

**Purpose of the Methodology section or chapter (note: this is an abbreviated methodology):**

Generally speaking, the purpose of the method section or methodology chapter is to provide readers with the methods you engaged in during your research study. The goal is to be as thorough and detailed as you can in writing this section/chapter because readers should view its content as being replicable. If your method/methodology section/chapter does not contain the information needed for someone to replicate your study, then you need to re-visit the writing you've done for this section/chapter. Methodologies normally appear in academic writing, specifically research reports/scholarly articles, and dissertations. Importantly, in addition to describing what and how you engaged in research (your research process), methodologies offer rationales for *why* you made the research choices that you did. For this reason, methodologies should contain references to scholarly literature and your theoretical framework as you discuss your design and analytical choices. Having a detailed, replicable method/methodology section/chapter establishes your credibility as a researcher and helps readers understand your research process. A quick note about the writing in a method/methodology section/chapter: it is okay if it feels very technical and dry—it's supposed to. The writing in this chapter is very straightforward and concerned with describing a process and the reasons behind the researcher's methods that informed their process and outcomes.

*Potential Writing Moves to Make:*

- Provide rationales for your design and analytical choices (this is an explanatory kind of writing)
- Use headings and multiple levels of headings as necessary
- Be as detailed as possible regarding your research process (recruitment, participants, data collection, and analysis). I highly recommend having someone read over your methodology

because they will give you a good indication as to whether or not they think they could replicate the study.

## METHODOLOGY (this chapter is excerpted from a dissertation)

### Study Design

This qualitative, exploratory, single case study (Hesse-Biber, 2017) focused on understanding how upper-level undergraduate students and their course professor conceptualized the role of feedback and revision on written assignments in an English course, in addition to how the professor constructed feedback, and how students interpreted the feedback and revised their written assignments. A qualitative case study approach was ideal for my topic of study because I sought to explore phenomena that could be best understood by asking research questions beginning with “how”, “why”, and “what” (Yin, 2009 as cited in Barone, 2011, p. 21; Hesse-Biber, 2017, p. 4), indicating a desire to “understand in a meaningful and nuanced way, the view of those within the case” (Stake, 1995, 2000, 2005 as cited in Hesse-Biber, 2017, p. 226). To understand these nuances, I collected multiple sources of data in order to generate rich and robust qualitative information on my participants. Thus, it was imperative to incorporate a case study design because doing so would affirm my desire to seek insight into an issue that has long been a source of both professional and personal puzzlement to me (Barone, 2011; Hesse-Biber, 2017; Cresswell & Poth, 2018). Importantly, when utilizing a case study approach, it is essential to identify how the case is bound (Barone, 2011; Hesse-Biber, 2017; Cresswell & Poth, 2018; Check & Schutt, 2012). For this study, the case was bounded temporally—over the course of the Spring 2021 semester—and spatially (the course itself).

**Commented [EKJ1]:** This is a great topic sentence because it lets readers know all the necessary information regarding design in one sentence:  
-the research paradigm: (qualitative)  
-the nature of research: (exploratory)  
-the research approach/design: (single, case study)  
-the topic of research  
-includes a scholarly reference related to the design type (doing so lends credibility to you as a researcher)

**Commented [EKJ2]:** Rationale for study design

## Theoretical Framework

The theoretical basis of this work was rooted in three key assumptions: (1) writing, feedback, and revision are socially constructed, (2) these forms of communication are best understood by taking an ecological, or holistic approach when studying them, and (3) writing and revision follow a process approach.

### Writing as a Social Construction

Situating this study under a social constructivist perspective of writing (Vygotsky, 1978; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wells, 2000; Halliday, 2013; Smagorinsky, 2013) allowed for a focus on writing as an embodied social practice that exists through individuals having agency in their learning processes and the ability to create their own knowledge, which has been influenced by or takes place in social interactions (Schreiber & Valle, 2013). Social constructivism is a social learning theory influenced by Russian psychologist, Lev Vygotsky (1978) which claims learning takes place primarily in social and cultural settings, rather than solely within the mind of an individual (Schreiber & Valle, 2013). From this perspective, successful teaching and learning occur in environments which offer opportunities for interpersonal interactions and discussions, where the primary concern is that learners understand the discussion (Prawat, 1992). Therefore, an apt example of such an environment might be one which includes opportunities for learning to occur through interactions between student-teacher dyads or child-parent dyads, small groups of peers, or even one-to-one or small group tutoring sessions (Johnson & Bradbury, 2015; Powell & Kalina, 2009). Taking this view, the popular, yet overly romanticized, image of an isolated and weary, caffeine-fueled or, otherwise under the influence of drugs or alcohol writer, spending long nights agonizing over their writing may have some truth to it, but is not entirely accurate. The act of composing, while perhaps carried out in the manner just described, can never truly be

**Commented [EKJ3]:** It's important to include your theoretical framework in this section/chapter because it should inform your methodological choices.

