BECOMING WORKPLACE READY:
HOW SMALL-GROUP TUTORIALS CAN HELP

A Thesis

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Svetlana Popov-Doroshkin

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Department of English
Abstract

of

BECOMING WORKPLACE READY:

HOW SMALL-GROUP TUTORIALS CAN HELP

by

Svetlana Popov-Doroshkin

Becoming Workplace Ready: How Small-group Tutorials Can Help is a study of small-group tutorials in an academic setting that exposes students to different types of writing that would help students to more easily adapt and adjust to on-the-job writing. A survey, along with several evaluation forms of the 109X small-group tutorial helped to show that students benefit from being a part of a collaborative group tutorial, and that many of the students felt that they had improved their writing skills, collaboration, feedback, self-editing, negotiation, and critical thinking skills. My hypothesis was that small-group tutorials, like 109X, help students to be aware of the differences in writing expectations that they will experience once they have to write professionally. The data that I collected confirmed that students felt more prepared for different types of writing and collaboration after taking the tutorial.

______________________, Committee Chair
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Date
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Chapter 1

Introduction

Becoming Workplace Ready: How Small-Group Tutorials Can Help

In "Oven-ready and Self-basting: Taking Stock of Employability Skills," Atkins (1999) writes that "over the last decade there has been a steady stream of reports and papers urging the higher education sector to take key, core, transferable and employability skills into the hearts of the students' learning experience"(p. 267). Atkins continues by saying that employers and the government are urging all undergraduate students to acquire "key skills of communication, numeracy ... and 'learning how to learn' skills"(p. 267). Furthermore, Smith (1997) in Writing at Work writes that "a recent survey of Fortune 500 executives noted that poor reading and writing skills were the number one cause of employees being terminated within their first year. And the same survey identified training in writing and communication skills to be the top priority for the workplace" (p. 6). What both of these short excerpts show is that most undergraduate students leave the world of academia without preparedness for the reading, writing, and communication that they will have to perform in the workplace setting. While students might be able to perform well in the academic setting, they are not always prepared for doing the kinds of reading, writing, and communicating skills that they then have to learn on-the-job.

However, there are methods, lessons, classes, and tutoring that higher education institutions can implement in order for their students to be more workplace ready. One such program is offered in the English Department at CSU, Sacramento in the form of a
small-group tutorial called ENGL 109X. My research shows that students would be better prepared for professional writing settings if they received tutoring in small-group tutorials in the subjects of discourse communities, rhetorical awareness, collaboration, editing, and general effective writing practices.

**My tutoring experience**

I started out as a tutor at the CSUS Writing Center, where my job was more-or-less straightforward because I mostly needed to help tutees recognize mistakes themselves and give them the skills needed to do that; I expected that being a 109X tutor was going to be a similar experience. However, when I became a small-group tutor for English 109X, I quickly learned that my role and relationship with the students in a tutorial like 109X was more of a gray line than a defined one. As a tutor of a 109X small-group tutorial, I discovered that the relationship was very similar to colleague helping colleague throughout parts of the writing process; yet, there were times when I felt more like the employer providing some necessary guidance to the employee in the form of training or explaining. During the semester I had to facilitate peer review, teach mini-lessons, train students to become confident peer reviewers, assign readings, review class learning outcomes, explain why writing looked different in different disciplines, and more. That semester, I first noticed that the kinds of lessons and ideas that the students were supposed to learn at the end of this small-group tutorial were closely aligned with the skills that employers look for in future employees.

While conducting research about employability skills and the benefits that small-group tutorials offer to the students that use them, I found that many employability skills
and the learning outcomes of the small-group tutorial class were very similar. Skills such as collaboration, critical thinking, negotiation, rhetorical awareness, confidence in writing, genre knowledge, and giving and receiving feedback are not only useful in an academic setting, where small-group tutorials are situated, but are also necessary skills that employers look for in future employees. This research further developed as I continued tutoring, and as I discussed the idea further with Dr. Glade in preparation for beginning my thesis research. The research I conducted to support or disprove my hypothesis about small-group tutorials and employability skills shows that small-group tutorials do help to foster the kinds of communication skills that students are likely to see and use in professional writing in the workplace. Though I believe that small-group tutorials such as 109X do help students to later excel as employees, I also think that there can be other lessons taught that would help students transition with ease into the world of professional writing.

About English 109X

English 109X is “a required one-unit adjunct course for students who receive a four-unit placement on the Writing Placement for Juniors (WPJ). The course is a student-centered group tutorial which will offer supplemental instruction in elements of academic writing taught in writing-intensive upper-division courses” (Course Change Proposal, 2008, p. 1). The WPJ, English 109M, or English 109W are used to fulfill the Graduation Writing Assessment Requirement (GWAR) at CSUS. The WPJ is a two-hour essay exam, after which students receive a placement score of three units, four units, or six units of upper-division writing intensive coursework. Students who receive a three-unit
placement on the WPJ can proceed to take a Writing Intensive (WI) course with no additional writing requirements. Students who receive a six-unit placement on the WPJ must take either English 109M (for identified multilingual students) or English 109W in order to satisfy the GWAR; students can also choose to take either 109M or 109W to satisfy the GWAR without having to take the WPJ test. The 109X small-group tutorial is a one-unit class that must be taken together with a WI class (hence the four-unit placement) to help students excel and grow as writers. The class consists of twelve students and is run as a small-group tutorial by tutors who have been trained before the semester begins, and who meet throughout the semester to follow up on experiences, share lesson plans, discuss where the class is headed, and deal with any issues that have arisen in the class. During the in-class hour, and most class sessions, students bring in the essays that they are working on for their WI class or another class, and peers and the tutor read over the essays and offer helpful feedback both in written comments and orally. Typically there are two to three different papers from different writers and disciplines that the class must read over and respond to. In general, the small-group tutorial helps students to feel more open about sharing their writing and also about helping their fellow students. Through the process of peer-review and working with a student-tutor rather than a teacher, each student is provided with the opportunity to exercise critical thinking skills and to practice skills such as collaboration, negotiation, and rhetorical awareness.

The primary aim of my research project is to show readers that small-group tutorials like ENGL 109X help students gain confidence, independence, and the necessary skills of peer review and collaboration that they will need as future employees.
My hypothesis is that 109X and similar small-group tutorial classrooms better equip students for professional writing than regular classrooms because of the tutor-student model, the very collaborative classroom environment, the peer reviews, and the independence and confidence that the small-group tutorial helps to instill in students. I believe that in a classroom we still cannot fully escape the grips of academic writing because it is the standard at school, but we tutors can provide a smoother transition into the professional writing environment by providing a highly collaborative class and reading and writing assignments which teach the students in 109X to perform the kind of writing tasks that they might be asked to do in their professional field. I feel that my research will help to improve the way that small-group tutorials, specifically ENGL 109X, are run by providing necessary feedback from students about the tutorial.

The small-group tutorial model is similar to the workplace community in the sense that every voice counts; in essence, the role of the tutor and the writer continually shifts throughout a session in the process of collaboration. In a small group tutorial, both tutors and students give feedback and the students receive feedback from peers who come from many different academic and ethnic backgrounds, which prepares 109X students for participation within a larger professional field where most writing happens in a collaborative environment. In a comparison between tutorial learning outcomes, specifically 109X’s, and employee requirements, it can be seen that the two spaces use a similar language/vocabulary to describe what is expected of student writers or employees as writers; this information can be found in Chapter 2 in a comparison between professional and academic writing. Small group tutorials teach student writers to be
independent from the teacher and to engage with the tutor and each other in search of solutions. The creation of “the middle” (a role/ground between teacher and student roles according to Muriel Harris) through group-work, peer reviews, and a tutor-student model promotes a collaborative environment in the classroom and allows for participation that promotes self-teaching through the practice of skills that they will be using in the workplace.

Although small-group tutoring is relatively new, especially when considering the fact that the 109X class is run by a student tutor who gives a credit/no credit to his/her colleagues/tutees, I found that there is plenty of research that rhetoricians have done that states that small-group tutorials, via the process of collaboration, help to produce more independent writers. Several research questions arose after reading through theories and professional writing books. If 109X (small-group tutorials) do, in fact, provide students with the kind of collaborative environment experience that they will see in workplace writing, then:

1. How does 109X prepare students to become effective workplace writers?

2. What specific lessons are taught in 109X which students can utilize in the workplace?

3. Are there specific assignments that teach 109X students the kinds of writing that they will be doing in the workforce?

4. How does academic writing differ from professional writing?
5. Is there anything that 109X can do to make the gap between academic and professional writing less noticeable for the students taking the tutorial?

While these questions were the primary guideposts for my research, many others came up as I got more responses from students within the small-group tutorial. These questions focus more on 109X itself, but I chose to open up my project to the broader topic of small-group tutorials with 109X placed into that broader context as one example of a small-group tutorial. For my research, I chose to focus on the learning outcomes of 109X, the assignments and tasks performed in a small-group tutorial like 109X, and the reading and writing skills that are deemed as high-demand and important in the workplace.
Chapter 2

Review of Literature

The terms “collaboration,” “peer response,” “discourse community,” and “shared knowledge” have become symbols for a pedagogical agenda that values talk and activity as learning tools...a person learns in a group as he listens and speaks (The Writing Teachers Sourcebook, 1999, p. 123). Small-group tutorials, or writing groups, are generally new to the field of Composition and Rhetoric; most other fields have yet to accept small-group tutorials and writing groups as part of their curriculum. Research has shown that collaborative writing via writing groups and small group tutorials helps to promote skills such as independence in reading and writing, negotiation skills, collaboration, learning to read and revise their own and other’s writing, tolerance of others, and critical thinking. Particularly important to today’s workplace is the collaboration that small group tutorials teach to the students who are exposed to such an environment in school and not just in the workplace. Bruffee’s *Collaborative Learning: Higher Education, Interdependence, and the Authority of Knowledge* talks about the collaboration which should take place in academic settings, in writing especially, for students to be successful in and beyond academia. In this book, Bruffee talks about peer tutoring, the student-teacher power structure, the benefits of peer and thus collaborative work, and the way that universities should be changing curriculum in order to incorporate collaborative learning as the base for all teaching, especially in writing. Bruffee (1999) writes that “thinking of writing as social, collaborative, and constructive tells us a good deal about how college and university teachers (and textbooks) should be teaching...
writing and expecting students to learn it” (p. 58). The problem is that most disciplines that use writing as a form of communication do not accept writing as social and collaborative; instead, writing in most fields in the academic setting is seen as individual. By now, academia has become more open to collaboration within the writing process, and most Composition and Rhetoric instructors are trained in and promote collaboration throughout the writing process. However, there are fields in which instructors are either hesitant to accept collaborative learning as a part of their curriculum, or who are not properly trained in how to run a small-group based classroom, and therefore avoid it. Bruffee calls on teachers, schools, and textbooks to accept writing as a collaborative and social act and to provide the curriculum and guidance that students need in order to practice writing as a social act, which will then help them succeed in the workplace and discipline.

Bruffee also talks about the kind of collaboration which should take place in an academic setting, in writing especially, for students to be successful in and beyond academia. In Collaborative Learning, Bruffee talks about peer tutoring, the student-teacher power structure, the benefits of peer collaborative work, and the way that universities should be changing curriculum in order to incorporate collaborative learning as the base for all teaching, especially in writing.

