SHAPING THE THESIS AND DISSERTATION: CASE STUDIES OF WRITERS ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

by

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To my family:

Ryan; Enrique and Sheila; Rosita, Jonathan, Noah Sol, and Mia Luz; and Gary and Linda.

And to my mother, my first writing teacher:

Frances (July 16, 1934-February 2, 2001)

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Chapter 1: Enculturation, Production, and Instruction: Introducing *Shaping the Thesis and Dissertation: Case Studies of Writers across the Curriculum*

On an early draft of her dissertation prospectus, a close friend received a frustrating comment from her director. He said, "You're still writing like a graduate student, and it's time to write like a professional." She asked me, "What's that supposed to mean?" At the time, I was studying for Ph.D. comprehensive exams and designing my own dissertation project, focusing on academic writing at transitional moments in graduate school. My friend's uncertainty about what writing like a professional meant prompted me to narrow my focus. I knew that writing researchers had studied graduate student writing, but I wondered what this research indicated about the purpose of the genres produced by advanced graduate students. What is the purpose of the thesis or dissertation? How might these genres be sites in which one can write like a professional? Who or what influences this writing, and how? In order to better understand the purpose of the culminating projects of graduate school—the thesis and dissertation—I direct my attention to the processes by which they are produced.

Since the 1960s composition scholars have focused their attention on the complex activity of composing rather than focusing only on the textual product itself. Social and cultural theories then shifted the emphasis from the individual writer composing to the writer-as-agent composing a text, influenced by the world around her. Contemporary teachers of writing teach students from diverse backgrounds and preparations, and this project aims to better understand the contexts of writing, especially the conceptualizations of the thesis and dissertation that writers and teachers assume but rarely articulate. A better understanding of what might go unarticulated and/or untaught during the writing process could lead to better mentoring and better writing.

The contexts of writing at the center of my multilayered study—the individual writer's preparation for graduate school, the representative program and university background, and the representative discipline's values—are potential resources of support and instruction to graduate students as they write their culminating projects. The impact of this influence can manifest as early as during the exams or during the prospectus or proposal-writing stage or as late as the oral defense. In order to understand the contexts and the texts, I conduct case study research at Texas Christian University,[1] a mid-size, private liberal arts university, gathering data from graduate students about their writing experiences, from their earliest memories of writing to their current experiences in graduate school. The culture of graduate school that currently shapes the students' writing, of course, is the heart of my analysis. But in many cases, these students' early writing experiences impact how the graduate students perceive themselves as writers and how they conceptualize writing. By extension, how and why people encountered writing in the past—at home, work, or school—has shaped how they learn to write in graduate school.

Although I discuss my methods and methodology more extensively in Chapter Two, below I introduce the questions that form the basis of my inquiry. These research questions speak to my earlier concerns about the purpose and influential shaping of the culminating text of a graduate student's education:

[1] During the process of writing this dissertation, I considered using a pseudonym for the institution in an attempt to more carefully protect the identities of the participants. However, I was confronted by the reality of referring to institutionally-produced documents and graduate program policies that would require naming the institution in order to cite sources accurately. The importance of interrogating specific disciplinary and local practices in addition to my concern about citing my sources accurately motivated me to name TCU and the programs in which the participants study and work. All human participants are referred to by pseudonym.

- What role does writing the thesis, dissertation, or equivalent project play in graduate programs across the curriculum?
- What resources of writing instruction and support for the thesis, dissertation, or equivalent project do the programs provide?
- How do graduate students use these resources and how do these interactions shape their writing?

Ultimately, the three questions circulate around one central question for this study: **What role does the production of these culminating projects play in a student's entry into professional writing?** These answers to these questions have the potential to add to ongoing conversations in writing studies about graduate writing research and disciplinary enculturation, genre theory, mentoring, writing centers, classroom pedagogy, and writing across the curriculum.

Below I review relevant scholarship on the culture of graduate school to situate my research. This scholarship that I review situates writing at the center of disciplinary enculturation, and my project follows in that tradition, teasing out two important threads: support and instruction. These threads inform important sections in the literature review, guide methods for gathering data, and point toward the significance of the project.

The Culture of Graduate School

There is no shortage of anecdotes among academics about their graduate school experiences. Researchers and theorists in the humanities and the social sciences have explored whether the lore, as historian of research in Composition Studies Stephen M. North would call it, matches up with empirical results. Melissa S. Anderson, an associate

professor in higher education at the University of Minnesota, and Judith P. Swazey, historian of science and president of the Acadia Institute, present an overview of graduate experience in the sciences (chemistry, civil engineering, microbiology, and sociology). In this survey of 2000 doctoral students, Anderson and Swazey find that distress is the cornerstone of the graduate student's existence. The researchers report that the "complaints and stories of woe" we all hear about in graduate school were corroborated by their findings. One of the major stressors for graduate students in the programs Anderson and Swazey studied is the frustration they feel as a result of the "socialization process" which the researchers explain in the summarized terms of Van Maanen and Schein's 1979 article, "Toward a Theory of Organizational Socialization": the process demands "divestiture, in the sense of shedding one's previous self-conception and taking on a new view of self that reflects one's role and membership in the new group" (9). Anderson and Swazey found that for the graduate students surveyed, "graduate school was changing them in ways they did not like" (9). This socialization process begins at admissions and continues throughout the thesis and dissertation writing period and beyond.

Graduate programs and faculty, even students themselves, attempt to predict how prospective and admitted graduate students will perform during coursework, exams, and thesis and dissertation writing. Programs are regularly judged by their peer institutions, accrediting groups, and the public on their turnout of successful graduates who secure desirable jobs (desirability typically depending on the program's curriculum and the discipline's ideals of employment). Graduate programs vary in their decision-making processes for admissions. Some weigh undergraduate and/or previous graduate grade

point average (GPA) and Graduate Record Examination (GRE) scores far higher than any other criteria. But others, such as many humanities programs, tend to balance the criteria among the GPA and GRE and other items such as writing sample, letter of intent, vita, and recommendation letters from former professors or employers. Admissions committees are made up of busy people who might not want to spend a great deal of time reading through hefty application packets. But students who score well on standardized tests or make good grades—i.e., those who look good on paper—are not necessarily those who fare well in graduate school nor are they necessarily the ones who finish at all.