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accomplished in isolation—even the inspiration for the writing has to come from somewhere. With this lens, it was understood that the ways in which the professor and upper-level undergraduate students approached writing, gave and received feedback, and revised was an inherently social endeavor. As such, observing the social interactions within the classroom along with interviewing participants about their beliefs, feelings, and experiences with writing, feedback, and revision were necessary approaches to understanding these complex phenomena.

### **The Ecological Landscape of Writing**

Applying an ecological (Cooper, 1986; Dobrin, 2012; Macmillan, 2012) lens to writing theory allowed me to investigate the inherent nuances of writing in this course under study. Ecological writing theory claims also espouses the view all writing is social by nature (Cooper, 1986; Dobrin, 2012; Macmillan, 2012). According to Cooper (1986), “writing is one of the activities by which we locate ourselves in the enmeshed systems that make up the social world. It is not simply a way of thinking but more fundamentally a way of acting” (p. 373).

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### **Researcher Positionality**

A researcher’s positionality plays a large role in the research project. One’s lived experiences, biases, and preferences can influence much of the decision-making involved in conducting research (Bourke, 2014). Because of this, it is important to acknowledge one’s positionality and be aware of biases which may negatively influence the research (Bourke, 2014). This can (and should) be accomplished through including a positionality statement in the final report, but also during the research process by seeking ethical practices and building in trustworthiness criteria, validity, and reliability into the study (Bourke, 2014). Allowing the audience a glimpse into your context as a researcher permits them to better understand the

**Commented [EKJ5]:** This is another example of connecting theory to methodology. Notice the direct language here—I come right out and say how the theory allowed me to investigate the nuances of writing (which if you refer back to my RQs, you will see that that’s what I’m trying to research).

**Commented [EKJ6]:** If this isn’t in your methodology section, it needs to be somewhere in your dissertation (or journal article if they allow you the space). This provides YOUR CONTEXT to the research you are conducting. It feels revealing to write, but providing that context for readers helps them know where you’re coming from and how that impacted your research interests, biases, and study design.

context of the study as a whole, and one's stake in it (Rifenburg, 2020). Providing this kind of context, or insight, into the study is important for readers to not only understand the study holistically, but also critically.

I researched writing pedagogy as it related to feedback on written assignments and revision and approached this research from a strong position of viewing writing as a social act. This is to say, that the way I viewed and interpreted all actions related to writing in this course was from a social perspective—for me, it is impossible to classify any writing-related activities as not being rooted in, or influenced by, social dimensions. Importantly, I approached this study as someone who is heavily invested in improving writing pedagogy, particularly at the college level. This desire stemmed from my myriad experiences studying writing as a student, teaching writing as a composition instructor and writing tutor, and identifying as a writer. With that said, I came to this research with experiences with and beliefs towards writing and writing instruction that, at least to a small degree, influenced not only my theoretical and methodological approach to studying writing, but also how I interpreted the data.

Additionally, I was familiar with two out of the four student participants (Alexis and Rebecca) prior to the study because we worked together at Tidewater University's writing center and I was also familiar with the professor participant, Dr. Darcy, because in our own separate roles at TU, our paths occasionally crossed due to the close relationship between the writing center and English department. Because of my involvement with the writing center, my target student population, and the limited English course offerings during the time of my study, I knew there was a good chance that I would already know some of my participants, and so I tried my best to keep objectivity in mind. Furthermore, Rebecca had participated in another study that I conducted a year prior to this study. All of these relationships were strictly professional and I

regarded Alexis and Rebecca as coworkers when we worked together and student participants while they were involved with my study. Once I Alexis and Rebecca selected to participate in my study, I knew our status as coworkers would have an impact, but I also knew having them as participants meant that I would need to make sure I treated them and their data as I would the student participants whom I did not know beforehand. However, I was aware of potential biases and strove to mitigate them and maintain an open mind set during data collection and analysis so as to objectively as possible, contribute valuable information to the broad field of Writing Studies and build upon the scholarly work of others.