One of the points that Bruffee (1999) makes about collaborative peer learning is that “regardless of the subject, the issues [that student writers run into] tend to come down in one way or another to reading (texts, documents, word problems) and writing (papers, lab reports, exams). (p. 93). Here Bruffee points out that the cause of all
miscommunication is that something was not read or written properly, which is where tutors and small-group tutorials step in
to guide and support. When [tutors] instruct, it is to clarify that guidance and enhance that support. They engage in conversation with their tutees, helping them translate at the boundaries between the knowledge communities they already belong to and the knowledge communities they aspire to join. (p. 98)

Essentially, what the small group tutorial, such as ENGL 109X, seeks to do is to teach students to work across disciplines with people from all kinds of backgrounds, and this is important not only for the academic setting, but most importantly, for the workplace in which the students want to succeed later. In her book *Effective Business Writing: A Guide to Those who Write on the Job*, Maryann Piotrowski (1996) writes that "efficiently run business cannot tolerate unclear memos, letters, and reports. Business stops, or is slowed, as a result of poor communication .... Up to 30 percent of letters and memos in industry and government do nothing more than seek clarification of earlier correspondence or respond to that request for clarification .... Bad writing is bad for business" (p. 1). Piotrowki’s point connects to Bruffee’s argument that issues tend to arise because someone somewhere either misread or did not write clearly and effectively, which is why small-group tutorials are an important resource for students. These groups not only teach students how to collaborate, but also teach them how to communicate effectively in an academic setting and later in the workplace.

Bruffee (1999) goes on to write the following about collaborative writing and learning:
one purpose of collaborative learning is to give college and university students opportunities to experience this reacculturative, conversational process, direct and indirect, by which not only scientists, but also doctors, lawyers, mathematicians, sociologists, classists, and other bearers of intellectual tradition construct knowledge in the language of their communities of knowledgeable peers. (p. 54)

What Bruffee is saying here is that collaborative learning gives students a heads up about the kind of communication that they will have to perform later in the workplace; unfortunately, not many disciplines have accepted the fact that learning from peers is something that students will have to do once they leave the classroom, only instead of peers they will be learning from their co-workers. Needless to say, even students believe that they cannot learn much from their peers, and that they need a “teacher” or “instructor” to teach them anything worth knowing; this leads the students to mistrust the feedback that they receive from anyone other than the teacher. In the previous quotation, Bruffee states that scientists, mathematicians, doctors, and pretty much any professional field or discipline uses collaborative learning as the basis for success. Still, at the academic level, few have accepted collaborative learning as something of importance. Because Composition and Rhetoric is the foundation of communication, it is fitting that this particular field is one of the first to open its doors to collaborative learning. Reading, writing, and any kind of communication does not happen in a vacuum; there are many people and voices involved in the process. Writing, in any shape or form, is less informed unless it goes through a process of collaboration, and a small-group tutorial, like 109X, highlights that group effort.
In *Towards Reconstructing American Classrooms: Interdependent Students, Interdependent World in Teaching Composition*, Bruffee (1999) talks about different discourse communities and how students benefit from having “transitional communities” that help students easily move from the discourse of one community into the discourse of another community, and English 109X is a great example of a “transitional community.” Bruffee talks about the discussion and translation of language that takes place in these collaborative transitional communities. Bruffee calls these transitional communities “support groups” or “collaborative learning groups;” both have a similar structure and purpose as a small-group class/tutorial.

In this same work, Bruffee (1999) writes that “members of different academic and professional knowledge communities negotiate with one another in order to translate the language of one community into the language of another” (p.128), which is similar to what takes place in English 109X between the tutor and the students. Bruffee describes what happens in a small-group tutorial and how a small-group tutorial, with a mediator in the middle of the teacher-students relationship, helps students to transition from one community to another. In order for students to succeed in a small-group tutorial, they learn to negotiate with one another about what makes effective writing and what does not. Bruffee (1999) also talks about negotiation and collaborative discussions in his book *Collaborative Learning* where he says:

learning to converse constructively with peers about writing is at least equally important for student writers because, as we shall see William Perry’s informants reveal, conversation with people we regard as our
peers-- our equals, members of our own community-- is almost always the most productive kind of conversation. (p. 59)

This type of conversation is also a conversation of negotiation between one student and another, and it teaches and encourages students to accept each other as individuals with different understanding and knowledge about writing. This type of negotiation and tolerance is necessary for success in the workplace since an individual will have to work with a wide variety of coworkers and people outside of the field in order for business to succeed. Bruffee (1999) also mentions a research study done about group work and its effects on an individual, and these were the results: “The work of Robert Slavin, Shlomo Sharan, and David and Roger Johnson, for example, abundantly demonstrates how ‘teamwork’ among schoolchildren can help overcome racial and ethnic bias. It has also shown that children learn better through collaborative group work than in classrooms that are highly competitive, hierarchical, and individualized” (p. 82). The workplace is growing more and more diverse, and as the above research shows, group work, or small-group tutorials, teach students to be more accepting of others and to work with anybody as a team.

Gurak Hocks (2000) in The Technical Writing Handbook writes that some of the most important strategies in a team include these: willingness to ask for help, willingness to review work when asked, recognition of another’s success, offering constructive criticism, providing clear channels of communication, timely replies to inquiries, sensitivity to and respect for differences, using the right communication technology to accomplish the
Based on Bruffee’s assertion that small-groups, and group work in general, provide students with the necessary skills of negotiating and working with a diversity of people, it is safe to say that tutorials prepare students for workplace tasks such as offering constructive criticism, providing clear channels of communication, timely replies (the time management aspect of a tutorial), sensitivity to and respect for differences, and using the right communication technology (covered by the genres and conventions lessons in 109X). What Bruffee’s findings and Slavin and Sharan’s research outcomes show is that group work is key to teaching students to negotiate between each other and to work with a diverse group of people.

Bruffee (1999) continues to argue that

- In contrast, [to traditional, individualized learning] the purpose of collaborative learning is not primarily to teach students how to quack.
- Collaborative learning tasks are designed to generate conversation in which students learn to “speak differently” (in Rorty’s phrase), to speak in ways unlike their former habits of speaking. (p. 140)

One of the many benefits of small-group tutorials is that within the collaborative environment students learn to not just think with someone else’s head, but they learn to think and converse on their own, and to come to some sort of consensus with the rest of their peers. Negotiation and the ability to communicate with someone within or outside of the field that an individual is working in are necessary skills for success within the workplace. In 109X, students collaborate by giving and receiving feedback and
discussing why certain comments were made, and by discussing what their particular
discipline is doing differently in communication than another discipline. By exposing
students to different activities such as group work, peer review, online posts, discussions
in class, and work with a peer tutor rather than an instructor, 109X strives to provide an
environment in which students become more independent in their writing, more
dependent upon themselves and their peers as resources, tolerant of change and diversity,
knowledgeable in how to give and how to receive feedback from peers, able to discuss a
variety of topics with their peers, able to negotiate within their groups, and more
experienced critical thinkers who pay attention to the communities they are in and the
communities that are around them or that they want to be a part of. As Bruffee puts it,
students do not just learn how to “quack.” Instead they learn how to speak for themselves
using their language, and eventually they learn to use the jargon of the community in
which they would like to be fluent. Small-group tutorials and group work play a huge role
in the development of students’ abilities to communicate effectively with others in or out
of their field.

Anne Gere (1987) offers the history and the direction in which small-group
learning is headed in Writing Groups: History, Theory, and Implications and sheds light
on the importance and benefits of having small-group tutorials like 109X within a
university. Gere discusses writing groups in and out of the academic context and states
that the small group setting allows for collaborative learning. Gere also makes the
assertion that by using small groups, and teaching students the importance of the
collaborative learning that takes place in small-groups, teachers can prepare students for
the collaborative nature of the workplace which they will be entering. Gere writes that students learn to negotiate, use critical thinking, and become more confident in their writing when they are participants of a small group because these groups foster all of the skills listed above. Confidence in writing, negotiation, collaboration, and critical thinking are also the skills that most employers wish their employees had more of. Gere concludes that writing groups are the way that instructors can help their students become a part of our democratic community.

Gere also talks about collaborative learning as something that provides a separate community in which, through negotiation, the students are able to learn about not only the community that they are in, but also about the communities that they want to be a part of. To make her point, Gere quotes Bruffee’s thoughts on collaborative learning. Bruffee writes that [collaborative learning provides a] “community in which normal discourse occurs... a context in which students can practice and master the normal discourse exercised in established knowledge communities in the academic world and in business, government, and the professions” (as cited in Gere, 1987, p. 73). Within this context of collaborative learning, writing groups are an essential part of developing students’ abilities to negotiate and communicate outside of themselves, so that when they enter their chosen professional field then they will be able to work and negotiate well with colleagues and the communication, or conversation that is being produced can be productive and effective. Gere goes on to discuss how important it is for students to participate in the collaborative dialogue that is produced in a small group, and she writes that “without the opportunity to participate in the dialogue of writing groups, students
have one less chance to converse with the society around them” (p. 84). Gere writes that with students who have had the chance to participate in a small-group, “motivation toward writing increases, anxiety about writing decreases, and [feelings of trust and community develop]” (p. 84). Within these passages, Gere notes not only the importance of the writing that happens in a small group, but also the importance of the conversation that takes place in such a community. This collaborative discussion that can take place in a small group is the difference between an academic and a professional setting, because in academia, the students usually sit and listen to the instructor while taking notes; on the other hand, in a professional setting, the employee will most likely be collaborating and negotiating with other employees instead of constantly listening to the employer talk. The students in an instructor-student setting do not always have many opportunities for collaborative discussion; however, in a small group tutorial class such as ENGL 109X, the students have an opportunity to create a community in which their voices are heard, and everyone can participate without being afraid that their comments will be completely rejected by either the teacher or classmates. The tutor in the small-group setting takes on the role of a facilitator who can guide the conversation by asking questions or offering an opinion as a peer would offer to a peer or a colleague to a colleague, and can therefore help to make all voices heard and all opinions supported or disputed. Hence, the collaborative discussion that occurs in a small-group is crucial for developing negotiation skills that then transfer into the workplace.

writing instruction occurred after WWII. The war showed the importance of technology and communications, and thus of technical writing, business writing, and journalism” (p. 149). Up until WWII, colleges and universities taught students how to write the traditional essay, but after the war, teachers and professionals started acknowledging the importance of teaching/learning technical writing. Today more than ever, both knowledge of technology and the ability to communicate well are skills that are much needed in employees. However, employers are finding the following to be more true of recent college graduates: “As students were completing the new types of college degrees and entering their chosen fields, teachers, business professional, and the general public voiced concerns about writing quality...Business and engineering professionals despaired over the ungrammatical and inexact correspondence of their colleagues” (p. 16). Within this book, Adams gives the history and the highlights of professional writing instruction. Adams (1993) also focuses on instruction in rhetoric and its importance in the teaching of professional writing; she writes that the focus on rhetoric helped teachers to focus on audience awareness, writing process, and critical thinking. While most schools have yet to create a technical writing class that would truly replicate what writing on-the-job looks like, small-group tutorials are a good step to exploring the kind of atmosphere that professional writing happens in. Small-group tutorials provide students with an opportunity to work closely with a tutor and fellow peers who come from different backgrounds, and so students get a wide variety of readers looking and commenting on their writing. Small-groups tutorials also help students to critically think throughout their writing process because of the types of activities done in the classroom and the questions
that they might be asked. Finally, and most importantly, students who participate in a small-group tutorial are more confident in not only their writing, but also in commenting on their own and others’ writing—a skill that is very important for colleagues who usually write collaboratively, which brings us to what professional writers have to say about communication on-the-job.

