot study I conducted with a similar case, allowed me to conduct a quality study, correcting the limitations I encountered in the pilot and helping me maintain my researcher role. In my role of case researcher as interpreter (Stake, 1995), I was aware of my need to focus my observations and interactions on what students did and said that might give me insights into the problem of low pass rates in accelerated developmental classes at MCC. While I embraced my role as an insider at the college, I also refrained from acting in the capacity of a teacher during my interactions with students. To further manage my subjectivity, I wrote lengthy analytic memos and checked my observations and interpretations with Dr. Goode, using these activities as records of any shifts in my thought process or roles, which I analyzed as part of my data at the conclusion of data

collection. I also used an extensive coding and analysis process, describing in detail my methods during each cycle and using transitions between cycles to refine my analysis procedures (Saldaña, 2013).

Intensive, long-term involvement. To produce credible findings, I studied my case thoroughly and thoughtfully, developing an intimate understanding of my participants and their experiences in EF2 at MCC over 14 weeks. I used repeated observations and increased the length of observations to allow me to spend as much time as was feasible in the class. I also adopted a role of participant observer to increase the intensity of my involvement with and access to my student participants. Finally, I gathered and analyzed course documents to fill any gaps in my background knowledge or data collection so that I had as complete a picture of the case as was possible.

Incontestable description and rich data. So much of the effectiveness of qualitative research depends on its ability to allow readers to understand the experiences of the actors being reported on (Stake, 1995). Therefore, I used thick description as well as some numerical data to establish incontestable description, describing the activities and behaviors of the my participants in a way that any reasonable person who also had the opportunity to observe what I saw would also be likely to notice what I did (Stake, 1995). Thick description in my report also tries to convey the experiences and behaviors to readers to help them develop an “empathetic understanding” of the case (Stake, 1995, p. 39). I also used numbers, which are shown in Table 1 and Table 2 in Chapter Four, to show how common certain positive and negative behaviors were among students. Maxwell (2013) advocated the use of numbers to achieve quality in a qualitative study by

establishing evidence for claims that certain behaviors, such as being late or being unprepared, were typical for some students and rare for others.

Data saturation. In my study, I continued to collect and analyze data until I reached a point where I found no new themes or pieces of evidence that could help me answer my research questions. As I continued analysis of field notes, student interview transcripts, and students' documents, I also made sure that I was not encountering any more surprises, or unexpected ideas or themes, in the data. Upon reaching the point where there were no more "emergent patterns" in the data, I was satisfied I had reached data saturation (O'Reilly & Parker, 2013, p. 192). Reaching the point of saturation is important to achieving quality in a qualitative study to provide "richness of information," which depends of using adequate and appropriate data in answering research questions (O'Reilly & Parker, 2013, p. 192). Therefore, although I collected and examined numerous samples of students' writing—a diagnostic essay, eight paragraph-long online posts, 13 page-length journal entries, two reflective essays, a summary response essay, a research paper, a literary analysis paper, a final in-class essay, instructor commentary, and pre-writing and revision work—I did not include evidence from several of these documents in the final report because I reached data saturation.

Using purposeful boundaries. In creating this study's boundaries, I purposely defined what I emphasized in my inquiry and what I did not (Reybold et al., 2013). I placed a boundary around my study's setting, one class at one college that included a certain group of students who experienced literacy learning over the course of one semester. This boundary was set for methodological and practical reasons. I defined the

case with a goal of coming to know its particulars well, emphasizing its uniqueness to understand the case well (Stake, 1995). This practical boundary ensured that I, a single researcher with limited time and resources, could thoroughly study the case to achieve well-supported interpretations (Stake, 1995).

Further, my study was not particularly concerned with students' ethnicity, sex, age, or language status, which is a second boundary. Only students' experiences of literacy learning, and the behaviors and attitudes they demonstrated that helped or hindered that process were of particular interest to this study, especially in light of the limited definition of success—passing EF2—I was working under, another boundary I accepted as part of the cultural setting of the class at MCC. Setting these boundaries established the focus of the inquiry and underscored the ability of the case—one class, comprised of its instructor, students, and the course material and objectives—to provide real insight into understanding why some students taking accelerated developmental courses succeed while others do not. In the next chapter, I describe the class's assignments, events, and behavior of successful and unsuccessful students and present the core theme that emerged in answer to the two research questions that guided the study.

Chapter Four

In this chapter, I report the key findings from my qualitative case study of one accelerated English class over the course of 14 weeks. My study sought to answer two questions about students' literacy learning experiences in the class:

1. What happens in an accelerated developmental English class?
2. Why are some students successful but others are not?

Through analysis of field notes, analytical memos, transcripts of interviews, and course documents, I was able to answer my first research question, what happens in an accelerated developmental English class, by providing a detailed description of the literacy learning activities and assignments students were required to complete in the class, which I describe in the first subsection of this chapter. I was also able to answer my second research question, why are some students successful but others are not, by describing students' behaviors and to a certain extent, their feelings when completing these activities and assignments, which I describe in the second subsection of this chapter. Analysis of my data revealed that students experienced literacy learning in reading, writing, and, to a lesser extent, researching, but not every student was able to master these literacy-learning areas over the 14-week class. I also found that students' behaviors and feelings about literacy were not always reliable predictors of their success (defined as passing) in the class. Finally, I found the amount of effort a student put forth

in the portfolios, as evidenced by the use of the writing process—including making revisions based on teacher feedback—related to whether or not a student would be successful, that is, pass the class, but even successful students' revision efforts were often seen as insufficient by instructors. In describing my findings, I use examples from individual students whose behaviors and attitudes were compelling examples of successful or unsuccessful students, treating them as nested cases within the larger case (Patton, 2014). I report students' words exactly as they spoke or wrote them, including their errors, to preserve authenticity.

Literacy Learning in an Accelerated Developmental English Class

In this section, I describe the literacy learning activities and assignments students engaged in to answer my first research question, what happens in an accelerated developmental English class? Developing a clear picture of what students learned and did in the class was essential to understand how these experiences and interactions were indicative of acceleration—the faster pace and deeper requirements of the course as a result of MCC's redesign. Additionally, understanding how students coped with the literacy learning requirements—including reading, writing, and researching tasks, skills, and strategies—was important since as developmental students, these skills were likely to be weak (Cohen & Brawer, 2008; Grubb et al., 2011).

English Foundations 2 (EF2) is the mid-level, four-credit developmental English course that combines instruction in reading and writing. This redesigned course takes the place of two mid-level traditional developmental courses, Developmental Writing, a five-credit course, and Developmental Reading, a five-credit course, both of which are no

longer offered at MCC. The course is graded as pass/fail. Under the traditional system, students taking Developmental Reading ($n = 929$) and students taking Developmental Writing ($n = 821$) had an average pass rate of 68% for both courses (Office of Institutional Research, Planning, and Assessment, 2014). Under the accelerated system, 63.3% of students taking EF2 ($n = 662$) passed (Office of Institutional Research, Planning, and Assessment, 2014). The findings I present here delve into students' literacy learning experiences and responses to develop a clearer understanding of the students' experience of literacy learning in the class.

Students in EF2 met twice a week for two hours and 15 minutes each session over the 14-week term, a kind of double acceleration because students had a shorter number of weeks to accomplish their literacy learning than their peers in other sections of EF2 taking a 16-week format class. It is important to note here that students enrolled in the 14-week and 16-week EF2 sessions received the same number of contact hours with their instructor. Still, the shorter number of weeks in the term meant that students had less time to accomplish the same number of literacy learning activities and assignments and show proficiency in the following course outcomes listed in the course syllabus by the end of the class:

1. Demonstrate the use of pre-reading, reading, and post-reading skills with college-level texts.
2. Pre-write, draft, revise, edit, and proofread college-level texts.
3. Expand vocabulary by using various methods.
4. Demonstrate comprehension by identifying rhetorical strategies and applying

them to college-level texts.

5. Analyze college-level texts for stated or implied main idea and major and minor supporting details.
6. Demonstrate critical thinking skills when reading and writing college-level texts.
7. Write well-developed, coherent, and unified college-level texts, including paragraphs and essays.
8. Identify, evaluate, integrate, and document sources properly.

The assignments for the class were partly developed to meet departmental requirements and partly choices made by Dr. Goode. For example, the department required students to use a certain textbook for the course, to write on a specific diagnostic prompt, to complete two portfolios using certain guidelines, one due at midterm and one due at the end of the course, and to write a final in-class essay, but Dr. Goode chose the individual reading assignments and topics for writing assignments. Dr. Goode also assigned two supplemental texts, a novel and a collection of essays, while her colleagues who taught other sections of EF2 assigned only one supplemental text, and she admitted that her reading requirements were heavier than in other sections of EF2. The writing requirement for the course included three major papers and two essays, which were presented in two major portfolios during the 14-week semester. Dr. Goode also required numerous informal assignments—eight online posts and 13 journal entries—to support the supplemental readings she assigned.

Learning about reading. According to the course syllabus, Dr. Goode planned some kind of reading activity for 12 of her 27 instructional days. Students completed

reading assignments to help them practice active reading strategies (i.e. underlining or highlighting main ideas and details in texts, writing annotations of their responses to ideas in the margins, and writing summaries of what they read) and also used several of the texts they read to complete formal and informal writing assignments that required them to summarize, respond to, analyze, and incorporate text as support for their assertions.

According to the course syllabus, students were required to read nine articles of varying page length, one 244-page novel, 24 selections in a collection of essays, again of varying length, and 95 pages of reading and writing instruction in their course textbook. Review of the course schedule showed that students often had to manage multiple readings each week, with at least two assignments completed as homework for each class session. In week 11 of the semester, Dr. Goode and I talked about the numerous reading assignments she required in the class, and she said she thought the level of assignments was necessary to ensure students “got a lot of exposure” to reading different kinds of texts for different purposes in different contexts.

During my first observation of the class in week three of the semester, Dr. Goode provided active reading instruction, in which students learned how to preview the text, identify its features, mark main ideas and details, annotate, and build comprehension. After a brief introduction reminding students about the reading selection on active reading they were supposed to have completed for homework, Dr. Goode asked students to talk about the differences they noticed between active and passive reading. Students sat quietly, not answering at first, so Dr. Goode asked two students to share what they had

written about in their online posts about active and passive reading. The students gave short answers and the class lapsed back into silence, so Dr. Goode had students work individually to brainstorm ideas about the purposes for active reading. After a few minutes, Andy answered that active reading could help “define what the text is all about.” David said that one strategy of active reading was to “highlight important words,” and Dr. Goode clarified this answer, saying that highlighting was a way to mark main ideas in the text. Franklin said he used active reading strategies “to help me understand. I usually relate it to something. Try to have a sense of humor as you read because if you’re just reading, it might be boring. Try to enjoy it.” Dr. Goode commented that connecting to experience would help the students relate to the texts on a “much deeper level.”

As they continued the discussion, a few students continued to offer ideas about active reading strategies. Franklin was very engaged during this conversation, speaking five times during the 30-minute lesson. He seemed to be a fount of information for using active reading, pointing out several strategies and approaches. He said that students could read the back of the book to find a summary and look at pictures to find clues about content. This comment spurred Sara to add, “I didn't want to read it [the homework assignment in the textbook] so I flipped though and looked at the pictures [of graphic organizers showing active reading].” She said that doing this helped her decide that reading the textbook wouldn’t be as bad as she thought. Dr. Goode used this opening to have students study some features in their textbook. Most students listened quietly, but a few typed or handwrote lists of reading strategies.

After five minutes of lecturing, Dr. Good finished going over the features of the textbook chapter and turned her focus to how students should adapt their reading process to different kinds of texts and reading for different purposes. She asked, “What other classes are you taking?” Several students said that they were taking history classes and reading first-hand accounts. Maggie said that she needed “to pull facts from reading” in her history class. Franklin asked about how he could apply skills to a book he was reading for a philosophy class: “I have to learn a lot of facts, but I’m not very good at this. How can I get better?” Dr. Goode told him that using annotation to write what he read in his own words to summarize the text. This conversation showed how students were becoming aware of the connection between annotation and rewriting to help with comprehension.

