"Write Like College": How Remedial Writing Courses at a Community College and a Research University Position "At-Risk" Students in the Field of Higher Education

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Background/Context: *Twenty percent of first-year students in public 4-year institutions and 42% of first-year students in public 2-year institutions in the United States enroll in remedial courses. Yet despite widespread remediation across U.S. colleges and universities, there remains a great deal of uncertainty about how remedial courses develop the academic skills and habits of mind required for students to succeed in college-level courses. Remediation at the college level is a widely debated practice, yet there is a dearth of research that assesses the efficacy of postsecondary remediation. In addition, there is evidence that student outcomes differ depending on whether students participated in remedial coursework at a community college or a 4-year institution. A theoretical analysis of first-year students' experiences of remediation in both contexts may help to reveal the institutional structures that act to maintain or reduce this disparity in outcomes.*
Purpose/Objective/Research Question/Focus of Study: *Two questions guided this study: (1) How do first-year developmental writing courses at a research university and a community college compare? (2) How do differences in institutional provisions of course content, instruction, and tutoring resources to remedial students at a research university and a*

community college impact students' self-reported experiences in the first year of college? To address these questions, we analyze the relationship between postsecondary institutional structures and the efficacy of remedial writing instruction for underprepared students by examining the experiences and outcomes of remedial writing students enrolled in two institutions, an urban community college and an urban research university. We apply Pierre Bourdieu's theory of practice and consider remedial writing as a position in the field of higher education.

Research Design: *A qualitative comparative case study approach was used, including three primary methods of data collection: ethnographic observations of students and instructors during one semester of course meetings; taped interviews with instructors, students, and a college writing program director; and a compiled catalog of course documents including course syllabi, class notes, assignments, and samples of student writing provided by instructors. Both course instructors also provided data on student performance. Using Atlas.ti qualitative analysis software, we coded and categorized field notes and interview transcripts to facilitate the development of theoretical concepts.*

Conclusions/Recommendations: *Although remedial writing can be viewed as a subordinate position in the overall field of higher education, our ethnographic study reveals that institutions further determine the advantage or disadvantage of remedial students by controlling their access to cultural capital and the supportive academic resources that are critical for navigating the field of higher education successfully. In addition, although all students in the two courses seemed to possess a college-going habitus, only students enrolled in the remedial writing program at the 4-year university acquired a habitus of what is required to be successful once enrolled. We believe that these findings may inform postsecondary remediation practices and add a new angle to the debate over whether remedial courses have a place at 4-year institutions. In particular, our findings suggest that it is not the type of institution but the confluence of curriculum, pedagogy, and level of resources afforded to students by the institution that influences students' experiences with remediation.*

INTRODUCTION

> *Before I came to college I thought that the homework here would be just like high school, but it's not. It is a lot harder here and there are many subjects that I do not understand. I am trying to write more like college style and less like high school but I need help to learn.*

This is how Rupali,[1] a first-year student enrolled in a large northeastern university, described the gap between her high school preparation and the demands of college-level writing. Rupali attended high school in a failing urban school district with a graduation rate of only 59%. Although hard work and academic achievement gained her admission to college, Rupali's scores on the university's writing placement test required her to complete a remedial course before enrolling in college-level writing.

Rupali's account of being unprepared for college work and needing help to learn is common among entering college freshmen. In fact, 20% of first-year students in public 4-year institutions and 42% of first year students in public 2-year institutions in the United States enroll in remedial courses (Parsad & Lewis, 2003). Yet despite widespread remediation across U.S. colleges and universities, there remains a great deal of uncertainty about how remedial courses impact students. Higher education scholars and policy makers debate both the overall merits of remedial coursework in postsecondary education (Breneman, Costrell, Haarlow, Ponitz, & Steinberg, 1998; Merisotis & Phipps, 2000; Oudenhoven, 2002; Perin, 2006) and whether precollege coursework belongs in the 2-year or 4-year sector (Bastedo & Gumport, 2003; Gumport & Bastedo, 2001).

In this article, we analyze the relationship between postsecondary institutional structures and the efficacy of remedial writing instruction for underprepared students by examining the experiences and outcomes of remedial writing students enrolled in two institutions: an urban community college and an urban research university. We apply Pierre Bourdieu's theory of practice and consider remedial writing as a position in the *field* of higher education. Although remedial writing can be viewed as a subordinate position in the overall field of higher education, our ethnographic study reveals that institutions further determine the advantage or disadvantage of remedial students by controlling their access to cultural capital, which is critical for navigating the field of higher education successfully. In addition, although all students in the two courses seemed to possess a college-going habitus, only students enrolled in the remedial writing program at the 4-year university acquired a habitus of what is required to be successful once enrolled.

PREVIOUS RESEARCH

Even though remediation policy is an active area, there is a small body of literature on the efficacy of postsecondary remediation. Weissman, Bulakowski, and Jumisco (1997) suggested that the dearth of research on the effectiveness of remediation is symptomatic of the failure of most higher education institutions to evaluate systematically their developmental or remedial programs. Nevertheless, there have been several large-scale quantitative studies of remediation, one using a national longitudinal data set (Adelman, 1998), and two studies using longitudinal data from the state of Ohio (Bettinger & Long, 2004, 2005).

Using a longitudinal data set from the National Center for Education Statistics, Adelman (1998) reported that for a sample of 2-year and 4-year students, the number of remedial courses in which students enrolled

negatively impacted their degree attainment. Further, Adelman found that remediation was less of an obstacle to degree attainment in community colleges than in 4-year institutions. Although Adelman's findings portray remediation as ineffective, particularly at 4-year institutions, more recent analyses by Bettinger and Long suggest otherwise.

In two separate studies, Bettinger and Long examined the efficacy of postsecondary remedial math programs in nonselective 4-year colleges (2004) and 2-year community colleges (2005). Using a longitudinal data set from the Ohio Board of Regents, one analysis included a cohort of traditional-age, first-time, full-time freshmen who enrolled in college in the fall of 1998 and sought to determine how both placement in a remedial math course and completion of remedial math coursework affected student outcomes when compared with similar students not in remediation.[2] For students at 4-year institutions, Bettinger and Long (2004) found that although initial placement in remedial math appeared to increase the likelihood of student dropout, when students who completed their remedial work were considered separately, the negative impact of remediation on dropping out was reversed. Thus, students who completed remedial coursework were less likely to drop out than nonremedial students with similar abilities.

For community college students, Bettinger and Long (2005) calculated the impact of remediation in both English and math on students' likelihood to drop out or stop attending. The results of these analyses showed that unlike remediation at 4-year institutions, which had a positive impact on persistence for completers, math remediation at the 2-year colleges had no impact on students' likelihood to stop attending. In addition, there were no significant differences in the outcomes of remedial English students and nonremedial English students.[3]

Although recent studies by Bettinger and Long (2004, 2005) enhanced the prior work of Adelman (1998) by comparing remedial students with nonremedial students of similar ability, the results of their analyses emphasize the need for more research on the effects of remediation both within institutions and across sectors. In particular, the marked differences in the dropout rates of students placed in remedial courses versus students who completed remedial courses reported by Bettinger and Long (2004) suggest that students gain something in the process of taking and completing a remedial course that helps them to persist to degree. Thus, research is needed to identify the components of remedial courses that support persistence.

Moreover, although Bettinger and Long (2004, 2005) found variation in the effects of remediation across 2-year and 4-year institutions, their analyses offered no insight into what causes these differences in student

outcomes. Why does remediation at 4-year institutions increase students' likelihood of persisting, whereas remediation at 2-year institutions has no effect on persistence? To assess the efficacy of remediation across institutions and sectors, institutional factors that promote or obstruct efficacy in particular remedial courses must be uncovered.

INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT AND ACQUISITION OF VALUED CAPITAL IN THE FIELD OF REMEDIAL EDUCATION: A BOURDIEUIAN THEORETICAL MODEL

We use the theoretical framework of Pierre Bourdieu to study the role of remedial writing coursework in higher education and specifically to examine how institutional differences in remedial writing instruction, course content, and access to tutoring might function to reproduce inequalities.

Bourdieu's theoretical explanation of human action is called a structural theory of practice. According to Bourdieu's model, human social action (*practice*) is the outcome of the interaction of three constructs: *habitus, capital,* and an individual's position within a *field.* Bourdieu emphasizes that practice is an "interrelationship" of "present conditions" (field and capital) and "past conditions" (habitus) and thus cannot be broken down into constituent parts (Bourdieu, 1990, p.56).

Bourdieu (1990) defined habitus as "systems of durable, transposable dispositions" through which humans subconsciously deduce their possible actions; these dispositions or preferences are generated out of a structured, class-related set of conditions (pp. 53–54). Although Bourdieu's concept of habitus is tightly bound to its original form based in one's childhood class or status position, this does not mean that Bourdieu views human action as determined by social origins. Bourdieu explained that human action "is defined by the relationship between on the one hand, [an individual's] habitus . . . and on the other hand, a certain state of the chances objectively offered to him by the social world" (p. 64). Thus, the constructs of capital and field must be considered in conjunction with habitus as shaping practice because they reflect "the state of the chances objectively offered to an individual" (p. 64).

For Bourdieu, capital represents all forms of power, including material, social, cultural, and symbolic forms (Swartz, 1997). Bourdieu (1973) argued that cultural capital is the most critical form of capital for obtaining power within the field of education. Moreover, he posited that the kind of education a person obtains is a form of cultural capital, which can be acquired and later exchanged for high-status occupations and incomes (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). Bourdieu stressed that the

construct of cultural capital should be considered as a resource that assists in the acquisition and maintenance of power.

Bourdieu's field is "a network, or configuration, of objective relations between positions" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 97). Bourdieuian fields are structured spaces of dominant and subordinate positions; these positions are objectively determined by an individual's relative amount of capital. For example, one would expect that a student positioned in a remedial program would have a relatively low amount of academic capital. In Bourdieu's theory of practice, the field represents the institutional component of his theory of human action; fields are composed of structures that impose conditions on their competing occupants. Although developed more recently in Bourdieu's theoretical work than habitus or capital, the construct of field is integral to Bourdieu's theory of practice because it represents the boundaries of a given social setting where habitus operates in occupants' struggle for valued capital (Swartz, 1997).