### **Research Setting**

This research took place at Tidewater University (TU) over the course of one semester in the Spring of 2021. Tidewater University is a mid-sized, comprehensive, regional campus situated in the mid-Atlantic. TU has roughly 8,000 undergraduate students and offers several Master degrees programs, in addition to two doctoral programs. The demographic data of undergraduates includes approximately 44% males and 56% females. Of these undergraduates, 72% identified as White, 15% identified as Black, 5% identified as Hispanic, 4% identified as Asian, and the remaining 4% identified as either multi-racial, American Indian/Alaskan Native, and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander. The course under study was an English course. This course was only offered to Junior, Senior, or graduate level students, whom I refer to as “upper-level students”. These are students who have declared English or a related field as their academic major or who pursued graduate studies in English. Because these students have progressed to this level of learning within their declared discipline, they would no longer be considered novices in a university context as opposed to Freshman, Sophomores, or non-majors whose courses at this stage are typically composed of mandatory, general education courses. Rather, these upper-level

**Commented [EKJ7]:** Again, another context-based writing move. Here, instead of providing your personal context, you are providing the research site’s context. You’re doing this so that readers get a sense of the place where you conducted your study since obviously they couldn’t be there at the time of your study to see it for themselves. They also use this writing to compare their potential study locations (or past study locations) to yours.

students may be more closely equated to the designation of “experienced” college students— meaning while they were not yet experts in their field, they had experience with learning and writing in college, specifically in this discipline and are aware of, or at least had the opportunity to become aware, of disciplinary knowledge, discourse, and writing styles within their field of study.

### **English 495/595 Special Topics: Disability & Writing at Tidewater University**

English 495/595 was a special topics course within the English Department. In spring 2021, the special topic for this course was Disability & Writing. This special topics course was only offered to undergraduate students who had passed prerequisite coursework and graduate students majoring in English.. This was a content-driven course, and so even though it was considered to be writing intensive, the focus was on the content, which in this case was concepts, theories, and rhetoric around topics in the field of Disability Studies. The professor, Dr. Darcy, chose the topic of the course for several reasons, but the most important of which was because she was invested in it and saw herself as an advocate for persons with disabilities (PWDs). Enrollment in this course during spring 2021 totaled seven students, four of whom were undergraduates and three graduate students. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, all classes at TU were held online. This course met synchronously online once a week (Mondays) for two hours and forty-five minutes (4:30 pm-7:15 pm).

The structure of the course was rigorous, and students frequently received feedback from their professor, but mostly as summative feedback. Students were expected to complete weekly response journals in response to an assigned reading or readings. Students received summative, feed-forward feedback from Dr. Darcy on each of their journal entries. They also rotated turns as class notetakers, and took notes on each class which were to be posted on the course MyClasses

**Commented [EKJ8]:** Provide the context of the course/phenomenon being studied. Be as detailed as possible.

page weekly. Students also had a choice between completing three short paper assignments of four to five pages in length (if they were undergraduates) or five to seven pages in length (if they were graduate students) or they could complete assignments geared toward scaffolding a larger seminar paper, twelve to fifteen pages in length for undergraduates and fifteen to twenty pages in length for graduate students. The two smaller assignments were designed to prepare students for the seminar paper included a project proposal and an annotated bibliography. Only one participant opted to take the seminar paper path, and that was Finn. For these major written assignments (the three papers), students were only required to submit a final draft and this was the draft Dr. Darcy assessed by providing summative feedback. However, students could work on as many drafts as they saw fit until the deadline.

Peer review was a significant event within the context of the study. Before each paper was due to be graded, Dr. Darcy led and facilitated in-class peer reviews. Before the first peer review, Dr. Darcy discussed her rationale behind this activity and her expectations for it. She also provided detailed guidelines students could use when reviewing each other's work. Students read each other's work for the first-time during peer review and gave a mix of mostly verbal with some in-text feedback. Unless students made an appointment to meet and discuss their writing with Dr. Darcy, the only feedback they received as they developed their paper was from their peers during peer review. This was intentional as per Dr. Darcy's course design and was guided by her belief that students should value each other's feedback and have opportunities to provide and hone their feedback skills. Once students submitted their final draft for the professor's review, they received a grade accompanied by Dr. Darcy's feedback.



## Participants

### Overview

This qualitative research was conducted with upper-level undergraduate college students from Tidewater University who self-identified as English (or a related field) majors. What follows is an explanation of participant selection methods and participant profiles.

### Participant Selection

The research questions and design guiding this study allowed me to engage in convenience sampling procedures (Check & Schutt, 2012). For this study, one professor and four students were necessary to conduct a thorough case study and to generate rich, thick data of the sort which could only be obtained by working closely with a small number of participants (Stake, 2006; Hesse-Biber, 2017). Furthermore, all participants needed to be aged 18 years or older (since this was my target population) and have internet access since this was an online course. Additionally, per my study design, the professor needed to know which students were participating in the study because my interview protocol required we discuss the professor's feedback in the context of each student participants' work. Student participants were made aware of this within the consent form.