During this lesson, vocabulary seemed to be a common concern with students in the class. Breanna said, “Sometimes when I don’t know a word, I stop [reading] to look it up.” Franklin advised, “You could just highlight it and go back later,” prompting Dr. Goode to address situations when it made sense not to interrupt one’s reading to go back and look up a word and when not knowing the word interfered with understanding, in which case, students should look up the word right away. Sara commented, “Reading is the best way to build vocabulary,” showing her understanding that one purpose for reading is to build word knowledge. Dr. Goode ended this lesson after about 30 minutes in the 2 hour and 15 minute class session and moved onto a discussion about the writing process.

In addition to what they learned in the lecture in week three, students were also expected to read about active reading strategies in their textbook and to write two informal online posts directly addressing active reading. However, it is also not clear that every student in the class completed the reading in the textbook. One student, Ed, did not even purchase the textbook. Additionally, while the online posts about active reading were designed to help students engage with the concepts of active reading, providing a way for students to process their own reading habits and plan ways to make them more active, and several students, Paul, David, and Connor, completed only one post, and Ed did not complete either post, meaning they were more dependent on learning that took place in the class to be able to understand how and when to use active reading.

Throughout the 14 weeks, Dr. Goode used several class periods to practice active reading strategies, including large and small group discussion and oral reading. During one class in week three of the semester, Dr. Goode invited students to spend the last 45 minutes of class reading aloud from an essay about developing an interest in reading, but it was clear that many of them did not want to. Students were very quiet, looking at the essay while Dr. Goode cajoled them into reading. Finally a few students volunteered to read a few paragraphs, but eventually, Dr. Goode had to finish reading the essay aloud. Dr. Goode continued to prompt students for answers to her questions about the content of the reading, but only two students gave responses, leaving her to do nearly all of the talking in this section of the lesson. Even Franklin, who had often contributed to class discussion before, made only a single, mumbled response about an idea in the essay that I could hear because I was sitting behind him, but Dr. Goode had to repeat his answer so

the rest of the class could hear, which was surprising considering how willing he had previously seemed to contribute to class discussion. Dr. Goode's questions required students to make interpretations about the text, which they might have found to be difficult. For example, she asked several times about what the author's statements "said about the importance of reading," a question requiring students to understand the implicit meaning underlying the author's words.

During my second observation in week five of the semester, the class was working on writing their first formal paper, the summary/response, and I noticed that students were also often silent when Dr. Goode asked them questions about the essay, which they were supposed to have read the essay for homework and written a paragraph-long summary. However, it quickly became clear that most of the students in the class had not completed the assignment. Andy, who did do the homework, commented that he found the assignment "a little challenging," though he was able to identify the topic of discrimination in the essay. Only Franklin offered any answers to Dr. Goode's questions.

After a brief discussion of their responses to the essay, Dr. Goode asked students to write a sentence that responded to the main idea in two paragraphs of the essay, which Andy, Breanna, Connor, and David began to do, but other students spent this time to catch up with their reading, including Maggie, Sara, Paul, and Rob. However, Franklin used this time to look at the transfer calendar of the college's website, but based on his answers to Dr. Goode's questions, I interpreted this behavior as indicating that he had completed his assignment and was just waiting for his peers to catch up. Later, Dr. Goode

shared with me that this was the second time Franklin had taken EF2 with her, so he had already read many of the texts and was most likely relying on previous knowledge.

When the small groups had been working for about 10 minutes, Dr. Goode asked Sara to read her response, but she said she did not know how to write one. Franklin shared his sentence, which was more of a summary than a response to the two paragraphs, but other students were very quiet, so Dr. Goode wrote a sample sentence on the board. Maggie, who had spent the whole time reading the essay, copied the sentence into her notebook, showing that she not only saw the example as a useful resource, but also that perhaps she was reliant on such resources. I noticed this reliance across several class observations and in her formal assignments.

During this activity, it became clear that Ed did not have a book, so Dr. Goode lent him hers. After class, Dr. Goode shared with me that Ed never bought any of the books, and although she tried to give him photocopies of readings and reminded him that the campus library had several copies of the books he could borrow, he often did not complete reading assignments. This failure also created a problem with writing assignments that were based on readings from the class, including all eight online posts, 11 of the 13 journal entries, and the three formal papers. Ed completed only the first journal assignment, which asked students to describe their feelings about reading and writing. Here, Ed revealed,

I have only completed a handful of books cover to cover in my 19 years of existence. All for my wonderful high school education of course. . . . I mean I had

to have tried at least half a dozen books . . . and still nothing hooked me in. . . . I can't focus on anything, much less a book that doesn't interest me.

Considering his admission that he could not focus on a text that he did not find interesting, Ed's feelings might have contributed to not reading the assignments for the course even when Dr. Goode made every effort to help him access the material.

Despite the instruction, practice during class, and supporting resources and assignments, it seemed that only a handful of students actually used active reading strategies to engage with text. In my fourth observation in week nine of the semester, students were participating in a prewriting workshop to practice incorporating evidence from other sources into their research papers. When she assigned this paper, Dr. Goode reminded students that they would have to use quotes from several essays in the collection as evidence to support their assertions in their papers, so they should use annotation as a strategy to help them identify good examples in the essays. As I talked with students as they worked on identifying evidence from texts they could use in their papers, I was often able to see students' copies of the texts and I noticed that several of them were not using annotation as they had been taught to. For example, I saw that David was working on composing an outline for his research paper, flipping through the collection of essays to find quotes from one essay that he could use. However, David's book showed no sign of being annotated—no passages or pages had been marked. When I asked him how he found the quotes he wanted to use from the book, he said he just remembered the chapter number and scanned it to find the quote again. I asked him if he had learned any annotation strategies for texts that could make finding the quotes easier.

He answered that he has used sticky notes to mark passages in books, but again, I saw no sticky notes in the book he was using for the research paper.

I saw that Maggie was also not using annotation strategies as she read through her sources. Maggie acknowledged that she was taught about active reading strategies, but she also admitted, “Yeah, but I don't really use them.” She said she thought it would take longer to complete a reading task if she had to stop to mark passages and that she preferred to read shorter passages that she could simply remember. She explained, “I feel bored of doing the same thing, so I will do something else. If it's taking too long, I just stop doing it.”

In contrast, while Breanna also seemed to rely on remembering what she read to find support for her research paper, she also employed annotation strategies. As she used a graphic organizer to complete a paragraph using an assertion and evidence, she flipped through an article, rereading multiple paragraphs that she had marked with a pencil. When I asked her about her strategy of rereading, she said she remembered a little of the article from when she read it the previous week, but she had also underlined several sentences in the article. She said that she was trying to find a “good quote” to include in her paragraph, indicating to me that she was using rereading strategically to assess the suitability of the passages she marked for use in her paper. Only a few other students, including Sara, Connor, and Paul, used some level of annotation, yet even as they reread their sources, I noticed that many students still did not mark new, relevant passages.

In their online posts, several students wrote about using annotation as a strategy to promote active reading, so it is clear that they knew about it, yet many students—

Maggie, Rob, Breanna, Connor, Paul, and Andy—also described themselves as passive readers. Franklin and Sara, who wrote that they were active readers, both talked about using highlighting as a strategy to mark main ideas and interesting ideas, and I observed that they, along with Andy and Breanna, used some annotation in their texts.

Interestingly, David described himself as

both a passive and active reader because although its hard for me to focus on a writing piece im eager to find out what happens in the end or i get to a point where i can predict what is going to happen. Also once i figure out what the writing is i tend to just stop there and dont really get engaged in the piece.

David’s post shows that he might be simplifying active reading, which is a collection of behaviors, attitudes, and strategies, with simply being interested in reading, or in his words, being “eager to find out what happens in the end.”

Learning about writing. According to the course syllabus, Dr. Goode required students to write eight paragraph-length posts to an online forum due throughout the semester, 13 journal entries between 350-375 words each also due throughout the semester, two in-class essays (one at week two and one at week 14), a summary/response paper, a research paper, a literary analysis paper, and two reflective essays. These essays and papers were included in two portfolios, the midterm portfolio completed at the beginning of week six and the final portfolio completed at week 13 of the 14-week term. Portfolios were graded holistically using a rubric created by faculty members at the campus, a practice unique to this campus of MCC, as its other campuses do not employ holistic grading or use a common rubric for evaluation of developmental students’ work.

For holistic grading of midterm portfolios, two other faculty members who were teaching EF2 in the same semester graded Dr. Goode's students' portfolios, commenting on each of its components and scoring from 1 to 4. For the final portfolio, Dr. Goode and another faculty member who was teaching EF2 in the same semester graded portfolios. As long as the two grades were within the same range (i.e. both in the 2 range), the portfolio was assigned a grade. In the event that graders did not agree, a third reader read the portfolio and determined the final grade. Dr. Goode's final portfolio assessments agreed with the other faculty member's assessments, within a plus or minus (i.e. 2/2-). In general, students in Dr. Goode's class earned 1s (Unacceptable), 2s (Making progress toward minimum requirements for college English), and 3s (Meets minimum requirements for college English) on both portfolios. Table 1 shows students' performance on each portfolio.

Dr. Goode emphasized using the writing process in her instruction, teaching students to use pre-writing and planning strategies, write and revise multiple drafts, and edit for clarity and correctness, spending, according to the course syllabus, at least part of 19 of 27 instructional days teaching and practicing the writing process. During my first observation in week three of the semester, Dr. Goode led students through a discussion of the components of the writing process, then students broke into small groups to discuss what they had learned about the writing process from their textbook, which they were assigned to read as homework. I observed Franklin and Paul talking about how the reading process was really part of the writing process. Paul commented, "You read and write so much that you lose track of what you're writing," indicating his awareness that

managing information was important to writing, but also showing that he had a difficult time with it. Franklin seemed to understand Paul's difficulty: "Yeah, your brain has to figure stuff out [when you read]. [When you write] it's about organization, letting your ideas out."

Much of the time Dr. Goode allotted for writing activities was spent in drafting, revising, and editing workshops, during which students used the computers in the classroom to work on specific writing assignments. In one such session that I observed in my second visit, during week five of the semester, Dr. Goode tasked students with writing their first reflective essay, formatted as a letter to the portfolio committee and containing students' assessments of their weaknesses and strengths as students and writers. Dr. Goode explained that the purpose of this reflection was "to look at the reading and writing process" and to talk about "strengths and what they still need to work on." She also went over the portfolio rubric with students so that they would have an understanding of how the essay would be graded by the committee. Then Dr. Goode gave students a brainstorming graphic organizer, and, while students looked it over, she asked them what they thought it meant to be reflective when they write. Ed answered, "To look back on something," and Andy offered, "Associate yourself with something." Both of these responses show students' awareness that reflection writing has to do with one's own experiences, and both students demonstrated the additional element of self-evaluation that Dr. Goode also wanted in their final drafts of the essay. However, David said being reflective was about presenting "an image of yourself," an answer both Dr. Goode and I found interesting in its vagueness.

When I talked with students in the group interview, David's earlier statement was put into context, one that suggested he wasn't completely aware of the purpose of the reflection essay in the portfolio. While he understood that the assignment was about "writing skills," David indicated that the thought the reflection letter was almost a negotiation for a grade, saying, "Maybe they'll [the committee] be more lenient on the grading process if you're struggling more. If you're struggling in the writing and they see that you're trying, they might be a little bit more lenient in the grading." Possibly, David had developed a picture of himself as a "struggling writer" and so used his letter to communicate this struggle. In his letter, he wrote, "I know I am capable of doing more and better than what my grades show. . . . I do have an interest in but never had the right guidance to improving my [writing] skills," and added that one of his goals for the semester was "to make my professors proud and make sure they notice an improvement in my essays." However, David's reflective essay contained no specific assessment of his own strengths and weaknesses in writing, nor any kind of plan to address them, which were both requirements of the prompt, and which Dr. Goode emphasized in her introduction of the assignment, and he earned 1s and 2s on the rubric used to assess the midterm portfolio.