Bourdieu's theoretical constructs have been applied to a wide range of studies focusing on the reproduction of status inequalities via formal education systems. However, most of these studies have primarily focused on the impact of cultural capital on outcomes and have neglected the constructs of habitus and field (Davis, 1998; DiMaggio, 1982; DiMaggio & Useem, 1978; Farkas, 1996). A few analyses have attempted to provide a fuller treatment of the Bourdieuian model by incorporating both habitus and cultural capital in studies of gender disparities in school success (Dumais, 2002), racial disparities in students' experiences (Horvat, 1999; Horvat & Antonio, 1999), and the stratifying effects of elite universities (McClelland, 1990).

Although these scholars offer a more complete application of the model, their analyses tend to subordinate the contribution of the field in the generation of human action. Often the field is defined at the outset of the study as the setting where action is produced; however, little consideration is given to structures within the field and their active contribution to the production of human and social action. This is an underestimation of the construct of field because Bourdieu emphasized that outcomes cannot be deduced to either habitus or field, but instead their interaction (Swartz, 1997). According to Bourdieu, an analysis that attempts to account for human action using only habitus or capital is useless because these constructs are inseparable from the field in which they interplay. To illustrate, Bourdieu (1990) wrote, "there are acts that *habitus* will never produce if it does not encounter a situation [i.e., field] in which it can actualize its potentialities" (p. 295).

We apply Bourdieu's construct of field to better understand how postsecondary institutions structure students' experiences and success in

remedial writing. We find that institutions vary in how they position remedial students in the field of higher education. Moreover, the specific field position assigned to remedial students influences change in, or the reinforcement of, these students' levels of cultural capital and academic habitus during their first semester of college.

Bourdieu's construct of field is particularly useful for a comparison of remedial programs at different postsecondary institutions because Bourdieuian fields are not constructed along institutional boundaries; a field might span across several institutions or may be confined within a single institution (Swartz, 1997). Therefore, in this study, we define the field of struggle as the U.S. higher education system, and we compare students enrolled in remedial programs at two postsecondary institutions to determine how each institution positions its students relative to one another in this field. In particular, our qualitative analysis reveals the ways in which the remedial students at the research university occupy a dominant position relative to the remedial students at the community college. These dominant and subordinate positions are reinforced by institutional structures, which provide remedial students at the research university with increased access to valued capital, including tutoring services and knowledge of how to write papers, that will bring them success in college. Likewise, we show how the habitus of students at the research university are changed to include a disposition for succeeding in college. This change in habitus was not evident among students at the community college.

THE STUDY

We chose to examine writing programs because students' overall lack of preparedness for academic writing has been consistently cited as one of the most pressing problems of both first-year and upper-division college students (Cox, 2004; Richardson, Fisk, & Okun, 1983). The cultivation of writing skills is labor intensive for any introductory writing instructor, but particularly so when teaching students with little writing experience and few personal encounters with academic writing. Hence, a student's success in remedial college writing is likely to be affected by her institution's ability to assist in the development of this skill.

As researchers whose formal academic training is in education policy and the sociological contexts of education but not the teaching of English or composition pedagogy, we drew on the college writing literature for a set of standards to evaluate the quality of the course content in the two composition classes that we observed. Mainly, we wanted to identify a set of standards or "best practices" for teaching developmental

students how to write for a college audience.

In an article entitled "What Is 'College-Level' Writing?" Sullivan (2003) described a considerable divide among teachers of English and a lack of consensus regarding what constitutes "college-level" writing. Sullivan wrote, "I would like to suggest that we change the term 'college-level writer' to 'college-level reader, writer and thinker'" (p. 384). Sullivan proposed two core standards to typify "college-level" writing:

1. A student should write in response to an article, essay or reading selection that contains at least some abstract content and may be chosen based on its appropriateness for a college-level course. The selection should *not* be a narrative and should not simply recount personal experience.

2. The writer's essay in response to this reading should demonstrate the following
   A willingness to evaluate ideas and issues carefully; Some skill at analysis and higher level thinking—some ability to shape and organize material effectively; The ability to integrate some material from the reading skillfully; The ability to follow the standard rules of grammar, punctuation, and spelling. (p. 385)

Sullivan argued that these "college-level" competencies are "vitally important academic skills" that students must possess to attain success in their mainstream college courses. Therefore, we apply Sullivan's college-level writing standards to inform our evaluations of the developmental course content and reading and writing requirements of the two classes that we observed. Using Sullivan's guidelines, we determine whether the skills taught in the developmental writing courses are indeed college-level competencies, and we assess if students transferred these skills to their other mainstream courses in their first year of college.

These questions guided the research: (1) How do first-year developmental writing courses at a research university and a community college compare? (2) How do differences in institutional provisions of course content, instruction, and tutoring resources to remedial students at a research university and a community college impact students' self-reported experiences in the first year of college?

RESEARCH SITES AND PARTICIPANTS

We address the research questions by conducting a qualitative study of remedial writing courses in two separate higher education institutions in

a large northeastern city. Franklin Community College (FCC) is located on a 14-acre complex in central Franklin. FCC also offers classes at three satellite regional centers and over 30 neighborhood sites. Currently, there are approximately 42,000 part-time and full-time students who attend classes taught by almost 1,000 full-time and part-time faculty members. Since 1964, FCC has granted associate's degrees and certificates to students pursuing various goals, including transfer to a 4-year college, employment, and lifelong learning opportunities.

Telford University (TU) is a 4-year public university with an urban mission, also located in Franklin, a few miles north of FCC. Founded in the late 19th century, it boasts a large main campus and six branch campuses. In 2003–2004, over 35,000 students matriculated at TU, 29,000 of them on a full-time equivalent basis. That same year, TU employed over 1,600 full-time faculty members. Offering over 130 undergraduate degrees, a wide range of master's and doctoral degrees, and five professional colleges, TU is one of the largest providers of professional education in the nation. Table 1 presents data describing the enrollments and resource levels for the two institutions.

Table 1. Comparison of Institutional Characteristics

Institutional Characteristic	Franklin Community College	Telford University
Number of full-time enrolled (FTE) undergraduates	18,800	22,215
Racial/ethnic background of student population in fall 2003 (percent of total enrollment)	White: 27.0 African American: 57.0 Asian: 8.8 Latino: 6.6	White: 59.4 African American: 18.3 Asian: 10.3 Latino: 3.3
Average undergraduate class size (number of students)	22.7	24
Ratio of full-time faculty to part-time faculty	1:2	1:1
Library holdings (number of books, serial backfiles, and government documents)	92,698	5,086,211
Average instructional expenditure per FTE student	$3,887.00	$9,983.00
State appropriation levels per FTE for fiscal year 2002	$2,731.00	$6,147.00
Retention rate for first-year full-time students	54.6%	82%

We selected these two institutions because each sustains a longtime commitment to the provision of pre-college-level instruction for a diverse

population of students of limited means. The mission of each institution supports widespread access to higher education as a means of advancing scholarship, gaining knowledge and skills for future employment, and pursuing lifelong learning, although it is important to note that Telford University has been shifting its focus to research and scholarship in recent years. Both institutions provide remedial writing instruction for admitted students who score below college level on the mandatory placement test (at FCC) or placement essay and other criteria (at TU). Moreover, these two institutions have collaborated extensively to develop articulation across courses, particularly for their pre-college-level writing courses. Table 2 provides a comparison of remedial course policies at the two institutions.

Table 2. Comparison of Remedial Writing Course Policies

Course Policy	Franklin Community College	Telford University
Developmental composition placement policy	Mandatory for admitted students who score below college level on the placement test	Mandatory for students who are identified as below college level based on a formula that considers the results of a placement essay, the Descriptive Test of Language Skills reading and writing scores, high school rank, and the SAT verbal score
Levels of pre-college-writing offered	2	1
Requirements for passing developmental writing	Receive a passing grade from course instructor	Successfully pass a portfolio review conducted by a panel of first-year writing program instructors
Number of times developmental levels can be repeated	3	0
Number of credits awarded for developmental writing course	0 (course is pass/fail and is not credit bearing)	3

It is important to emphasize that there were over 30 sections of the English 80 course meeting at TU and well over 60 sections of the English 90 course meeting at FCC during the semester in which we conducted our observations. At both institutions, students enrolled in developmental writing were required to demonstrate a mastery of basic writing skills prior to gaining authorization to proceed to college-level English composition coursework. Despite the number of courses like the ones we observed at the two institutions, we remind the reader that all social situations, including classroom experiences, are dynamic. The events that transpired, the words of the instructors, and the interview responses

offered by students were unique to their specific situations and interacting members and cannot be generalized to describe the way that other sections of English 80 or English 90 are taught by instructors or experienced by students at TU and FCC.

English 80 at Telford University

Telford's small, intensive remedial writing program is designed for students who do not meet the standard admissions requirements of the university but exhibit academic promise. Through a formula that considers the combined results of a university-designed writing placement test, the results of the Descriptive Test of Language Skills, the SAT verbal score, and high school performance, incoming freshmen in need of extra writing support and remedial instruction are identified and required to register for an introductory composition course called English 80. Although TU's English department publicly markets the course as "instruction for at-risk writers," in actuality, the population of students required to matriculate to English 80 are typically at risk in more areas than writing alone. As one TU English professor, Sam Jacobs, confided, "Many [English 80] students come from [Franklin] comprehensive high schools where writing isn't a rigorous process. They already have a severe disadvantage here—economically and culturally. This instruction is crucial to their survival." The guiding belief of early writing instruction, according to Jacobs, is that students who receive it will "face fewer crises of confidence and meet greater academic success overall."

The English 80 course description specifies that the instruction, activities, and readings are focused on a "single theme and disciplinary approach." Throughout the course, English 80 students compile writing portfolios comprising "multiple drafts of the same paper." A strong "emphasis on revision" scaffolds English 80 students over the duration of the semester until they demonstrate a full range of skills with regard to the college writing process.

The section of English 80 that we chose to observe met three times per week for 1 1/2 hour class sessions. The class met in a basement classroom of the Greenfield Learning Center, an attractive multi-million-dollar technology center and social space. The instructor, Dr. Marian Titano, is a White female in her mid-50s. A master's and PhD graduate of TU's English Literature and Women's Studies programs and a full-time instructor at TU for over 10 years, Dr. Titano coauthored the English 80 syllabus and was active in decision making regarding tutoring resources and assessment criteria for English 80 students. Dr. Titano described the population of students whom English 80 targets:

> [English 80] is designed to meet the needs of any student who may be under-prepared for university writing and reading. . . . There are students from urban schools, suburban schools, all kinds of students benefit from this course, it wasn't designed with any demographic in mind. But right now, I mostly see inner-city kids.