Rebecca Moore Howard (2001), in her essay “Collaborative Pedagogy,” quotes Bruffee’s three principles of collaboration, which are recognized in composition studies:

1. [B]ecause thought is internalized conversation, thought and conversation tend to work largely in the same way. (p. 639)

2. If thought is internalized public and social talk, then writing of all kinds is internalized social talk made public and social again. If thought is internalized conversation, then writing is internalized conversation re-externalized. (p. 641)

3. To learn is to work collaboratively to establish and maintain knowledge among a community of knowledgeable peers through the process that Richard Rorty calls "socially justifying belief." (p. 646)

These three principles show that writing is a process of collaboration, because whether the thought was first born in the mind or on paper, either way it must still come out from the internal and be externalized. Based on the three principles outlined above, Bruffee emphasizes that conversation (not only written feedback) is an important method of getting students to externalize that which was first internal. These principles apply not only to academic writing, but even more so in writing that happens in the workplace. In
her article, Howard also talks about collaboration pedagogy and its application in the workplace. Howard quotes Andrea Lunsford on what collaboration pedagogy should look like, and what it should include, in order for it to prepare students for workplace tasks:

"When collaborative pedagogy aims to prepare students for work-place tasks, it should be designed not just on general precepts but also with a well-developed conception of work-place writing. Lunsford offers a taxonomy of work-place tasks ‘that seem to call consistently for collaboration: high-order problem defining and solving; division of labor tasks, in which the job is simply too big for any one person; and division of expertise tasks.” (as cited in Howard, 2001, p. 57)

Here Howard writes that in order for students to be fully prepared for workplace writing tasks, collaboration pedagogy should not be taught just in “general precepts,” but with knowledge of and an emphasis on the different workplace writing tasks that students might later encounter. While 109X tutors do not go into the specifics of the many different workplace writing tasks, they do helps students learn and recognize the many different forms of writing in different disciplines, and ask the students to bring in the different types of writing that they do within their discipline, so that those examples can be shared with the other eleven students. This sharing, and the discussion that follows the examples, not only exposes the students to the different types of writing tasks in their field, but it also allows the students to share and discover some new thoughts about that particular type of writing. Howard also mentions the importance of the class discussion in her article, where she writes:
often overlooked as a vehicle of collaborative pedagogy is whole-class
discussion. [When] the teacher gets conversation started and then acts as a
secretary and synthesizer, class discussion can be very collaborative ... [In
small-group pedagogy] students can teach each other; more important,
together they can discover things that individually they might not. (p. 59)

Like Bruffee, Howard feels that class discussions promote self-learning and self-
discovery. Both skills are important for workplace writing, and a regular classroom does
not offer enough practice in these skills; however, small-group tutorials can help with
this. Finally, Howard writes that students might at first resist collaboration because too
often they feel that their fellow peers know only as much as they do, and students
question what new concepts they can learn from someone who does not have a PhD. The
solution that Howard offers to this problem is to let the students “understand how
prevalent collaboration is in work-place writing, how much their ‘individual’ writing will
benefit from having worked in a group and having seen firsthand how others articulate
and solve writing problems, and how much more they can accomplish than if they were
working alone...” (p. 64). Many 109X students are skeptical about the small-group
tutorial because not only is there no teacher, but they also feel that other students who are
on the same level in writing cannot possibly help them improve their own writing.
However, the tutor explains to the students that collaboration is something that they will
have to do all of their life, and that they will usually be collaborating with their peers.
After explaining the power of collaboration, the tutor then will usually “teach” (I use
“teach” in quotations because the tutor is not a teacher, but must present mini-lessons
much like a teacher would) the students about how to give constructive feedback to their peers. In 109X, the tutors are taught to do just what Howard advises before starting collaborative pedagogy, and usually the students feel more comfortable and confident after this initial lesson at participating in a collaborative environment.

In *Technical Writing for Success a School-to-Work Approach*, Sue Mehlich and Darlene Smith-Worthington (1985) write that “technical writing (workplace writing) shares much in common with the academic writing [students] have experienced so far in school” (p. 10). Any academic writing has to be well-organized, coherent, unified, well-supported, and be presented in a certain way for a certain audience- all of this applies to technical, or workplace, writing as well. According to Mehlich and Smith-Worthington (1985),

the difference between [academic and technical writing] is in the presentation, audience, and approach. Academic writing presents itself in a succession of paragraphs--usually an introductory paragraph, a number of paragraphs that develop a thesis, and a concluding paragraph. Academic writing is written for an academic audience--a teacher, your classmates, or a group of interested scholars...Technical writing also presents itself in paragraphs and often begins with an introduction and closes with a conclusion, but technical writing (with its headings, itemized lists, boldfacing, and visual aids) looks different from academic writing. Written for a specific audience, the subject is treated in a more technical, business, or scientific way ... the approach is more utilitarian.
What this quote demonstrates is that there are many similarities between academic and technical writing because both call for certain features such as organization and coherence to be present; however, in academic writing, the audience is usually limited, and the style is more creative and sometimes wordy. Professional writing, on the other hand, is more “utilitarian”, meaning that the structure is usually very rigid, and that the writing is clear and to the point without being too lengthy. In 109X, when the time comes to discuss different types of writing that is done in different disciplines, the tutor helps the students understand than technical writing is similar to yet different from academic writing because it requires different types of genres and a knowledge of the jargon that is used within that workplace community. Bruffee writes that tutors help students understand what the conventions for their new writing assignment are; therefore, the tutors act as the “middle ground” between teacher and student, so that students can transition successfully from one community or discipline into another that they want to be a part of. The tutors of 109X help students to learn the skills in reading and writing that are needed to succeed in their writing intensive discourse communities and also in their chosen disciplines’ discourse communities; the tutor become the translator, or the guide, who helps the students to move freely from one community to the other and to communicate well in that community using the conventions needed. Because tutors discuss and have the students bring in examples of the different types of writing done across disciplines, students in 109X have the opportunity of seeing and discussing why
and how writing differs in different genres. The students then have this knowledge to help them when they start writing in the workplace rather than in the academic setting.

Today, more than ever, employees need to know how to communicate effectively in order for business to thrive. In What People Need to Know About Writing, Chris Davies and Maria Birbili (2000) write that

> Writing is becoming ever more central and crucial to the world of work, with computers on every desk, email and the internet adding to the world's written words in almost epidemic proportions, and very little being done either in formal education or the world of work to adjust to these quite overwhelming demands. The place of writing in our lives is changing all the time, and the nature of that writing is changing also. (p. 430)

What this quotation demonstrates is that writing in the real-world is increasing with continually developing technology, and it is often the only form of communication available. Davies and Birbili highlight the fact that though writing demands are increasing in the professional writing setting, but they also point out that neither formal education nor the workplace provides employees with the skills needed to adjust to the high amount of writing that needs to be done. Davies and Birbili also point out that writing is constantly changing in its demands and nature which means that academic writing cannot meet all the demands of professional writing. Students need to be exposed to different forms of writing while still in the academic setting so that they have a better chance at adapting and adjusting to professional writing. “Success in the workplace begins in the classroom...” particularly in a classroom that constantly enforces the skills
that are needed within the workforce, and ENGL 109X does this through learning outcomes such as “developing an increased understanding of the discourse conventions of academic discourse communities, and developing critical self-reflection, self-editing, and self-assessment skills through writing” (English 109X IRM, p. 6). Students often time claim that their chosen profession will not use writing, and that they know enough about writing already to get by; however, Elizabeth Chesla (2000) in Improve Your Writing for Work writes the following:

Who would have thought you'd have to do so much writing at work?
Reports, evaluations, equipment requisitions, e-mails, letters and memos...you're often judged by how well you express yourself in writing.
Whatever your job title or position, you need to be able to get your ideas across clearly and correctly, in the form that's expected in your workplace. Effective writing will help you succeed in your present job and help prepare you for the next step ahead. (p. 1)

One of English 109X’s learning outcomes is: “be more aware of [his/her] own writing process, including prewriting, drafting, revising, and editing” (English 109X IRM, p. 6). This learning outcome of 109X not only helps the students in their writing intensive class, but also in workplace writing later on; the students who are in 109X get to practice those essential skills and to learn to be effective communicators by learning the steps of the writing process and internalizing it through practice. ENGL 109X also prepares students for the different types of writing that they might encounter in the workplace by teaching students about different discourse communities and exposing them to those
differences via lessons during which students from different disciplines bring in and discuss the different types of writing that happens in their particular discourse community. One other lesson that students in 109X are exposed to is that all jobs require communication, whether it is written or oral, and that they must be prepared for the different styles and genres that they might see in workplace writing.

Chesla offers a list of characteristics that set workplace writing apart from other types of writing. This list consists of the next five characteristics: subject matter (usually about business), audience (very specific), purpose (must be stated quickly and clearly), format (following the necessary rules of presentation), and style (clear, concise, and straightforward). Most of the points about effective professional writing that Chesla mentions in her book are also the rules and characteristics that are taught in writing in academia; however, as Chesla notes, the difference between academic and professional writing is in the subject matter, audience, purpose, format, and style.

Chesla also writes that “writing for work should follow a specific set of rules and conventions. It demands communication that is logical, clear, and concise” (7). She also writes:

there are actually many different kinds, or genres, of writing, and each genre has its own unique characteristics and conventions (customs or practices) that distinguish it from other genres...Writing in the workplace is no exception, and a big part of becoming successful writer at work (or in any genre, for that matter) is mastering these characteristics and conventions. (p. 9)
One of the things that 109X teaches is that there are many genres in both academic and professional settings, and any one discipline can use several genres. Although this concept does not seem to apply as much in academia, it does play an important role in the workforce. In a small group tutorial, the tutor helps the students to understand the different conventions and requirements that disciplines and assignments require of them, and to use that understanding to create a more effective document, and thus, create effective communication that will not be misunderstood by the reader. Bruffee (1999) explains this peer tutoring/ small-group tutorial relationship with the following words, “what tutees need is help in translating the terms of the communities they are trying to enter--the academic and professional disciplines, people who read and write standard written English--into the terms of the communities they already belong to, and vice versa” (p. 94). Small-group tutorials allow the tutees to effectively read and write in the academic setting and also in the workplace because they learn the skills that are needed to help them first understand the assignment and the conventions that are needed in order to fulfill the assignment, and then to respond in an informed and effective matter. The peer tutor in small-group tutorials is there to help the tutee understand what the assignment calls for and how to correctly respond to it; similarly, one of the skills required for effective workplace communication is to understand and master the genres and conventions needed for certain communication assignments.

Edward Smith and Stephen Bernhardt (1995) open Writing at Work: Professional Writing Skills for People on the Job, their book about improving professional writing, with the following words:
Most people would agree that writing is one of the most essential skills in business. Writing is an important way in which a business presents its public self; it is also a means by which individuals within a business communicate. And writing is often the yardstick that we use to evaluate others’ performance and that others use to evaluate ours. (p. 1)

The common thread that seems to be running through all of the books about professional writing is that writing in the workplace is one of the most important skills that an employee can have by which individual and business performance is measured. If an employee fails to write in a professional and effective matter then that employee could be fired, and the business could have lost a lot of money because of a mistake in communication. On the other hand, a well written document or the proper communication can not only earn an employee a raise, but it can also mean business for the company.

Unlike in the academic setting, in the workplace, effective communication is high stake for both the individual employee and for the business.

Smith and Bernhardt write that:

Although very few people write full-time as a profession, many people find that writing is a large part of their chosen field. If you are one of these people, you may well have been surprised when you first started working by how much writing you do on the job: memos to coworkers and managers, electronic mail sent to a distribution list, forms to complete, letters to customers, weekly or monthly status reports, yearly appraisals--
and those are only the generic writing tasks that almost everyone tackles!

(p. 2)

The authors go on to say that what this book is going to teach the reader is how to become a confident writer by learning the necessary skills to write well in the workplace. Smith and Bernhardt go on to talk about appropriateness, grammar, punctuation, clarity, tone, and emphasis that need to be present in professional writing, and they present examples of the types of errors that can occur and how to correct them. Writing is not just something that students do in college to get a degree; writing is a form of communication that happens all the time, and it is particularly important to be able to write well in the workplace. Smith and Bernhardt write that “researchers who look at the workplace find that many employees feel uncomfortable with their writing. Most employees feel they spend too much time writing, that their writing is weak in one of a dozen ways, [and] that they really need to brush up on the principles of good writing” (p. 5). What both of the previous quotations show is that writing is inescapable in the workplace, that there will be more writing than most students anticipate, and that most of the college graduates going into professional writing feel that their writing skills are lacking. Gere talks about the fact that participation in small writing groups helps students to be more comfortable and confident about their writing than students that do not have a chance at participating in a small-group discussion and writing in a collaborative setting. ENGL 109X provides the small-group collaborative environment that Gere says helps students to gain confidence in their writing so that those college graduates are comfortable in their writing once they have to write professionally. Both academic and professional writing requires
students to have confidence in their writing process and writing skills; however, academic writing is more forgiving, since there are resources such as instructors, writing centers, and other peers to help. Professional writing, on the other hand, requires that the writer be independent and confident enough in writing that only the collaboration with a coworker, if anything, will be needed to complete the writing task.