There were two sets of inclusion criteria for participants—one for the professor and one for the students. In order to be recruited, professors had to be teaching an English class in the Spring 2021 semester designed for upper-level, English (or a related field) majors only. My rationale for doing so was two-fold: (1) as mentioned earlier, I was seeking to address a gap in the literature on feedback and revision at the college level by studying voices less represented in the literature—upper-level college students and (2) it was imperative I selected a course which offered many opportunities for writing, feedback, and revision of written assignments since this

**Commented [EKJ9]:** Identify how you selected your participants and who they are. Referencing the research literature to support your choices lends you credibility, which is how you want readers to perceive you—as a credible researcher.

was the phenomena I was studying. Thus, it seemed appropriate to select a major which is both writing intensive (as many English courses are) and one in which not only is writing valued as a form of learning, but also feedback and revision as well, meaning the professor is more likely to use these as learning tools. From there, I used Tidewater University's digital course catalog to view courses offered in spring 2021. The course offerings were limited for a writing-intensive course offered within the English department, as is the case in many higher education contexts, and so my potential pool of professorial participants was limited as well. Next, I proceeded to recruit those professors individually and one at a time via email invitation before the start of the semester. The first professor I emailed, Dr. Darcy, agreed to participate, and so I did not email additional professors. The course she was teaching during Spring 2021 was a special topics course in Writing and Rhetoric within the English department and was open to undergraduate and graduate enrollment, and so was classed as a 495/595 course called Disability & Writing. I contacted Dr. Darcy first because although we are in different roles, our work at TU occasionally intersects with one another, and I saw our familiarity with each other as an added benefit to the study because I anticipated our conversations would flow more easily which I thought would be useful since I knew we would be engaging in many conversations over the course of the semester. I then emailed her the consent form, and she signed and returned it electronically to me. Next, we scheduled our first semi-structured interview.

The second set of inclusion criteria was for student participants. In order to participate, student volunteers needed to be enrolled in the professor's English class during the time of the study. Classes were held remotely, so once the professor gave me student access to her MyClasses page (a course specific hub located on TU's learning management system, Canvas) I emailed each student introducing myself and my study and attached an informed consent form

for those interested in participating. When we first met as a class, I introduced myself again and read the consent form aloud in an effort to ensure comprehension, and I emphasized that participation was voluntary. I asked students to decide whether they were interested in participating by the end of class, and if they were, to email me their signed informed consent form. Initially, I planned to recruit six student participants on a first come, first serve basis, however, I was only able to recruit four. Having said this, there were only a total of seven students in the course (four upper-level undergraduate students and three graduate-level students), and so only being able to recruit the four undergraduate students was still an acceptable amount and population for me to engage in the kind of qualitative data collection I needed in order to generate rich, thick data for my single case study. Once I receive all signed consent forms, I scheduled the first round of semi-structured interviews. All recruitment and consent documents, in addition to interview protocols, are included in the appendix of this document.

### **Participant Profiles**

#### ***Dr. Darcy***

Dr. Darcy identifies as female and taught the Disability and Writing course under study. Dr. Darcy has her PhD in English, Composition and Rhetoric, and in addition to teaching, directs the First Year Writing program at Tidewater University. Although she has been teaching for several years, she is a recent PhD graduate and a new professor. As a professor, Dr. Darcy is very intentional in her pedagogy. She devoted much time to designing the course, in addition to re-reading the course texts before drafting the syllabus. Each course activity was a result of research and planning to generate learning and inspire student engagement. She purposefully planned all coursework to connect and to strengthen and build upon one another in order to align

**Commented [EKJ10]:** Not everyone will need to go as in depth as I have about my participants. I needed to create profiles for each because of the nature of my research (I worked closely with these participants for months and because of my ecological, holistic approach, I needed to represent them as much as I reasonably could as it related to my study.)

If you do believe you are in a situation where you need to write detailed participant profiles, make sure they are balanced, meaning everyone gets equal space, and that they are anchored by your research aims. It's VERY easy to go off track and start writing everything you know about them, but you'll have to focus your writing about them to your research aims.

with her course goals. She employs a student-centered approach to pedagogy, and cares deeply about the thoughts and writing of her students. She saw all writing for the course as having exigency outside of the classroom, and empowered her students to value their ideas conveyed through their writing at least as much as she did.

Feedback figured prominently within Dr. Darcy's course design. She made class time for students to conduct peer reviews with one another while they drafted their major writing assignments, encouraged students to attend her weekly office hours if they needed learning/writing support, and diligently responded to all submitted written assignments. Thus, her course activities reflected her high esteem of the role of feedback as being useful and instructive. Of particular note, Dr. Darcy believes once students have become acclimated to the academic demands and expectations of higher education, their feedback to each other becomes valuable and instructive. This belief primarily informed her decision to let the students workshop each other's writing (using evaluation guides she created) before submitting it for a grade, meaning that unless students sought help outside of the weekly class time, they would not receive her feedback on a paper until it was given as a summative evaluation. She believed in the intelligence and capabilities of her students, and intentionally strayed away from "hand-holding" pedagogies. Furthermore, she hoped that by stepping back from peer review activities, it would enable students to appreciate and regard the feedback they gave each other.