English 90 at Franklin Community College

The English composition course that we observed at FCC was English 90, Fundamentals of Writing and Reading Improvement. English 90 is a pre-college English course; similar to the students placed in TU's English 80, the students enrolled in this course scored one level below college level in reading and writing on the required placement exam. If the students in English 90 earn a "pass," they are permitted to advance to English 101, a college credit course.

We chose to observe English 90 because Janine Davis, the English department chairperson at FCC, told us that English 90 was designed to be equivalent to the English 80 course offered at TU. In their recent efforts to establish better articulation and build consistency between the two courses, professors from the director of the First-Year Writing Program at TU and the English department at FCC exchanged course assignments and syllabi. The FCC course catalog provides the following course description of English 90: "Instruction and intensive practice in the development of academic reading and writing skills. Analysis of literary and non-fiction materials. Extensive practice in the writing process leading to the five-paragraph essay. Study of advanced grammar." In addition to writing, English 90 also includes "instruction and practice in developing strategies for college reading in fiction and non-fiction."

The section of English 90 that we observed met two times a week, Tuesday and Thursday afternoons from 2:00 until 4:50. The class convened in a classroom on the fourth floor of Kaufman Hall, a large building located in the center of FCC's campus. The English 90 instructor we observed was Sarah Parker. A White woman in her early 40s, Professor Parker began teaching at FCC in the fall of 2002; this was her third semester as a part-time adjunct faculty member in FCC's English department. During the fall semester of 2002, Professor Parker also taught English composition courses at a nearby private university and at a suburban community college, teaching seven sections across the three institutions. Prior to teaching at FCC, Professor Parker served as the writing center director at a Midwest state university and taught English composition at a community college. Professor Parker informed us that her formal

training was not in English composition; she earned her bachelor's degree in accounting and her master's in postcolonial literature.

A total of 18 students were enrolled in Professor Parker's section of English 90. When asked whether the English 90 course was created to serve the needs of a specific population, Professor Parker confirmed that the course targeted "at-risk students who otherwise might not make it through college." Specifically, Professor Parker described English 90 students as "an urban population, who are coming from lower income who are just kind of pushed through the system. . . . I think most of them are coming right from [Franklin public schools]."

At the beginning of our study, students in both courses voluntarily provided survey data to the researchers about their ethnic and social backgrounds, as well as their academic preparation prior to these courses. An examination of the demographic and educational characteristics of students enrolled in these courses indicates that the groups are strikingly similar in terms of race and ethnicity, family income, neighborhood of geographic origin, familiarity with higher education, and personal educational history, including graduation from a Franklin public school. In terms of English composition skills, all members of each group scored one level below proficient on mandatory entrance placement tests administered by their respective institutions. These characteristics are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3. Characteristics of Students Enrolled in English 80 and English 90

	Prof. Parker's English 90 at FCC	Dr. Titano's English 80 at TU
Total Number of Students	18	17
Number English language learner students enrolled	9	10
Racial composition	African American: 33% Asian/Pacific Islander: 33% Hispanic: 12% White: 22%	African-American: 35% Asian/Pacific Islander: 41% Hispanic: 18% White: 6%
Percent of students who graduated from Franklin public schools	94%	94%
Percent of students qualifying for a Federal Pell Grant	100%	100%
Percent first-generation college students enrolled	100%	100%
Percent of students who plan to complete a 4-year degree	94%	100%

DATA COLLECTION

A qualitative research design was appropriate because the goals of the study were to illuminate differences in developmental writing courses at two different institutions and to understand how each course influenced students' self-reported experiences in the first year of college. Three primary methods of data collection were used: ethnographic observations of students and instructors during course meetings; taped interviews with instructors, students, and a college writing program director; and a compiled catalog of course documents, including formal course descriptions, course syllabi, class notes, homework assignments, in-class assignments, and samples of student writing provided by instructors. Both course instructors also provided data regarding student performance informally in candid conversations with students and the researchers, and formally through midsemester grades and end-of-term grades.

   During the fall 2003 semester, we conducted classroom observation sessions for 12 weeks, averaging two visits to each course per week, for a total of 120 hours of observations (approximately 60 hours at each institution). To address the first research question and compare the two classes, we focused our classroom observations on the content of instruction, the role of the instructor (in the particular course and in the context of the institution), and the relationship between the students and their remedial writing instructors. To address the second research question and to assess if and how these developmental courses affect students' college experiences, we observed students' participation in their courses throughout the semester. We listened for students' perceptions about the usefulness of the course and their self-assessments of their own performance in the course and in college in general. Their candid reflections and self-assessments were offered in formal conversations with us and informally during discussions with their peers and instructor.

   For each visit, we arrived at the class location approximately 20 minutes early and were the last to exit. During the class period, our role was strictly that of an observer. Arriving early and leaving late enabled us to build rapport with several students as well as engage each instructor in casual dialogue about the course material, her perceived role in the course and the institution, and the academic progress of specific students. We were also able to witness the pre-class and after-class interactions between the instructors and their students. We found that these moments, more than any other classroom time, offered extraordinary insight and assisted us in understanding how each instructor defined and acted out her role within her respective institution.

   We triangulated these ethnographic observations with eleven

90-minute semistructured interviews with students, professors from both institutions, and the director of the writing program at the research university. In total, we conducted eight student interviews, two instructor interviews, and one 3-hour semistructured interview with the director of the remedial writing program at the research university.

Through student interviews, we sought to uncover students' perceptions of the effectiveness of their developmental writing class in preparing them for college-level writing and to discover how their learning in the class had influenced their experiences as first-year college students in general. To establish that the sample groups at the two institutions are of the same population and have essential commonalities, a set of demographics questions was a central component of the student interview. These questions explored students' demographic data, specifically Franklin neighborhood of origin, attendance term and graduation from a Franklin public school, ethnicity, family income level, whether any immediate family member had attended college, and the student's self-defined history of academic achievement, including high school grade point average and awards or honors.

Interviews with course instructors focused on learning about their educational backgrounds, how they came to teach at their respective institutions, and their experiences with teaching the developmental course. We probed the instructors about their goals for the course, how they assess student competencies, and additional resources they need to teach the course more effectively. At the end of the semester, the instructors provided us with students' midsemester and final grades, and various course materials, including formal course descriptions, syllabi, course texts, and student writing samples.

An interview with the director of First-Year Writing at Telford University offered an institutional perspective that clarified much of the information gained through the instructor interviews about TU and FCC, as well as the extent of the formal articulation between their developmental courses. The director of First-Year Composition described the philosophy behind the developmental course, the design of the English 80 curricula, and the facets of formal support available to developmental students (writer's assistants, the TU Writing Center, the Randolph Dowell program tutors, and the English 80 course instructors). Programwide demographic statistics for the population of students who take developmental coursework at TU, including the names and locations of the high schools they attended, were also provided to us.

In our search for an institutional counterpart at FCC who could discuss remedial writing coursework and related matters at that institution, we discovered that no such counterpart existed. At FCC, remedial English

instruction is treated as a course offering of the institution, not as a formal writing program.

To improve the likelihood that findings and interpretations that emerge from the triangulation of ethnographic observations, formal interviews, and the catalog of course artifacts and demographic data are credible, we employed two strategies recommended by Lincoln and Guba (1985): peer debriefing and member checking. Lincoln and Guba defined peer debriefing as "a process of exposing oneself to a disinterested peer in a manner paralleling an analytic session and for the purpose of exploring aspects of the inquiry that might otherwise remain only implicit within the inquirer's mind" (p. 308). The peer debriefer for this study is Dr. Kate Shaw, an associate professor in the College of Education at Temple University. We met weekly with Dr. Shaw throughout the course of the study to discuss methodology, the data, and emergent themes across the two sites.

Member checking is a process through which respondents verify data and the interpretations thereof (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Several times during the semester, we shared our field notes with the instructors. We also used preclass and postclass time to check our interpretations of the previous class with the students and instructor and to verify information in our notes. As a fail-safe measure, we developed interview questions for the exit interviews that specifically referenced field notes and codes to check whether the students and instructors shared our interpretation of specific events. In this way, the reactions and verifications of the students and instructors were recorded in the taped interviews and became part of the data.

METHOD OF FIELD NOTE AND INTERVIEW ANALYSIS

We analyzed data at multiple times to focus the research (Glaser, 1978; Maxwell, 1996). Using Atlas.ti qualitative analysis software, we reviewed each set of field notes several times to ensure that documents were coded and categorized to facilitate the development of theoretical concepts (Maxwell). Initially, we approached the coding of our field notes with two preliminary codes, course content and instruction. Previous studies have identified course content and instruction as central to remedial writing success (Cox, 2004; Grubb & Cox, 2005; Richardson et al., 1983; Sullivan, 2003; Sullivan & Tinberg, 2006). To supplement these codes, we used an "open coding" scheme to "open inquiry widely" and include additional themes that emerged from our data (Berg, 2001, p. 236). In an early analysis of field notes with our peer debriefer, we identified access to

tutoring as a prominent resource that instructors and students at both sites related to successful college writing. Therefore, the three major components of first-year writing that we compare across institutions in this study—course content, instruction, and tutoring—emerged from both the literature on college writing and our own ethnographic observations.

Using these three general themes, we recoded the data and discovered additional subcodes for each theme. In particular, within the data coded for course content, we applied subcodes for course objectives, course materials, and writing assignments, and also noted whether these components satisfied Sullivan's (2003) standards. Two themes emerged during our coding for the influence of instruction on student experiences: the instructor's past experience with teaching the course, and how the instructor defined her role in the class. Third, in our analysis of the role of tutoring, we coded for the types of tutoring available, and instructors and students' perceptions of the usefulness of tutoring resources. Finally, to address the second research question regarding how the skills that students are taught in their remedial writing coursework transfer to their other college classes, we included codes for students' perceptions of the utility of their writing classes and students' perceptions of their facility with college writing.