I noticed during my second observation in week five, that, as in most workshops, Dr. Goode walked around the room, stopping to chat with each student as they wrote their drafts and offering advice for improvements. Students used writing time during class at varying levels of effectiveness, with some students jumping right into the draft once they had filled out the graphic organizer—which had areas to address reading,

writing, and study behaviors that students might address in their essays—and others using the time to catch up on other assignments. Franklin seemed to have difficulty filling out the brainstorming organizer, often pausing and erasing what he had written. He seemed distracted by another assignment that he was working on using his laptop, and by the end of the period, he had not completed the organizer and had not started the draft of the reflection essay, leaving him behind in the writing task. Paul was late to class and so missed the explanation Dr. Goode had given about the parameters of the assignment. Although she came over to get him started, he seemed confused and had a very hard time filling out the graphic organizer. I had often noticed that Franklin and Paul worked together and shared ideas, but since Franklin was obviously working on something else using his laptop, he was unable to assist Paul with the assignment, and so Paul stared at the blank organizer and did not get to the draft of the essay during class. Maggie, Rob, Ed, Andy, Connor, David, and Breanna worked steadily throughout this period, filling out the graphic organizer; then they moved to the computer to begin drafting.

During writing workshops, students often made use of the computers in the class to get their work done. In fact, Maggie, who rarely said a word in class and who often used her phone when Dr. Goode was talking, made good use of the computer to write. Rob also seemed to like having the computer to complete work during class. Other students, however, appeared to prefer using paper and pen to write in-class assignments. Franklin, Paul, and David used notepaper or the graphic organizer Dr. Goode handed out to write their reflection letters.

After my second observation in week five ended, Dr. Goode told me that having the time in class to work with students on their writing was important to her, but she also worried that she did not have enough time to spend on drafting during class time. I asked if Dr. Goode felt a lot of time pressure in the accelerated class. She answered that she felt the time crunch when it came to being able to give her students individual attention during class time, especially since a few of her classes were cancelled due to bad weather. During our final interview, in week 14 of the semester, I asked her if she felt like even if she had those snow days back, that the course was still really jam packed with what she needed to do with the students. She answered,

It was. We lost three and a half days out of 26 days of instruction. The fact that it came before the spring break, and it was a late-start class, so in the first six weeks, we lost three and a half days, so that's huge. That's over 25% of the face time [where so many of the students were actually doing the course work].

Students also seemed glad of the class time to write. During our interview in week nine, Maggie and David both commented that they preferred using class time to get work done to listening to the teacher talk all day, which “makes the class boring.” During our final interview, Dr. Goode also thought that Connor depended on class time: “Connor I think would have been better off [with more time in class]. I think that derailed him to some extent because he was one who wasn't doing the work that he needed to keep pace with the class.” Dr. Goode confided that Connor faced several personal challenges during the semester that might have taken his focus away from class and prevented him from completing work outside of class time. This pattern was evident in a few other students as

well, including Sara, Breanna, and Ed, all of whom worked and/or faced significant personal challenges during the semester.

Franklin also seems to need the class time to keep up with the work and Dr. Goode surmised he might have done better if he had more face time. On a few occasions during my observations, he talked to me about his other classes, and while he never said that he felt overwhelmed, he did say that he had numerous other projects due all at the same time and joked that his professors must all get together and plan due dates at the same time just to stress students out, "lulling students into a false sense of security." He seemed not to understand that he was supposed to be doing the work assigned in small chunks and build toward completion, which is why his teachers gave him assignments well in advance of due dates. He also demonstrated multitasking behaviors on several occasions, often working on several assignments at once because he was behind. On at least one of these occasions, he was working on an assignment for one of his other classes during a writing workshop, so it is possible that he was having a hard time managing assignments in other classes, too.

If students were facing other challenges and were significantly behind in the class, using class time to catch up on writing assignments should have been a useful strategy for them. However, for a few students, participating in writing workshops did not seem to help them. In week nine, during my fourth observation, after students had submitted the first portfolio, they were working on writing their research paper draft, practicing incorporating quotes and formatting their documents. Sara, who had been absent for almost three weeks due to a family situation, sat at her computer and listened to

directions, but as Dr. Goode spoke, I noticed Sara checking her phone every few seconds, a behavior I had not seen her doing in my previous observations. When Dr. Goode allowed students to work on their papers, I talked to Sara briefly about what she was going to write about, but she said she was still working on the pre-writing assignment, which she should have completed for homework. She said, “I hope I can catch up,” and looked back at the pre-writing assignment, a graphic organizer designed to help students outline their main points and supporting details for the paper. Dr. Goode told me the week before that Sara had not turned in her midterm portfolio and that she would almost certainly fail the class. Sara struggled to catch up, flipping through the collection of essays they were supposed to use as sources for the paper and trying to jot down ideas on the organizer, realizing that since she had not submitted a major required assignment, her present efforts would do her no good. She ended up withdrawing from the class the next day.

Ed also struggled to use this writing workshop to catch up with the class. After arriving to class over 20 minutes late, he flipped on his computer and Dr. Goode came over to get him started on the graphic organizer. Dr. Goode informed me that Ed had submitted an incomplete midterm portfolio, containing only the reflection essay, an initial draft with Dr. Goode’s comments, and the graphic organizer. These assignments showed that Ed was capable of using the writing process and responding to feedback effectively; however, Dr. Goode said the fact that his portfolio was incomplete meant he would almost certainly fail the class. As I watched Ed during the workshop, I saw that he looked overwhelmed and stressed. He rubbed his face and sighed heavily as he worked on the

graphic organizer. When I went to talk to him, he said he felt tired and was finding it difficult to concentrate on the work. I noticed that even though students had been working on the organizer for an hour, Ed has not filled out a single idea on the sheet. I asked him if he needed a break or some rest before he jumped back into the task, even just to think about the assignment, but he said, “But then I won’t write anything. I feel like I psyche myself out when I think too much about writing.” Later, I checked to see if he had completed the journal responses to the essays students were supposed to use as sources, but Ed had not completed any of them. As I previously reported, Ed never bought the books for the course, and so completing the research paper was impossible since he most likely hadn’t read the required texts. Ed did not return to class after this session.

Learning about researching. Dr. Goode gave instruction on finding, incorporating, and documenting sources, along with formatting source citations, using three of 27 instructional days, according to the course syllabus, to work on researching and documenting strategies. Students were required to use at least one text in each of their formal paper assignments, though only one was formally labeled a research paper, requiring students to use at least four texts from a collection of essays. Dr. Goode also encouraged students to use other sources, articles from the library database or websites, to complete the paper.

During my third observation in week six of the semester, Dr. Goode asked her students to take a true/false quiz on plagiarism to find out what they knew about it. She displayed the results of the quiz on the screen in the front of the room and used them to

prompt discussion. Students in the class were often uncertain about the rules of plagiarism, and gave many incorrect answers. For example, of the 12 students who took the quiz, eight thought that providing a list of sources at the end of the paper was enough to avoid plagiarizing, and nine thought it was unnecessary to cite a summary or paraphrase of someone else's words and ideas. Dr. Goode also cleared up some questions about using sources, and then moved students into an exercise on incorporating sources.

As they talked about how to find and use sources from a website, Rob admitted to feeling overwhelmed by the amount of information available on the internet, and Andy said he often had a hard time focusing on reading websites thoroughly, often jumping from site to site to pluck facts without putting them into context. It was also clear by their answers to Dr. Goode's questions that these students were inexperienced when it came to documenting ideas and words from sources in their own texts. Paraphrasing seemed to be particularly troublesome for students. For instance, when Dr. Goode used a sample paragraph to go over documenting sources, Franklin correctly identified that the author had used an idea from another source. However, even after they had just taken the plagiarism quiz and learned that paraphrased information had to be cited, no one in the class corrected the lack of citation in the paragraph.

After Dr. Goode finished going over the plagiarism quiz and discussing students' experiences with using the internet to find information, she and the class used a common article about plagiarism to practice finding, incorporating, and citing sources. Students were given a choice of two topic sentences to use in composing a paragraph in which they were to use quotations from the article. Once they chose their topic sentence,

students began to read to article to themselves. Once again, I noticed that only a few of them were annotating the text; only Connor, Sara, Breanna, and Paul actually underlined any portion of the text as they read. When I asked Connor about his strategy for writing the paragraph, he told me that he chose the first topic sentence because “he could relate to it,” and I saw that he had put brackets around the sentence from the article he used in his paragraph. However, when I looked at his paragraph, I noticed that he altered it to sound like a summary statement rather than using the sentence as his claim and adding a quotation from the article to support the claim. Though he did cite the quote, he used a very awkward end citation, which Dr. Goode had told them not to use. Further, even though Dr. Goode showed students how to use signal phrases, Connor’s final paragraph had none. Perhaps Connor simply did not understand the instruction he was given or he did not feel that he needed to follow the models that Dr. Goode provided.

Franklin and Paul also had difficulty with completing the paragraph. Franklin was able to select a topic sentence and find supporting quotations, but he had trouble with incorporating them smoothly into the paragraph, which mostly comprised his response to the article rather than an argument supporting his claim. Paul, who was late to class that day, incorrectly answered that he did not need to cite a paraphrase of the author’s words that he used instead of a direct quotation, a topic that Dr. Goode covered only a few minutes before I talked to him. While Franklin was able to correct Paul on his mistake, showing him the handout Dr. Goode gave them, Franklin’s own work was incomplete, and his series of short quotations were poorly incorporated.

Eventually, Franklin and Paul did complete their paragraphs, using the model topic sentence, direct quotation, and signal phrase, and providing commentary so that the paragraph argued its point rather than simply responded to the ideas in the article.

Breanna and Rob also were able to complete their paragraphs moderately well.

Conversely, Maggie did not understand that she had to incorporate a quotation and argue her point, so her paragraph was simply a summary of the article.

While students worked, Dr. Goode spent time talking to each student about the assignment, but after class, she told me that she did not feel that she had enough time to spend with students when they were doing writing like this and that she would like to have more face-to-face time with them. During our final interview in week 14, we talked about her approach to teaching researching strategies and documentation, and Dr. Goode admitted to spending less time on formatting than she had initially planned due to the cancellations caused by bad weather. Class time is a precious commodity in any instructor's instructional approach, and perhaps more so in an accelerated class. Therefore, Dr. Goode had to pick and choose which skills and lessons to emphasize.

Students' Behaviors and Feelings about Literacy Learning

In this section, I describe how students responded to literacy learning experiences in the class. I use the term "response" broadly to include specific behaviors I observed and feelings about literacy learning students expressed either directly to me in interviews or conversations or indirectly in their reflective writing. Behaviors are defined as what I observed students doing, and feelings are defined as how students expressed their often visceral responses to literacy learning by using words that indicated emotional and

physical responses. To provide a detailed description, I incorporate evidence from analysis of all of my data sets, including transcripts of student interviews, informal and formal writing assignments, field notes, and analytic memos. I also include two tables that portray information about students' behavior. Table 1 shows information about students' academic performance in the class, which I gleaned from the class's online forum and from my conversations (recorded in analytic memos) and interview transcripts with Dr. Goode. Table 2 shows how many time I observed specific kinds of student behaviors that were either positive or negative.

Behaviors. To answer my second research question, I was interested in EF2 students' academic performance to see how students managed the workload in the class and how they performed on assessments, particularly the midterm and final portfolios, as markers of their success in EF2. Using the class's online forum, I counted how many online posts and journal entries students completed. Then I used completed rubrics in their midterm and final portfolios to find the scores they earned (these were given by EF2 instructors and Dr. Goode and averaged). Finally, I asked Dr. Goode to give me information about students' last week of attendance and final grade (pass/fail) for EF2. All of these pieces of information are recorded in Table 1.