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### **Data Collection**

In keeping with best practices for a qualitative case study (Cresswell & Poth, 2017) and in order to explore my research questions, I used multiple data sources in an attempt to construct an accurate representation of the case being studied and to represent the complexity of the case

**Commented [EKJ11]:** Here's what you want to do in this section:

- provide a rationale for why you collected the data that you did
- identify the types of data that you collected
- include detailed information on how you collected the data, frequency of data collection, time spent in data collection (e.g., how long did interviews take?)

and of the subject of study: writing, giving feedback and responding to feedback on written assignments, and revising. The instruments for data collection included: observations, semi-structured interviews, documents and artifacts, and field notes.

### **Observations**

I acted as an observer participant, meaning that my presence was made known to participants and I was a minimally active participant within the classroom setting (Check & Schutt, 2012). The purpose of observations was to observe the classroom environment in regards to writing instruction, in other words, I desired to see how writing was discussed and enacted within the course. Additionally, I observed how the way in which Dr. Darcy discussed and used writing in the classroom translated to her feedback and assessment practices. Thus, I observed each class session over the course of the Spring 2021 semester. Classes were held once a week (on Mondays) on Zoom for two hours and forty-five minutes (4:30 pm-7:15 pm). The class met a total of fifteen times, with the last class meeting serving as the final exam during which students presented one of the papers they had written for the course during the semester. Observations were audio-recorded when writing-related conversations occurred in addition to peer review events. Because this course was primarily a content-based course, it was not necessary to record the entirety of each class, rather, only parts of class that were related to my research on writing, feedback, and revision.

### **Interviews**

I conducted multiple interviews with each participant over the course of the semester. With that said, the choice of using a semi-structured interview protocol was based upon my desire to conduct a high quality, qualitative study, and to do so, I needed to enact an in-depth

interviewing protocol (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2014) which would produce thick data and add a layer of complexity (beyond the scope of observations, documents and artifacts, and field notes) to the data being collected. Interview protocols are listed as appendices A-B and E-H. Semi-structured interviews lasted between thirty minutes to seventy-five minutes. In total, I conducted twenty interviews (four interviews per participant). Each participant participated in an initial interview, three written-assignment-based interviews, and a closing interview. The closing interview was combined with the third assignment-based interview per participants' preference to eliminate an additional time being interviewed as many of them were graduating and heading off to new endeavors. These semi-structured interviews were held on Zoom and were audio-recorded using Zoom's recording feature and a digital recording device as a backup, thus allowing me to "participate in the conversation" in a more natural, fluid way (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 109).

### ***Initial Interviews***

All participants engaged in an initial interview conducted at the beginning of the semester, or in the case of the professor, a few days before the course began. These interviews lasted approximately sixty minutes. The nature of this interview had several purposes: (1) to gather information on participants' conceptualizations of writing, feedback on written assignments, and revision; (2) to become familiar with their experiences with writing, feedback, and revision so that I could individually contextualize how each participant viewed writing, feedback, and revision and therefore, can paint an accurate portrait of them and the phenomena under study; and (3) to familiarize ourselves with one another since I would be working closely with them over the coming months.

### ***Written Assignment-based Interviews***

All participants engaged in brief interviews of approximately thirty to forty-five minutes in duration to discuss feedback on written assignments. These brief interviews occurred each time feedback on a written assignment was given with the opportunity for student-revision. The purpose of these interviews differed from professor to students, but the nature of the interviews was similar. For the professor, the intent for these interviews was to (1) understand how she constructed her feedback to students, (2) discuss her environment when writing feedback, (3) understand her processes for writing feedback to students, (4) understand the ways in which she anticipated her feedback would be helpful to students, and (5) ensure I understood the meaning of the feedback. The consent form for students specified the professor would have knowledge of the participants in this study, so while the professor and I were discussing students' papers, we were doing so with the students' consent, and thus, ethically. For students, the intent for these interviews was to (1) understand how they interpreted the professor's feedback, (2) discuss their environment for responding to feedback, (3) explore the resources they used when responding to feedback, (4) and understand their processes when revising.

### ***Final Interviews***

All participants participated in a final interview which took place during the scheduled meeting time of the third and final written assignment-based interview, but after this interview was conducted. To put it more simply, since the final assignment-based interview occurred near the end of the semester and close to commencement, all participants preferred to fit two interviews into one meeting instead of having separate meetings for these remaining interviews. Therefore, they opted to have a lengthier interview session in order to finish all interviewing by the end of the semester. The nature of these final interviews was primarily that of reflection and member-checking. For the professor's final interview, I sought to know the following: (1) her

thoughts about my study and her involvement in it, (2) her opinion of how the course went during the semester, (3) if it impacted her pedagogy and the ways she thought about curriculum and assignment design, (4) and to discuss my plans for using the data (see Appendix K). For the students' final interviews, I sought to learn the following: (1) their experience as a student in this course, (2) their experience as a participant in this project, (3) if they learned anything about themselves as writers, (4) if they thought any of the knowledge they learned in this course would be transferable, (5) if they thought this course helped prepare them for a professional career, (6) and inform them of my plans to use their data.