FINDINGS: COMPARING THE FIELD POSITIONS OF REMEDIAL STUDENTS AT FCC AND TU

According to Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992), an individual's position in a given field is objectively defined by the individual's "present and potential situation in the structure of the distribution of species of power (or capital)" (p. 97). Thus, we were able to define the field positions of the remedial students at FCC in relation to remedial students at TU by examining their relative access to valued capital in the field of higher education. In particular, we compared the FCC students and TU students regarding their relationship to three types of valued resources, or capital, that were defined as critical for becoming proficient in college writing: knowledge of college writing, writing instruction, and one-on-one tutoring. Past research has identified course content and instruction as having an impact on remedial writing success (Cox, 2004; Grubb & Cox, 2005; Richardson et al., 1983; Sullivan, 2003). We added the third form of capital, one-on-one tutoring, to our analyses because it was identified by both the professors and students in our study as the single most critical resource for attaining success in college writing.

INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT AND STUDENTS' ACCESS TO COURSE CONTENT

Course objectives

According to the director of composition at TU, the main objective of English 80 is to fill the gap that a weak high school background has created for "at-risk" first-year writers by boosting their confidence in their ability to participate in academic conversation. In Dr. Titano's English 80, students were pushed to find their own analytic voice and craft their own original essay arguments. Their writing efforts culminated in a 7–10-page essay assignment that required students to research a social issue that they believed to be "misunderstood," craft an analytic thesis by citing at least five outside sources, and create a works-cited document using MLA formatting. Dr. Titano clearly explained that the rationale behind English 80 is not to make up for a language mechanics deficit, but to focus on critical reaction and idea development:

> The original idea behind English 80 was not to teach them grammar. It was to make them able to—not flunk out of school. . . . No professor in sociology is going to fail them if they have the wrong ending on the verb, but they could fail if they are not able to read the book and understand what it says. . . . If we taught them how to write about their summer vacation or a personal essay and were worried about commas, they would not be prepared to do the work of the university. It was more important that they have to write an argument and supply evidence and discuss things in class than it was to not make grammatical mistakes. Although I do mark their grammar and we talk about it, it's not the main focus of the course because correct grammar, while it is nice, is not going to affect them as much as not being able to read or write.

Dr. Titano closely adhered to TU's writing program philosophy, which asserts, generally, that ultimate success in college is not hinged on a student's proper usage of grammar but on her or his ability to critique academic texts and to construct high-quality arguments in written form. Our field notes reveal that in only 2 of the 36 class meetings we observed did Dr. Titano engage in any in-class discussion that related strictly to grammar or its misuse, and these discussions were prompted by direct student inquiries. Repeatedly, Dr. Titano communicated to her students that college writing was about ideas and supporting arguments and that

grammar was not a "college-level revision." The following excerpt from field notes reveals how Dr. Titano took every opportunity to highlight the differences between college skills and high school skills. This interchange between Dr. Titano and Latoya, an African American female who, like all English 80 students, was struggling to improve her writing, occurred during a class discussion about which writing samples students should include in their portfolios:

> LATOYA: So if you had a lot of grammar mistakes in one draft, and then you fixed them, that would show that you improved?

> DR. TITANO: Fixing grammar is not a college-level revision, Latoya. Instead, what they'll be looking for is that you know how to significantly revise your writing, or what you say, in a paper. Fixing your ESL errors does not count as a significant revision either. I would like you to learn the skills of revising your own writing. That would make me really happy.

In contrast, as much as Dr. Titano of TU downplayed the importance of grammar mastery in becoming a successful college writer, we found that English 90 at FCC emphasized grammar as the core of remedial writing instruction. In fact, every course meeting of English 90 that we observed over 12 weeks included a formal discussion or lesson on proper grammar usage in writing. When asked what percentage of the English 90 course focused on grammar, Professor Parker confirmed that nearly half of her course focused on grammar:

> It's so much a part of everything. Every paper that I mark, you know, points out grammar mistakes, I have little conferences with them to work on grammar, we do group conferences, but also, when I hand back their papers . . . I've met with them one on one to talk about the [grammar] problems they are still having. I feel like I have to put caulk and patch up what they need. But maybe it's 40%, 40% ends up being discussion about grammar and it might even be higher.

In addition to "patching up" her students' inadequate background in English grammar, Professor Parker described the other course goals as teaching students to identify the main idea in something they are reading and to compose a five-paragraph essay that supports a thesis. Professor Parker viewed the purpose of the remedial writing course as patching up for students' deficiencies rather than orienting them to

college-level expectations. Professor Parker did not require students to do much critical analysis because she felt that would be something that they would work on once passing into the college level. Professor Parker described her benchmarks for passing 90 as follows:

> Just the fundamental reading and writing skills—because 101 really works with the critical analysis. So just being able to read something and understand it, to read an editorial and understand it, to be able to pick out the main ideas, they need to be able to summarize it and tell me what it's about, to be able to write where they can pass, they need to be able to write an essay, develop a thesis, and it be at least C level.

Course materials

The instructional materials used in these courses fit with each institution's version of a precollege reading/writing curriculum. The text selected for English 80, *Great Divides,* was a compilation text of introductory readings in sociological studies. In the course of our observations, we observed English 80 students reading Marx's *Communist Manifesto,* MacLeod's *Ain't No Makin' It,* Mills's *The Power Elite,* and excerpts from Rose's *Lives on the Boundary.* Additionally, students were asked to read Kozol's *Savage Inequalities* (in its entirety) when it became evident that so many of them identified with issues of inequities in education. Because of Dr. Titano's selection of the Perspectives on Social Inequality syllabus, all English 80 students read and wrote essays that thematically reflected an academic analysis of race, class, and gender in the United States. Had Dr. Titano chosen to adopt the Race Studies or Introduction to Critical Literacy syllabi, also previously crafted and approved for English 80 instruction by TU's First-Year Writing Program, the students' reading and writing topics would have varied according to those themes. Noticeably, TU students were assigned texts that were challenging and academic in nature. *Great Divides*, supported by Dr. Titano's essay assignments, not only encouraged students to actively build cognitive connections between complex macro ideas but also required students to ideologically situate themselves—through writing—in the academic conversation.

At FCC, the course materials for English 90 are selected by each professor and thus vary from section to section. For Professor Parker's section, she chose two main texts: *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe, and a writing textbook by Academic Systems. Professor Parker adopted the writing

textbook with hopes that it would bring students up to the college-level benchmarks of reading and writing fundamentals. *Things Fall Apart* was the main text used to teach reading fundamentals. The novel is recommended for Grades 9–12 and is thereby consistent with the objectives of English 90: to reeducate students in high school reading and writing techniques. Professor Parker used *Things Fall Apart* to teach reading comprehension and often assigned reading comprehension questions for homework along with the chapter reading. Parker also used the book to teach vocabulary. For each chapter of the book, Professor Parker guided the class in composing a list of words that they needed to define. In addition, she gave periodic vocabulary quizzes to test if the students had mastered the vocabulary. Professor Parker also supplemented her reading instruction with short editorials from local newspapers. Students were asked to read these editorials and identify the author's main argument and supporting details.

Writing assignments

The writing assignments that stemmed from TU's English 80 readings required students to be able to critique an author's evidence and to present salient evidence in support of their own viewpoint. English 80 students were required, foremost, to forge a personal connection with the text. Background research was often necessary for most students to understand how their own personal knowledge or history related to their reading. Second, students were required to take a personal stance on an issue, in written form. Next, students were required to look within *Great Divides* and also encouraged to look outside it for textual academic supports for their personal written stance. This English 80 writing process communicated to students that although they were beginning writers, they still had unique perspectives and knowledge to offer to the academic community. Once these new writers began the process of joining the "academic conversation" (as Dr. Titano referred to it), many were visibly surprised to identify strands of academic dialogue that supported their own life experiences and views of the world, a discovery that made them feel increasingly at home in their new learning environment.

For example, during an in-class peer-editing session in the beginning of November, Ivan, a Russian student and the only international student in the class, had a breakthrough regarding how he could improve his essay. In the following excerpt from field notes, Ivan explains to the class how he has shaped his work:

IVAN: Mine is going to be better—I didn't trade, but I made mine better because I put better quotes in my paragraphs, so my essay is about the Rose article and not just about me personally.

DR. T: What Ivan is saying is very important. In high school, you could just talk about yourself in your writing and get As. Part of college is seeing how you can connect one piece of text to another piece of text or an idea. That is one huge difference in what we want you to do—to stop talking just about your ideas and to start discussing the ideas of others.

This exchange between Ivan and Dr. Titano illustrates the standards of "college-level" writing outlined by Sullivan (2003): Students who write at the college level demonstrate the ability to replace personal opinions with supporting materials from the text to advance their written arguments. During our 12 weeks observing Dr. Titano's English 80, we often heard students detail their growing understanding of what it means to be a college writer, as Ivan did in the example.

Unlike English 80 at Telford, in-class writing instruction in English 90 closely guided the students through highly structured assignments with a strong focus on grammar. The Academic Systems writing textbook contained short readings and follow-up questions, as well as writing prompts and grammar exercises. During the second hour of class, students were either assigned to work on grammar skills in the Academic Systems workbook, or they worked in small groups with Professor Parker. When Professor Parker worked with a small group, she instructed them to copy "problem" sentences from graded writing assignments onto the marker board, and then the group worked together to make the sentence grammatically correct:

Cherice wrote the following sentence on the board: "Which implies that Mr. Hussein has no weapons, or he has weapons but is not admitting to having them or the weapons that he have he plan on using them."

PROF. PARKER: Who knows what the problem is with this sentence?

PHIL: Run-on?

MANUEL: Commas?

PHIL: I think it's more like a run-on.

PROF. PARKER: OK, but what are "but" and "or"?

PHIL: Coordinating conjunctions.

PHIL: Also a problem is the word "which," you can't start a sentence with "which."
(Prof. Parker nodded and crossed out the "which")

PROF. PARKER: How can we make this a little smoother? Whatcha think Manuel?
(Manuel shrugged.)

In addition to their grammar work in class, students were assigned pages in the Academic Systems workbook to complete for homework, and then they reviewed the exercises aloud in the following class. Students were also required to complete one writing assignment a week. Professor Parker increased the difficulty of her writing assignments throughout the semester. Up until midterm, students were often asked to write one-to-three-paragraph summaries of the readings. However, after midterm, more writing was required as Professor Parker focused writing instruction on composing a thesis statement and crafting a five-paragraph thematic essay. All of Professor Parker's essay topics required students to draw from life experiences for their arguments. For example, students wrote categorical essays about stereotyping and the different ways that they speak, and cause and effect essays about racial profiling and school violence. None of Professor Parker's writing assignments required the students to apply class readings, consult outside research, or incorporate external textual supports.