Students who perform well while in graduate school, regardless of the size or quality of their program, are not guaranteed to be success stories, statistically speaking. In their seminal study of graduate education published in 1992, William Bowen and Neil Rudenstine found that 56.6 percent of graduate students, both master's and doctoral-level complete their programs (212). David Damrosch points out that this completion rate is similar for even the best students across the country, students who are recipients of the most prestigious national fellowships (144). In Bowen and Rudenstine's study, the smaller programs at the best schools showed 60 percent completion rate and larger programs had 32.5 percent (154). Attrition is not just a concern for students, however. It's a concern for programs. In "Doctor Dropout," Scott Smallwood cites Peter Diffley, an associate dean of the Graduate School at Notre Dame, who indicates that Notre Dame "would save $1-million a year in stipends alone if attrition went down by 10 percent, because programs would not over-enroll students to compensate for attrition" (Smallwood par. 12). Futhermore, Diffley suggests that there's really no difference between those who complete their degrees and those who do not when it comes to GRE

scores and undergraduate grades (par. 11). There's more to consider in graduate admissions, however, as Adam McKee, Stephen L. Mallory, and Julie Campbell assert in "The Graduate Record Examination and Undergraduate Grade Point Average: Predicting Graduate Grade Point Averages in a Criminal Justice Graduate Program." These scholars suggest that undergraduate GPA and GRE scores should be considered alongside other criteria. Their review of the scholarship points out that researchers disagree as to the predictive value of the GRE and undergraduate GPA. Their own study of student transcripts and records conducted at University of Southern Mississippi adds that "rigid, institution-wide admission policies are inappropriate for specific departmental admission criteria" (316). The researchers are careful to caution readers and graduate program directors against generalizing these findings for other programs, and they insist that predictive value of GPA and GRE is highly dependent on the area of study. But they do point out that admissions committees can be easily persuaded or convinced that these criteria are efficient ways to make decisions.

There are alternatives to making ill-informed decisions about potential students. For example, programs might consider noncognitive factors such as personality, research and teaching and personal interests, and professionalization activities prior to graduate school when making admissions decisions (Kyllonen, et al.). According to Kyllonen et al's research review, the traits highly valued by faculty analyzed as predictive for success include demonstrations of the potential for collaborating agreeably with peers and for being proactive in their own professional development. Furthermore, the writing assessment portion of the GRE brings up other issues worth considering. Inquiring how writing performance on the GRE-W might influence graduate admissions decisions,

Donald E. Powers and Mary E. Fowles, researchers in a study funded by the Educational Testing Service, hypothesized that admissions committees would misinterpret the essays written in response to the prompts provided by the GRE-W, assessing the essays for irrelevant or insignificant aspects of writing because admissions committee members do not necessarily understand what the exam is testing (217-18). Committees should have the opportunity to see what product is being assessed by the exam. Given these findings, it makes sense that committees would consider multiple factors in admissions. As McKee et al. and Smallwood suggest, multiple factors influence graduate student retention and attrition.

The Educational Testing Service (ETS) began administering the Analytical Writing Section of the GRE in October 2002 in response to graduate programs' desire for a specific measure of their applicants' critical thinking skills. The organization also wanted to provide a "performance measure" of test takers' ability to make and analyze arguments, which is "central to the work done by graduate students" ("The GRE Analytical" 2). According to the ETS, examinees are asked to take on "two discrete analytical writing tasks" for which one combined score will be determined ("Analytical Writing Score"). The score is based on a 0-6 scale, 6 being the highest, in ½ point increments ("Analytical Writing Score"). One task is to offer a perspective on an "Issue" of general interest. The examinee has 45 minutes to write a response. The other task requires the examinee to compose a written analysis of an argument in 30 minutes.[2] The

[2] In the ETS's "An Introduction to the Analytical Writing Section of the GRE General Test," sample prompts are provided so that faculty may better understand the kinds of prompts their applicants have encountered. Here is the sample "Issue" prompt provided:

> "In our time, specialists of all kinds are highly overrated. We need more generalists—people who can provide broad perspectives." (8, quotation marks in original)

essays produced are generally scored according to their demonstration of critical thinking. The highest scores are given to responses that offer "insightful, in-depth analysis of complex ideas" and logically arranged and developed ideas ("Analytical Writing Score"). These responses also demonstrate sentence variety with only "minor errors that do not interfere with meaning" ("Analytical Writing Score"). According to the ETS website, the lowest scores are given to responses that are either "fundamentally flawed" and "confusing or irrelevant" and do not address the prompt at all and/or contain major sentence-level errors throughout the writing such as "foreign language" or indecipherable text" ("Analytical Writing Score").

Powers and Fowles report that graduate faculty in history and psychology (the two disciplines they targeted) generally did not use what the researchers deem irrelevant or inappropriate judgments when reading examinees' essays. As a result, they conclude that the availability of the essays would have little effect on admissions decisions because faculty in their sample focused on the Analytical Writing Section of the GRE scores despite the presence of the essays themselves. Powers and Fowles assume throughout this report that faculty would focus on the incidentals of writing under pressure—spelling errors, punctuation and sentence boundary errors, jargon, ESL markers, among others. Perhaps even more problematic is that graduate faculty might expect the critical and analytical thinking might be well demonstrated in the exam essays. According to the ETS, the GRE-W responses are evaluated based on their demonstration of their ability to:

Here is the sample "Argument" prompt provided:

> Hospital statistics regarding people who go to the emergency room after roller skating accidents indicate the need for more protective equipment. Within this group of people, 75 percent of those who had accidents in streets or parking lots were not wearing any protective clothing (helmets, knee pads, etc.) or any light-reflecting material (clip-on lights, glow-in-the dark wrist pads, etc.). Clearly, these statistics indicate that by investing high quality protective gear and reflective equipment, roller skates will greatly reduce their risk of being severely injured in an accident. (18)

- Articulate complex ideas clearly and effectively
- Examine claims and accompanying evidence
- Support ideas with relevant reasons and examples
- Sustain a well-focused, coherent discussion
- Control the elements of standard written English (a factor that plays a role only to the extent that poor writing skills impede readers' understanding of the argument). ("Analytical Writing Score" 10)

Given the above list of skills evaluated and the claims made by ETS, more complications arise when making admissions decisions. If the Analytical Writing Section evaluates what it claims to, then faculty must consider that the scores reflect a writing performance under the artificial circumstances and constraints of the standardized exam. If the test assumes the ability to assess critical and analytical thinking, then graduate faculty on the admissions committee can read the examinees' essays with such criteria in mind as well. However, is it possible that the faculty read the essays assuming that the writers with the most potential for success will write most successfully under the exam's constraints? Although the GRE-W is a mechanism in use for admissions into many graduate programs, certainly the predictive value of this mechanism is unclear.