According to a recent report conducted by The National Commission on Writing “Writing: A Ticket to Work...Or a Ticket Out” (2004) “120 major American corporations employing nearly 8 million people [report that] in today’s workplace writing is a “threshold skill” for hiring and promotion among salaried (i.e., professional) employees” (p. 3). This was a second report that the Commission has conducted, and it shows that writing is a skill that is usually expected by employers, and that companies are willing to sift through many qualified people until they find the ones that have the desirable level of communication skills. This report consists of tables with numerical responses from employers, and with many actual words from those employers. The survey reports that “more than half (51 percent) of responding companies say that they frequently or almost always take writing into consideration when hiring salaried employees” (p. 4). In this report, the respondents also talk about recent college graduates writing abilities and how most graduates are not equipped with proper writing skills. These employers also noted that the academic style writing that students do in school is unsuited for a professional writing setting. One of the respondents replied that “the skills of new college graduates are deplorable—across the board; spelling, grammar, sentence structure . . . I can’t believe people come out of college now not knowing what a sentence is” (p. 14). Another
employer states that “recent graduates may be trained in academic writing, but we find that kind of writing too verbose and wandering” (p. 14). What both of these responses show is that students are not meeting the standards of most employers’ expectations in writing skill level. Perhaps this is because classes are getting larger and each student cannot receive the help that he or she needs. Perhaps it is because the students think that they will never have to write on the job, and therefore they do not put as much effort or thought into their writing. However, the results of this survey done by The National Commission on Writing shows that writing is an essential skill for getting hired or for getting a promotion. While English 109X does not go into depth about many of the different genres found in the workplace, it does introduce the students to many of the genres that they will likely see in the workplace. English 109X also teaches students to be more confident in their writing skills. The class also teaches students how to self-edit, and this is one of the greatest skills that a writer can have because it enables him/her to correct either their own or a co-worker’s writing so that it meets the company’s standards.

In “What do People Need to Know about Writing in Order to Write in Their Jobs?” Chris Davies and Maria Birbili (2000) argue that writing is constantly being used in the workplace, but that many employees come unprepared because there are “limits to what can be learnt about writing in school” (p. 430). This article was written as a result of research done at several different workplace settings, and it shows that people at work are indeed mostly not prepared for the many different (sometimes difficult) writing assignments that often require a collaborative effort. The article mentions that employers
are trying to obviate the need for better writing skills and knowledge about writing in employees; however, many employers have had to either hire someone else to write instead of the employees, or to send employees to various business or technical writing classes. Davies and Birbili conclude this article by saying that

“writing of this kind [professional writing] can benefit from a wide range of strategies in order to ease its progress and ensure its quality - the conscious deployment of process strategies, the time needed for review and revision, opportunities for collaboration and feedback” (p. 444). English 109X provides the lessons mentioned in the quotation above because it teaches students about the recursive writing process and helps them practice within that process, it teaches students that time spend in review and revision is necessary for quality writing, and it provides students with the opportunity to communicate in a collaborative environment as they give and receive feedback. The lessons learned in a small-group tutorial help to create strong workplace writers that have a smoother transition from academic to professional writing.

Smith and Bernhardt (1995) lay out the points that are important to professional writing, and they are:

1. Professional writing is appropriate to the situation.

2. Professional writing is grammatically correct.

3. Professional writing uses punctuation to show what is-- and what is not-- important.

4. Professional writing uses a clear and concise vocabulary.
5. Professional writing is appropriately active and personal, rather than passive and impersonal.

6. Professional writing emphasizes what is important—and downplays what is not. (p. 359)

To add to this list, Mehlich and Smith-Worthington (1985) write that successful employees (and students) are those that can:

1. Communicate effectively with others at all levels, both inside and outside the organization
2. Learn and change as the demands of the workplace change.
3. Work in teams
4. Use technology to get the job done efficiently and economically
5. Think critically and solve problems, and
6. Make important decisions. (p. iii)

In theory, academic writing has similar expectations as professional writing because it too needs to be appropriate, grammatically correct, use correct punctuation, use clear vocabulary, written in active rather than passive voice, and emphasize only what is important. But while all of these criteria are true for academic writing as well, professional writing requires that the writer be able to adapt all of these points into any genre of writing that is required to complete the task, while in the academic setting these criteria will most likely apply to an essay of some sort. Mehlich and Smith-Worthington write that “the difference between [academic and technical writing] is in the presentation, audience, and approach” (p. 11). Professional writing can be presented in many different
forms, such as memos, emails, reviews, forms, etc., while most gradable academic writing is presented in the form of an essay¹. The audience in academic writing is usually seen as the instructor, peers, or other people interested in the subject-- it is more of less clear cut; however, in professional writing the writer could be writing to coworkers, staff, employer, readers who know nothing about the topic, employers in fields other than the one that the writer is currently in, etc.

Another big difference between academic and professional writing is the approach to writing. In academic writing, students usually have several resources to which they can go to get help with their writing, the students are usually encouraged to follow the recursive three-step writing process, students might or might not have to do some research, and finally a piece of writing will be produced. Professional writing is more fast-paced; in order for business to thrive, documents must be produced effectively and efficiently. Professional writing also makes use of the writing process, but it happens much faster, and most times there is not much time left for revision, though it is recommended. Much of professional writing will also require some sort of research (formal or informal) so that the writer knows what to talk about, how to talk about it appropriately, and how to effectively reach the audience for whom the text is intended.

One of the key similarities between academic and workplace writing and communicating is that both advise and promote students/employees to write with the writing process in mind. In Writing at Work, Smith (1995) writes about the recursive

¹ This is not true for ALL academic writing; however, the majority of writing assignments done in non-scientific field are a type of essay, though there are some cover letters, unofficial emails, and abstracts that come along in some classes.
shape of the writing process by saying that "reading over a draft or getting feedback on it from a co-worker may call for additional planning; revising may reveal the need for more information; difficulty in editing for word choice may lead to a realization that a whole section needs to be re-conceived. In short, it's wisest to think of writing as a process that constantly loops back on itself" (p. 2). Smith also writes that “successful writers are much more effective at using the different components of the writing process (such as): planning and information gathering, drafting, revising, editing, proofreading” (p. 2) and that "very few people are terrific at every stage [of the writing process], which is why professional publishers have such a clear division of labor and why much workplace writing is to some extent collaborative" (p. 4). This “recipe for successful writing” in the workforce is not that different from the continuous writing process that is taught in the academic setting, and it stresses the importance of managing time effectively in order to fit in all the different stages of the writing process for effective communication. Small group tutorials also teach students to manage their time more effectively by requiring that students bring in at least drafts or outlines of the papers that they have due in the future in their writing intensive classes so that the whole class would be able to read it and provide necessary feedback. Giving and receiving feedback is in itself an important skill to master, and one that ENGL 109X trains the students in. Chesla writes that “writing is communication--and if the person receiving your communication doesn't understand your message, you've failed in your task. By getting feedback, you can help ensure that your message is coming across clearly” (p. 3). In the workplace, getting and knowing how to give feedback is an important skill that helps to prevent many miscommunications.
because that piece of writing has already gone through one or two readers who might have caught something in the writing that should not be there or that sounded confusing. Feedback should not be given just in forms of writing; according to Bruffee, oral feedback and “talking it out” is just as important for effective communication and understanding. In *Collaborative Learning*, Bruffee writes that “learning to converse constructively with peers about writing is at least equally important for student writers because, as we shall see William Perry’s informants reveal, conversation with people we regard as our peers--our equals, members of our own community--is almost always the most productive kind of conversation” (p. 59). One of the main similarities between academic and workplace writing is that both require students/employees to collaborate within their community of peers/coworkers in order to create an effective piece of writing and to understand and learn the different genres and conventions in that particular field.

Anne Beaufort, in *Writing in the Real World: Making the Transition from School to Work*, writes about the experience of four professional writers at a non-profit organization called JRC. Beaufort interviewed and followed the four writers for some time to find out what kind of writing they were doing on-the-job, what kinds of lessons from academic writing were the most useful for the type of writing they are doing now, and their growth as writers. Beaufort (1999) writes that “for writing to be effective, composers have to learn to adapt, quickly and effectively, the style, length, and content of their texts, and they must do so in less than optimal working conditions” (p. 2). In the instances of the four writers that Beaufort interviewed, all four stated that it was hard to transition from writing in the conditions that one chooses to write in to writing in the
hectic conditions of a shared office. What the previous quotation states is that a professional writer must know writing conventions so well that the writer will be able to write even in a busy office with interruptions. Beaufort also goes on to say that “leaders in business and government complain that college graduates cannot handle important workplace writing tasks and therefore cost companies time and money” (p. 3).

The more research I find about the transference of writing from academia to the workplace, the more I discover that most students go into professional writing without having the mastery of the writing skills that are so needed within the professional sphere. For this very reason I believe that small-group tutorials, such as 109X, are crucial to teaching and enforcing the writing process and good writing practices in the academic setting so that students can take those skills and use them once they are writing professionally. After an interview about the types of skills that the four professional writers found transferrable from academia to technical writing, here are the replies that Beaufort (1999) received:

Certainly the skills like being able to summarize something, or writing an opinion about agreeing or disagreeing with something,

I learned how to think structurally about writing...presenting an argument in a logical fashion, You’re writing for an audience, as opposed to journal writing. And you want something from that audience,

The critical thinking thing did help me bring ideas together,
The more you write and the more you learn how to organize your thoughts in different contexts, you can pretty much apply that to anything. (p. 183)

What these four writers seem to be saying within these lines is that there are skills that are universal to writing no matter if the writing is done in academia or on the job; however, the situations and the contexts vary. The writing process is an important thing to learn, along with skills such as summarization, grammar, organization, critical thinking, negotiation, collaboration, audience awareness, and rhetorical awareness. All of these lessons are taught, to some degree, in a composition classroom; however, the difference is that in a class such as 109X, the students are given more time to spend practicing these lessons, and that in turn boosts their confidence in their writing abilities and allows them to internalize their writing process. Because of all of this, the students who have been exposed to small-group tutorials can transition more easily into a new role as a writer in a professional setting since they already got the practice with collaborative effort in 109X.

*Writing in Nonacademic Settings (1986)* is a book that is part research, part suggestions for future curriculum development, and a collaborative effort of many teachers and professional writers who strive to teach their students technical writing in a way that would help those students easily transition from school to work. Upon receiving results back from a survey on workers’ attitudes and beliefs concerning education about writing, here is what the researchers discovered:
1. Workers believe that people can learn how to improve their writing ability through on-the-job experience.

2. Employer-sponsored training in writing is available to many workers, but not to a majority.

3. More company-sponsored writing courses seem to be needed.

4. Many workers consider writing courses to be an important part of college curricula.

5. Workers recommend that a wide range of writing skills be taught in college writing courses; ranked highest by workers are the skills needed to write clearly, write concisely, organize well, and write grammatically.