Table 1
Students' Academic Performance

Student	Last Week of Attendance	Online Posts (out of 8)	Journal Entries (out of 13)	Midterm Portfolio Grade (out of 4)	Final Portfolio Grade (out of 4)	Final Course Grade
Andy	Week 14	6	12	3-	3+	Pass
Breanna	Week 14	8	13	3-	3-	Pass
Connor	Week 9	4	4	2+	Not submitted	Fail
David	Week 12	2	5	2-	Not submitted	Fail
Ed	Week 9	0	1	1	Not submitted	Fail
Franklin	Week 14	7	12	2+	2-	Fail
Maggie	Week 14	8	11	3-	3	Pass
Paul	Week 9	2	2	1+	Not submitted	Fail
Rob	Week 14	8	13	3+	3-	Pass
*Sara	Week 9	3	N/A	Not submitted	Not submitted	Withdrawal

Note. *Student withdrew from the course, so information about online assignments is not available.

In general, students who were successful in the class completed most of the coursework, attended class regularly, were prepared for class, and used the writing process to complete their portfolios. Breanna and Rob, two successful students, turned in all assignments, Maggie completed 90%, and Andy completed 86% of assignments. Many students who were unsuccessful in the course stopped attending around week nine, so it is not surprising that their assignment completion rates are so low; however, considering the due dates for the assignments, it is clear that many of these students were

very far behind in completing assignments even before they stopped attending. Ed completed only one journal assignment, and Paul completed only four assignments by week nine, even though, by then, all eight of the online posts and half of the journal assignments were due.

Two students' assignment completion behaviors are particularly interesting to me because they illustrate the complexities of the question about why some students were successful while others were not. David stayed in class until week 12, attending regularly. However, he completed only two of eight online posts and only five of 13 journal entries. Dr. Goode told me that she often talked to David, warning him that he would not be able to pass the class if he did not complete the required work. Since the assignments also helped students prepare to write the formal papers and to understand the course material and concepts, completing them ostensibly should have helped students perform better on the portfolios. As shown in Table 1, David performed poorly on the midterm portfolio, earning a 2- out of a possible 4, meaning that he was significantly below expectations for the class. What is surprising here is that David persisted to week 12 in the class, but he did not change his behavior even when Dr. Goode tried to warn him about the consequences. When I talked to David about his performance on the midterm portfolio, he recognized that he was still growing in his skill and that he hoped the portfolio evaluators would recognize his struggle and be "lenient" on his grade. Perhaps he hoped that Dr. Goode would also recognize his struggle and be lenient about his missing assignments. Franklin's completion rate was also interesting because he failed the class despite having turned nearly everything in. He missed only one online post and one

journal entry. Franklin told me that this was his second time through EF2 and that one of the lessons he learned from his first failure was that he needed to complete all of his work, so he seemed to apply that lesson to this class.

At week nine, after four of my student participants had stopped attending class, Dr. Goode said she had high hopes for both David and Franklin, and that they were making steady progress, but also, about this time, both students told me that they were feeling the pressure in their other classes, too. David had to withdraw from one of his other classes so that he could devote more time to English, going from four to three, and Franklin, who was taking three classes, told me that he had a lot of projects due in his other classes. By week 11, Dr. Goode told me that David was unlikely to pass the class due to his poor assignment completion and failure to turn in drafts for the final portfolio to get feedback, and that Franklin was slipping in getting work in for feedback. While Franklin did submit a final portfolio, the fact that he did not get feedback from Dr. Goode or make revisions cost him, and he earned a 2-, below expectations for college-level English. David did not submit a portfolio at all. Though I cannot say for sure why he did not, perhaps he finally recognized that he was too far behind to catch up.

During my observations, I noticed that students in the class exhibited varying levels of positive and negative behaviors in the class. I define positive behaviors as those that demonstrate students' awareness of expectations in the class, established in the syllabus and by the instructor, and their engagement with the class, as demonstrated by their attentiveness and active contribution to their own learning. Negative behaviors are in opposition to these expectations, such as lack of preparation or failing to attend class.

While positive behaviors were not guarantees of success in the class, my experience as an educator led me to believe that they could be important factors that contribute to it. Using my field notes where I recorded students' in-class behaviors, such as asking and answering questions, which showed active engagement in class and being late, absent, off-task, or unprepared, which showed at least a lack of awareness of expectations for behavior in a college class. Table 2 shows how many times I observed specific behaviors in each of my student participants during my six visits to Dr. Goode's EF2 class.

Table 2
Students' In-Class Behaviors

Student	Asks/Answers Questions	Late to Class	Absent	Off-Task	Unprepared
Andy*	13	1	0	0	0
Breanna*	5	1	1	0	1
Connor	0	0	1	1	3
David	8	2	0	0	2
Ed	1	1	2	2	3
Franklin	13	3	1	4	5
Maggie*	1	0	1	6	1
Paul	2	3	1	4	2
Rob*	3	6	0	2	0
Sara	2	0	2	2	1

Note. *Student successfully completed EF2.

Two patterns are evident from my observations. First, asking and answering questions, which I saw as a positive behavior showing active engagement in the class, was not a common behavior in successful students. In fact, of the three most “active” students—Andy, Franklin, and David—only one, Andy, was successful in the class. Further, Maggie and Rob, who were successful in EF2, were very quiet in class, rarely speaking up. Second, demonstrating a higher level of negative behaviors did not mean that a student wouldn't be successful. Maggie was often off-task, using her phone during lectures, and Rob was late to every class I observed, a pattern that Dr. Goode said held for the entire semester; however, both of them successfully completed the class.

One negative behavior that seems evident in students who were not successful in EF2 was being unprepared. I often observed that Ed, Connor, and Franklin were unprepared for class, meaning that they had not completed an ungraded homework assignment, a pattern that Dr. Goode confirmed when I asked her about it. Both Connor and Franklin's rates of being unprepared increased after they turned in the midterm portfolio at the beginning of week six. After his poor performance on the midterm portfolio, Paul's negative behaviors increased. He was often off-task, usually looking at websites when Dr. Goode was giving instruction, was unprepared a few times, and late three times before he stopped attending in week nine.

When I talked to Dr. Goode in our final interview at the end of the semester, she seemed bewildered by certain behaviors that she saw as antithetical to success. She

seemed particularly confused about what she saw as Rob's arrogant, disrespectful behavior in coming to nearly every single class at least 15 minutes late, and often later. She worried that his immature behavior would cause trouble for him in college-level courses:

Punctuality is a problem [for Rob] and so when we talked at our final conference, I told him he was going to sabotage himself because he gave off the impression that he felt he could come and go as he pleased, because he did not have to follow the same rules as everyone else. He was often late to class; he would take a longer break, or not show up to class. I realize that he is not an arrogant person, but his attitude can easily be perceived as arrogance, and I told him that he didn't want to not do well because someone perceived him as arrogant. He said he didn't mean to show rudeness or disrespect.

Dr. Goode also seemed saddened by students' poor performance in the class, but while some students seemed to sabotage themselves, others clearly disappointed her:

I was concerned about David from the get-go because he didn't turn in work. Franklin and Paul, I did have hope for, because they started out strong, but Paul, who is repeating the class for the second time, was late and also missed a lot of class. And Sara, she repeated the class. I thought she was going to be OK. She had the initial understanding and drive to be successful. She knew she hadn't done what she needed to do the previous semester. [But] she missed three or four weeks before the midterm portfolio and didn't turn in the portfolio.

Dr. Goode also noticed that how students used class time and whether or not they were coming to class prepared had a great impact on their success in the class:

Ed did nothing in class, and Franklin did very little. Connor, he was a student where when we would start working on something, he would have it down. As a student, he started out as a very efficient thinker and worker, but then outside of class, there was nothing, because of life issues.

While some students made progress in demonstrating awareness of how their behaviors contributed to their success, others fell short. Dr. Goode noticed that a few students who were repeating EF2 for the second time seemed to understand the need to turn in work:

I did see improvements in Franklin's understanding that he needed to use more consistent effort toward his work because I did have him as a student last semester. At the beginning, he was making sure he was turning his work in.

Maggie also seemed to learn she needed to keep up with the work. I talked to her about that [turning in all of the work], so I know that she was aware of that.

Overall, it seems that students' ability to recognize and adhere to the expectations of the class had uneven effects on their ability to pass the class. Again, these findings suggest that understanding the factors that contribute to success in an accelerated developmental English class are extremely complex and multi-layered.

Feelings about literacy learning. In addition to in-class behaviors, students' feelings about literacy learning, in terms of their current understanding of and confidence in their skills and abilities to read and write as well as in how their past experiences color their expectations of the course, form another layer in developing a complete

understanding. The students in this EF2 class had complex feelings about their literacy skills. Nearly all of the students in the class talked about struggling with procrastination and time management. Breanna wrote that she wanted to “get my classwork done early so that I don't have to worry last minute.” Maggie admitted to procrastinating when it came to reading because she found reading boring. I asked her what she does instead of reading, and she answered, “I find stuff that’s more entertaining. I wait until the last minute [to do my assignments] then force myself to read.” Paul also confessed his tendency to procrastinate, but he seemed confident about his ability to overcome his challenges, saying,

For as long as I can remember, I’ve always procrastinated. The weird thing is, I always get things with better quality. I feel like I need to get it done, so I get it done. When I start it too early, I can’t think of anything, but when I start it the day before, my thoughts are clear. But I do want to change so that I don't have to worry about it.

Still, Paul also acknowledged that he had a hard time working under pressure because he had trouble translating his ideas from his head to the page, staying focused on his ideas. Part of this trouble might come from what Paul described as his difficulty with reading: “I have a hard [time] holding in what I read, I have to read the text 100 times so I can recap what I read.” The hyperbolic description of his reading process, reading the text “100 times,” indicates that Paul thought he spent a lot of time just trying to understand and remember what he read.

Several students in the class talked about how they needed to be interested in the text and relate to it in order to be able to read it. Breanna conceded that she enjoyed reading for the class “more than I thought I would.” In an online post, she said that prior to EF2, she had only ever read one book for fun because she did not usually enjoy reading. Similarly, Connor said that he was getting more interested in what he was reading for the class: “I noticed I wouldn’t get into what I read, but now I am more interested. I’ve learned to be more patient with my work, reading and writing.” In an online post, Connor wrote that he did not always comprehend what he read, so he did not enjoy reading before taking EF2. He attributed his increased enjoyment of reading to learning strategies that helped him comprehend what he read. David told me that he chose his summary/response topic because he could relate to the story and that helped him write the response part of the assignment. A few students even said that they actually enjoyed reading. Sara said she loved to read and told me her favorites were classics and novels, and Andy wrote, “As a reader I enjoy very much new ideas or new information. I prefer subjects related to motivational speakers, health, food, history, travel, and some politics. I find reading is like food for the brain.”

However, other students talked about how much they disliked reading. Rob wrote, “Reading is not fun for me because I have a learning disability and it is difficult.” Ed wrote that he found reading in front of other people very stressful:

The fear of criticism starts to consume my thoughts like a cancer the instant she calls on someone in the class [to read aloud]. Please don't pick me, please don't

pick me starts to repeat itself in my head like I don't even have a choice in the matter anymore.

Ed also stated that reading a book as very difficult for him if he wasn't interested in it because it was hard for him to focus. Paul similarly expressed a fear of reading aloud: "I really hate reading out loud in class, I get really nervous and choked up, I have no problem presenting or talking in class, but reading kills me." He wrote that when he was younger and was asked to read aloud, other kids would make fun of him because he was a slow reader. Paul did say he thought he was better at writing than reading, but that he had trouble "beefing up" his papers. Likewise, David wrote that he had a "love hate relationship towards [reading and writing] because although they are vital in life I am not good at writing. Reading is very hard for me to actually sit down and read a piece of literature." A common theme among the students was that they had a difficult time comprehending what they read and that made them feel like reading was very taxing and time consuming.