In the 2006 issue of MLA's *Profession* Karen M. Cardozo asserts:

> If the university has a subconscious, its repressed wish would be this: it does not actually want all graduate students to finish their degrees, let alone quickly. Nonetheless, I proceed on the assumption that accepting students into doctoral programs ethically requires institutions to provide

> the necessary advising and instruction, broadly construed, for program completion. (141)

Many researchers in higher education share the goal to propose reforms to admissions policies that will serve student writers, faculty advisors, and graduate programs. Because attrition rates are high and time-to-degree rates appear to be rising, education scholars Patricia Hinchey and Isabel Kimmel suggest that programs establish clear and explicit guidelines on completion of requirements with "intelligent application of general rules to individual cases" and close monitoring of the "performance of students and faculty" (250). Hinchey and Kimmel agree that explicit guidelines and clear goals will help expedite the dissertation process, which is in the best interest of the students and faculty. From the moment of admission, graduate students begin the socialization process into what is most likely the most intense of academic experiences, one which they assume accepts nothing but excellence at every turn. In the 2004 report prepared for the Association of Departments of English (ADE) and the Modern Language Association (MLA), David Laurence and Doug Steward state that in 2000-2001, the U.S. average time-to-degree is eight years for English doctoral degrees, and women's time is slightly longer than men's (118). Some graduate students will seemingly thrive during these years while others will seemingly struggle or fail. I use the term "seemingly" to qualify success, struggle, and failure because as David Damrosch says, the story of the academy and of departments is told by victors. When the student finishes and even after going on to take a job in academia, she may not consider her accomplishment a great success story. The losses one may incur include strained or permanently damaged personal relationships including marriages due to the time commitment and emotional labor a graduate degree

demands. The losses one may experience include damaged academic and/or professional relationships including the ties between the advisor and/or mentor. Peer relationships may also become strained due to competition. And, not least of all, the graduate student's feelings toward her own culminating writing project is often tied to how closely she feels it represents her ideas, her research, and her voice. Sometimes, leaving the graduate program before finishing is as much a success or more than staying.

Graduate Writing Research

Much composition research has challenged the assumption that graduate students know how to write and that graduate writing instruction is an exercise in remediation.[3] As early as the 1950s, scholars have inquired about the socialization of graduate students into their professions by studying their writing. Robert Merton (1957) led a team of researchers to investigate how medical students develop professional identities and adjust to the increasingly difficult literacy demands of their programs. Another early research team led by Howard Becker (1961) conducted case studies and found that medical students privilege performing well as individuals but that the students valued classroom performance and grades more than they sought opportunities to collaborate with their peers and engage in professional development activities. Such findings offer some insight into the medical profession's culture and the emerging professionals' adjustment to that culture. These studies show that grades and school-based accolades can be very important

[3] Christine Pearson Casanave in *Writing Games: Multicultural Case Studies of Literacy*, Paul Prior in *Writing/Disciplinarity: A Sociohistoric Account of Literate Activity in the Academy*, and Patricia Sullivan in "Writing in the Graduate Curriculum: Literary Criticism as Composition" note that all graduate students (from those who are new to their programs and those who are writing theses and dissertations) struggle with understanding the forms of writing they encounter in graduate school. These forms are new to the students who are, in some cases, new to the field and to writing academic English. Alan Golding and John Mascaro in "A Survey of Graduate Writing Courses" argue that graduate students benefit from explicit writing instruction.

to graduate students, even at the expense of their own professional development and relationships with colleagues.

More recently, researchers have used case studies of situated practice to inquire about graduate student socialization processes and student and professor expectations of writing. Carol Berkenkotter, Thomas Huckin, and Jonathan Ackerman's study of "Nate" in "Conventions, Conversations, and the Writer: An Apprenticeship Tale of a Doctoral Student" focused on textual analysis, following Nate's gradual acceptance of and growing facility with the discourse of rhetoric and composition, Nate's new community.[4] They found that his process of acculturation into this new discourse community did not equate to his disavowal of other discourses. Ackerman points out in his "Postscript," that graduate students "are not in a reciprocal relationship with the social structure around them" (148). Ackerman explains that he struggled publicly with practices he, at times, agreed with and, at other times, did not. Thus, because of his subject position, he looks back at the texts as "exercises in 'getting by.'" The study of Nate explains how one graduate student learned to enter into professional conversations of the discipline even as he felt subjugated to the discourse. It is not until Ackerman writes his "Postscript" that he felt he could tell the full version of his story of his entrance into the discipline. And it is not until Ackerman grants readers access to this "Postscript" that he and Berkenkotter and Huckin included in *Genre Knowledge in Disciplinary Communication: Cognition/Culture/Power* that we begin to better understand the complexity of his relationship to the graduate program, the discipline, and the texts he produced. Additionally, Patricia Sullivan's project published as "Writing in the Graduate

[4] Berkenkotter, Huckin, and Ackerman's study was originally published in 1988 in *Research in the Teaching of English*. However, my text refers to Berkenkotter and Huckin's 1995 *Genre Knowledge in Disciplinary Communication: Cognition/Culture/Power*, the book that includes Ackerman's "Postscript."

Curriculum: Literary Criticism as Composition" focuses on the contradiction between theory and practice in writing instruction in English studies. Sullivan's 1991 study contributes to an already established view of writing as a hierarchical, recursive process that can be taught. But her study also points out that the graduate writer is socially-situated. She indicates that graduate students write, but they receive little to no instruction in writing. Although hers is less case study of individual writers and more a mini-ethnography of a specific facet of graduate culture, Sullivan's article proposes that literature faculty explicitly teach graduate students how to write critical analyses and theoretical essays.

In the years since Sullivan's study, writing instruction in the graduate curriculum has received greater attention from researchers and practitioners. In his comprehensive study of graduate writing published in 1998, *Writing/Disciplinarity: A Sociohistoric Account of Writing in the Academy*, Paul Prior argues that writing and disciplinary enculturation are "situated, mediated, and dispersed" in graduate students' experiences and that these experiences "emerge out of deeply laminated lifeworlds" (Prior 286). These laminated lifeworlds represent the many different discourse communities with which students (or anyone) might align themselves during their process of enculturation. He contextualizes multiple sources of data including student-written texts, professor response to texts, interviews with students and professors, and classroom observation in order to develop a comprehensive portrait of graduate writing activity as an accumulation of social processes. These multiple layers, "lamination" in his terms, generate complex, protean images of writing in graduate school. Students, their texts, their professors, the professors' responses, and the languages used in the classroom and in the texts all

intersect and influence the socialization process sanctioned by disciplinary enculturation. Prior finds that, despite the volume of writing accomplished during graduate courses, graduate students are not necessarily engaged in their writing and may not understand their professors' expectations for their writing. In this way, Prior's conclusions, which like the "Nate" study are derived largely from case study data, point to the mismatch between professor and student conceptualizations of graduate-level writing. The students do not necessarily know what they should be writing. And if they do know what to write, they do not necessarily know how to write. As a result of these studies, writing researchers understand that writing is highly valued and essential to disciplinary participation across disciplines. In addition, graduate students can struggle to do this writing that is valued but that they still receive little instruction in.

Herein lies the core of the problem for graduate program support for student writing: writing is at the heart of disciplinary work, but we have much to learn about how this writing actually is done and is taught across disciplines. Graduate students have different research interests and preparation for graduate-level writing even within the same program. As a result, no one model of graduate writing instruction and support will meet the needs of such a diverse population. My project responds by explaining how the texts the graduate writers attempt to write are defined in multiple contexts including the discipline, local, and individual, (which I define in Chapters Two and Three), and by discovering how sources of support help shape the texts. Therefore, my inquiry into the shaping of graduate student writing is inextricably bound to disciplinary enculturation.