6. Workers suggest that writing courses should teach skills in writing a variety of kinds of documents (p. 68-74).

What these six points suggest is that writing is teachable, writing courses are important to professional writing later, and a variety of skills and documents should be taught in writing classes. I find these points valuable because I feel that 109X fulfills some of these. Because 109X is a small-group tutorial, it teaches students that they can learn to write well, and provides them with many opportunities. 109X also teaches students about different types of documents (by having students bring in examples of the types of writing that they do within their discipline), and 109X teaches students many different writing skills so that students would be more comfortable with their writing. Thus, a small-group tutorial helps students to practice and internalize writing, which leads to more able and confident professional writers.
In short, academic and professional (or any other type of writing) mostly differs in several characteristics which are genre-specific. As mentioned, any kind of writing usually encourages the writer to take note of and use the recursive writing process for a well-written document. While academic writing teaches students to write well, students are not exposed to the kind of writing that they will have to do on-the-job or that type of atmosphere; however, small-group tutorials help to introduce students to some of the kind of writing that they might see in the workplace. In a workplace setting, employees must learn to write under pressure, collaborate with co-workers on most types of writing projects, and present a well-written document in a short time frame, and students should have the opportunity to be introduced to such writing and atmosphere.
Chapter 3
Methodology, Results, Findings

Data Collection

As mentioned in Chapter 1, my hypothesis is that English 109X helps students to make the transition between academic and professional writing more smoothly than the students who had not had the advantage of taking the tutorial. I believe that the collaboration, writing practice, and the giving and receiving of feedback that goes on in a 109X classroom helps to produce students who are more aware of their own writing practices and who can confidently compose what is required of them and help a colleague out along the way. The following pages will help to show that my hypothesis is correct, and that students feel that they come out after taking English 109X better prepared to write. I began collecting the data for this research project in Spring 2013, in the middle of the semester, when students would have been exposed to course goals, and the types of activities that I believe set apart small-group tutorials like ENGL 109X as better transitions between academic and professional writing than regular writing courses. At the beginning of the Spring 2013 semester, I asked tutors via email if they would be willing to have their class participate in the research project, and then to ask their students for participation via a cover letter. I asked the students to fill out an anonymous questionnaire, and the tutors to give me a copy of their syllabus, the completed surveys, and the quantitative anonymous course evaluation forms that most tutors pass out at mid- and end of the semester (See Appendix A, B, and C).
After gathering all of the research documents, I analyzed the data by creating separate charts which showed what students in 109X thought they had learned, what the course outcomes were, what students thought still needed to be taught in 109X, and what reading/writing skills students thought employers seek for in their employees.

Specifically, my questions asked what major was the student in, if it would be helpful to have a 109X course that would be based solely on the student’s major, what the student’s experiences with group tutorials have been like, whether or not his or her 109X section met/exceeded/did not meet the course goals, the types of documents the student thought he or she would need to know how to write on the job, and what the most useful activities in 109X were.

I had three sections participate, with thirty students who came from completely different backgrounds (i.e. majors, writing experiences, tutorial experiences, discourse communities who filled out the questionnaires). Table 3.1 shows the diversity of majors that were situated in the three 109X classes. Altogether, there were eighteen different majors within the class.

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<td>Criminal Justice</td>
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<td>Business Finance</td>
<td>Health Science</td>
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<td>Deaf Studies</td>
<td>Recreation, Park, and Tourist Admin.</td>
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<td>Theatre Arts</td>
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<td>Computer Engineering</td>
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</table>

Table 3.1 List of Majors
One of the questions that was on the survey asked if it would be useful to have a WI course and a 109X course solely for the students’ major. The reason why I thought that this question needed to be on the survey is because while I taught the class, there were many opinions about the diverse environment within a tutorial that is led by a tutor. I was interested to find out if students believed that a 109X course and a WI course within their major would be a better combination than a WI and 109X course outside of their major, and if they thought they would benefit more from such a combination. I was not surprised that a majority of the students answered “yes” (63%) or “maybe” (27%), and only 13% responded with a “no.” Most of the respondents wrote that they believed that if there was a WI and a 109X course designed specifically for their major then they would receive more constructive, major-based feedback that would help them to improve their writing within their major. Many respondents also wrote that they believed that if WI and 109X were offered within their major that those two classes would be more useful towards teaching writing because then the student would be exposed to the different forms of writing, genres, and problems within their own field. However, 13% stated that if both 109X and the WI course were solely for their major then they either would not be exposed to much writing (for majors that do not require much writing), or that they would be stuck looking at and hearing from the same perspective over and over. (see Table 3.2). The argument that this 13% made was that they sometimes learned new things, or explored new ideas and genres in writing, because someone in their 109X or WI course came from a different major. Many students responded that they simply did not have a
WI course that was offered in their major, and thus took any WI course that was available. Interestingly, some students wrote that their WI course does more (or less) writing than another WI course so that some students get more writing practice than others.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th># of Responses</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maybe</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.2: WI and 109X by Major

A question that sheds some light on the number of students who had some experience with a group tutorial asked what the students’ experiences with group tutorials had been thus far, to which they could answer “first time,” “helpful,” “somewhat helpful,” or “useless.” In support for my hypothesis that small-group tutorials are beneficial and help improve the writing of the students in the class, the majority of the students responded positively to this question; however, there were many students who were in a group tutorial for the first time. Out of the thirty respondents, 43% said that 109X was their first tutorial experience, 30% said that they found group tutorials to be “somewhat helpful,” and 27% said that they found group tutorials to be helpful. Only 7% responded that they found group tutorials, like 109X, to be “useless.” (see Table 3.3). Based upon these outcomes, my hypothesis that group tutorials are a learning tool that help students to address both their strengths and weaknesses in a certain area, such as
writing, in a more informal and low-stakes setting in which they feel comfortable enough to voice what they have to say without having to worry that their grade might be lowered or that the “smarter” students in the class will judge them, is supported. I believe that the reason that students responded that they find small-group tutorials to be helpful is because they not only get to practice their writing and feedback skills more often, but they also have a chance to talk to others who are having a hard time writing the strongest and most effective paper that they could; the students in the class also know that their tutor is also their peer and not a teacher who has to hand them a grade, so they feel more comfortable discussing what they need help on, and end up receiving more necessary feedback and advice that they can build upon for future writing assignments.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Number of Responses</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Helpful</td>
<td>8/30</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat Helpful</td>
<td>9/30</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Useless</td>
<td>2/30</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First time in a tutorial</td>
<td>13/30</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.3: Group Tutorial Helpfulness

The first question on the survey asks what the students hope to learn out of 109X without giving any options (thus allowing them to write what they felt they wanted to learn), and this is what the students replied: out of the thirty students, 53% said that they
hoped to learn how to become effective and confident writers, 23% said that they wanted to learn to improve their writing skills, 7% said that they wanted to learn effective peer editing skills, and 3% said that they wanted to have a grammar review. Because students get so much practice reading and writing in the 109X class, they naturally tend to be more comfortable with their writing. Many students, upon the completion of 109X, have written in the course evaluation forms or in one of the essays that are assigned in 109X that the class had helped them to gain confidence in their writing skills and helped them improve their writing skills. The majority of the students who took the survey (76%) hoped to learn something about writing skills and how to be more effective as a writer. What this percentage shows is that students know that they have weaknesses in communication through writing, and they are hoping that 109X will help them recognize their weaknesses and improve them.

Since students get to read so much of their fellow students’ writing, they often point out to each other during peer reviews where the writer could make some changes because one of the points of writing, such as organization, language, tone, etc. are not as strong or convincing as they can be. Thus, if students continually get comments about a certain section of their paper (introduction, body, conclusion, thesis), or if they consistently get comments about one or more of the points of writing, then they know that those are the weaknesses that need working on in future papers. Most of the students commented that they would like to be “better writers” after taking the 109X course.

However, there was a variety of answers to this question (see Table 3.4). One student wrote that he is hoping to learn “anything that the University thinks is required
for me to graduate after taking the WPJ.” Another student wrote that she hoped to “write stronger [papers] with confidence, and get a better understanding of what is needed in a paper.” Yet another student wrote that he hoped to learn how to “be able to be more dedicated about setting more time aside for more than one draft of a paper.” Fewer students (7%) wrote that they hoped that 109X will teach them to give effective feedback, but the class offers that through the training that the tutor provides about effective feedback, and through the weekly practice of giving feedback in class to peers. Giving effective feedback is also an important skill that students will not only use in the academic setting evaluating their peers, but it is also a skill that is necessary for workplace writing.

The ability to give constructive feedback is also important to students for evaluating their own writing because they will have built up the questions and the practice of asking those effective peer editing questions not only of their peers, but also of their own writing. A mere 3% said that they hoped that they would learn more grammar in 109X; however, 109X does not really teach grammar, unless most of the class seems to be struggling with it. Grammar is considered to be an LOC (lower-order concern) rather than an HOC (higher-order concern), which is why 109X does not focus on it, but based on the comments that students left at the end of the surveys, and at the end of the semester evaluation forms, grammar might be something that should be addressed more within 109X, but I will revisit this point a little later in the thesis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hoping to learn out of 109X</th>
<th># of Responses</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How to become an effective and confident writer</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hoping to learn out of 109X</td>
<td># of Responses</td>
<td>Percentage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve writing skills</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grammar Review</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effective peer editing skills</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.4: Expectations of 109X

**Learning Outcomes and Student Responses**

For the purpose of this question on the survey, I wrote out the learning outcome for the 109X course and asked the students to write whether the lessons that they learned in their section did not meet/ meet/ or exceed the learning outcomes. ENGL 109X has four structured and very to-the-point learning outcomes that need to be met in each section, and each syllabus states the following outcomes:

Upon completing 109X, students will:

- be more aware of their own writing process, including prewriting, drafting, revising, and editing; (Outcome 1)
- develop an increased understanding of the importance of giving and receiving feedback throughout the writing process; (Outcome 2)
- develop an increased understanding of the discourse conventions of academic discourse communities; (Outcome 3)
- develop critical self-reflection and self-assessment skills through writing (Outcome 4)  
  (Glade, p. 1)
In the rest of this thesis, I will refer to each of the outcomes by their numbers. Out of the thirty-one students who replied to this question, the majority replied that their sections had either “met” or “exceeded” in all four areas of the learning outcomes. There were a few though, who responded negatively, and wrote that their course “did not meet” some of the learning outcomes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcomes</th>
<th>Did not meet</th>
<th>Met</th>
<th>Exceeded</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Outcome 1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outcome 2</td>
<td></td>
<td>25</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outcome 3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>27</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outcome 4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.5: 109X Learning Outcomes

The numbers on this table show that the majority of the students found that their section of 109X had either covered or went above-and-beyond covering a certain learning outcome. Particularly interesting is that no student replied that their section did not meet Outcome 2, which is “an understanding of giving and receiving feedback throughout the writing process.” This goal is important because when students learn to give and receive feedback, they can also look at their own writing and have a better idea of what needs to be revised or edited. Also, according to Table 3.5, Outcome 3, “understanding of the discourse conventions of academic discourse communities,” has four “did not meet” and no “exceeded” responses. This particular outcome is not only tricky to present within the
109X context, but students, I think, are still on shaky ground when talking about discourse conventions even after taking the 109X course; however, most of the responses to this learning outcome were “met.” From my experience as a 109X tutor, I felt that there just was not enough time to explain discourse conventions in great detail, and I think the students were more aware of this concept at the end of the semester. In addition, many students wrote on their end-of-semester evaluations that they still were not clear about what exactly discourse conventions were.