In sum, the instructors valued different writing competencies. Dr. Titano viewed knowledge of how to make strong and well-supported arguments as the form of capital that would be most valuable to struggling writers in the university. Professor Parker, however, believed that learning to write a paper without grammatical errors would be the most valuable resource to her students in their struggle to gain power in the field of higher education.

COURSE CONTENT AS CAPITAL: THE EXCHANGE VALUE OF
COURSEWORK

There are distinct differences in how students viewed the value of the curricula provided them in Telford's English 80 versus FCC's English 90. On several occasions in class and in the interview setting, TU students commented that their competency in writing had improved because of English 80 and that their new writing skills were useful in their other classes. In the interview setting, TU students readily admitted that the skills they were learning in English 80 were easily transferable to their writing assignments in other courses and that English 80 had helped them (at times immensely) with their transition to college academic work in general. In contrast, FCC students did not view English 90 as helping them to acclimate to college-level work. For example, during an interview, JaQuan, a student in Dr. Titano's class, described how his approach to reading had changed from being in English 80:

> It's very different. When I read now, I think about every sentence and I try to put it in my own words. I try to imagine everything that's going on. In high school, I would just skim through it, put no thinking into it. But now I'm there with every word. There. And it's hard.

When asked if English 80 had helped him with his other college classes JaQuan replied,

> Yes! I like writing now. When I have something to say about something, I've learned that I can write it and it comes out clearer and more serious. [In high school], we wrote a lot of essays, but that critical literacy thing, that wasn't taught to us. We just summarized stuff. There was no analyze, synthesize, or thinking about articles. You just write papers like a summary. This is a whole new thing because it's all about analysis.

TU's English 80 students described their remedial writing curriculum as a "whole new thing" and viewed their course content as a form of academic capital, not acquired in high school, that had exchange value in their other courses in which they had applied their English 80 analytical techniques. In other words, English 80 students perceived that the methods of analyzing a text that Dr. Titano had taught to them were not only useful in English but were useful in their other college classes too.

Unlike the English 80 students, English 90 students at FCC did not

describe their coursework as having provided them with additional capital. Whereas the TU students often emphasized the differences between English 80 and their high school English courses, FCC students found their remedial coursework to be very similar to their high school English courses. For example, when asked how the writing assignments required in English 90 compared with the writing assignments in her high school English class, Isha, an African American female student in Professor Parker's section, said, "[It's] the same, the same amount [of work]. We did cause and effect in my high school, and my senior year . . . we did like a five-page essay to graduate, our senior learning project, I did that on the Harlem Renaissance."

In her response, Isha referenced similarities both in the type of writing that was taught in English 90 and in the length of the essays. In late October, Professor Parker taught the class how to write a cause-and-effect essay, but Isha did not find this particularly challenging because she had written the same type of essay in high school. Isha received a B in high school English and reported that she also had a B average in English 90.

Aaron, a Middle Eastern student whose first language is Hebrew, was also a B student in his high school English class. Like Isha, Aaron reported similarities between English 90 and his high school class. According to Aaron, Professor Parker had high expectations, but they did not exceed those of his high school teachers. Aaron described Professor Parker's expectations, saying, "I wouldn't say she is more difficult, I would say that she does expect a lot out of you. . . . She wants you to excel really good in this class, just like the high school teachers." Aaron's grades in Professor Parker's class reflected a B average, much like his performance in high school English.

Not only did Professor Parker's students find the course material to be the same as in high school English, but these students also expressed ambivalence toward English 90's role in helping them acclimate to other college courses. Students commented that they thought it would help them with English 101 because they needed to pass English 90 to be able to take English 101. However, none of the students found the reading and writing instruction particularly helpful for work in other courses, not even students who were taking courses that required significant amounts of reading and writing. For example, Isha was enrolled in education courses that required substantial amounts of reading and writing, but when asked whether there was anything that she learned in English 90 that had helped in her other courses, Isha responded, "Not really. They really don't relate." Therefore, unlike the TU students who viewed their remedial training in crafting arguments as valued currency that could be exchanged for success in their other college courses, FCC students did

not find the review of grammar provided in English 90 to have exchange value in the field of higher education.

INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT AND STUDENTS' ACCESS TO TUTORING

The second form of capital at stake in the field of remedial college writing was tutoring. Our observations and interviews indicated that outside-of-class tutoring was a core component of remedial writing instruction courses at TU and FCC. Although both institutions provided out-of-class support for remedial students, there was great disparity in both the quantity and quality of the tutoring resources at TU and FCC.

TU's remedial math and English students were provided access to multiple layers of outside tutoring to foster their success through precollege coursework and their persistence to a degree. In terms of writing support, the first outside resource made available to all English 80 students was their course's writer's assistant. As a supplement to the expert instructor responsible for teaching, evaluating, and assisting English 80 students with their work, TU provided each English 80 class with an undergraduate junior or senior called a writer's assistant. The role of the writer's assistant was to serve as a writing tutor and out-of-class contact for the students. Writer's assistants undergo intensive training that requires them to become extremely familiar with all English 80 course material. Once assigned to assist an instructor, writer's assistants support students on an outside-of-class, as-needed basis, assisting with brainstorming, draft writing, and editing of essays; explaining difficult readings; and acting as a grammar tutor when necessary. We were told that it is not uncommon for a professor to have the same writer's assistant for 2 years or longer. Most students in Dr. Titano's section of English 80 scheduled appointments with their writer's assistant, Charlene, on a weekly basis for assistance with their papers.

In addition to their course's writer's assistant, English 80 students were also able to access tutoring through the Randolph Dowell Program. When students who need remediation in writing and mathematics are admitted to TU, they are admitted provisionally under the Randolph Dowell Program. During their first two semesters at TU, students in the Randolph Dowell Program must demonstrate that they are able to perform college-level work by maintaining a specified grade point average. If a student fails to meet the requirements for full admission after two semesters, Randolph Dowell counselors recommend that the student enroll at FCC to build the required academic skills necessary to reapply to TU. Because the stakes for these students are so high, once enrolled at TU, the writing program director explained, "acculturation, access [to

resources] and retention" of its students are primary goals of the Randolph Dowell Program.. To achieve these aims, the program has established a strong physical presence on campus—the Randolph Dowell Center (RDC)—where its students may access resources, receive advising, socialize with one another, and study. English 80 students admitted that they frequently used the Randolph Dowell tutors (tutors dedicated solely to assisting remedial students) to proofread their papers and to work through grammatical problems.

The third layer of writing support made accessible to English 80 students is the University Writing Center. The TU Writing Center was designed to provide help to all students at the university, not specifically "at-risk" writers. According to the Writing Center's Web site, the center offers "one-on-one tutoring sessions by appointment or on a drop-in basis," aiming to "help students at any stage of writing," including paper planning, drafting, and proofreading. Dr. Titano disclosed that her English 80 students rarely used the Writing Center's resources, primarily because she "directed them to see Charlene, the writer's assistant, first for specific paper help, and then to visit the Randolph Dowell Center for general proofreading support."

Of the English 80 students we interviewed, none sought the assistance of the University Writing Center. Many students boasted about the high degree of mastery that their writer's assistant, Charlene, possessed with regard to their course readings and Dr. Titano's expectations, citing this as their main reason for favoring Charlene's help. Dr. Titano understood that students needed to be able to plan their papers with a tutor who was able to converse with them on a "deep level" about the themes of specific readings that would become supporting evidence in their essays. JaQuan explained that only RDC tutors and writer's assistants were "with the [English 80] program," meaning that these tutors understood the requirements for English 80 and the particular needs of English 80 students more than the University Writing Center tutors who were accessible to all TU students.

Unlike the array of tutoring resources provided to the TU English 80 students, FCC's English 90 students had a single resource, the Writing Lab. All remedial writing students at FCC were required to spend 2 hours a week in the Writing Lab. Each section of English 90 was assigned a specific 2-hour block in the lab, and Professor Parker's section was scheduled to attend the Writing Lab every Tuesday from 12:00 until 2:00 p.m. Thus, each Tuesday, Professor Parker's English 90 students reported to a classroom where they met with the two Writing Lab instructors to work on their writing. The Writing Lab was designed to function as an extension of the English 90 course, and according to FCC's formal course

description for English 90, the purpose of Writing Lab instructors was to "reinforce and strengthen the classroom instruction and provide individual tutoring." Professor Parker told us that she phoned one of the two Writing Lab instructors weekly to discuss the areas in which her students needed the most support. As a result, Professor Parker's students spent most of their time in the Writing Lab reviewing grammar, often working on grammar worksheets.

Although the Writing Lab was a writing resource offered only to remedial students at FCC, neither Professor Parker nor her students found it to be an effective source of individualized tutoring. Professor Parker and the English 90 students explained that the 2-hour time period allotted for this service was not an adequate amount of time for the two instructors to meet with each of the 18 students in Professor Parker's section. In addition, because attendance at the Writing Lab was required, all 18 students were present for the entire 2 hours, prompting the instructors to design activities for the whole class rather than work with students individually. Professor Parker's English 90 students explained that most of their time in Writing Lab was spent reviewing grammar lessons as a whole class.

TUTORING AS CAPITAL: THE EXCHANGE VALUE OF TUTORING AT TU AND FCC

Both Professor Parker and Dr. Titano were certain of their students' need to have out-of-class writing assistance to support their classroom learning. In fact, when asked which resource she thought was most important to the writing progress of English 80 students, Dr. Titano answered,

> I think that every English 80 student needs to get one-on-one tutoring with this course. As long as they get tutoring, they can do it. As long as they go, we get great retention. They can't seem to do this on their own. They have to learn that you cannot do this on your own, without a tutor. Because you really need to sit down with each person and help them to write the paper—for a certain amount of time. Help them outline it, you know, just help them set it up. . . . The English department did a study [last year] and found that the English 80 students who use the writer's assistants the most often attain the highest grades in the course.