The Role of Genres in Disciplinary Enculturation

In many academic communities, disciplinary enculturation is performed in part by the production of texts engaged in socially-ascribed discourses. Genres are these discourses that articulate the values and work of the academic community. In her now-classic definition from "Genre as Social Action," Carolyn Miller sees genre not simply as types of writing but as "typified rhetorical actions based in recurrent situations" (159). Learning to write in these genres is "an ongoing process as writers move into and meet the demands of new situations" in which texts are community and/or discipline-specific according to professional writing researcher Jane Ledwell-Brown (200). College writers encounter new situations in each class, learning disciplinary content as they write their way into the communities they wish to join. Prior explains the "social and textual" relationship between writing and disciplinarity and notes how participants in a discipline demonstrate "legitimacy" through texts they write:

> This literate activity is central to disciplinary enculturation, providing opportunity spaces for (re)socialization of discursive practices, for foregrounding representations of disciplinarity, and for negotiating trajectories of participation in communities of practice. (32)

As Prior sees it, graduate students are expected to be able to demonstrate their potential to contribute to the discipline or profession largely through textual performance. As long as they are expected to contribute in writing, graduate students must showcase their historical, theoretical, as well as rhetorical knowledge.

After coursework, graduate students demonstrate legitimacy through preliminary/qualifying/comprehensive exams,[5] and then through the thesis or dissertation process including the oral defense (which is typically written to be delivered orally unless the defense occurs as part of the final exams process for the Master's degree).[6] My study targets student writers who have recently entered candidacy in order to better understand how graduate writers learn to write as professionals in their fields. The Master's degree, historically viewed as illegitimately awarded or conferred only on individuals interested in teaching (though this is not the case in current practice), may or may not demand the writing of a thesis. The doctoral degree has focused on research from its inception, and this degree carries with it a number of checkpoints or obstacles (e.g., the doctoral exams, and even the dissertation itself) originally established to promote only the most serious and capable students. With this focus on writing during candidacy in mind, I further develop these brief historical introductions to the Master's degree and thesis in Chapter Four and to the doctoral exams and the dissertation in Chapter Five.

For the students, the department, and the discipline, these textual bridges—comprehensive exams, the proposal, the thesis or dissertation—show the student writers' progress along the path toward legitimacy with the thesis or dissertation functioning as the ultimate demonstration of legitimacy—the rite of passage into stewardship. The genres of the thesis and dissertation, the textual bridge that takes students from student to

[5] Exams are a common bridge between coursework and the dissertation prospectus/proposal. Typically taken in the third year of study, doctoral exams are also called "preliminary," "qualifying," or "comprehensive" exams. In *Refiguring the Ph.D. in English Studies*, Stephen M. North uses all of these terms to describe the "barrier" examinations that form a "ritual gauntlet" for graduate students (30-33). At Brite Divinity School, the doctoral exams are called qualifying exams. In the Department of English at TCU, some faculty and students informally call them "comps" but they are identified as Ph.D. qualifying exams in the Graduate Program Policies document. I use the terms "qualifying" and "comprehensive" interchangeably.

[6] I offer the example of the oral defense presented "off the cuff" during the Master's exams because I defended my Master's thesis during the last half hour of my oral exams.

professional, represent the graduate students' (re)socialized selves: the student transforming into the professional. As graduate students attempt to claim their legitimacy in the professional writing of their field, their need of support for this resocialization is one generalization we can justifiably make from the research on graduate writing research. But identifying the forms of support that students need is trickier.

Graduate Student Writing Support and Instruction

Embedded within the concern for graduate schools' response to the needs of their students is the assumption that graduate students are often left to fend for themselves (i.e., sink or swim) when it comes to writing. Programs often work from blanket assumptions about their students: they should already know how to write and they should know the "essential secrets" about the field (G. Graff 1192), despite the increasing writing research that claims these assumptions are wrong.[7] In order for students to compete or "get ahead in this business" as Gerald Graff aptly puts it, graduate students may need access to a variety of kinds of support and instruction for the literate activities demanded of them. Undergraduates potentially learn about writing in required composition courses and writing in the disciplines courses. They may also have access to writing center services that can inform and support their writing processes. Undergraduates in the arts and humanities are typically expected to summarize secondary sources, write short analytical essays, and give oral presentations. Undergraduates in the

[7] For a more extensive discussion of these assumptions and arguments against them, see Irene L. Clark's article in 2006 *Profession*, "Entering the Conversation: The Graduate Thesis Proposal as Genre" and her 2007 book, *Writing the Successful Thesis and Dissertation* and Christine Pearson Casanave's 2002 book, *Writing Games: Multicultural Case Studies of Academic Literacy*. Clark insists that thesis advisors become as familiar as possible with current practices in writing pedagogy, regardless of field of expertise. Casanave points out that second language learners in particular struggle with proving their legitimacy through textual performance.

sciences and social sciences typically prepare lab reports and oral presentations. Graduate students in all of these disciplines are more often expected to critique secondary sources, conduct primary research, write seminar-length papers (twenty pages) in addition to shorter essays, response papers, lab reports, and oral presentations. Although graduate school writing demands differ from those at the undergraduate level, graduate students may benefit from a similar variety of institutional support in addition to that they receive from faculty mentors. At the undergraduate level, the sheer numbers of writing centers and WAC programs that have developed and flourished over the years speaks to the attention the academy gives to the literacy development of undergraduate writers. But my project aims toward more than simply attracting attention to graduate student writing: this study attends to the ways students make use of these resources and how these interactions shape their writing.

Contemporary literacy theory contributes useful frames for analyzing the intersection of graduate student writers, professors, peers, and other people who shape graduate students' texts. All of these agents may impact how graduate students perceive themselves as writers, how they conceptualize writing, and how they learn to write. In particular, the relationships among the agents are often hegemonic, the individuals representing the institution maintaining a controlling interest in the opportunities of the students. Students are subject both to professors and to the university. Deborah Brandt calls these kinds of rhetorical structures literacy sponsors. Literacy sponsors are "any agents, local or distant, concrete or abstract, who enable, support, teach, and model, as well as recruit, regulate, suppress, or withhold, literacy—and gain advantage by it in some way" (19). Sponsors are "usually richer, more knowledgeable, and more entrenched

than the sponsored, [and] nonetheless enter a reciprocal relationship with those they underwrite. They lend their resources or credibility to the sponsored but also stand to gain benefits from their success, whether directly or indirectly, by credit of association" (19). It's not unheard of for graduate students to be concerned that their unwillingness to agree to what their sponsor suggests or advocates might adversely affect the advisor-student relationship. If advisors get frustrated with their students, they can cut them off from their assistance, from program and from institutional resources. For dissertation writers, this sort of power on behalf of the sponsor can be—and often is—intimidating.