**Student responses to the types of documents that they will have to write at work in their field**

This particular question on the survey is more concretely related to my research question since it asks students what kinds of documents they will be producing when on the job in relation to the types of writing assignments that they have to fulfill within their majors now, and in 109X. The reason why I find this question so important is because in academia, the document that is produced most often is the essay, though once again, there are exceptions; however, in the real world, and in most majors, students learn that what they are writing constantly are not essays, but rather a plethora of other genres. One of the lessons that 109X teaches through the nature of peer review is that there are many different genres and forms that writing takes on when it is put into the context of a certain major or the “real world.” Students, too, are aware of the fact that they will probably not be using the essay format so much once they are working because most of the responses to this question were that memos, emails, and reports were the more likely documents.
that students would have to produce as future employees. The problem in academic writing is that too often emails that are sent to the teacher are not discussed (even though they can be full of errors), memos are virtually unwritten at the academic level, and reports are mostly used within the more “technical” majors in school. The benefit of 109X is that the students in the class will usually see some of these different genres, or will at least hear about them, sometime during the course of the semester. Table 3.6 contains the numbers of responses for this question.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Documents</th>
<th># of Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Essays</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Memos</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emails</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reports</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Articles</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Writing</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abstracts</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summaries</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cover Letters</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.6: Expected On-the-job Documents

On the survey, I thought it would be important to know what lessons within their class the students found to be most useful for them. I expected that the majority would respond that the peer review activities were helpful for improving writing, and my expectations were confirmed. Besides peer review, students responded that they found activities such as writing drafts, thesis building, self-reflection, review of sentence structure, free writing, prewriting activities, and online journals to be helpful as well. The following list gives the responses out of thirty-one students:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Peer review</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing drafts</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thesis building</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-reflection</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review of sentence structure</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free writing</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online journals</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prewriting activities</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The majority of the students responded that the peer review that they did in the class helped them to improve their own writing. One student wrote the following: “Evaluating and editing peers’ writing has been a good practice in preparation for my own writing.” Another student wrote that “peer reviewing others’ papers made me aware of my mistakes.” On a different note, a student wrote the following about what the class helped him/her do: “[it helps me to] understand the prompt so that my writing is straightforward and that I meet what is expected in the paper.” Many students commented on the benefits of the peer review that they had to do in the class because they learned not only how to give effective feedback, but they also learned what their own mistakes were and how to fix them after seeing them in their peers’ papers.

The final question on the survey asked students to suggest what else should be covered in the 109X class that is not already. Some students wrote that the class was good the way that it was already, some wrote that they wanted more grammar review,
some wrote that the class needed to be more focused on their WI classes rather than on anything else. A few responses were more informative about what the student thought still needed to be covered in the class, or what needed to change in 109X. Here are a few responses:

- more work towards our actual writing not just reading articles.

- more discourse specific formatting.

- more techniques on how to write thesis statements, introductions, conclusions, essays, emails, cover letters, etc.

- [Grammar] review. How to better write a conclusion and introduction.

- Actually get help with essays by peer review rather than just taking notes.

From these responses, it can be seen that topics such as actual writing, discourse specific formatting, writing techniques and tips, and grammar review had showed up in the students’ 109X classrooms; however, students felt that they needed more practice or exposure to those topics.

The anonymous semester evaluations that students fill out for their 109X tutors at mid and end of the semester are based on a 1-5 scale, with 1 being “not helpful at all” and 5 being “very helpful” or 1 being “strongly disagree” and 5 being “strongly agree.” For
the purpose of my research, I chose a few questions from this evaluation sheet that I felt were important to my research questions. The evaluation sheet consists of six questions, two of which are broken down into subcomponents. Question 1 asks students to “rate the extent to which you found components of English 109X helpful in terms of successfully completing your writing intensive (WI) course on a scale of 1 to 5.” Question 2 through 6 is based on the students’ experience in English 109X and asks students to “circle the number that most closely corresponds to your perspective for each of the following statements...English 109X helped me...”

Table 3.7 shows which statements I chose from the evaluation form and what the student responses were based on four sections and thirty-five students. See appendix for original evaluation form.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement and #of responses to the scale</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q1b.Receiving feedback on drafts of writing assignments for WI course</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q1c.Discussing aspects of effective academic writing</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q2a.English 109X helped me become more aware of my own writing process, including prewriting, drafting, revising, and editing</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q2c.English 109X helped me develop an increased understanding of the discourse conventions of academic discourse communities</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q2g.English 109X helped me understand prompts for writing assignments for my WI</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.7: Part of Evaluation Form
Question 3 of the evaluation form asks students what they learned from the class and question 4 asks them what they would have “liked to learn that wasn’t covered or emphasized in this class” (evaluation form). The replies to both of these questions have given me more insight into student responses to being in 109X and its usefulness and benefits for them. Instead of writing out each response to these questions, I created broader headings under which those elements could go.

**What did you learn from this class:**

- give/receive better feedback
- awareness of writing process
- helpful hints/activities in writing
- how to create a better thesis
- skills of effective writers
- critical thinking before and during the writing process
- prewriting techniques
- the steps of the writing process
- reading carefully and critically
- citation of MLA and APA
- how to self-edit

Based on what students wrote that they learned from English 109X, the class covered all of the learning outcomes and more. All of these skills are important for being a successful writer on the job. Some students wrote that English 109X had helped them to read carefully and critically, and this reminded me of the skill that students often overlook
when they are trying to become effective writers, and that is reading with care. By helping students understand prompts and what their teachers are asking them to do in their papers, tutors help the students to understand how to read with depth and a critical eye. This is a very important skill to have since if students, or professional writers, cannot carefully and critically read the directions given to them then there is a misunderstanding in communication that can cost the students points and the professional writers a loss for the company or their jobs.

Questions 4 of the evaluation form asks students about what they would have liked to learn that wasn’t covered or emphasized. I feel that this question is important because it shows where English 109X can be revised to make it more effective for students, and because some of the responses to this question will help to prepare the students more towards job-related communication skills.

What would you have liked to learn that wasn’t covered or emphasized:

- how to write the conclusion
- grammar skills (review and more)
- how to write research papers
- how to organize an essay
- how to focus within an essay
- sentence structure
- MLA and APA citation
- developing a more argumentative thesis
Many of the things that students wrote as the answer to question 4 are also skills that they will need when they write on the job. One of the big topics that is considered an LOC, but is fairly important in professional writing, is grammar. Most classes, outside of the grammar-specific ones, do not focus on grammar; however, in order to polish writing, students need to be able to do this well. Of course, other steps in the writing process, such as writing effectively, are more important than grammar, which is why basic grammar is often overlooked. Organization, focus, and a well-written thesis/argument are considered to be HOCs and they carry a hefty weight in both academic and technical writing. Some of the skills that show up in the “what I learned” section also show up as the answer to question 4 “what I wanted to learn or have emphasized.” I think this is because the responses come from several different sections, and because some students felt that they needed more emphasis on a certain topic because that is where they struggle the most in writing. Since this is a mid-semester evaluation, the tutor probably will go more in-depth about some of the above mentioned topics within the second half of the semester.

I have decided to include some comments that students had included about English 109X on their evaluation forms and surveys because I think that it is important to know what exactly do the students think about having to take English 109X. Some of them are positive, some of them neutral, and there are several that did not feel that the class helped them in any aspects of their writing. One student wrote that 109X had helped him/her not just with her WI, but also with her other classes: “My experience in English 109X has been very helpful not just in my WI, but in all my classes. As mentioned before, I felt like I did not need to take 109X, but came to find out that it really opened
my eyes.” Another student wrote, “From this class I learned a lot about my writing experience overall and how to improve as a writer.” Below are more students’ comments about the class:

I have also benefited from learning how to peer-review and to look at HOCs in writing. In addition, learning about different ways to look at writing has taught me to analyze and look critically at someone’s writing.

One of the things that helped me the most was learning how to peer review. I learned how to give good and helpful feedback, and how to help classmates improve their papers. By doing this, I was not only helping my classmates, but I was also helping myself because I was able to learn from other peoples’ mistakes as well as from my own.

The tutor feedback was helpful, but I do not feel the class overall made a difference in my writing.

Based on the survey and student responses on the evaluation form, it is safe to say that most students who are placed into English 109X, whether they see it as fair or not in the first place, come out of the class feeling that they learned something useful.

**Discussion**

In order for the rest of my research to fall in place, I would like to take a look at my initial research questions and analyze them in light of the data provided above.

Because my research questions were specific to small-group tutorials and workplace
writing. I used the knowledge that I have gained from the extensive reading I had done to make the speculated answers based on students responses (what they learned, what was presented in the class, and the course outcomes) and how all of those compared to what the technical writing books said was important in real-world writing.

My first research question is: How does 109X prepare students to become effective workplace writers?

Before I answer this, let us re-cap some of the important writing knowledge that is needed for successful professional writing. In Chapter 2 we learned that professional writing has to be well organized, coherent, unified, well-supported, have an introduction and a conclusion, be audience specific, have proper format, be clear, and be grammatically correct. Much of these necessities for effective on-the-job writing are similar to what is necessary in effective writing in general, which is why some students wrote that English 109X helped them not only with their WI course, but with all of their writing. Now, I would like to go back to my first research question. English 109X prepares students to be effective workplace writers by teaching them skills such as, teamwork, self-editing, giving and receiving feedback, collaboration, discourse community specific genres, formatting, sentence structure, critical thinking, and critical reading. Also, the community within the English 109X classroom, specifically the community of a small-group tutorial, is very similar to the workplace community. The two are similar because in both writing situations the people within the community are more of less aiming for the same goal and working collaboratively to reach it. In English 109X, both the tutor and the students are aiming to improve their writing skills and to
master effective writing. In professional writing, both managers and the rest of the team members are usually aiming for the same goal, whether it be winning a case, proving some new theory, securing a grant, or making more money for the company.

My next research question was: What specific lessons are taught in 109X which students can utilize in the workplace?

For this question I looked once again at student responses about what they learned from English 109X and what lessons they found to be most useful. Based on students’ responses, lessons such as giving/receiving feedback, self-editing, critical thinking, critical/careful reading, beginning and continuing through the writing process, and writing confidence were all lessons that students wrote helped them write for their WI courses, and also helped with all of their other writing. After going over the points of a successful on-the-job writer, it can be seen that the lessons taught in 109X help students gain the kind of writing skills that will be useful not only during their academic years, but also as professional writers fulfilling their job effectively. One of the lessons that students wrote that they would like more of, and that they found to be effective, was on discourse communities. This lesson is also very important to professional writing because it shows students that there are many genres in writing, and that different majors have different genres within them with specific expectations.

The third question that I had when starting out my research is: Are there specific assignments that teach 109X students the kinds of writing that they will be doing in the workforce?
This question is somewhat similar to the previous research question, but I was hoping to find some specific assignments that tutors use in their classes that students found to be the most effective for teaching them the lessons that they were supposed to master in order to become effective writers. However, because English 109X is a tutorial that has a syllabus which is mostly filled with students scheduled to “present” their papers during a certain class session rather than some assignments written in, I was unable to get much information to answer this question. Since most students responded that they learned a lot about giving/receiving feedback, and because it is also something that needs to be taught before students can do this successfully, I believe that there must be specific assignments or activities that are done in class to fulfill this. From my experience, a typical session of a workshop would go something like this: the student(s) scheduled to present that day pull out six to eight copies of the writing that they would like to get feedback on, and then the class is divided into groups, or some tutors prefer to assemble the class into a large discussion circle. For written feedback, the tutors either pass out a detailed questionnaire about the paper being reviewed, or ask students to make notes on the paper itself based on several questions that the scheduled students answer on the board. The questions that the scheduled student(s) would have to answer are: name, what class is the writing for, what are the main writing concerns for this paper, and any special instructions that the readers need to know about. After the quiet reading and writing of feedback, the class, or the groups, has time to discuss and bounce ideas off of the student whose writing is being read while that student quietly listens. After that, the student is allowed to explain what he/she was trying to do in the paper, and clarify what
his/her classmates meant by their comments. This gives the scheduled student a chance to receive both written and oral feedback from at least five different people and the tutor. As a former tutor myself, I know that during the tutor meeting with the 109X Coordinator, we had to share some specific assignments with the rest of the tutors on a certain lesson. I have included some of the lessons that students found helpful that were shared during some of the meetings that I had been to, as well as a lesson from the Tutor Training Manual (see Appendix D and E). I have mentioned earlier how workshops are led in a 109X class, but I would like to go in depth here. Most 109X classes gather together into a large circle or into several circles of students for both the reading of the papers that are brought in, and for group discussions. Most days there are at least two readers who bring in six to eleven copies of whatever writing they would like the class to give them feedback on (usually scheduled at the beginning of the semester based on WI writing deadlines). The students then receive either a structured questionnaire to write on, or are asked to give written feedback on the students’ paper. When the students write only on the student’s paper, then the student writer must answer some questions written on the board. These questions are usually asking for the students’ name, the class for which the writing was done for, what discipline the writing is for, what the writers concerns are, and if there are any special directions that were in the prompt for peers to consider when giving feedback. The students and the tutors then quietly read through the papers while providing written feedback. After a certain time, the tutor calls the class together and the students give oral feedback to the student writer, while the writer must sit and listen. Afterwards, the writer is allowed to talk and ask any clarifying questions.
Sometimes the tutor will give a mini-lesson either at the beginning or the end of the class, or the class might have a large class discussion based on a reading that they had to read on Blackboard. Because both written and oral feedback is required each session, the students learn to give both types of feedback freely and constructively.