Some students seemed to like writing better than reading. Breanna said that she found writing fun but challenging because she needed to work on her punctuation and spelling: "I love to write so if I work hard on fixing my spelling and punctuation then I'll be in great shape." She talked about her weakness in spelling and punctuation multiple times and seemed very concerned about needing to work on them. Connor described himself as a "decent writer," and said that that he liked to write though he admitted to needing to work on a tendency to repeat his ideas.

Other students expressed more negative emotions when they talked about writing. Both Paul and Franklin used the word “confused” a lot when they talked about writing. Paul worried that he would “sound dumb or overcomplicate” his writing if he could not find a balance between spending too little time on a project or spending too much time on it. Franklin said that he had trouble focusing when he wrote because he got a lot of new ideas as he composed, which made him feel confused, like he forgot what his original idea was: “It overrides my original thought, makes me feel like, oh, never mind, I don't even know what I'm saying.” Ed and Rob both talked about how they did not enjoy writing and found it difficult. Ed thought that it took him “longer than the average person” to write, and Rob wrote that he thought his learning disability meant he had to work harder to write and not to be “complacent” about his writing skills. Andy described his feeling about writing as “frightening and stressful,” while Maggie said she hated writing. Before completing EF2, Andy described his feeling about writing as a “phobia” and attributed his lack of skill in writing to getting a demotion at work. Maggie described her weakness in writing thesis statements, which she thought was the reason she failed EF2 the first time.

Certainly, most of the students in the class felt at least some anxiety about their literacy skills, if not blatant fear about completing literacy tasks. While Andy, who was by far the oldest student in the class, demonstrated active connection to literacy learning in the class by developing his understanding, engaging in class and collaborating with peers and seemed to have clear motivators to pass the class, he also expressed having a lot of anxiety about writing. In his first journal entry, Andy wrote, “I recently got

demoted at work, from a director position after six years, to a manager position, most of it is due to my fear of writing and communicating to my superiors by email.” English is Andy’s fourth language, so he struggled with comprehension, grammar, mechanics, and vocabulary. He told me that he felt he could not express himself as well in writing as he could in speaking and that he felt his major challenge in the class was that he had not been a student since 1995, so his study skills were rusty. He told me, “It takes me 10 to 12 hours to write an essay.” I asked him if he thought that was more time than it took other students. He answered, “I think that’s why I feel I am not managing my time correctly. I should measure it before I can manage it,” which I took to mean that he might recognize that part of his struggle was thinking he was talking too much time when he might be taking the same amount of time as his peers in the class to complete assignments for the class.

Some students did gain confidence in their skills by the end of the term. Andy wrote that he began to feel more confident in his ability to write about halfway through the semester: “[This class] helped me to stop avoiding my fear of writing and face it head on.” He also said that he felt “empowered with the new ability to read for longer hours while keeping a good level of concentration.” Maggie wrote that after taking EF2, she learned to like reading and writing, and not hate it, recognizing that literacy skills “will help me in the long run.” She also wrote that she felt more confident about her reading ability because of the skills she learned:

Asking myself questions while reading has helped me remember what I was reading. Before this class, I would skim through the book because it was assigned.

After learning what active reading was I knew I would have to change the way I was reading. . . . This has helped me tremendously on my reading skills, and I can thank [this class] for that.

Breanna described how she had changed as a student: “Learning to prioritize, think critically, and not rushing have been major components leading to my improvement in my overall English skills.” Similarly, Rob pointed out that he had to make changes to his student behavior to cope with his learning disability and improve:

It is no secret from my past writings that I have to work harder to meet the same level of success as some others when reading and writing. That said, I do find my writing coming to me more naturally with improved detail, but with effort and planning.

For these successful students, EF2 seems to have made them feel more confident about their ability to learn and complete literacy tasks, along with providing them some specific strategies and processes that could act as guides to future learning, such as using active reading and the writing process. Most of these students also talked about how getting feedback from instructors on the midterm portfolio helped them focus their efforts to improve their writing.

It is unclear from the data I have collected how unsuccessful students felt about failing the course. Because several of them stopped attending the class at week nine, I was not able to make consistent observations of their behavior in class for the entire semester, and, while I contacted them via email after they left, I was also unable to follow up with them for interviews since they did not respond to my requests. Further, with the

exception of Franklin, all of the unsuccessful students in my study had low assignment completion rates, so their body of work from the class is extremely limited.

What is clear from the data that I was able to get is that Ed and Paul were both afraid to read aloud and that Connor, Ed, Paul, and David all felt uncertain about their ability to comprehend what they read. Further, each of these students expressed that they did not like to read and write and that if a text did not interest them, it was very difficult for them to get through it. Several of these students talked about feeling confused about reading and writing tasks, especially in terms of organizing ideas and focusing their thoughts. Perhaps these feelings were the result of past failures these students had experienced, which could create a crippling feeling of being overwhelmed by all they had still to learn. In at least Paul's case, his fear of reading aloud stemmed from his experiences of being laughed at. What is clear to me is that these students' feelings about literacy learning impacted their performance in some critical way.

Perceptions of Effort

My analysis of students' portfolios and the feedback they received from Dr. Goode and the other evaluators was that students were expected to show a high amount of effort that seemed to be measured by their use of the writing process as evidenced by the number of drafts and level of revision they used in their midterm and final portfolios. Students who were successful in the class showed evidence of using the writing process to complete their portfolios, which involved completing pre-writing activities, writing drafts, getting feedback from Dr. Goode, and revising and editing their work based on her feedback. Each of the four successful students, Rob, Breanna, Maggie, and Andy,

included multiple drafts in their final portfolios, completing several pre-writing activities for each formal paper, and drafting and revising multiple times until they had a complete project, while unsuccessful students did not include such evidence of the writing process in their portfolios.

Two students in the class stood out as using the writing process effectively, according to Dr. Goode and the other evaluators. Rob and Andy's efforts at using the writing process were seen as particularly adept in their midterm and final portfolios. Andy shared with me that English is his fourth language and that he felt nervous about his writing because of it. During a conversation we had after my third observation in week six, Dr. Goode shared with me that she thought Andy performed very well at the idea level and that his problem lay more in the mechanics of writing, which is unsurprising given that he is not a native speaker. Still, many of Dr. Goode's comments on Andy's papers pushed him to develop his ideas by providing richer detail and making deeper connections between his ideas and the examples from the text. For example, in the summary response essay, which was included in both portfolios, Andy wrote and revised extensively, creating five drafts before submitting his final paper (the sixth draft) in the last portfolio. In the third version, Dr. Goode commented on the abrupt introduction and lack of connection between the opening sentence and the introduction of the essay Andy was writing about. She also pointed out several errors in punctuation and a few missing words, but it was clear from her comments that she wanted Andy to focus revision efforts on increasing detail and connections.

What made Andy's revision efforts successful was the fact that he submitted several drafts (six total for the summary response) and applied these efforts to answer Dr. Goode's concerns. Through various iterations, Andy continued to work on the introduction to address Dr. Goode's comment that he needed to "introduce the article more generally and connect it to the hook," reminding him to use the standard language she had shown the class during a drafting workshop and to strengthen the thesis statement since the one he used did not "fully capture" his idea. Though Andy's issues with grammar were evident still in his final draft, the revisions he has made specifically addressed Dr. Goode's concerns about the initial poor connection to the essay and awkward thesis, showing that he was able to use her feedback to improve the content of his paper as well as to make several corrections to syntax and grammar.

The second evaluator on Andy's midterm portfolio noticed that Andy had obviously revised his essay, and it seems she thought these efforts boded well for Andy's success: "Overall, you have shown your ability to do much better as the semester progresses." A different evaluator noticed Andy's work ethic in his final portfolio: "You are a true example of a hard worker. You put time and effort into your assignments, which is an example of someone who wants to succeed." These comments mirror Dr. Goode's comment on Andy's final portfolio: "It is clear that you take your assignments and the learning process seriously. I enjoy reading your essays and your other work because you take the time to ponder, relate to, and question what you read." Dr. Goode's comments were made separately from the other evaluator's comments, yet their words are remarkably similar. It is also important to note that while Dr. Goode got to know

Andy over the course of the 14-week semester, the two other evaluators had no interactions with Andy and based their assessment of his writing (and effort) solely on the contents of his midterm and final portfolios.

Rob's midterm portfolio also seemed to engender hope for his success in his second evaluator, who wrote that while he needed to work on organization and writing a stronger closing paragraph in his summary response, which also had an unclear thesis, he was still bound to be successful in the class: "The way you relate the article to your workplace . . . makes your [paper] very eloquent and effective. You will do a great job on the final portfolio." Dr. Goode also commented that Rob's writing was "engaging and thoughtful." I saw this comment a lot in Rob's written feedback from Dr. Goode and the other evaluators, and it suggested to me that thoughtful writing was seen as the product of a thoughtful person, one who spent time and effort thinking about the ideas he would writing about. These suggestions become explicit in the comments Rob received on his final portfolio. The second evaluator wrote:

I can see that a genuine sense of learning has taken place . . . Your revision process is noted and appreciated, which makes quality essays. . . . I enjoyed reading and appreciate the efforts in completing a great piece.

Dr. Goode also noticed Rob's thoughtfulness in the final portfolio, but her comment seems tempered by her experiences of Rob as a student in her class: "You generally take the time to clearly articulate your points and to develop them." Rob was often 30 minutes or more late to class, and Dr. Goode expressed annoyance with his "immature" behavior and his "attitude" that seemed to suggest he needn't follow the rules. Still, it is clear in

her comments on the final portfolio that she saw Rob as a capable writer who was perhaps not living up to his full potential.

Of his overall effort in the final portfolio, Dr. Goode commented, “Are these essays acceptable as they are? Yes. But are you capable of even more? Absolutely.” Dr. Goode expressed her concern that Rob’s lack of meeting his potential would negatively impact his ability to do well in the college-level English composition course that he was headed to upon successful completion of EF2: “Being able to push and motivate yourself will be even more important at the higher levels.” Rob seemed to recognize his need to keep up with the challenges of his coursework, and addressed this issue specifically in his reflection letter: “[M]y main challenge is to keep completing my homework on time and improve on the level of detail in my writing to continue to the next English class. . . . I am still learning, but see that this is a step ahead for me.” Rob struggled to overcome dyslexia, and he saw this struggle as impacting his ability to succeed if he did not work harder than his peers: “I have to work harder to meet the same level of success as some others when reading and writing. That said, I do find my writing coming to me more naturally with . . . effort and planning.” Rob’s self-evaluation implies that he has found fruit in his hard work and understands that his effort can pay off.

Breanna, another successful student, also wrote five drafts of the summary response essay before submitting her last version in the final portfolio; however, her ability to respond to feedback was seen as less effective by Dr. Goode and other evaluators. One of the elements that Dr. Goode commented on in Breanna’s early draft was that her thesis idea was unclear and needed more focus. Breanna had written, “[The

author] learns that you have to fight for the things you want and often need.” In a subsequent draft, Dr. Goode commented that Breanna needed to address the thesis and review previous feedback she had gotten, which asked Breanna to develop a personal connection to the text and define the idea that the author was trying to communicate to readers. Dr. Goode’s comments seemed to push Breanna to make a personal reaction to the essay, which is the heart of the response writing, but the thesis in her final draft seemed still to neglect the personal aspect: “[The author] makes the readers realize that they should not judge those in need of help because eventually everyone will need help.” As is evident here, Breanna clearly stated the author’s main idea, showing that she understood what she read, but there is no personal connection in the thesis, a fact that one of her portfolio evaluators caught, calling her thesis weak. The other assignments in Breanna’s final portfolio showed a similar weakness in thesis statement construction, and Dr. Goode’s comments tended to push her to develop stronger arguments.