In their book *The Graduate Grind: A Critical Look at Graduate Education,* scholars in education Patricia Hinchey and Isabel Kimmel ask whether the dissertation is "[e]ffective quality control or reified oppression of students" (93). Their response? "A close look at students' lived experience of the dissertation process answers that [the dissertation] must be judged oppressive, a means for faculty to use and maintain their hegemonic privileges for their own, rather than students', benefit" (93). A closer examination of the published scholarship on academic mentoring and advising appears to support Hinchey and Kimmel's conclusion.

Professors Emeriti at University of Pittsburgh, James E. Mauch, Administrative and Policy Studies, and Jack W. Birch, Psychology in Education, define the advisor's role this way:

> The research advisor is mainly a teacher but also a guide, mentor, confidant, and senior research colleague. The role definition rests on the premise that the advisor is instructing the student in the final stages of learning to conduct investigations independently. Successful students and

> advisors often describe their relationships as similar to the roles of parent and mature offspring. The advisor, usually older, wiser, and knowledgeable about the ways of the university world, wields a considerable amount of power. The student, typically plagued with anxieties about the ability to do what is expected, looks up to the advisor as someone who has done it and who can teach or impart the needed knowledge and skill. (31-32)

Mauch and Birch envision the advisor-student relationship in the apprenticeship model: the advisor knows and the student needs to know, so the learning is one-sided. In such a model, the advisor and student benefit, but in very different ways: the student learns and the professor gains glory or credit for the work the student does. David Damrosch notes that many of the essays in the collection on doctoral education *Envisioning the Future of Doctoral Education* maintain that students and faculty stand to gain from "more varied" approaches than the apprenticeship model offers. As he describes it, the apprenticeship model is similar to the old *Doktorvater* relationship held over from the nineteenth-century German university in which the "patriarchal sponsor was supposed to give birth, parthenogenetically, to the newborn Ph.D." (38).

Hinchey and Kimmel offer a dramatically different definition of mentoring and advising from the apprenticeship or *Doktorvater* model. Whereas the apprenticeship model is characterized by the protégé becoming a sort of new version of the advisor, the model that Hinchey and Kimmel promote is one in which the advisor is a supportive mentor (98-99). Thus the advisor should develop what Peggy Hawley, former Director of Graduate Programs at The Claremont Graduate School, describes as a "strong

commitment to the student as a person as well as a neophyte scholar" (Hawley 53). They describe a mentor as "a sort of trail guide, warning students of assorted dangers, pointing out the challenges that can be surmounted and lead to growth, cheerleading good efforts, outlawing self-defeating mediocrity and laziness, and providing faith to fuel student's progress" (99). She insists that the advisor/mentor should care about the student's personal and professional well-being. However, such relationships are rare. Nursing education and doctoral mentoring researcher Kathleen T. Heinrich explains that the mentor-protégé relationship is critical to "perserverance, satisfaction, and success" (qtd. in Hinchey and Kimmel 99). Hawley asserts that the "chemistry" that develops between people who share an interest in the discipline cannot be forced by the student or advisor or by program administrators (Hawley 56). Chemistry happens during the process of getting to know one another via classroom interaction or perhaps working with one another professionally (e.g., on a research project or on a departmental committee). Heinrich outlines three different types of mentoring relationships that can emerge. There are two types characterized by an advisor abusing her power. These include "power over" relationship in which the advisee is expected to "be self-motivated and to accomplish without the need for advisory emotional support" and "power disowned" in which the advisee needs to be "overadequate" to make up for poor advising (qtd. in Hinchey and Kimmel 102-03). The preferred model, according to Heinrich, is the "power with" relationship in which the professor and student establish a "collegial sharing of power" (qtd. in Hinchey and Kimmel 102-03). Sharing power takes effort on the advisor's and the student's part, however. Both must confront the institutional hierarchy imposed on them. In *Homo Academicus*, Pierre Bourdieu draws a connection between academic

power and the number of theses and dissertations directed (91-92). He maintains that the most powerful professors are surrounded by the top students who end up with the best careers. Essentially, Bourdieu's point is that a candidate's academic and professional success may depend largely on his or her choice of advisor, and the advisor's success also depends on attracting the best students (92-93). Furthermore, he says that it is not disciplinary interest that unites advisor and student writer. It is social and professional interest (93).

Lewis Z. Schlosser and Charles J. Gelso's empirical study concurs with Bourdieu's position on what brings advisor and student writer together. Schlosser and Gelso indicate that the concept of mentors and mentoring has been researched extensively in educational and industrial-organizational psychology but find no consensus on the definition of "mentor." They say that "there is a need for empirical research that (a) defines the advising relationship and (b) establishes a reliable and valid measure of the advising relationship" (158). The advisor is "the faculty member who has the greatest responsibility for helping guide the advisee through the graduate program" (158). They find that rapport between the advisor and advisee is "an important factor (i.e., the emotional bond) in a positive working alliance" and that such an alliance enables the advisor and advisee to form "an apprentice-master relationship where the advisor facilitates the advisee's development and teaches the advisee how to function within the profession" (165).

For many researchers the major differences between a mentor and an advisor are the positive connotation associated with the term *mentor* (a chosen role) and the institutional position of the advisor as graduate faculty (an assigned role). Additionally,

more students have advisors than mentors. Students may expect their advisors to be mentors and may assign them this role, but faculty may not necessarily fulfill the expectations that come with this role. In a 2003 qualitative study Lewis Z. Schlosser published with Clara E. Hill, Sarah Knox, and Alissa R. Moskovitz, the researchers report on interviews they conducted with sixteen counseling psychology students about their relationships with their graduate advisors. The students' satisfaction levels with advising relationship are based on, but not exclusive to, the following: professional interactions with the advisor, comfort disclosing professional and personal information with the advisor, initial expectations from the advising relationship and the change in expectations since beginning the graduate program, benefits and costs of the advising relationship, and changes in the relationship including conflict management between the advisor and advisee.

Professors, as institutional representatives capable of instructing and supporting graduate student writing development, can benefit from working with graduate students, according to Hawley in *Being Bright is Not Enough* and Damrosch in *We Scholars*. Similar to the rewards of teaching, the benefits of working closely with graduate students can include the development of research and writing partnerships. When working with less intellectually engaged or more slowly progressing students, professors may consider the intensive work of mentoring less rewarding; thus to feel rewarded, they may depend on the institution to acknowledge their service to the department and the discipline. However, this acknowledgement is often elusive. In most cases, faculty in my study do not receive tangible "credit" for their service on thesis and dissertation committees. In the "Report on Data from the 2004-05 MLA Guide to Doctoral Programs in English and

Other Modern Languages," Doug Steward reports that 60.7% of the English departments surveyed indicated that their institutions do offer a reward system for mentoring (67). Therefore, shaping graduate student writing is potentially but not necessarily a profitable venture for faculty mentors, figuratively speaking.