Although both professors were quick to acknowledge external tutoring as an essential form of capital for remedial writing students, the relative field position of the remedial writing students we observed, defined by

their enrollment at either FCC or TU, greatly determined students' access to outside tutoring capital. Whereas TU students were provided access to multiple forms of tutoring, FCC students had limited access to this resource. Moreover, TU students described their tutoring resources as having high value, in which tutoring could be exchanged for better grades on writing assignments, but FCC students found available tutoring to be more costly than valuable.

Interviews conducted with English 80 students support Dr. Titano's belief that individual tutoring was a highly valued resource in her students' struggles to meet the requisites of college-level writing. For example, Shawn, a non–native speaker of English and a struggling English 80 student who began the semester doing C- and D-quality work but ended the semester with his first A- on a college essay, reported that he saw "about four [separate] tutors a week." Shawn explained that he used tutors at the Randolph Dowell Center for help with general skills, and his English 80 writer's assistant, Charlene, for more tailored guidance. Shawn said he was happy at TU because "you have good tutors when you need them." Particularly regarding writing assignments in classes outside of English 80, Shawn asserted, "I know I couldn't make it without a [writing] tutor. . . . The other professors, they don't care. They don't tell you what you need or nothing. . . . . They assume that we know how they want us to write the paper, but we don't."

Shawn realized that writing is a key college skill, and he reported that his frequent visits to the RDC and to Charlene had paid off. Foremost, Shawn said that being required to seek tutoring help had forced him to budget his time for writing, a commitment he learned that he had to make because most tutoring at TU is provided on a walk-in basis. Not having a steady appointment for writing assistance or a professor "on his back" meant that the obligation to seek help was entirely up to him, quite unlike the scheduled Writing Lab visits for English 90 students at FCC.

Citing specific advice that he had received from tutors that had proved to be of extreme value, Shawn reported that he learned to outline—something that he "never did before." Shawn said,

> one of my tutors taught me how to do it, so when I get off topic, I can go back to the outline and see what is supposed to come next. Now that I know how, I told Dr. T that's what I do. She said a lot of people [write] that way, but I didn't know about it.

With course reading, Shawn said that he would talk about the ideas of the readings with tutors to confirm his understanding of the material. As a result, he noticed that he had become "more verbal in class" because of

his enhanced understanding and confidence.

Unlike the positive experiences with external writing resources reported by Dr. Titano's students, English 90 students viewed FCC's Writing Lab as largely ineffective. For example, when asked about the purpose of the Writing Lab, Aaron, a student in Professor Parker's section, sighed and said,

> Some stuff that we do in the Writing Lab, I still have no idea, we go over stuff like fragments, sentences and all that. But this is stuff that we learned when we were in middle school, and plus I didn't understand it then and it's hard for me to understand it now.

In addition, when we asked Isha, an African American female who was majoring in early childhood education, to describe the Writing Lab component of the course, she also questioned its usefulness.

> I don't know, I think we don't need it for real. We just need Professor Parker, because all they do is do what she does and she does it much better. Because we spend more time with her than we do with them, and all they do is copy pages out of the book and we sit there and read it and whatever example they give us we go with it. . . . It's really just a waste of time. I'd rather be in English for that long.

Reit, a male student from Cambodia, explained how students become confused because the instructors in the Writing Lab often give conflicting advice:

> A lot of people have some problems with [the Writing Lab]. The problem is that we have two teachers in there and sometimes they have different opinions to teach the students so of course there are going to be some conflict the way they teach. So I didn't really learn, honestly I learn, but not as much. I learn a couple of things here and there, here and there.

Overwhelmingly, the students in Professor Parker's section of English 90 expressed the view that time in the Writing Lab was better spent revising their own writing assignments rather than working on skills lessons. For example, Aaron described how he had benefited from using the Writing Lab for one-on-one help with revising his writing assignments:

> What I do like about that [Writing Lab] class is that it makes me learn even more when we go over our papers, like before we give the professor our paper we have them grade it for us, so they make the corrections, and they go over it with us, . . . that is something I can get used to. But as far as just giving out hand-outs and doing all these exercises, to me I just don't see anything interesting about that.

However, when I asked Isha if she had benefited from individualized assistance during the Writing Lab, she disagreed:

> It's hard because the room is so small, you can't hear because people are talking. Like Tuesday I was talking to one of [the instructors] about my paper, and one of them was talking with Aaron, and Aaron talks kind of loud so it was kind of hard to hear what I was saying.

In addition to the frustrations caused by limited one-on-one interaction with the tutors, English 90 students also complained about the quality of the advice they received from the Writing Lab tutors, claiming that the tutors' revisions often conflicted with Professor Parker's expectations. For example, Isha explained how a writing tutor had edited her essay and actually made it worse according, to Professor Parker.

> [Tutors] have different opinions, like [Professor Parker] said one part was good and the [Writing Lab tutor] thought it should be different, and I'm like stuck and I went with the [tutor's] advice because I wasn't able to get to [Professor Parker] at the time and then when [Professor Parker] read it, it was just all thrown off.

Consequently, exposure to the Writing Lab and their instructor's subsequent (though inadvertent) punishment of the writing they produced there conditioned English 90 students not to approach the Writing Lab instructors for assistance. Cautious and mistrustful, FCC students relied on Professor Parker exclusively. Consequently, when Professor Parker was unavailable, English 90 students reported that they did not seek out other sources of writing support.

The experiences communicated by Dr. Titano and Professor Parker and their students about the value of tutoring capital provided by TU and FCC are telling. Whereas students in English 80 at TU had almost carte blanche to access tutoring resources through multiple TU programs,

tutoring resources at FCC were scarce. The ultimate pass rate of English 80 students versus the pass rate of English 90 students supports the instructors' common view that tutoring capital makes all the difference. In the section of English 80 that we observed, every student passed the course and proceeded to the college-level writing course, whereas in English 90, 4 students, or 22%, failed.

INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT AND STUDENTS' ACCESS TO INSTRUCTION

In addition to course content and tutoring, each course instructor was a highly valued resource for students. Both remedial courses capped course enrollment to a low instructor-to-student ratio: 20:1 at FCC and 18:1 at TU. The Writing Program director discussed how small remedial classes were meant to foster increased professor-student relationships and allow for a more intimate classroom environment. However, TU and FCC diverged regarding to the type of faculty member they assigned to teach remedial students—students who arguably enter the field of higher education in a disadvantaged position, possessing low levels of precollege academic capital. The instructors of English 80 and English 90 differed in terms of faculty status, years of teaching experience, and level of familiarity with the resources of their respective institutions.

Research has shown that students' interactions with faculty outside class have a positive influence on student persistence and degree completions (Kuh & Hu, 2001; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005), yet community colleges heavily rely on part-time faculty, who lack office space and have limited ties to the institution, to staff their courses. In this case, Professor Parker was simultaneously teaching composition at two other institutions and was on campus only during class meeting times.

To extend, we found that the institutional context influenced how each professor defined her role as writing instructor for at-risk, academically underprepared students. Analysis of our classroom observation data revealed that Dr. Titano's and Professor Parker's instructional approaches were very different. In terms of student access to academic resources (academic capital) needed to be successful college writers, Dr. Titano acted as an intermediary to this capital, whereas Professor Parker was an embodied form of capital for FCC students.

Dr. Titano was a typical English 80 instructor in that she had earned a PhD in literature, had earlier work experience teaching English in a North Franklin high-needs high school, and had received formal training to teach TU's version of introductory college writing. Dr. Titano was a respected full-time instructor at TU and was very familiar with the

university and English 80, having taught this particular course for nearly 10 years. Dr. Titano told us that the TU English department strategically assigns the most experienced instructors to teach the "weaker student sections" of English 80 because the program's philosophy puts the needs of at-risk students above the desire for comfort and ease of its instructors.

Professor Parker's background was typical of the English 90 instructors at FCC in that she earned a master's degree in literature and had prior teaching experience but no formal training in composition pedagogy. Like the overwhelming share of instructors at FCC, Professor Parker is a part-time adjunct faculty member. She has been teaching at FCC for three semesters, and she admitted that her familiarity with the department and with FCC's institutional resources is very limited. Professor Parker explained that most faculty members in FCC's English department do not want to teach the students who matriculate as part of the Franklin Achievement Partnership because they aspire to teach more challenging material than reading and basic writing skills.

Instructor role at TU: The instructor as transmitter of capital model

As the class discussion leader, Dr. Titano typically started class by initiating conversation among students about the previous night's reading in the course text, *Great Divides*. However, impromptu discussions were also commonplace, especially after peer-editing sessions, when students elicited advice from their classmates and Dr. Titano about ways that they should approach the difficulties they faced with regard to reading, writing, or life at TU in general. In the class, discussions were not always so open and free-flowing. Initially, many students were quiet and rebuffed Dr. Titano's prompts. When asked direct questions about the reading or their writing, students were evasive and said as little as possible in response. Several students, clearly unaccustomed to being asked to contribute their opinions on the reading, were dumbfounded by their professor's requirement that each student must make at least one verbal contribution to the class discussion every day. Dr. Titano believed that contributing personal ideas during discussion time was an integral part of the English 80 learning process: "They have to be willing to talk in class. If they are to succeed, participating must become a normal, natural occurrence in their lives." Dr. Titano interpreted this early silence not as lack of interest, but as a lack of "self-confidence" and, in several specific cases, "an internal struggle" to embrace the new identity of serious college student.

Over the course of the semester, the underlying instructional practice behind Dr. Titano's consistent efforts to engage every member of the

group in class discussion became noticeable. Dr. Titano spent her early weeks as discussion moderator emphasizing the importance of reading analytically. By asking leading questions, she skillfully led the students to internalize the process of analytical reading. The following discussion excerpted from field notes is a typical example of how Dr. Titano conducted class discussions on reading material. In this particular class, Dr. Titano was encouraging the English 80 students to analyze a reading from Edin and Lein's *Making Ends Meet* through the theoretical lens of Karl Marx. Dr. Titano began by asking probing questions but relied on the English 80 students to supply the answers:

> DR. TITANO: Why would Marx say that she's in the mess that she's in?
>
> SHILPA: No education.
>
> STEFFON: She has a job where she doesn't have a lot of skills.
>
> SHILPA: Marx would say that she is easy to replace.
>
> JULISA: Maybe she was in this job because her skills are outdated?
>
> SHEYVONNE: Maybe she used to do a job and the machinery took over what she did, like at a factory.
>
> KIMECHA: Alexandria needs to get her wages to go up, so Marx would say to get more skills.
>
> DR. TITANO: How would Marx make that happen?
>
> KIMECHA: He would say to join a union and demand your rights.
>
> DR. TITANO: Workers in a union get together to keep wages up. I'm in a union here at [Telford] even.
>
> KIMECHA: But how realistic is that? I got my bills, you got your bills, we've both got to get paid. If more than one person is there to take my job, then I can't join a union.
>
> DR. TITANO: So how does anything ever happen?