The fourth question that I had at the beginning of my research was: How does academic writing differ from professional writing?

For the answer to this question, I felt that it was important to go back to Chapter 2 since I discussed this more in depth within the context of the resources that I read. According to one of the sources, “the difference between [academic and technical writing] is in the presentation, audience, and approach” (Smith-Worthington, 1995, p.11). Academic and professional writing is similar, and yet, different. Smith-Worthington and other authors write that the requirements for effective writing for both settings are similar (strong introduction and conclusion, good grammar, audience awareness, organization, sentence structure, coherence, flow, and paragraph development). However, writing on the job differs in nature from academic writing. What I mean by this is that the audience is usually both broad and specific because most times the writer is trying to reach either an audience as wide as all readers or viewers of their product where different age groups, different personalities, and different interests have to be factored in; however, sometimes the writer just has to have the attention of the manager or the head of the company.

Academic writing differs from this because the student is usually writing for the teacher with a grade in mind, and if the teacher is composing something specific for the class then it is usually also written with a student audience in mind. The only exceptions to
writing in the academic setting stepping out of this teacher/student audience is when faculty write to each other or the dean (it becomes professional writing with co-workers), students appealing for grants or some research type of writing done by teachers or students, and writing that is done for publishing purposes either by students or teachers. The presentation of the writing in academia versus professional writing is also quite different. After finishing school, most students probably think that what they mostly will be writing and assessed on takes the form of an essay.

However, in real-world writing, the essay is often not the genre in which professional writing is presented. In real-world writing, students are more likely to see emails, memos, reports, presentations, cover letters rather than an essay, but in academia, writing presented in those forms is usually not graded (though there are exceptions). Smith-Worthington state that another way that academic writing differs from professional writing is in the approach. In academic writing, the student is most often given enough time to complete an essay, the student is usually provided with clear directions about what to do (provided that the student can analyze them), and the student usually is asked to write an essay of some sort. After that, the student usually leans heavily on quoting from sources to come up with an essay that will “wow” the professor. There are a few exceptions to the above described scenario, and those usually are one of the following: very genre-specific writing assignments done in graduate school, research papers in a science field, or an assignment that specifically asks the students to write using a specific genre and very rigidly following the discourse community guidelines. Professional writing is a bit different than most academic writing. Writers on-the-job have very tight
schedules in which they need to accomplish not only the writing and reading part of their job, but everything else that needs to be done as well. While students have a certain time limit for their writing, they have the privilege of working mostly on that writing assignment and a longer period of time. Professional writers are also not given many directions about how to format something that they were asked to write; they just have to educate themselves. Professional writers also have to be able to write effectively in any genre that is asked of them and about the subject that they were asked to write/present on without any “fluff.” Whoever is receiving that piece of writing wants it to be as condensed and informative as possible because they do not have hours to read that piece of writing. So, although there are many similarities in the way that writing is done in both settings; there are also many differences that set apart one type of writing from the other.

My final research question is: Is there anything that 109X can do to make the gap between academic and professional writing less noticeable for the students taking the tutorial?

Small-group tutorials like English 109X already give students the benefit of more preparedness for on-the-job writing and communicating when compared to those students who do not participate in a small-group tutorial; however, I wonder how English 109X can further be improved to make that transition even less intimidating. After all, in Chapter 2 we saw that most employees dread writing on the job because they feel ill-equipped to do so. One of the greatest benefits of English 109X is that student writers in the class reportedly feel more at ease with the writing process, and more confident in their writing skills because they get to work one-on-one with a tutor who knows more
about writing than they do, but who also stands in place of a mediator between teacher and student which is similar to a co-worker. Another plus that English 109X gives to the students is that students learn to work collaboratively with each other, and this is a skill that comes in handy once writing a resume and working in a professional setting. One of the many benefits of 109X is also the skill of giving and receiving feedback, which also teaches students how to revise and edit their own work. Students in a small-group tutorial also get to practice their critical thinking skills not just on paper, but the entire time that they are giving constructive feedback and thinking of ways that they can help their fellow students to improve their papers. Other benefits of English 109X that help students transition more easily from academic and into the professional setting are confidence in providing input/ideas in class, exposure to different genres, exposure and discussions about different majors and the types of writing that is done in those majors, self-reflection about own writing process, and helpful strategies about forming arguments, beginning writing a paper, and the ability to decipher what the directions/prompt given asks the individual to do. All of these skills help to prepare the students within the small-group tutorial to be successful on-the-job writers. I also have some suggestions on how to make the small-group tutorial even more effective for transition from academic to professional writing (based on students replies), and I will discuss them in-depth in Chapter 4.

Based on the student replies to both the evaluation form and the survey, my hypothesis has been mostly confirmed. My hypothesis stated that:

109X and similar small-group tutorial classrooms better equip students for professional writing than a regular classroom does because of the tutor-student
model, the very collaborative classroom environment, the peer reviews, and the independence and confidence that the small-group tutorial helps to instill in students.

Student responses have confirmed that English 109X and such small-tutorials are indeed beneficial for students writing. Small-group tutorials help students to become more effective writers, readers, and thinkers, and provide students with skills that they can take with them when writing on the job.
Chapter 4

Conclusion: Putting it all Together

One purpose of collaborative learning is to give college and university students opportunities to experience this reacculturative, conversational process, direct and indirect, by which not only scientists, but also doctors, lawyers, mathematicians, sociologists, classists, and other bearers of intellectual tradition construct knowledge in the language of their communities of knowledgeable peers. (Bruffee, 1999, p. 54)

This paper has argued that small-group tutorials like English 109X provide students with necessary communication skills to use when writing on the job. The findings of this research project suggest that small-group tutorials, such as English 109X, are beneficial to the students who are in them not only during academic writing, but also for transferring into professional writing. The title of this thesis is *Becoming Workplace Ready: How Small-Group Tutorials Can Help* and my research questions and hypothesis have helped me to analyze how small-group tutorials better equip students with communication skills that are useful for on-the-job reading and writing. Throughout this research project, I have looked at the benefits of small-group tutorials within the context of one specific tutorial, the English 109X class offered at California State University, Sacramento. In my hypothesis, I anticipated that small-group tutorials like English 109X help to better prepare students for professional writing rather than regular classrooms because of the collaborative nature of a small-group tutorial and the co-worker-like
atmosphere between tutor and student. The results of my research show that most
students feel that English 109X and small-group tutorials in general have helped them to
become more effective writers. Students responded that they learned reading, writing, and
communication skills that they believe are not only beneficial in the academic setting, but
also in all other writing that they do. The purpose of my study was to gather information
that would either prove or disprove my hypothesis about small-groups being helpful
bridges between academic and professional writing, and I believe that the findings for
this research help to prove my hypothesis, although there was a small percentage of data
from students who felt that the English 109X small-group tutorial did not help them at all.
In the following pages, I will discuss the outcome of my findings together with the
information that I gathered about small-group tutorials, collaboration, professional
writing, peer response, and discourse communities through extensive reading of scholarly
material.

At the beginning of this chapter, I included a quote from Bruffee that I think
summarizes my research quite well. In the quote, Bruffee writes that it is through
collaboration that every profession shares information where “knowledgeable peers”
deconstruct one language and construct another to create information that keeps them
growing in knowledge. Bruffee seems to stress the importance of students having the
opportunity to participate in a small-group like tutorial in which both the students and
tutor are knowledgeable peers who exchange knowledge just like they would if they were
coworkers working on a project. Throughout my paper, I hope to have proved that the
collaborative nature of small-group tutorials and the lessons that are presented within the
class help students to become confident and independent writers. This is important because, according to surveys and the books that I have read geared towards professional writers, writing is something that employees feel is their weakest point and dread writing. The reason why so many employees wish they did not have to write on the job is because they know that they will be judged on their performance within that piece of correspondence, but they feel that they are not able to do a good job in that sphere of their work.

The results of my research support Bruffee’s (1999) idea that all learning is collaborative and collaboration is an important aspect of mastering something new; it also supports Gere’s (1987) idea that group work is an important part of learning and knowledge making, Mehlich and Smith-Worthington’s (1985) idea that academic and professional writing are similar yet different, and Beaufort’s (1999) idea that lessons in effective writing start in academia and are further developed throughout the employees lifetime as a professional writer. As mentioned in Chapter 2, small-group work is relevantly new to the field of Composition and Rhetoric, and only a handful of researchers have written on this topic; however, the research that was done shows a positive correlation between small-group work tutorials in writing and writing improvement. My research seeks to expand upon what previous scholars have written about collaboration, small-group work, peer response, and professional writing by taking this previous knowledge and connecting it to the 109X small-group tutorial class.

In *Collaborative Learning: Higher Education, Interdependence, and the Authority of Knowledge*, Bruffee (1999) writes that most writing problems arise from
poor reading skills, but that it is a problem that tutors can help with. Based on my findings, students reported that English 109X has helped them to read more carefully and critically; in other words, the tutor taught the students to carefully analyze the directions, which is a great skill to have on the job. Another important skill that 109X teaches students is the ability to communicate effectively between disciplines. Throughout the semester, tutors stress the importance of discourse communities and disciplines by showing the students that in one day they go from one community to the next and that they have to use the appropriate language and communication skills for each setting. Because students in English 109X are given more opportunities to critically think and speak about their writing, they learn to hear and tell the difference between one community’s language and another’s. English 109X prepares students to negotiate, tolerate others, and speak from themselves rather than from somebody else, and therefore, it provides students with the skills needed for on-the-job communication with a diverse group of people under the pressure of performing well.

Anne Gere is an important scholar and researcher in the field of group work, specifically writing groups, and what she wrote about small-group tutorials helped me to formulate some of the questions for my research survey. In *Writing Groups: History, Theory, and Implications*, Gere (1987) writes about collaboration in workplace writing, and the necessity of implementing small-groups as a part of class curriculum. Gere also argues that small-group tutorials (like English 109X) help students to find a voice and critically think as they explore their own writing and the writing of their peers through reading, observation, and discussion. Student responses to my research questions showed
that students believe that small-group tutorials are helpful to their learning process because they often felt more comfortable asking for help and giving feedback to their peers than they did asking for help from their professors. Because students are more comfortable in participating in discussions based on their writing and that of their peers, they appreciate having an environment where they feel like they can work together to improve each others’ writing.

Mehlich and Smith-Worthington (1985) write that academic and professional writing is both similar and different; they point out that most differences between the two types of writing are in the “presentation, audience, and approach,” and the students of 109X seem to recognize this. Based on my findings, students realize the fact that they probably will not be writing essays all their life, but in school that is mostly what they are graded on. One of the questions that I asked on the research survey was about the types of writing they thought they would have to know how to do when writing in a professional setting, and hardly anyone responded that they would be writing essays. Instead, students mostly chose memos, emails, cover letters, and reports as the genres that they expected to write on the job. Audience is another part of writing that looks different in academic versus professional writing spheres. Though students have not said anything specifically about English 109X helping them become more aware of the audience, the small-group tutorial nature of the course provides the students with many different audiences. Although all the students within the class are peers, they all come from different academic and ethnic backgrounds and often with a variety of expectations for what successful and effective writing looks like. One of the skills that English 109X teaches
the students is how to get rid of the “fluff” and write a more detailed and specific paper that is strongly supported. A few students wrote on their evaluation responses that English 109X helped them to learn to cut out the stuff that did not support their argument, and add in what was needed to make a stronger paper. My research findings show that English 109X is quite an effective bridge between the gap of academic and professional communication because through the style of the class and the major activities in it students get to experience what their future workplace might be like.