#### **Documents and Artifacts**

Documents and artifacts (see Appendices C-D and I-J) were collected to corroborate the interviews and to provide additional opportunities for collecting rich, thick data (Barone, 2011; Hesse-Biber, 2017; Cresswell & Poth, 2018). See Table 1 for a description of the documents and artifacts collected from the professor and the students.



**Table 1**

*Documents and Artifacts Collected from the Professor and Students.*

Professor	Students
Course syllabus	Course syllabus
Prompts of written assignments	Prompts of written assignments
Email responses for each written assignment explaining intentions and goals for that assignment	Drafts of written assignments with professor's feedback
Teaching philosophy regarding writing, feedback, and assessment of writing	A document of student-selected resources used during revision processes
Photographs of her environment where she gave feedback	Photographs of their environment where they compose and revise
Applicable course materials	Revised written assignments
	Final drafts of written assignments with professor's feedback (if applicable)

**Commented [EKJ12]:** Making a table is an easy way to visually represent your data in a way that's accessible for readers, so I highly recommend taking advantage of tables and figures when appropriate.

Collecting course materials, such as the course syllabus, writing assignment prompts, and other applicable course materials afforded me the opportunity to learn more about this course from an ecological standpoint (Cooper, 1986; Dobrin, 2012). I expected these course materials to shape the learning and writing that occurred in this class, and to provide me with the context I needed in order to holistically view the writing, feedback, and revision processes that occurred in this course. Having participants submit pictures of their writing environment and the resources they used when revising also granted me access into the ecology of this course, and within the individual writing practices of each participant.

***Documents and Artifacts Collected from the Professor***

I requested several documents and artifacts from the professor in order to better help me understand how writing instruction occurred in this classroom. The first document I requested was the course syllabus. Obtaining this was helpful for me to see how the course was designed. Since I was given student access to the course online through its MyClasses page, I was able to

collect other documents such as prompts of written assignments and writing guides to help me contextualize the writing that student participants showed me via their drafts. In an effort to better understand the kind of communication happening between the professor and the students, I requested the professor email me a brief synopsis of her purpose and goals for the written assignments, in addition to a brief teaching philosophy to gain a sense of the professor's expectations for the students and identify her theoretical and/or value-laden orientations to the course and her pedagogical practices (Greenleaf, 1985; Sperling & Freedman, 1987; Prior, 1995). Lastly, I requested that the professor send me a picture(s) of her composing environment when writing feedback so that I would have the opportunity to see how her writing environment related, if it all, to the feedback she provided students (Cooper, 1986; Dobrin, 2012).

#### ***Documents and Artifacts Collected from the Students***

I collected several documents and artifacts from student participants. The first document I requested was their copy of the syllabus in the event they have written notes on it which might be important in providing me with information that might be pertinent to contextualizing and understanding their experiences as students in this course, however, none of them had made notes of any kind on the syllabus. I collected students' drafts of written assignments with the professor's comments and her revisions to assess how effective the conversation was between the students and the professor (Sommers, 1982; Smith, 1997; Sperling & Freedman, 1987; Straub, 2000; Kim, 2004; Treglia, 2008; Bilbro, et.al., 2013; Calhoon-Dillahunt & Forrest, 2013). Students provided me with a document for each written assignment indicating the resources they used to revise the assignment, which enabled me to have a more holistic view of the writing ecology of the course (Cooper, 1986; Dobrin, 2012). I also requested that they send me photographs of their composing and revising environments so that I might be able to see how

these environments influence their writing and revising practices (Cooper, 1986; Dobrin, 2012). Finally, I collected revised written assignments and final drafts of revised written assignments (which were often one in the same) with the professor's feedback in order to see how they progressed in their writing how they were understanding and responding to their professor's feedback, and how effective (or ineffective) her collaborative conversation regarding the students' writing and learning was going (Sommers, 1982; Smith, 1997; Sperling & Freedman, 1987; Straub, 2000; Kim, 2004; Treglia, 2008; Bilbro, et.al., 2013; Calhoun-Dillahunt & Forrest, 2013).

### **Field Notes**

Throughout this study, notes were taken during observations and interviews. These notes captured aspects of my research I found interesting, important, and memorable in relation to the data and also served to contextualize my data gathering procedures.