A commonality among definitions of mentor is the person's role in the student's professional development. Frank N. Willis and Charles T. Diebold explicitly point out this role in their 1997 *Teaching of Psychology* article, "Producing Mentors in Psychology": a mentor is "an individual who actively participates in the respondent's professional development" (40). Willis and Diebold's definition emphasizes the thesis and dissertation as a textual bridge from academic to professional writing. Being a good mentor requires one to help the graduate writer cross the bridge.

Faculty Mentors as Sources of Writing Support

Scholars in composition have theorized the role of the advisor and mentor in supporting graduate students' progress and writing performance as well. Irene L. Clark, Director of Composition and the Master's Option in Rhetoric and Composition at California State University, Northridge, explains that the advisor aims to foster growth in scholarship, professional development, and personal confidence. The effective advisor does this by supporting the graduate writer in several areas including the scholarly, pedagogical, political, and psychological. In terms of the essential, but often overlooked, psychological support, the advisor cheers the writer on when she's doing well but is critical when the work is not as strong as it should be. Clark says that the apprenticeship model (like that of Mauch and Birch's description) works effectively for very few

writers. In contrast, the advising relationship should develop into “collaboration between colleagues” (140). Clark makes a particularly valuable contribution to the scholarship on academic advising when she says that the advisor is a writer and should be aware of writing pedagogy that will assist students in their graduate writing and into the work of their professional lives. Faculty teach graduate students about writing in their discipline in courses (some more than others). Graduate courses that specifically attend to writing and writing centers that serve graduate students are increasingly garnering interest. Professors also teach students in individual interchanges such as professor-student conferences despite the systematic lack of institutional reward for mentoring or service on thesis and dissertation committees.

Different models of professor and student mentoring can prioritize the discipline, student, or the relationship itself. Certain forms of writing support are typically associated with particular priorities (see Table 1).

Table 1. Faculty Priorities and Characteristics of Mentoring Relationships

Priority	**Characteristics**
Discipline	Supports traditions and the conservation of knowledge and rhetorical and genre conventions. Graduate students are expected to demonstrate mastery of extant knowledge in the discipline. The mentor is *Doktorvater*. Catherine Latterall and Cynthia Selfe call this model "empire-building" (51).
Student	Knowledge is treated as provisional and dynamic, as are rhetorical and genre conventions. Graduate students are expected to work independently. The mentor is a cheerleader.
Relationship	The relationship involves mentor, student, and the discipline. Graduate students and mentors are expected to treat each other responsibly and in the spirit of reciprocity. Content knowledge, rhetorical knowledge, and genre conventions are acknowledged but challenged and critiqued. Discourse is negotiated responsibly.

When the discipline is the priority, tradition matters more than the student's stake in the field. In other words, the graduate student learns not so much to position herself in the discipline but learns the historical and current conversation in the field, joins the conversation on its own terms, and learns the discourse, perhaps at the expense of her own. In Nate's case, for example, he felt that his own personal voice was often suppressed when writing for academic purposes. But his professors and the researchers interpreted his writing as gradually positioning him in the field. According to Catherine Latterell and Cynthia Selfe in "Dissertation Writing and Advising in a Postmodern Age," advising as "empire-building" seeks to "protect the discipline and increase its visibility. . . . sponsoring graduate students who will carry forward what the field deems appropriate research agendas" (51). On the opposite end of the spectrum, Latterell and Selfe outline the cheerleader as mentor who sees disciplinary knowledge as "provisional and positional" (51). The cheerleader mentor privileges the student's voice as the writer attempts to situate herself in the discipline. Characteristic of inter- and multidisciplinary projects, the student-prioritized mentoring model offers many opportunities for the student interested in (and comfortable with) using multiple methodologies. However, a less-confident student who encounters difficulties even early in the process may need more direction. Latterell and Selfe suggest that students working under this model are likely to revert to safer, more traditional projects. On the other hand, some students may end up stagnating in their progress.

From research on graduate student writing and my own experience, I am beginning to better understand that the student-prioritized mentoring model can set up an unrealistic dynamic in which the student herself controls the production of the text, and is

solely responsible for its success (or failure). By handing over the reins, the advisor may actually cause the student to lose control of her own project. A student researcher, even the most talented, needs an advisor. A student who is left to work with little direction and with little access to the resources her advisor provides (disciplinary content knowledge, rhetorical knowledge, genre awareness, research materials, professional contacts in the discipline, and political power within the institution). Also, the student may decide that it is easier to take on a less risky project, one that is typical of other graduate students in her program or at the university. Taking on a less risky project means being able to follow in a well-worn path in the discipline and in the local setting (at the university). Otherwise, without the explicit instruction and support of her advisor, the student may have little to no means of getting her work accepted at the institution or in the discipline. In this way, this mentoring situation seems similar to the discipline-prioritized situation. In the arts and humanities, student-focused mentoring models predominate since these disciplines tend to value independent scholarship. The individual writer ultimately takes responsibility for writing even though the writing process ends up not being an independent or solitary endeavor at all.

Acknowledging the potential for collaborative responsibility in textual production, Latterell and Selfe conceive of advising and writing as a responsibility for the postmodern "other." In what I call a relationship-focused model, the priority is to recognize power in the form of knowledge existing within complex sets of relationships. Advisors and writers take responsibility for one another's success, for this indicates an ethic of responsibility. In this same collection on dissertation writing in rhetoric and composition, *The Dissertation and the Discipline*, Nancy Welch proposes a graduate

professor and student mentoring relationship grounded in reciprocity. Such a configuration mirrors Latterell and Selfe's model at the same time that it complicates Brandt's sponsorship framework: responsibility rather than reward marks the stakes for both the professor and the student.

Peer Mentors and Writing Center Consultants as Sources of Support

Peers and other sources of support, such as writing center consultants, may also guide, mentor, or instruct graduate students in learning how to write the texts expected of them, but these people do not wield power in the relationship that develops around these texts. Peers tend to work reciprocally in writing groups and partnerships,[8] and writing center scholarship tends to emphasize the center's position as writer-focused. In the same vein, relying on peers as mentors for writing may make for a freer, even safer exchange of ideas, at least in a program where the students and faculty have formed a supportive environment. My study suggests that some students are reluctant to seek help even from peers, due in part to competition or embarrassment. But peer writing groups can help alleviate some of the symptoms that lead to competition and embarrassment. Rowena Murray, senior lecturer in the Centre for Academic Practice at the University of Strathclyde, UK, teaches a course in thesis writing and lectures internationally on academic writing practices. In *How to Write a Thesis*, Murray suggests a "middle ground" for writers who may normally prefer to work alone but seek to improve productivity (141). According to Murray, such groups should select a facilitator to help the group meet the needs of individuals. This facilitator manages the group meetings and

[8] Writing groups are a rich resource of support for writing, especially for graduate students. This is a worthy avenue of research but outside the scope of this project.

mediates discussions. In clinical psychologist Joan Bolker's popular book *Writing Your Dissertation in Fifteen Minutes a Day*, she explains how a writing group functions most effectively: "The right group creates a supportive atmosphere—and a reliable, known bunch of people who know you and your work and can empathize, criticize, and push, as the occasion demands, *with the expectation that you will do the same for them*" (original emphasis 104). The kind of mentoring relationship Murray and Bolker advocate—a student-focused, yet reciprocity-minded approach may serve as an alternative or supplement to a faculty mentor-student protégé situation.