Despite the fact that Breanna had written several drafts of each of the three papers in the portfolio—five drafts of the research paper and three of the literary analysis—and included several examples of prewriting, including graphic organizers and outlines, and it was clear that she tried to alter her thesis statements to respond to feedback, her evaluators felt that her attempts were inadequate. She earned a 3- on the portfolio, which, when combined with her excellent effort to complete all the other assignments, was enough to pass EF2. However, Dr. Goode was still concerned about her performance in the class, saying, “Breanna could have done better.” Dr. Goode’s concern seemed to be echoed by the other portfolio evaluator, who wrote, “There are some areas you still need

to focus on which means you will need to work even harder in college level English. Good luck.” Given how hard Breanna worked to produce the portfolio, as evidenced by the numerous drafts she wrote of each paper, my observations of her during class, and her excellent assignment completion rate, it’s hard to imagine what working harder in college level English might entail.

From these comments, it is possible to interpret that these educators value high-level ideas because they suggest that students are taking time and putting in effort to write, whereas the comments the second evaluator (who was the same as Rob’s and Andy’s) made about Breanna’s portfolio, that she needed to use more effort and work harder, might indicate that Breanna’s more simple ideas failed to impress, despite the fact that Breanna’s portfolio had numerous drafts as did Maggie’s, Rob’s and Andy’s.

Helping her students develop the ability to use the writing process was important to Dr. Goode because she connected the process of getting and responding to feedback not only with students’ ability to do well in the class and improve their writing, but also with their ability to make honest judgments about their strengths and weaknesses in literacy learning. When I asked her if she thought students were able to understand their strengths and weaknesses, she said, “I think the students that stuck with the process did very well. But if a student didn't turn in work and get feedback, they didn't really have the opportunity to immerse themselves in that [reflection about their strengths and weaknesses].” Clearly, Dr. Goode thought that using the process was essential to passing EF2.

Of the nine students who actually completed the course and submitted a final portfolio, a requirement to pass the course, only five total students passed, four of whom were in my study plus an additional student who was not a participant. Of the four failing students, Dr. Goode said, “The other four stuck with the class, but they never followed through with getting feedback and improving their work.” Franklin, who was unsuccessful in the class, used the process in crafting his midterm portfolio, creating three drafts of his summary response essay and getting feedback from Dr. Goode, which indicated that he was on the right track in terms of meeting her expectations for the summary/response: “This essay shows serious thought and reflection.” Though he did attempt to tackle Dr. Goode’s concerns that his essay did not effectively address the audience, mostly due to overly complex, abstract sentences that Dr. Goode found hard to understand, his revision efforts were not acknowledged by the evaluators who commented on that his thesis was unclear and that he should not make announcements in his paper. Both midterm portfolio evaluators gave him low scores (1s and 2s) on the rubric for the criterion covering use of the revision process.

Franklin’s final portfolio had no drafts in it, only final copies of each of the three papers and a few outlines and graphic organizers. Of his literary analysis, the second evaluator wrote, “There is no evidence of theme/thesis and the essay leaves me wondering if you had the opportunity to even read the book.” My observations of Franklin in class convinced me that he did read the novel, and he was able to discuss its themes in detail with Andy in their small group during week 11, yet the draft he produced is rushed and confusing, containing little support from the novel. Again, the evaluator

suggested that Franklin had not put in the required effort in this portfolio, which the evaluator attributed to the lack of drafts and revisions. Dr. Goode likewise commented on Franklin's lack of effort, but perhaps, because she knew Franklin as a student in her class, her comments were more positive than the second evaluator's: "I see that you are capable of more when you invest the necessary time." Dr. Goode also expressed concern that Franklin did not apply any feedback in revising the summary/response or research papers, which students worked on extensively in class. Dr. Goode thought that this failure indicated a lack of "seriousness about improving your work." Given the evidence in the final portfolio, it is perhaps unsurprising that Dr. Goode and the other evaluators would attribute Franklin's poor performance to a lack of effort; however, Franklin's other class behaviors—actively participating in class discussions, collaborating with his peers to discuss readings and writing strategies, turning in nearly all of the assignments for the class—showed that he put forth at least some effort, especially early on in the semester.

At midterm, Franklin was making some progress in the class, earning a 2+ on the midterm portfolio, meaning that the evaluators thought he was making progress toward standards for college-level English just five weeks into EF2. However, after the midterm portfolio, his focus in class was also often divided, and he seemed to spend workshop time catching up with assignments rather than working ahead to prepare his final portfolio. When I talked to Franklin about his other classes, he told me that he also had a lot of reading and projects due in those classes around midterm, and despite his outward confidence in his ability to get the work done, he also expressed stress at the workload, saying it was a lot of work and reading and some of it was very difficult to understand.

He said that his philosophy readings were especially challenging and that he did not always understand what was going on when he attempted to read them.

Combined with his poor performance on the final portfolio, which indicated that he had not overcome his weakness in focusing on developing coherent ideas and communicating through clear sentences, it was clear to Dr. Goode and the other evaluators that Franklin was not ready for college-level courses in spite of his good initial effort. One evaluator wrote, “It looks like you started the semester out strong but you did not finish the same way. I think you have the potential to write decent essays but there is no evidence of effort in [this] portfolio.” When I asked Dr. Goode what chance Franklin would have in college now that he had failed EF2 a second time, she was uncertain:

I don't know. When I talked to [Franklin] at his individual conference, he kept diverting the conversation to other things. It was kind of odd. And he didn't seem too broken up about failing the class. I talked to him about how he was doing in his other courses—I think he was taking psychology and philosophy—and he said they were doing multiple-choice tests.

Franklin was not the only student who seemed not to grasp the importance of using the writing process and demonstrating it through getting feedback and creating multiple drafts. At the midterm portfolio, several students failed to submit early drafts for feedback from Dr. Goode, indicating that they might not have understood the expectation to use the writing process. Connor, Paul and David's midterm portfolios showed a distinct lack of drafting and revising, and these students relied mostly on themselves for any corrections they made, which were mostly of surface errors like spelling and

punctuation rather than on content improvement. Part of the concern that evaluators showed in all three of these students' midterm portfolio was that they had not gotten feedback from Dr. Goode. An examination of the summary/response papers in all three portfolios shows no comments from Dr. Goode, meaning that the students had never submitted early drafts for feedback. One of Paul's evaluators asked directly, "Did your instructor give you feedback?" The second evaluator commented, "You need a lot of work on revision and editing in this draft." Of his own writing, Paul wrote, "Writing and reading have been a tremendous struggle for me through out, I never understood why." He also wrote that he actually did some planning for the paper, and his midterm portfolio included a completed graphic organizer for describing his plan for main ideas and details for the summary/response. He seemed to recognize that poor time management and procrastination affected his ability to do better and indicated that he "really wanted to improve" his time management skills. However, Paul's poor attendance, off-task behavior in class, and lack of preparation for class indicated that he still struggled to overcome this challenge.

It is difficult to say whether simply using the process to create multiple drafts that showed improvement and correction with each iteration is primarily responsible for students' success in EF2. Certainly, Breanna's, Maggie's, and Rob's papers were more technically correct than Andy's, whose second language issues were clearly evident in his writing. Further, Maggie and Breanna both made corrections and improvements to their essays, but their efforts were often uneven, with more attention paid to adding more paragraphs than to improving the thesis statements and developing the connection

between thesis and paragraphs. Perhaps in Maggie's case, this failure to improve the thesis is unsurprising since she admitted that crafting thesis statements was the most difficult aspect of writing for her. But the fact that Dr. Goode and the other evaluators specifically attributed success to using the writing process, even if it was less than completely effective, speaks volumes about why students who consistently drafted and revised based on her feedback did well while those students who relied on themselves to correct their drafts did not succeed. Possibly, simply understanding the expectation of process writing and striving to meet it was enough to help students succeed in EF2.

Summary of Findings

For the four successful students, taking an accelerated developmental English class helped them to access college-level English at MCC, fulfilling both their goals and the college's mission to get students into credit-bearing courses required to earn degrees and/or transfer to university. Unfortunately, other students in the class did not succeed in passing EF2, and for some, like Franklin, who failed the class for a second time, this class might be more of a stumbling block. Could it be that Franklin simply buckled under the pressure of writing two new papers in addition to revising the summary/response from his midterm portfolio? Was the workload too much for him to handle in 14 weeks in addition to his other courses?

While I cannot answer these questions specifically for Franklin, I think it is important to ask them. Unlike the other unsuccessful students—Ed, Connor, and David—who turned in almost none of the informal assignments and seemed in some ways doomed from the start, Franklin had a strong start. Perhaps if he had the choice of a

slower paced course, he might have been able to parse his energy more efficiently and spend the time he needed to improve his writing. Certainly, he did put forth a tremendous amount of effort to get the assignments done in a very short amount of time.

Chapter Five

This dissertation describes a qualitative case study I conducted to explore what happened in one section of EF2, an accelerated developmental English course at MCC, a large community college, during one 14-week semester in order to understand developmental students' literacy learning experiences. Secondly, I also wanted to help faculty and administrators at MCC understand how students' experiences, behaviors, and feelings contributed to students' success or failure in the class. Analysis of my data helped me to provide a detailed description of the literacy learning activities and assignments students were required to complete the class, allowing me to answer my first research question: What happens in an accelerated developmental English class? By describing students' behaviors and to a certain extent, their feelings when completing these activities and assignments, I was also able to answer my second research question: Why are some students successful but others are not? Analysis of my data revealed that students experienced literacy learning in reading, writing, and, to a lesser extent, researching, but that not every student was able to master these literacy-learning areas over the 14-week class. I also found that students' behaviors and feelings about literacy were not always reliable predictors of their success (defined as passing) in the class. Finally, I found the amount of effort a student put forth in the portfolios, as evidenced by the use of the writing process—including making revisions based on teacher feedback—

related to whether or not a student would be successful, that is, pass the class, but even successful students' revision efforts were often seen as insufficient by instructors.

Ultimately, I concluded that students must exert a huge amount of effort to accomplish literacy learning and to be successful in this fast-paced course.

This study is important because it provides MCC administrators and faculty members with a more developed picture of students' experiences in a class that is part of its redesigned developmental English program to shed light on why current success rates are low. This report also contributes a much-needed qualitative study to the literature on the use of accelerated design in developmental education programs in community colleges and students' experiences in these classes.

Discussion

The students I observed in EF2 were typical examples of developmental English students, both according to my experiences as an educator and according to definitions of developmental English students in the literature (Daiek et al., 2012; Grubb et al., 2011; Higbee, 2009; Maloney, 2003). As students whose placement test scores at MCC consigned them to EF2, they were not considered as possessing college-level literacy skills (Conley, 2008). My findings about students' behaviors further suggested that many lacked the academic behaviors required to successfully complete college work, such as managing time, attending class, and coping with multiple demands (Conley, 2008; Cohen & Brawer, 2008; Paulson & Armstrong, 2010). Additionally, a review of their application of literacy learning skills in course documents, and according to their instructor and other

evaluators, demonstrated that the students in EF2 clearly struggled to navigate the requirements of academic literacy (Maloney, 2003).

In terms of the course itself, the expectations embodied in the course objectives of EF2 were certainly common of college-level work, which requires comprehension of difficult texts through use of close reading skills as well as the ability to respond critically to ideas with organized, supported, and correct writing (Conley, 2005). As indicated by the eight course objectives for EF2, students in this course had to progress quickly through several difficult skills and tasks, including understanding and employing both reading and writing processes effectively, improving reading comprehension, building vocabulary, thinking critically, and producing correct, coherent texts, all while managing multiple reading and writing assignments in only 14 weeks of instruction. Further, students in this EF2 class were required to interact with literacy learning in multiple media, a skill that is also common in college classrooms in the twenty-first century (Biancarosa, 2012; Trotter, 1990).

Two important observations emerged from what I saw about the effects of acceleration on literacy learning for students in the class. First, students in this EF2 class were expected to complete quite a lot of work during their 14 weeks. Keeping up with the work and not falling too far behind was essential for success, as evidenced by successful students, Breanna, Rob, Maggie, and Andy, but perhaps more dramatically exemplified by students who fell behind before midterm, especially Paul, Sara, Ed, and Connor. For successful students, completing each assignment not only offered them more instruction and practice on skills such as close reading, summary, and process writing, but also

helped them gain confidence in their ability to learn and apply skills and strategies. For example, Andy wrote about his growing confidence in his final reflective letter and his final journal entry, saying that he was able to overcome his fear of writing and become a stronger reader by practicing the skills Dr. Goode was teaching. Similarly, Rob recognized that he was a stronger writer when he put in the effort to complete all his work. Also, while Breanna and Maggie both admitted feeling overwhelmed by the work at times, both attributed their reading and writing improvement to the practice they got by doing the assignments.