### **Ethical Considerations**

From a procedural standpoint, great care and consideration were taken with all participants in this study and their privacy and well-being was integrated into the study's design. At every step of the research process, participants were informed verbally and/or through writing about the study and the role(s) that participants played. Participants were informed participation was neither mandatory, nor would they face any kind of retaliation or negative outcomes, including impacting their course grade from not participating in the study, or for dropping out at any point. The amount of time required for their participation was intentionally kept to a moderate amount so as not to inconvenience them or impose a burden on their lives so I could fulfill my research purposes.

**Commented [EKJ13]:** This is an absolute MUST when researching and writing about research. Yes, your study wouldn't have made it past your institutions IRB, but readers still need to know that you conducted research ethically and how you were able to do so.

Risks to participants were minimal. Participants may have experienced a mild amount of anxiety over being observed and audio-recorded and discussing their writing and learning experiences. In order to mitigate feelings of distress, all observations and interviews were scheduled in advance at times that were mutually convenient for us and I was flexible with scheduling depending upon the participants' needs.

Participant privacy was an utmost concern for this study, so participants were asked to choose a pseudonym (or they were given one if they did not want to choose one) to protect their identity. All participant information was safely stored. Although I did not anticipate that any participants in the project would directly benefit from their participation, each participant expressed to me how much they enjoyed being involved in this study and that it encouraged them to think more deeply about their writing and revising processes and in the professor's case, about her writing pedagogy.

Going beyond careful considerations of procedural ethics in research, I was also keenly aware of the intermediary role I played as a researcher working with two very different groups of participants: the professor and her students. I deeply respected both groups of participants and as such, strove to maintain respectful boundaries with each group, being careful not to divulge information told to me from one person to another. Gaining my participants' trust was important to me because I saw the development of this trust as being essential to having authentic conversations about their perceptions and experiences with writing, feedback, and revision, and so I made sure to foster that trust by not divulging information told in confidence to me with other parties. I also refrained from interfering in the dynamics of the classroom as far as the professor-student relationship was concerned. I did so out of respect for both groups, not wanting to undermine these relationships or any relationship-building taking place between all of my

participants, whether it be from professor-student, student-professor, or student-student. That desire to maintain the status quo of those relationship dynamics led me to acknowledge the importance of the intermediary role that I played as researcher and to strive for adhering to professional boundaries. Being in an intermediary role was not new to me, as I had much experience from previous and current employment positions that placed me in such a role.

### **Data Analysis**

What follows is a thorough description of how my analysis was systematic and continuous throughout the study. I kept a researcher's journal to record my thoughts and feelings and experiences as I researched. My field notes were also housed in this journal, and I referred to them during data analysis. I analyzed my data both through transcribing it when possible and coding it iteratively. I also engaged in member-checking and mentor debriefings with my committee members.

#### **Analytic Memoing**

I conducted analytic memoing throughout the research process (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014; Saldana, 2016). These memos were written in Word documents and securely stored on my personal computer. These memos served not only to contextualize my data, but also to capture my thinking about it and how I was making sense of my data. All memos were dated and descriptively titled so as to be as useful to me and my analysis as possible.

#### **Transcription and Reflection**

Another aspect of data analysis I employed was transcription. As anticipated, I had a large volume of audio-recorded data, so while I transcribed all of the recordings which involved multiple speakers (I thought it would more difficult for a transcription service to transcribe) such as peer reviews, I predominantly used Rev.com for transcription of interviews. Using a

**Commented [EKJ14]:** Again, this section is crucial to include. Readers need to know how you analyzed your data and why you chose to do it that way. There are myriad possibilities for coding, but here is where you specify why you coded things the way you did based on your research questions.

transcription service was necessary for me to assist me in conducting my analysis within a practical and reasonable timeframe. I checked the transcriptions against the audio-recordings to ensure that the service provided me with an accurate transcription. When I did transcribe the data, I appreciated that it allowed me to develop a closeness to it and come to deep understandings of its content while helping me develop my interpretive voice and remain grounded in the experiences of the participants (Hesse-Biber, 2017).

### **Coding Data**

Another analytical technique I employed was coding. I performed iterative and multiple cycles of coding (Saldana, 2015). To code, I used both NVivo and coded by hand. NVivo is a very effective CAQDAS for coding, but coding by hand—at least initially and towards the end as I was thematizing my codes—helped me to be closer to my data, spurred my analytical thinking, and allowed me to draw and make other notations that I could not otherwise do using NVivo, so this is why I employed both approaches to coding.

### ***First Cycle Coding***

Because my research questions were of an epistemological nature, I used initial coding as a first cycle code (Saldana, 2016). I also desired to approach coding in this way because initial cycle coding allowed me to (despite the inherent biases that influence coding) view my data with few preconceived notions and regard the data objectively (Saldana, 2016). Additionally, using initial coding was compatible with the design and various forms of data collection for my study (Saldana, 2016).