Finally, Anne Beaufort (1999) in *Writing in the Real World: Making the Transition from School to Work* did some research about professional writing and the transition from academic to professional writing by following several professional writers as they wrote on the job and asking questions about their writing experience from school to the workplace. The difference between a regular classroom teaching those same skills rather than a small-group tutorial is that in a regular classroom these skills are usually introduced once, and then students are expected to do them on their own because there are other subjects to learn and teach. In a small-group tutorial, though, where everyone is focused on improving each others’ writing, the students get more one-on-one time with someone who can remind them to use certain skills (the tutor), and they are continually encouraged to do so throughout the peer reviews. According to my findings, critical thinking, giving an opinion, and providing a strong argument were also some of the top skills mentioned by students as improved after taking English 109X. Beaufort also reported in her research that in workplace writing the employees have to be able to adjust fairly quickly to any new situation. I believe that English 109X helps students to learn to
adapt to new situations because the groups are constantly changing, they are always working with someone new in the class, and they often have to take the roles of the tutor/teacher (when they present their papers or something that they learned about their peers’ paper), the peer (when they are providing peer feedback with both encouragement and help), the listener, the responder, the student (when the tutor presents a lesson in class), and most importantly the self-analyst who can relate the advice given to other students to their own writing.

My research has revealed that students still think that they will not have to write much in certain professions; as a result, when they are placed into a class like English 109X they think they are just wasting their time learning how to write because they only have one more semester left of school before they graduate. My research has also shown that written communication is an important skill that all employees should have; unfortunately, most college graduates come into the work force not prepared for the writing that they have to perform on the job. Many of the students who responded on the evaluation sheet wrote that English 109X helped them not only with improving their writing for their WI course, but also all of the other writing that they had to do.

So are small-group tutorials the answer to improving all writing and making the gap between academic and professional writing narrower? While I do not think, and my research does not claim, that small-group tutorials are the instant and pain-free solution to solving writing woes and the transition between academic and professional writing, I do believe that small-group tutorials provide a strong foundation of communication skills that students can use both in academia and in the real world. My findings have shown
that English 109X/ small-group tutorials are highly effective as a supportive writing
class, and help students to learn how to write effectively, but there are also some
suggestions that I have for improving the tutorial to make it a more supportive class not
just for helping with a WI course, but also with preparing students for future real world
writing. The following suggestions stem from comments and ratings from both the survey
and the mid-semester evaluation form.

Suggestion #1: Increase the time spent in the tutorial.
Many students commented on the fact that they felt that the tutorial was too short, and
that they felt that some more time each week would help with the giving and receiving of
feedback and learning more writing tips from tutor presentations. I would suggest that, if
possible, class times either be increased if the tutorial were to remain a once a week class,
or to maybe have the tutorial be held two times a week. I realize that English 109X has a
required on-line time, but many times students do not make use of this, and log in for 5-10
minutes and do not provide any quality feedback or work on-line.

Suggestion #2: Focus more on the student writing rather than reading or other
activities.
This is an important suggestion and reminder for the tutors because a few students
responded that they wished that their tutors would work more with the students’ writing
rather than having the class read so many articles and then have a discussion about them.
As a former 109X tutor, I realize that it is important to have some articles and discussions
about them in the class because there are many articles that address questions such as
genres, discourse communities, rhetorical awareness, etc, and they do a good job of
explaining those topics. It is important for tutors to include these readings and discussions, especially for the online part of the tutorial, but this supplemental material should not take the place of a good peer review during which each students’ paper is looked at and commented upon thoroughly.

Suggestion #3: Include more real world writing, discourse community, and genres examples and discussions in the set curriculum.

In the student responses, students wrote that they would have liked more information about discourse communities and genres. While both of these topics are covered in English 109X, I think more time should be devoted to talking about these topics and seeing examples of them, or at least tutors should point the different genres out when students from across the disciplines bring in a different looking document than the traditional essay. I also think that adding discussions or readings about writing in the real world would be not only helpful for students to succeed in academia but also in a professional writing setting.

Suggestion #4: Revisit the first lesson about giving and receiving good feedback throughout the semester.

There were a few responses that said that they felt that the feedback they received on some of their writing was either sugar-coated or not enough to go off of. In order to prevent this from happening, I think that it is important for the tutors to revisit that initial lesson, but with a different game plan. Instead of providing the students with the answers, the tutor should have the students come up with lists in partners or groups that would be a recap of that first lesson and then follow up with a class discussion. Since
feedback is such a big part of the tutorial, and because from good feedback students learn not only to help someone else improve their writing but also to learn the necessary skills to self-edit, I think that it is crucial for the tutor to bring up the topic of giving and receiving helpful feedback during the course of the semester.

As a final thought, small-group tutorials offer students the opportunity to have discussions in their “own language” that allow them to participate in other discourse discussions, provide students with opportunities to practice writing and to build writing confidence, teach students how to read and write critically, teach students to self-edit, and teach students to give and receive feedback. Because of all the skills that students gain in small-group tutorials, students leave academia more prepared to function as professional writers on the job. Although there have been researchers in the field of Composition and Rhetoric that have done research about small-groups, tutorials, collaboration, and professional writing, my research adds to the field by showing that small-group tutorials are not only beneficial at the academic level, but that these tutorials also help students succeed later as professional writers.
109X Research Survey

1. What are you hoping to learn in 109X?

2. What is your major?

3. Do you think that it would be helpful to have a WI course and a 109X course that was solely for your major? yes  no  maybe

4. What are your experiences with group tutorials? (circle one)
   this is the first time I’m in a group tutorial  somewhat helpful  helpful  useless

6. Do you feel that the lessons in the class (already taught or planned) have met or exceeded the learning outcomes of your 109X class? (underline one: did not meet, met, exceeded)
   be more aware of their own writing processes, including prewriting, drafting, revising, and editing
   did not meet  met  exceeded
   develop an increased understanding of the importance of giving and receiving feedback throughout
   the writing process
   did not meet  met  exceeded
   develop an increased understanding of the discourse conventions of academic discourse communities
   did not meet  met  exceeded
   develop critical self-reflection, self-editing, and self-assessment skills through writing.
   did not meet  met  exceeded

6. What kinds of document do you think you will have to write at work in your field of study?
   (underline those that apply)
   Essays  Memos  Emails  Reports  Articles  Group Writing
   Abstracts  Summaries  Cover Letters  Other

7. Which kinds of activities that you’ve practiced in 109X have been most useful in preparing you for writing those documents?

8. What do you think should be covered in 109X classes that is not already covered? Explain why.
English 109X Evaluation

This is an anonymous questionnaire; do not write your name on it.

Circle one: Fall  Spring  Summer  English 109X Section #________

Key: Strongly Agree=SA  Agree=A  Disagree=D  Strongly Disagree=SD  Not Applicable=NA

Reading, responding and revising:

Workshopping the prompt(s) for my WI helped me.        SA A D SD NA
Feedback I received on drafts of writing assignments helped me.  SA A D SD NA
Discussions of aspects of effective academic writing were helpful.  SA A D SD NA
I learned effective methods about how to read and respond to my peers’ writing.  SA A D SD NA
Learning to read and respond to my peers’ writing helped me with my own writing.  SA A D SD N

English 109X has helped me...

• become more aware of my own writing process, including prewriting, drafting, revising and editing.  SA A D SD NA
• develop an increased understanding of the importance of giving and receiving feedback throughout the writing process.  SA A D SD NA
• develop an increased understanding of the discourse conventions of academic discourse communities.  SA A D SD NA
• develop critical self-reflection, self-editing, and self-assessment skills.  SA A D SD NA
• complete minor writing assignments (such as regular homework or other informal writing).  SA A D SD NA
• complete major writing assignments (such as regular homework or other assignments that were graded).  SA A D SD NA
• understand the prompts for writing assignments for my WI course.  SA A D SD NA
• manage my time more effectively in terms of completing my work for my WI course.  SA A D SD NA
• understand written feedback about my writing from my WI instructor.  SA A D SD NA

The 109X tutor...

• encouraged student participation.  SA A D SD NA
• encouraged questions and took time to clarify ideas.  SA A D SD NA
• has been enthusiastic and effective in sharing his/her knowledge of the subject matter.  SA A D SD NA
• has encouraged me to think critically and/or analytically about writing.  SA A D SD NA

I actively participated in class by...

• bringing materials when required  SA A D SD NA
• engaging actively in workshops  SA A D SD NA
• posting and responding to SacCT regularly and on time  SA A D SD NA
English 109X Course Evaluation

Section ______ Semester Fall 2011

1. On a scale from 1 to 5, rate the extent to which you found components of English 109X helpful in terms of successfully completing your Writing Intensive (WI) course.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>NA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Workshopping the prompt(s) for major writing assignments for your WI course</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Receiving feedback on drafts of writing assignments for your WI course</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussing aspects of effective academic writing</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning how to read and respond to my peers’ writing</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. For each of the following statements, please circle the number that most closely corresponds to your perspective.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English 109X helped me...</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>become more aware of my own writing process, including prewriting, drafting, revising, and editing</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>develop an increased understanding of the importance of giving and receiving feedback throughout the writing process</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>develop an increased understanding of the discourse conventions of academic discourse communities</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>develop critical self-reflection, self-editing, and self-assessment skills.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>complete minor writing assignments (such as regular homework or other informal writing).</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>complete major writing assignments (such as longer essays or other assignments that were graded)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>understand the prompts for writing assignments for my WI course</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>manage my time more effectively in terms of completing my work for my WI course</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>understand written feedback about my writing from my WI instructor.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What did you learn from this class?

What would you have liked to learn that wasn’t covered or emphasized in this class?

What grade do you expect to earn in your WI course?

What grade do you think you might have earned in your WI course if not enrolled in English 109X?
Ideas for Freewrites

- What has been your most memorable writing experience?
- What are your goals for your Upper-Division Writing-Intensive class?
- What are your strengths and challenges as a writer?
- How do you want your peer workshop to look?
- What is your favorite piece of writing that you have read? Why do you admire it? Has it influenced the way you write?
- Was there something notably helpful that you learned this week, either about writing as a process in general, or about the way you write? Tell us what happened, what it was like, what you learned, how it affects your writing or your relationship to the process of writing?
- Did anything happen in your Writing-Intensive class (or any other class where writing may be involved) that gave you some trouble?
- What is something you have learned this semester about writing?
- What can you do to be a better peer-responder?
- What can we (as a class) do to give better workshops?
- Tell us about your Writing-Intensive class. What are you working on? What skills associated with writing are being covered? What kind of strategies is your teacher using to help you learn these skills?
- How are things going for you? In your Writing-intensive class? In general?
- What kinds of writing are you doing in your other classes?
- Draw a picture of your home. Mark all of the places where writing happens. Now take out a piece of paper and describe those places: are they dark, bright, small, large, smelly, quiet, noisy, comfortable, isolated? Are there people around? Is there music? What hours of the day are you there? How does writing in this space make you feel? (Along with this, you might also ask them to describe an ideal writing space and/or draw it).

These questions can also be used as discussion questions if your class is more inclined to talk than freewrite.

Adapted from "Freewriting Topics for 1X" in the English 1X Tutor training book
Scenario

Before the semester began, you spent the $500 that you had allotted for books to go on a spur-of-the-moment trip to Tahoe with friends. You now have no money for books this semester.

In thinking about your predicament, you remember that:

1. your uncle, who lives overseas, dotes on you and indulges your every whim
2. your best friend has a stash put away to have the air conditioner in her car overhauled
3. your college dean has a discretionary fund for student emergencies

Assignment

Write 3 letters: one to your uncle, one to your best friend, and one to the Dean. These letters should request money for books. Use whatever strategies (short of outright lying) you need to coax money out of these three individuals. Be sure that you use the tone and style in your letters that are appropriate for each audience.

Your letters should follow standard format: one page, double-spaced, one-inch margins, with salutations and closing.
References