The writing center serves as potential site of student-focused or relationship-focused mentoring. By focusing largely on teaching people how to be better writers one writer at a time and one writing experience at a time, writing center consultants, which I discuss in greater detail in Chapter Five, are in the unique position to sponsor literacy as student advocates.

Classroom Instruction as a Source of Support

Even with mentors willing to support writing, graduate students may need more formal instruction. Other scholars hold a similar position, which is not new. In their 1985-86 study of graduate writing courses, Alan Golding and John Mascaro conclude that many graduate students have had no formal writing instruction since freshman English. The respondents to their study—who believe writing training belongs in the undergraduate curriculum or at least not in "legitimate" graduate courses— see writing as a generalizable skill learned once, and any further instruction represents remediation (176-77). This assumption privileges a discipline-based model of mentoring in which

student writers enter an already-established tradition of discourse whose content the mentor instructs her or him to master. But as many graduate faculty know, graduate students participate in highly specialized and dynamic discourses, and the undergraduate curriculum does not necessarily adequately prepare them for the work expected of these emergent professionals and scholars. Writers learn how to write new genres either through situated practice or explicit instruction or both (Freedman; Prior). About eight years after Golding and Mascaro's survey, Sidney I. Dobrin asserts in a 1993 article in *Dialogue* that graduate students are expected to write professional and scholarly documents and "are unjustly assessed based on a skill which they have not been properly taught" (75). He continues, "[i]n graduate schools, our students are taught methodologies of their fields, not methodologies for writing in their disciplines" (75). According to Dobrin, the pervasive research methods course could involve writing for the discipline but more often than not the student learns primarily epistemological content and empirical methods.

In the years since Golding and Mascaro's and Dobrin's studies, scholars and practitioners have paid greater attention to writing instruction in graduate school and they have developed courses to address the needs of their students. Several faculty across the country who teach interdisciplinary graduate writing courses have presented or published on their graduate writing courses.[9] At Georgia State University, Lynée Lewis Gaillet developed a course, "Writing for Academic Publication," a graduate course in expository writing. She designed a course that would prepare graduate students in rhetoric and composition and other disciplines for writing publishable documents. However, after

[9] Charles Bazerman teaches a graduate writing course in the Gevirtz Graduate School of Education at the University of California Santa Barbara but has not published on presented scholarship on it. His syllabus is available on the Web at <http://www.education.ucsb.edu/~bazerman/WritGSE.html>.

being assigned to teach the course, she knew she had plenty of work to do since such a course had not been taught at her university:

> My worst nightmare was that English 812 had been designed as a glorified advanced English 101 class and that I was expected to teach the "current-traditional modes" to graduate students, many of whom were teaching introductory English classes themselves. Upon taking over English 812, I decided that this class could be restructured under the existing rubric into a seminar in academic publishing. (90)

Her first group of students enjoyed great success with the work they produced in the class: several had presentation proposals accepted, articles published, and travel and equipment funds awarded (90). She developed the course because "without formal instruction in writing for their specific disciplines, many graduate students fail in their attempts to join their professional writing communities" ("Designing a Graduate Course" 43). A writing course such as the one Gaillet and others develop offers students the opportunity to pursue a research topic of their interest or within the scope of a larger research area while learning about the writing and publishing conventions for credit. Thus, the students learn how to situate their research within the field, initiating them into the disciplinary practices in the supportive environment of the classroom.

Writing specialists Barbara M. Olds and Jon A. Leydens proposed their academic publishing seminar at Colorado School of Mines (CSM) because faculty in sciences and engineering acknowledged to them that the CSM WAC program focuses on undergraduates, but graduate students need writing instruction as much as undergraduates ("A Graduate Course" 2). Their course is designed for faculty or graduate students in at

least their second year of graduate study. In Olds and Leydens's class (as in Gaillet's), the focus is primarily on student writing, and the reading and exercises done throughout the semester support that writing. For example, Olds and Leydens's students write journal entries so that students may reflect on their learning and writing in the course, produce annotated bibliographies of research on discipline-specific conventions in their field, write a rhetorical analysis of a sample of professional writing in their field, and write a short analysis of a major journal in their discipline in whose style they write all of their papers for the class. The final course project requires students "to investigate a focused topic that unveil[s] disciplinary writing conventions of interest to them and to report their findings" (4). Finally, they present their papers to the class as if at a conference. Students in this course comment that they gain "experience, confidence, and knowledge" as the class "tie[s] together theory and practice in very useful ways" (5). Gaillet and Olds and Leydens teach students how to write and about writing in their various disciplines, but is this the only model of graduate writing instruction? Do graduate students benefit as much or more from a course in writing taught by professors in their own disciplines?

The case studies that I discuss suggest that graduate students may not take advantage of all of the resources available to them at the university and that they are, in some cases, resistant to taking advantage of them. Graduate students may rely on the resources they consider most qualified or most readily available to them such as disciplinary faculty and departmental peers. However, non-specialist resources may be able to provide valuable support for students' writing, supplementing not replacing the support they receive from disciplinary resources. This project also continues in the

tradition of research in graduate writing pedagogy that indicates what kind of writing experiences best prepare writers for graduate and professional writing.

Chapter 2: Methodology: Using a Case Study Approach across the Curriculum

> The inclusion of the self in research and scholarship is inescapable, even more so when writers try intentionally to excise the self from their research.
>
> —Robert J. Nash, *Liberating Scholarly Writing: The Power of Scholarly Narrative*

In her book *Ethnographic Writing Research: Writing It Down, Writing It Up, and Reading It*, Wendy Bishop defines ethnographic research as "represent[ing] a complicated hybridization of research traditions—sociological, cognitive, and anthropological" (4). She distinguishes microethnographies from macroethnographies which "report research on multiple sites and involve larger or longer projects than do microethnographies. Microethnographies can report on the culture of the single classroom, the single learner, and even the single learning event" (13). Writing researchers who do ethnography elicit connections between writing, learning, and culture, according to Beverly Moss in "Ethnography and Composition: Studying Language at Home": "While ethnography in general is concerned with describing and analyzing a culture, ethnography in composition studies is generally topic oriented and concerned more narrowly with communicative behavior or the interrelationship of language and culture" (156). The students in my study write their theses and dissertations in different graduate programs, that is, in disciplinary subcultures of academia. Because I study the students' writing in the context of the disciplinary and programmatic cultures in which the writing is produced, I refer to my dissertation project as microethnographic case studies. I have studied a small number of advanced graduate students from April 2006 to February 2007, collecting multiple kinds of data in order to understand how the graduate

students perceive themselves as writers, how they conceptualize writing, and how they learn to write.