I also used two forms of a priori coding published in the literature on the topic of writing, feedback on written assignments, and revision at the college level. One form of a priori coding that I used was Greenleaf's (1985) notion of an "ideal text" and "ideal writing process"

(Sperling & Freedman, 1987). An “ideal text” (Greenleaf, 1985; Sperling & Freedman, 1987) refers to the concept that both teachers and students have their own ideas about the features a written text should have. When teachers and students are not in agreement over their versions of “ideal texts” (Greenleaf, 1985; Sperling & Freedman, 1987), miscommunication can arise. This concept also applies to the notion of an “ideal writing process” (Greenleaf, 1985; Sperling & Freedman, 1987), meaning students and teachers may have certain conceptions about how one’s writing process should be, and if they are overly rigid or are misaligned, then this allows for yet another opportunity for miscommunication between teachers and students (Greenleaf, 1985; Sperling & Freedman, 1987). The unit of analysis was response rounds, or a segment of the student’s text-the teacher’s response-the student’s reaction to the feedback and subsequent drafts in response to feedback (Greenleaf, 1985; Sperling & Freedman, 1987, Prior, 1995). Using the notions of “ideal text” and “ideal writing process” (Greenleaf, 1985; Sperling & Freedman, 1987) fit well with my research questions and study design because they contextualized the feedback by bringing in the data from classroom observations and highlighted how professors’ language use in class and in feedback compares, in addition to showing how the students apply that knowledge once they get outside of the classroom and into a writing situation (Sperling & Freedman, 1987).

The second set of a priori codes I used when analyzing the professor’s feedback included the terms: “praise”, “criticism”, “content”, “local concerns” (comments made about grammar or spelling within a single sentence), “global concerns” (comments pertaining to grammar and structure across multiple sentences) and “[disciplinary] discourse” (comments pertaining to subject content that only a subject matter expert might know), used by Patchan, Schunn, & Clark (2011) and Szymanski (2017, p. 4) in their studies of college students’ disciplinary writing.

These categories of coding allowed me to get the disciplinary perspective on writing feedback and formative assessment that I sought.

### ***Second Cycle Coding***

During my second cycle of coding, I engaged in multiple cycles of pattern coding (Saldana, 2016) so as to group similar codes together developed in the first cycle of coding. Initial coding and the a priori codes that I used in the first cycle of coding generated many codes, some of which were more applicable to my research questions than others, so my first step in pattern coding was to determine which codes related to my research questions and which codes did not. Then, guided by my research questions, I developed broad categories that centered around data relating to perceptions of feedback, feedback experiences, examples of types of feedback given, applications of feedback on written assignments, writing pedagogy beliefs and practices, resources used by students. I sorted codes accordingly under these broad categories. I also looked at frequency counts of codes and high frequency counts informed my categories as well. I then made sub-categories that consisted of codes that were similar thematically within the larger categories to help refine and deepen the meaning and nuance of the broader categories. The addition of these sub-categories served as sub-themes that enabled me to articulate my findings (the larger categories) and sub-findings (the sub-categories under each larger category). At that point, I was able to produce findings statements that were supported by data (Saldana, 2016).

### **Trustworthiness and Validity**

There are many ways to gain trustworthiness and thus validity in a case study. Trustworthiness can be established through credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Hesse-Biber, 2017; Cresswell & Poth, 2018). My study was credible due to

**Commented [EKJ15]:** Including this section helps readers trust you as the researcher and the results/findings of your study. One of your writing goals is to have readers trust you, and an easy way to do so is to write about how your study is trustworthy and valid.



triangulating multiple, varying sources of data (Yin, 2016). It was transferable because I applied the same theories and methods of analysis across participants (Yin, 2009 as cited in Hesse-Biber, 2017). I engaged in dependability because I used protocols (such as interviewing protocol) and created a database to house all of my data if I ever needed to be audited (Yin, 2009 as cited in Hesse-Biber, 2017). This study demonstrated confirmability because it included a literature review, used multiple sources of evidence, established a chain of evidence, and I conducted member-checking during interviews (Yin, 2009 as cited in Hesse-Biber, 2017; Cresswell & Poth, 2018). My study was valid as a result of engaging in trustworthiness activities, specifically, triangulating data sources, clarifying researcher bias, member-checking, generating rich, thick descriptions, and working with and using the guidance provided by my committee throughout the dissertation process (Cresswell & Poth, 2018). Reliability is yet another way to achieve quality in a case study (Cresswell & Poth, 2018). To ensure my analysis was reliable, I developed a list of codes in NVivo and shared this list with my adviser and sought her feedback so as to establish inter-rater reliability when coding (Cresswell & Poth, 2018).