EMANUEL: That system is changed by workers themselves. They have to stick together.

Although Dr. Titano initiated the discussion, English 80 students became active participants in a class dialogue aimed at identifying major themes and making comparisons across the course readings.

The foundation of English 80 was the teaching of writing through the in-class dissection and subsequent discussion of the course text, *Great Divides.* Considering this focus to be the students' first step toward crafting unique arguments of their own, Dr. Titano actively reminded students, "If you don't understand it, you can't write about it." In the first weeks of class, Dr. Titano led the discussions of the homework reading without asking comprehension questions. At no time did Dr. Titano formally check if students had completed the assignment or ask for a summation of the text. Instead, she began the classes in the same offhanded way each day: "From what you know about X, what did you think of the author's essay about X? Who was it written for? Why did he/she write it? What did you think when you read it?" It was only after students initially gained comfort with sharing their educated guesses and developed ample skill for identifying the author's main argument did Dr. Titano jumpstart the class discussion with the direct question, "What was the author's main argument? Why do you think so?"

Every class period, Dr. Titano modeled the same analytical process of critically evaluating college-level reading. Over time, this consistency established a set of guiding questions that students could revisit while reading alone. Late in the semester, when Dr. Titano's introductory questions became pointed, such as, "What is the most important thing that you could take from this reading?" or "What is the point that this man is making about prison?" students had mentally rehearsed answers prepared, demonstrating that the ability to read analytically had become a part of their academic skill set. Dr. Titano adopted a moderator's role at this point, scaffolding students to increasingly high expectations for their verbal in-class contributions. Moreover, her methodical pattern of questioning taught students that those were the same questions they should ask themselves to gauge their own understanding of academic reading. Steffon, a student in Dr. Titano's class, described how his approach to reading changed as a result of his experiences in English 80:

I've learned to go online to check for Cliff Notes or a summary of the book so that I know what I'm reading. Then when I read the book, I understand what is happening or what the author is

trying to say. When I started, I would try to wait to finish the whole book before I found out what the author is trying to say, but now I try to tip myself off in the beginning, so that I know what to look for all along.

Instructor role at FCC: The instructor as valued capital model

Unlike the student-centered discussion-based model of TU's English 80, we found the English 90 classroom environment to be instructor centered; Professor Parker held a position of power, and students looked to her as the primary source of knowledge (capital). By engaging in strict course grading, and instructional and behavior management procedures, Professor Parker asserted the authority of her role. Professor Parker began each class by checking for homework completion and recording data in her roll book. When students participated in small group discussions, Professor Parker kept a close watch to make certain that their conversations did not deviate from the prescribed discussion questions. She took formal attendance at the beginning of class and after the midclass break, and on one occasion, she locked five students out of the classroom when they returned late from their midclass break. When the students tried to reenter the locked classroom, Professor Parker went out into the hallway and reprimanded the students for being late, saying that they would no longer be allowed a break because they had not returned on time. Professor Parker's style was more typical of high school classroom management than of college culture.

Professor Parker initiated discussion of the course material by asking students specific reading comprehension questions. Many times, Professor Parker's questioning advanced to the posing of substantive discussion topics for the class, however, our observations show that each time she provided the answers herself without eliciting information from the students. The following excerpt from field notes captures how Parker is the locus of valued capital. She led this particular class discussion about a film that the class had viewed:

PROFESSOR PARKER: If you had to list the main points in this movie, can you tell me about what you think the main points are?

JEROME: I like the connection Newt had with his mother. They had a real bond. . .
(Students nodded)

PROFESSOR PARKER: I think that an important part was showing

her [the mother's] place in the community. Also what about Newt's moral character?
(Professor Parker wrote on the board "Main Points." Under it, she wrote:

- Newt's relationship with mother
- Mother's standing in community
- Newt's moral character)

During this class discussion, Professor Parker asked the students for their interpretation of the main ideas but then provided two of the three main ideas herself. In this way, Professor Parker enacted the role of primary discussant, allowing students to take a passive role in the analysis of course texts.

Writing assignments in Parker's course were also highly structured. When she assigned an essay, she prescribed its format and brainstormed a list of specific acceptable topics with the class. Although students were given some choice about their topic, the main ideas for the paper and the supporting evidence were discussed thoroughly in class before the students began to write. For example, when Professor Parker explained the writing assignment that would serve as the midterm assessment, she broke the class into three groups and told them to discuss the causes and effects of three issues: teen pregnancy, racial profiling, and school violence. When the class reconvened, the groups reported on the causes and effects of each of these issues, and Professor Parker wrote their responses on the board.

After this discussion, Professor Parker told the class,

> For your midterm on Thursday, I am going to have you write a paragraph about these cause-and effect-topics, I want a big chunky paragraph, 7–10 sentences. So you'll need to pick one of these topics and think how you can develop this idea, what cause would you want to write about? For example, you could say gang violence is a cause of school violence. You could write about the name of the gang and describe it. Same thing for effects—what would you focus on? Let's say metal detectors. DeJa, you said you don't like them, you feel violated, so you could write about that.

Thus, students at FCC received substantial in-class guidance with regard to both topic and argument development from their professor. Consequently, English 90 students became accustomed to Professor Parker taking the lead and depended on her to show them "what she

wants." Whether it was the right interpretation of *Things Fall Apart* or the right argument about school violence, students looked to Professor Parker for the answers.

INSTRUCTOR-BASED CAPITAL: THE EXCHANGE VALUE OF INSTRUCTION AT TU AND FCC

Although both instructors were highly committed to their students' success, the differences in their interactions with students and the way that they interpreted the role of instructor can be partially explained by the disparity in the resources provided by TU and FCC to teach this "at-risk" student population. Both Dr. Titano and Professor Parker identified "retention" as a primary motivation for teaching these precollege courses, yet, because of very different institutional support structures, the ways in which they performed the role of instructor and the strategies they used to support students were almost completely opposite.

For example, Professor Parker gave FCC students her home phone number and e-mail address, encouraging them to contact her outside of class for academic help. She also surpassed FCC's requirements for English 90 instructors in other ways: by holding weekly office hours (FCC did not require part-time faculty to set or attend office hours) and by providing after-class tutoring. Students appreciated Professor Parker's accessibility and often preferred her assistance over the tutoring available to them at the Writing Lab. When students were absent, Professor Parker contacted them at home and provided makeup work.

The students in Professor Parker's class were labeled "high risk" upon enrollment at FCC and were assigned to the Franklin Achievement Partnership (FAP) program. However, beyond a few scheduled visits to the career advisement center and a weekly session at the Writing Lab, FCC did not provide compensatory services for these "high-risk" students. Professor Parker recognized their extensive academic skill deficits. She confided to us during an interview, "It's just a mess; they need everything!" Recognizing the potential for her students to "slip through the cracks" at FCC, Professor Parker extended herself to act as a watchful instructor, counselor, and tutor for each of her students. Professor Parker believed that "retention" for her students began with passing English 90, and she saw herself as a more effective writing tutor than the FCC Writing Lab's two full-time instructors.

Overall, Professor Parker felt that it was her responsibility to compensate for both the extrinsic factors (e.g., inadequate precollege grammar instruction) and the institutional factors (e.g., lack of tutoring resources) that might foil her students' success. By making herself a primary

resource, Professor Parker unwittingly fostered dependence among her students. When asked what actions they take when they want to do well on a paper, the overwhelming response from the English 90 students was that they must go to Professor Parker for help.

In contrast to Professor Parker's extensive efforts to personally shepherd FCC students through remedial writing, Dr. Titano built a relationship with her students that, although extremely personal and familiar at times, was less demanding of her own outside-of-class time and attention. In doing so, Dr. Titano demonstrated the removed behavior that English 80 students could expect from other university professors as they proceeded through undergraduate work. Dr. Titano encouraged students to contact her via e-mail with reading or writing questions, but students understood that this communication was a course protocol that would prompt Dr. Titano to have Charlene (the writer's assistant) or the student's Randolph Dowell counselor intervene. Therefore, although students understood that contacting Dr. Titano would inform her of a difficulty with the coursework or a personal issue, they knew that Dr. Titano did not provide personal tutoring. Instead, students knew that they would almost certainly be referred to a university resource designed to assist them.

Although seemingly bureaucratized and impersonal, Dr. Titano's system of facilitating out-of-class assistance for students had the effect of empowering students to understand the control they had over their own academic success. Dr. Titano wanted students to understand that although capital was at their disposal, its value would only be realized if they learned to use it. More than anything else, Dr. Titano perceived her role as an instructor to be that of a university guide, helping students to "understand what the university requires." By consistently directing English 80 students to the TU resources designed with their needs in mind, Dr. Titano linked students with ongoing sources of university support that could be accessed in future semesters.

In contrast, lacking access to tutoring capital, FCC students viewed their instructor as capital. Although Professor Parker provided students with an array of services ranging from tutoring to counseling, instructors are not a sustainable form of capital because their value is tied to particular courses. Professor Parker did help students persist in English 90, yet it is unlikely that her students will be able to draw on Professor Parker's expertise in the future because her part-time status limits her time at FCC.

TU students occupied a more advantaged position in the field of higher education than FCC students by virtue of their access to academic capital, cultural capital, and external resources. In terms of instructors,

Dr. Titano was experienced and had received program-specific training for teaching composition to "at-risk" students, whereas Professor Parker was new to FCC and received no programmatic training. The writing course format at Telford University prompted students to adopt the habitus of academic self-efficacy by conditioning them to analyze texts, participate in class discussions, and use university resources for tutoring support. At FCC, the writing course format may have conditioned students to institutional norms, but interviewees did not report feelings of academic self-efficacy regarding their reading and writing skills as a result of taking the course. TU students gained cultural capital as Dr. Titano modeled dispositions, role, and behaviors common to undergraduate faculty at TU. Moreover, tutoring resources were available to TU students, a form of academic capital that is transferable to other courses. FCC students depended on their instructor as their sole lifeline to academic support; they made no gains in terms of capital because Professor Parker's assistance has little exchange value outside of English 90.