However, for Paul, Sara, Ed, and Connor, who all failed to turn in most of their assignments during the class, the pace of the class had no room in it to get back on track. Ed, who never bought the textbook, probably did not have much of a chance of doing well, though he expressed his desire to complete the class and get over his fear and dislike of reading and writing in his first journal assignment. In contrast, Sara, who missed three weeks of instruction due to a family situation, seemed to want to catch up when she returned, but the requirements of the course that she must submit a midterm portfolio in order to be able to pass the class proved a stumbling block and she ended up withdrawing in week nine. Paul and Connor both had low assignment completion rates and stopped attending after week nine, indicating that they could not keep up with the pace, yet both of them turned in midterm portfolios and came to class regularly before that point and both indicated that they wanted to do well in their journal entries. Certainly, when the pace of instruction is so fast, falling behind can create a serious barrier to success. When put into the context of arguments for acceleration's benefits to

students in terms of providing more access to college-level coursework and in providing more opportunity to succeed (Adams et al., 2009; Bailey, 2009; Hern, 2012; Mills, 2009), the experiences of several students in this EF2 class create doubt about such claims, at least for some students.

A second observation of acceleration was that face-to-face time with the instructor and time to work on assignments in class seemed to be important for student success. However, face time and workshop time was limited, partly due to the stipulations of the redesigned, accelerated course (i.e. EF2 covers both reading and writing in four credit hours) and partly due to other factors (i.e. it was a 14-week course and there were cancellations due to bad weather). Some evidence of the limited class time could be seen in how little time, relatively, was spent on actual classroom instruction on important topics such as active reading and incorporating sources. For example, Dr. Goode was only able to spend 30 minutes of classroom instruction time going over the strategies and principles of active reading and had to rely on supplemental instruction through textbook readings, online assignments, and online feedback to cover these strategies more completely. More compelling evidence of the impact of limited class time can be seen from Dr. Goode's concern that some students who were not successful might have been successful if there had been more time. Dr. Goode thought that Connor, David, Franklin, and Sara were all capable of passing the course and noted how much they relied on workshop time—and the support she could give them—to complete their assignments and stay on track. Knowing what we do about how developmental students often lack study skills and feel uncertain about their literacy abilities, it comes as no surprise that

some students will not succeed without these structures (Cohen & Brawer, 2008; Paulson & Armstrong, 2010).

Further, as I described in chapter four, students seemed to have difficulty managing the pace and assignments required by the course despite the high amount of support they received from Dr. Goode, who gave written, verbal, and online feedback on students' assignments and was supportive of her students' learning processes. Face-to-face instruction and writing support in workshops appeared to be an important element for these developmental writers, but was limited in this EF2 class. Face-to-face time is also touted as an important factor to students' success in the literature (Farakish, 2008; Koch et al., 2012; Paulson & Armstrong, 2011; Rose, 2007; VanOra, 2012). In fact, DiTommaso (2010) highlighted the importance of class time in developmental classes to build the relationship between students and instructors and for instructors to model academic behaviors and processes they expect their students to learn and apply.

Still, my observations of students in one EF2 class also show the complexity and variation of what makes students successful or not. Two students' behaviors demonstrated that assignment completion alone in an accelerated pace cannot account for success or help predict failure. At week nine, Dr. Goode still felt that both David and Franklin were capable of passing, even though David's assignment completion rate was low. Even more interesting is that both students were actively engaged in class, asking and answering questions, and although Franklin's negative behaviors increased after week nine (i.e. he arrived late and was off task more often), David's behaviors did not become more negative. Finally, both students made use of class time to complete work.

In fact, Dr. Goode said that David was working on his final portfolio in class during his last week of attendance, and she was surprised that he did not submit it. David and Franklin stayed in the class longer than the other four unsuccessful students, suggesting that they wanted to finish the class and pass, but both were unsuccessful at the end. Part of the reason for Franklin's lack of success can be traced directly to his final portfolio, which failed to demonstrate use of the writing process and was marked by papers that had serious issues in terms of coherence, support, and organization.

My observations of these students clearly indicate that simply persisting and doing the work is not enough to make a student in EF2 successful. The literature on developmental students is rife with warnings about how many lack not only academic skills, but also study skills, or "soft skills," to be able to keep up with the challenges of college study (Casazza & Silverman, 1996; Cohen & Brawer, 2008; Paulson & Armstrong, 2010). Perhaps the possibility that, like so many developmental students profiled in the literature, David and Franklin simply lacked effective study habits and time management skills, which they wrote extensively about in journal assignments, accounts more for their lack of success than longer course sequences, which the redesigned developmental English program was primarily intended to remedy (Virginia Community Colleges, 2011).

Another possible explanation for students' success in EF2 is how much effort they put into passing the class. The theme of effort emerged in two aspects of my study: first, from my analysis of students' behavior, particularly in whether or not students were prepared, and second, from instructor's and evaluators' comments on students' portfolios.

Initially, it might be tempting to attribute success or lack of it to how often a student came to class unprepared, suggesting a lack of effort on his or her part. However, I see this kind of conclusion as an over-simplification of the connection between success and effort. For one thing, we cannot always know the reasons a student comes to class unprepared. It could be that a student has suffered a personal tragedy or emergency, as Sara was, or that a student is simply overwhelmed by juggling work, school, and family, as Connor was. Yet the idea of working hard and demonstrating that hard work was a common theme in both students' and instructors'/evaluators' comments. Students, both successful and unsuccessful ones, wrote about struggling though and trying harder to complete the work, as if effort alone was the most important factor in passing EF2. However, it was not always clear that the students knew where and how to apply the effort, again suggesting that their lack of academic and students skills affected their approach to learning (Casazza & Silverman, 1996; Cohen & Brawer, 2008).

The most illuminating observation I was able to make in my study was the extent to which Dr. Goode and the other evaluators touted effort as an important factor to success, both in EF2 and in the college-level composition course that the four successful students would attempt in the next semester. While Dr. Goode based her assessment of students' effort on several pieces of evidence—in-class performance, keeping up with assignments, and drafting to get feedback on assignments—the other evaluators based their judgments solely on what students included in their portfolios. This finding is concerning to me because students themselves put so much emphasis on working hard and many did work very hard, particularly Franklin, only to be told this effort was

insufficient. It seems that being told their efforts were not paying off would negatively impact students' sense of self-efficacy, which is important for success (Bandura, 1997), and which the literature about developmental students' self-perception indicates is low already, possibly contributing to students' fear that no amount of effort is enough to be successful in literacy learning (Paulson & Armstrong, 2011; VanOra, 2012).

Implications for Teaching

The findings in this study emphasize the need for developmental instructors to understand the experiences of students taking accelerated developmental English classes and how these experiences affected their ability to succeed. Two important implications for faculty that emerge from my observation and analysis of this EF2 class are that class time is essential to success and that students need a way to catch up when they fall behind.

Class time. A crucial factor for successful developmental education programs is how faculty members interact with students in the classroom (Di Tommaso, 2010; Farakish, 2008; Karp & Bork, 2014; Roueche & Snow, 1977). In fact, studies about faculty who teach developmental courses suggest that the interaction between students and instructors plays an important role in providing clear expectations for students' behavior, requiring faculty to help students develop a realistic understanding about their roles and responsibilities and what it means to succeed in college (Di Tommaso, 2010; Karp & Bork, 2014). Dr. Goode planned and delivered instruction that created a positive environment and encouraged collaboration between students and herself, both factors that scholars consider essential to success (Roueche & Snow, 1977). However, due to a

shortened course format (14 weeks versus the traditional 16-week semester), cancelations for bad weather (the class lost the equivalent of two and a half days of face-to-face time during the first five weeks), and an increase in the number of skills and assignments students encountered due to the redesigned format of the course, the amount of class time was limited and possibly inadequate to accomplish the expected amount of learning for some students in the class. This finding, while specific to this EF2 class, should cause instructors of courses with similar designs to think carefully about how they are using class time and how much interaction, modeling of skills and behaviors, and direct teaching they are actually providing their students. It also emphasizes the need to plan and deliver assignments and literacy tasks carefully, possibly with a view to minimizing the number of assignments and maximizing the time spent on helping students develop skills as well as confidence to apply those skills. In this sense, Hern's (2012) description of accelerated programs in California that use backwards design to create assignments that meet multiple course objectives could be useful.

Catching up. One of the common themes of unsuccessful students in this EF2 class was falling behind in assignment completion. Due to the structure of the course—requiring a required midterm portfolio and final portfolio that were holistically graded—students who either did not submit the midterm portfolio or did not do very well on the portfolio (earning a grade of 2+ or lower) did not pass the course. Part of this result is undoubtedly related to students' poor literacy skills, evident in the contents of the portfolios themselves, along with some students' failure to follow directions or submit complete projects. Yet in a bare six weeks from the beginning of the class, half of the

class was already failing based on the results of this first formal project, a fact that had profound effects on students' performance after midterm since only one student who earned lower than a 3- on the midterm portfolio even submitted a final portfolio. This pattern, combined with another pattern of submitting informal assignments, is evident in all unsuccessful students with the exception of one student. For instructors of accelerated developmental English classes with similar formats and requirements to this EF2 class, one thing is clear from these results: once students fall behind, they often do not catch up. Instructors should be willing to help students who fall behind to catch up. A possibility might be to use midterm evaluations in a more advisory capacity so that students do not feel doomed if they do badly on an early assignment.

Implications for Research

Given the theoretical frameworks guiding the study, constructivism and social constructivism, several possibilities for further study emerged from my observations of this EF2 class. First, in their self-evaluations, students in this EF2 class expressed some awareness of their own strengths and weaknesses as readers, writers, and students, all important factors in doing well this the class and in college. However, it is not clear how this self-evaluation impacted their performance in the class. For example, in his letter to the midterm portfolio evaluators, David emphasized that he struggled with reading and writing because, as he told me in an interview, he thought it might cause the evaluators to be more lenient in their grading if they recognized that he struggled. Certainly David's comment suggests that he might not have understood his roles and responsibilities as the learner to overcome these struggles. Several interview studies with developmental

students address how students feel about literacy learning, and, indeed as this study also found, students are often very fearful and worried about literacy learning (Koch et al., 2012; Paulson & Armstrong, 2011; VanOra, 2012). Yet it seems that fear and anxiety are only part of the barrier students might experience. Through the lens of constructivism, which takes the view that knowledge is constructed from experience and carries personal meaning that individuals use to understand reality (Stake, 1995), the class composed its own unique culture and understanding of how interactions and learning should take place. This culture was guided by the instructors of EF2—Dr. Goode and the other evaluators—through their interactions with students and the institution (Tracey & Marrow, 2013). What remains unclear about the findings in my study is how this culture affected students' ability to overcome weaknesses. Researchers need to look at how students' perceptions of weaknesses and strengths as readers, writers, and students affect their performance in developmental English classes, particularly in how they address and overcome weaknesses.