HOW REMEDIAL WRITING INSTRUCTION IMPACTS PERSISTENCE: A CHANGE OF HABITUS

In our study, remedial writing students' success in their respective courses (as demonstrated by receiving a passing grade) varied across the two institutions. At TU, 100% of the 17 students enrolled in Dr. Titano's section passed into the college level of composition; however, in Professor Parker's section at FCC, 4 of her 18 students (22%) had not passed the course. Three of these students were scheduled to retake the course, and one student, who had repeated the course three times, was not permitted to continue.

In their analyses of the efficacy of remedial math instruction, Bettinger and Long (2004, 2005) found that completing remedial math had a positive impact on persistence for students at 4-year institutions but had no impact on persistence for students at 2-year institutions. By exposing the role of access to support resources, our study sheds some light on why the relationship between remediation and persistence differs across sectors. We posit that access to support resources is the integral catalyst in the change of habitus that we observed in students at TU. Our findings reveal that the students enrolled in English 80 at TU not only learned college writing but also acquired an understanding of how to succeed in college. Overwhelmingly, TU students would describe the benefits of their remedial course as having shown them how to succeed in college. For example, Yao, a student in Dr. Titano's section, provided this description of English 80 in his exit interview:

> For me, English 80 lets me know how it feels like to be a college
> student in the fall semester. It lets you know how a college stu-
> dent's life is like. It lets me know what is expected. . . . It makes
> you feel more confident. It gives you the encouragement to feel
> more confident in being a college student.

In contrast, the FCC students did not make any connections between English 90 and their experiences in college. When asked whether English 90 had helped them in any other aspects of college, students responded "no." Students speculated that English 90 would help them in their next composition course, because, after all, it was a prerequisite for that course. This is consistent with Grubb and Cox (2005), who found the goals and outlooks of remedial community college students to be "short term" and focused on "earning credits" rather than learning what the credits are supposed to represent.

Research has shown that students' self-efficacy is closely connected to academic adjustment (Chartrand, Camp, & McFadden, 1992) and students' decisions to persist in college (Solberg, O'Brien, Villareal, Kenner, & Davis, 1993). In addition, Bean and Eaton (2000) posited that the psychological notion of self-efficacy is integral to models of student persistence (based on Tinto's 1987 model) because self-efficacy explains how academic and social integration lead to student persistence. According to Bean and Eaton, as a student "recognizes his/her competence and gains self-confidence, that individual will exercise higher aspirations for persistence, task achievement and personal goals" (p. 52). In this study, we observed students at TU gain confidence in their abilities to write for a college audience. In addition, our findings suggest that these gains in self-confidence were related to students' access to resources (e.g., individual tutoring), which enabled them to gain competence as college writers. Thus, students' experiences suggest that institutional resources are closely connected to students' gains in competence and the development of their self-efficacy regarding college writing.

When interpreted through Bourdieu's theoretical framework, the knowledge of college success gained by TU students suggests that the content, tutoring, and instruction provided by TU's English 80 supported a change in habitus, wherein students internalized the disposition of what it means to be a college student. Therefore, although all the students in our study possessed a college-going disposition in their habiti by virtue of being enrolled in college, only students enrolled in the remedial writing program at Telford University demonstrated the acquisition of a college persistence disposition as part of their habiti.[4]

CONCLUSION: HOW ACCESS TO CAPITAL POSITIONS REMEDIAL STUDENTS IN THE FIELD

Primarily, our findings suggest that for the remedial students in our study, it does indeed make a huge difference where one chooses to matriculate to college. Even for colleges and universities within the public sector, there is no parity in funding—thereby no parity of resource availability for the very students most in need of those supportive resources. The vast differences between TU and FCC in tutoring alone may account for the disparity in student pass rates for the two courses. All TU students enrolled in Dr. Titano's section successfully completed English 80, whereas 4 students in Professor Parker's section of English 90 were going to receive a "no pass" for the course (one student for the third and final time). Therefore, future analyses of remedial efficacy should incorporate measures of resource allotment when predicting student outcomes.

Second, we note that although the two institutions in our study reported that they have actively collaborated on their introductory writing course curricula and assessment measures, students were assigned vastly different course curricula at their respective institutions. Whereas students enrolled at Telford, a 4-year university, were expected to construct their own arguments in class discussion and in essays, the students enrolled at Franklin Community College completed grammar worksheets and took vocabulary tests. This is not to say that either curricula is particular to a 4-year or 2-year school, but rather that it is critical that students receive training that will enable them to do university-level academic work. Therefore, these findings suggest that we need to look more deeply at articulation.

Finally, we have demonstrated how Bourdieu's theory of practice is useful in examining stratification in higher education, and particularly how evaluating students' field positions may help to explain differences in developmental students' self-reported experiences of academic success in their first year of college. Week by week, our observations of students' experiences with instruction, course material, and access to one-on-one tutoring at FCC and TU suggested that students at TU occupied an advantaged position regarding all three forms of capital. A comparison of the scholastic capital provided to remedial students at the two institutions reveals that students in the remedial writing course at TU were provided with instructors equipped to transfer the capital of the institution, assigned college-level course materials, and given access to more and superior tutoring resources than FCC students in their struggle to become proficient writers and persist in the field of higher education.

Moreover, we also observed differences in students' experiences with, and access to, each of these forms of capital. We found that students' disparate field positions were determined by both their access (or lack of access) to capital and their relationship to capital. Despite their inferior status relative to those in college-level composition courses, remedial students at TU were taught to have a commanding relationship to the academic capital at stake in college. In their exit interviews, TU students spoke confidently about their ability to succeed in college, demonstrating that their habiti included a disposition for college success in which they began to view themselves as having control over their college outcomes. This powerful position was communicated to them through the role of the instructor in the course, the course materials, and their access to out-of class resources. Conversely, students enrolled in the remedial composition class at FCC assumed a subordinate position in the field of power. Taught to have a powerless relationship to their course material and to be dependent on their instructor because of a lack of out-of-class resources, FCC students did not demonstrate an understanding of what was expected to succeed in the field of higher education and how to meet those expectations. Consequently, FCC students viewed their college trajectories as determined by outside forces such as their instructor and the transfer requirements prescribed by FCC.

Our study reveals the ways in which institutional resources serve as critical capital to remedial students. We believe that these findings add a new angle to the debate over whether remedial courses have a place at 4-year institutions. In particular, our findings suggest that it is not the type of institution but the level of resources afforded to students by the institution that influences students' experiences with remediation. In this case, it was not the type of institution but students' access (or lack of access) to particular resources or capital—course content that developed analytic skills, access to a full-time professor, and one-on-one tutoring—that stratified the students in our study. Some community colleges have successfully garnered the resources to provide this capital to their students; however, in general, community colleges constitute the sector of U.S. higher education with the least available funding to implement these supports.

Thus, in light of recent research that first-generation college students are disproportionately enrolling in remedial coursework (Chen, 2005), policies that quarantine remedial courses to the community college sector and other underresourced institutions can be seen as overt stratification. Unless institutions, 2-year or 4-year, are able to allocate adequate resources to their remedial programs, the efficacy of remediation is compromised.

Notes

1.　All names of institutions, participants, locations, and programs have been changed to provide anonymity and to protect confidentiality

2.　Previous work by Adelman (1998) compared remedial students with all other students regardless of precollege ability.

3.　Bettinger and Long (2005) noted, however, that their English results are not as reliable as the math results because their controls for selection were much weaker.

4.　Although it is possible that the higher completion rates of TU students versus those of FCC students may be due to individual differences and not institutional differences, student background data suggest that these students had comparable levels of motivation and resilience at the time we examined them in their first year of college. Students at TU and FCC differed in the path they chose to complete a 4-year degree (2-year institution or 4-year institution), however, they displayed similar levels of motivation and resilience: All but one of the students at FCC expressed a desire to complete a 4-year degree. In addition, students had demonstrated high resilience in their graduation from high school and enrollment in college, coming from a public school district in which only 59% of students graduate from high school.

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Are high schools failing seniors? Are students unprepared for college writing? Learn what can you do to get your students ready for university. A while back, I talked about the importance of strong writing skills in the workplace. Today I want to take a look at the grim statistics regarding poor writing skills on college campuses and help you explore things you can do now to ensure that your children do not join those ranks. EDIT: Originally written in 2010, this article has been updated to cite more recent sources. As you will discover, the problem has not gone away, but remains as disconcerting as ever. The Problem on College Campuses. At Baltimore City Community College, for instance, in the fall of 2015, only 13 percent of students were deemed ready to start on college-level math and English courses right away, according to data provided by the school. Credit: Graphic: Nicole Lewis. All BCCC students must take a test in math and English called the Accuplacer upon enrolling. Carole Quine teaches the highest-level remedial English course at BCCC. It focuses predominantly on essay writing. On a Wednesday last fall, she started off her class with a now-routine exercise: diagramming a sentence. She then wrote two sentences on the board â€" â€œI attend BCCCâ€ and â€œMy brother attends Morganâ€ â€" and had students suggest different ways of combining them. The high education courses like University and college are doubtful to give profits to common people because most knowledges from high schools are enough to live in the world. So some people think that studying in the colleges is wastful in your life and money. Although many parts in education of universtiy are criticized by some people. people with bechelor degree may have good chance than others when they get job. research on student writing in higher education. 2. writing and a comparison of student writing over three decades. This research was. undertaken to gain insight into the context of student writing in UK higher education. Academic Writing in Higher Educationâ€™ (Appendix A). Staff were asked to fill out. higher education. The questionnaire was sent to staff at all UK universities and to at. least one affiliated university college per institution, as well as to music colleges, performing arts colleges, and medical colleges. Thus, the sample was representative. of a diversity of mission statements, student populations, and institutional strata. Academic Writing. Most international students need to write essays and reports for exams and coursework. Yet writing good academic English is one of the most demanding tasks students face. This new edition of Academic Writing has been fully revised to help students reach this goal. Clearly organised, the course explains the writing process from start to nish. Plagiarism has become a major concern in higher education, and a special feature of Academic Writing is a section on avoiding plagiarism. There are also units on the key skills of paraphrasing, summarising and referencing. The advice focuses on what is required in terms of academic writing at university. He addresses different types of academic writing and even includes sample writing texts.