Second, the four successful EF2 students who are attempting college-level English, and relying on the preparation they received in EF2 to help them succeed, certainly face even more challenges. While research on the effectiveness of developmental English courses suggests that they can be effective in helping underprepared students succeed in a content course with high literacy demands (Crews & Aragon, 2004; Goldstein & Perin, 2008; Southard & Clay, 2004), the literature on success rates for students who have taken an accelerated developmental English course is less certain, with one study finding a lowered probability of success for such students in

college-level courses (Hodara & Jaggars, 2014). From the perspective of social constructivism, knowledge and learning happen through the interactions between teacher and students, as well as among students, who share and transform their understanding as they test current knowledge and create new knowledge (Tracey & Morrow, 2013). This study set specific boundaries that downplayed the instructor's role in the class, but the instructor and the other evaluators were still important players in students' success due to the nature of the holistic grading in the class. In this case, it is clear that the other instructors' behaviors and perceptions impacted the interactions in the class as well. The culture of performance and effort apparent from the findings in this study need to be further explored to understand how it impacts student success, particularly in light of the admonition of evaluators and Dr. Goode that students would have to try even harder to succeed in college-level English than they did in EF2. A logical next step for researchers at MCC and other institutions that use accelerated design would be to study how these students perform in college-level courses with high literacy demands. It is important that studies look at multiple factors, too, since data based on GPA and retention, which is already readily available in several studies, is also limited in its ability to tell us why students are successful or not (Adams et al., 2009; Brown & Ternes, 2009, as cited in Edgecombe, 2011; Hern, 2012; Sheldon & Durdella, 2009).

Third, in the redesigned program at MCC, students must take EF1, EF2, or EF3, depending on placement test scores. They do not have a choice to take a slower format course, and, if they fail a class, they must retake the same course in the same format. For example, several students in my study were taking EF2 for a second time, and of these

students, only two passed on the second try. In studies of other accelerated programs, students had a choice between taking a traditional developmental course or an accelerated one (Adams et al., 2009; Rose, 2007). Adams et al. (2009) and Rose (2007) both concluded that acceleration could help developmental students succeed, showing that pass rates for the accelerated classes were often higher than the traditionally delivered option. However, it is important to note that students themselves determined whether they would take the accelerated courses, and it is possible that these students might have been different from other developmental students in terms of their motivation, literacy skills, study skills, and even personal lives. Rose (2007) found, for instance, that students who self-selected the accelerated developmental classes showed more motivation, collaboration, and help-seeking behaviors than students who opted for traditional classes. Researchers at MCC and other institutions that use similar accelerated designs in their developmental English programs must study the relationship between these factors—motivation, literacy skills, study skills, and other personal factors (work, family life, etc.)—and the impact on student success. Perhaps offering a choice between formats could help some students succeed.

Fourth, the relationship between effort and success was an important theme in this study. Students and instructors alike commented on their beliefs that working harder was the key to success in EF2. However, it is unclear what working harder looks like. For example, from my observations, Franklin and Breanna both worked very hard in the class, submitting nearly all assignments, coming to class regularly, and generally using class time to work on assignments for the class. However, while Breanna was successful,

Franklin was not. Further, even though Breanna passed the class, her evaluators and Dr. Goode felt she should have shown more effort and done better, warning her that college-level English would require even more effort to complete successfully.

The literature on students' perceptions and the impact of instructors on student success in developmental English reveals the need for positive interactions between student and faculty (Di Tommaso, 2010; Farakish, 2008; Koch et al., 2012; Paulson & Armstrong, 2011; VanOra, 2012). Additionally, developing self-efficacy—the belief that a student can succeed—is considered an essential component of success (Bandura, 1997; Hattie, 2009). It is possible that some developmental English students believe they are putting in the necessary amount of effort but are not learning and/or applying literacy skills despite this effort. It is also possible that faculty are equating competency in completing literacy tasks with working hard, where a failure of effort is primarily responsible for failure to demonstrate competency. Both of these perceptions are problematic. Researchers in the field of teaching developmental students need to study the impact of students' and teachers' perceptions of effort on developing literacy skills and completing developmental English classes successfully.

Limitations

In creating the parameters for this study, including selecting the class and setting I would study, as well as the kinds of data I would collect, I purposely defined what I emphasized in my inquiry and what I did not, constructing boundaries for methodological and practical reasons (Reybold et al., 2013). Such practical boundaries ensure that I, a single researcher with limited time and resources, could thoroughly study the case to

achieve well-supported interpretations (Stake, 1995). Further, these boundaries focused my inquiry into the case—one EF2 class at MCC, its instructor and 10 students taking the class— allowing me to develop some insight into what students experience in an accelerated developmental English class and why some students succeed while others do not. These boundaries, then, are purposeful aspects of my design, not to be confused with limitations I encountered as I conducted my study and collected my data.

I did experience two limitations that I believe impacted my findings significantly, both of which relate to student interview data. Initially, I had planned to conduct two interviews with all 10 of my student participants, either in groups or individually, at about midterm and again near the end of the course. The first limitation was that during the midterm interview, I was able to interview only four of my 10 participants, which limited my ability to understand all of my participants' experiences in creating the midterm portfolio, using reading and writing processes, and applying these processes in other settings. While I was able to glean rich information from these four students about what motivated them and how they felt about learning in the class, my understanding about my other six participants was limited without these data. I was able to use reflective writing from nine of my student participants' midterm portfolios and journal assignments to glean information about how they felt about reading and writing, and about how they viewed their strengths and weaknesses, which was useful in developing my understanding about their experiences in the class, but I believe getting their responses to my interview questions would have yielded a richer understanding.

The second limitation was that although I had planned and tried many times to get a second interview with students near the end of the class to find out how their experiences of reading and writing processes changed how they felt about literacy learning, whether they felt that they had improved, and how they thought they could use the skills and strategies they learned in other settings, I was unsuccessful. First, by the end of the class, only six of my ten participants were still attending class. I contacted the students who stopped attending by email, but never received a reply from any of them. Second, while I maintained a positive relationship with students in the class and was able to talk to them during class time with no trouble, I believe that my remaining student participants were so exhausted by the end of the class that they just did not have the energy to give an interview. I was able to use students' reflective writing in the final portfolio and journal assignments to answer some of the questions I wanted to ask directly in the final interview, especially whether students felt they improved and how their feelings about literacy learning changed, but I believe I would have achieved a richer understanding of these elements of my study if I had been successful to getting the final interview.

In light of these limitations, the findings I report here rely more heavily on students' writing exhibited in course documents, especially reflective writing in journals, than I had initially planned. However, I found that these sources were able to provide authentic accounts of students' beliefs about literacy learning.

Conclusion

What I hope researchers, administrators, and teachers of accelerated developmental English programs will take away from this study is that literacy learning is complex and multifaceted and that the students who engage in literacy learning are equally so. It seems clear that students will continue to arrive at their first year of college unprepared to read and write at the college level and that community colleges must find a way to ensure that these students experience the literacy learning they need in a format that helps rather than hinders them. The stakes are high for faculty and administrators, but are even higher for our students, who might not get another shot at a higher education if we fail them at the community college level. Thus, it is imperative that we make a real effort to understand what makes students successful in literacy learning and how we can offer students options that move them forward rather than hold them back. It might not, in other words, be simply a matter of exerting a “tremendous amount of effort,” as Lawrence suggested, and Dr. Goode and her colleagues echoed, but more a matter of how students and instructors understand the nature and application of effort.

Appendix A

IRB Approval Letter



Office of Research Integrity and Assurance

Research Hall, 4400 University Drive, MS 6D5, Fairfax, Virginia
22030 Phone: 703-993-5445; Fax: 703-993-9590

DATE: February 13, 2015
TO: Elizabeth Sturtevant, PhD
FROM: George Mason University IRB
Project Title: [712450-1] Student Learning In One Accelerated Developmental English Class

SUBMISSION TYPE: New Project
ACTION: Approved
APPROVAL DATE: February 13, 2015
EXPIRATION DATE: February 12, 2016
REVIEW TYPE: Expedited Review
REVIEW TYPE: Expedited review category #7

Thank you for your submission of New Project materials for this project. The George Mason University IRB has APPROVED your submission. This submission has received Expedited Review based on applicable federal regulations.

Please remember that all research must be conducted as described in the submitted materials.

Please remember that informed consent is a process beginning with a description of the project and insurance of participant understanding followed by a signed consent form. Informed consent must continue throughout the project via a dialogue between the

researcher and research participant. Federal regulations require that each participant receives a copy of the consent document.

Please note that any revision to previously approved materials must be approved by the IRB prior to initiation. Please use the appropriate revision forms for this procedure.

All UNANTICIPATED PROBLEMS involving risks to subjects or others and SERIOUS and UNEXPECTED adverse events must be reported promptly to the Office of Research Integrity & Assurance (ORIA). Please use the appropriate reporting forms for this procedure. All FDA and sponsor reporting requirements should also be followed (if applicable).

All NON-COMPLIANCE issues or COMPLAINTS regarding this project must be reported promptly to the ORIA.

The anniversary date of this study is February 12, 2016. This project requires continuing review by this committee on an annual basis. You may not collect data beyond this date without prior IRB approval. A continuing review form must be completed and submitted to the ORIA at least 30 days prior to the anniversary date or upon completion of this project. Prior to the anniversary date, the ORIA will send you a reminder regarding continuing review procedures.

Please note that all research records must be retained for a minimum of five years, or as described in your submission, after the completion of the project.

If you have any questions, please contact Bess Dieffenbach at 703-993-4121 or edieffen@gmu.edu. Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence with this committee.

This letter has been electronically signed in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within George Mason University IRB's records.

Appendix B

English Foundations Common Rubric

Evaluation System

4 = Exceeds minimum requirements for College-Level English

3 = Meets minimum requirements for College-Level English

2 = Making progress toward minimum requirements for College-Level English

1 = Unacceptable

N/A = Assignment does not require element

Note: Incomplete portfolios will automatically receive a score of “1.” An in complete portfolio may be missing a component, or it may not provide evidence of the writing process in the form of drafts with substantial revisions.

<u>Evaluation Criteria</u>	<u>Essay</u>	<u>Cover Letter</u>
a. The title is appropriate.	4 3 2 1 N/A	4 3 2 1 N/A
b. The thesis is clearly stated.	4 3 2 1 N/A	4 3 2 1 N/A
c. The ideas are focused and unified. In the essay, body paragraphs and topic sentences support thesis.	4 3 2 1 N/A	4 3 2 1 N/A
d. Ideas are well-developed with specific, vivid supporting details.	4 3 2 1 N/A	4 3 2 1 N/A
e. Ideas are organized effectively into logical, clear paragraphs. Relationships between ideas are clear, and the ideas flow naturally.	4 3 2 1 N/A	4 3 2 1 N/A
f. The introduction and conclusion are appropriate and effective.	4 3 2 1 N/A	4 3 2 1 N/A
g. The essay/letter demonstrated audience awareness and consideration for the reader.	4 3 2 1 N/A	4 3 2 1 N/A
h. Resources are integrated smoothly in the form of accurate and relevant summaries, quotes, and paraphrasing.	4 3 2 1 N/A	4 3 2 1 N/A
i. The essay contains evidence of critical analysis of, response to, or reflection on accompanying texts. The letter demonstrated self-reflection on reading and writing.	4 3 2 1 N/A	4 3 2 1 N/A
j. The revision process is used effectively to make global changes to the essay/letter.	4 3 2 1 N/A	4 3 2 1 N/A

Appendix C

Faculty Interview Protocol

1. Tell me about creating the final portfolio assignment and your expectations for students learning.
2. Tell me about how students were able to reflect on their own learning and use feedback to make corrections/improvements.
3. Tell me about how student did on the final portfolio.
4. Tell me about the differences you saw between a successful student versus an unsuccessful student.
5. Tell me about how time, especially having enough face-to-face time in class affected students' learning.
6. Tell me about how failing EF2 might influence a student's ability to succeed in college.
7. Tell me about how you placed successful students.
8. Tell me about the factors inherent in acceleration you think might have affected students' success.

Appendix D

Student Interview Protocol

1. Tell me about the process you used to create the midterm portfolio.
2. Tell me about how you felt about creating the summary/response essay and reflection letter.
3. Tell me about what you learned by completing the portfolio.
4. Tell me about how you think you might use the skills you learned in other situations.
5. Tell me about what motivates you to stick with your studies.

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Biography

Karen Sutter Doheney received her Bachelor of Arts in Comparative Literature from California State University Long Beach in 1996. She received her Master of Arts in Literature and Writing Studies from California State University San Marcos in 2002. Karen is currently working for a community college where she teaches English.