This dissertation provides insight into the purpose and influential shaping of the culminating text of a graduate student's education, specifically addressing the following questions:

- What role does writing the thesis, dissertation, or equivalent project play in graduate programs across the curriculum?
- What resources of writing instruction and support for the thesis, dissertation, or equivalent project do the programs provide?
- How do graduate students use these resources and how do these interactions shape their writing?

My intent has been to study the ways that thesis and dissertation writers learn to make the transition from graduate writers to professionalized writers. Therefore, the above questions undergird the following research question for this study: **What role does the production of these culminating projects play in a student's entry into professional writing?** Conducting case study research and employing multiple methods of data collection enable me to share the stories of five thesis and dissertation writers. These stories offer writing researchers, teacher-scholars, and graduate directors in different disciplines a close examination of the influence of multiple (and often, competing) contexts on the thesis and dissertation writer.

A Case Study Approach

In "Methodological Pluralism: Epistemological Issues," Gesa Kirsch maintains that case studies employ multiple methodological approaches and have a rhetorical purpose that provides a depth of understanding through the close observation of individual writers, using narrative strategies that describe the development of these writers. In contrast to the experimental researcher who sets up an artificial environment in which writers produce texts that they would not normally produce, the case study researcher uses a variety of methods in order to learn how individual writers write in complex and real environments. Thomas Newkirk offers two critical questions for case study researchers in "The Narrative Roots of the Case Study": What's the authority of case studies? How can they claim to produce knowledge? Rhetorician Janice M. Lauer and educational psychology researcher J. William Asher indicate that qualitative descriptive research, such as case studies, helps the researcher identify new variables and questions for further research. In their estimation, case studies are a starting point for other kinds of research that are potentially more rigorous and generalizable. Newkirk criticizes Lauer and Asher's subjugation of the case study to experimental research and highlights the uniqueness of case study methods both in the process of conducting the research and in the process of writing up the research. Newkirk's interest is in qualitative methods that study the contexts in which writing occurs. As Newkirk notes, the researcher writes the story, selecting and ordering details and making decisions along the way about which version of reality the researcher will tell (133). Case study accounts themselves may be versions of reality, but they are based on writers who produce real texts that were written in complex situations. What we can learn from the case study

accounts are how writers negotiated the demands and expectations of the current writing situation, what the writers knew about writing before they encountered the current writing situation, and how other people influence their writing. As I pointed out in Chapter One, case study research on graduate writing exemplified by that of Carol Berkenkotter, Thomas Huckin, and Jon Ackerman; Paul Prior; and Christine Pearson Casanave has provided us with important introductions to how writers write while in graduate school. My project is the next step, explicitly bringing together each writer's sense of her own history as a writer, her program's expectations of her writing performance while in graduate school, and her discipline's values of writing.

Data Collection

I investigated my research question as it pertains to graduate students at Texas Christian University (TCU) and received approval from TCU's Institutional Review Board to conduct human subjects research. In addition, I completed the appropriate tutorial at http://ohsr.od.nih.gov/cbt/. The human participants'confidentiality has been protected by the use of pseudonyms. All of the participants granted me written permission to publish any statements or writing through an informed consent form. I removed identifying information from interview transcriptions and notes. In addition to the data gained from the program documents and writing center information publicly available, three populations of human participants provided multiple kinds of data.

Graduate Students

In order to recruit participants, I contacted 1195 currently enrolled graduate students via email in April 2006 (1) briefly describing the project and (2) requesting their participation in a survey (offered through the online survey tool Zoomerang) that gathered fact-based information regarding students' rank in the program (e.g., second-semester M.A. student, fourth-year ABD with prospectus in progress), academic areas of interest, and writing experiences. (See Graduate Student Survey in Appendix A.)[10] From this survey, to which ninety-five graduate students responded, I collected demographic information (race/ethnicity and sex) for comparative purposes. The survey provided some general information from graduate students across the curriculum about the kinds of writing they have done while in graduate school and from whom they seek help if they need it. This survey also helped me compare the case study participants' responses to a larger population.[11] In my email message asking for volunteers to participate in the survey, I also invited graduate students who were recently admitted to candidacy or who would soon be admitted to candidacy to participate further in the study by contacting me via email. Eight students responded to my recruitment email—seven women and one man. It is impossible for me to be certain why so many women and only one man volunteered to participate. I could assume that the larger population of female graduate

[10] The email message addressed to graduate students stated that participation is voluntary and that responding to the survey indicates their consent to participate in the project. Respondents interested in further participation were invited in the email to contact me. Those participants returned consent forms that I had attached to the email message as a MS Word document. Graduate professors and writing center personnel were also contacted via email and indicated their interest in participating via return email and return consent form. Complete survey results for the graduate student survey available online at http://www.zoomerang.com/reports/public_report.zgi?ID=L22LH9PCLNCD. The password is studentresults1. Complete survey data for the professor survey available online at http://www.zoomerang.com/reports/public_report.zgi?ID=L22LRHQL5DAF. The password is professorresults1.

[11] Details about the survey response are in Chapter 3, Contexts of Graduate Writing.

students on campus has something to do with the response. At the time of research, the graduate student population at TCU was 1,598, made up of 740 men and 858 women (TCU Institutional Research 2005). Obviously, these numbers do not reflect the imbalance of female to male response to my recruitment email. Possibly, men in graduate school have been trained by their supervisors to focus on their own work. The women participating as case studies all said they saw participating in the project as mutually beneficial. They thought talking about their writing and knowing what a writing researcher and fellow graduate student had to say about their writing might teach them some new things. They also expressed interest in "helping" me with my research whether they had met me before receiving my initial email or not.

The initial group of students represented programs in the arts (art history), communications (journalism), humanities (English [literature and composition/rhetoric], divinity), professions (nurse anesthesia), and the sciences (physics). Five women have stayed with the project and these five are featured in this dissertation as case study participants. All five of them wanted to be included in the "final" project.

The case study participants include three students conducting thesis research and writing in the following programs: M.A. in Art History; M.S. in Journalism, Advertising/Public Relations; and M.A. in English (literature). Case study participants from the doctoral population at TCU include two Ph.D. candidates, one in Biblical Interpretation (Brite Divinty School) and one in English (Composition and Rhetoric). Via two semi-structured interviews I gathered more detailed descriptions of participants' advanced writing as a graduate student. In total, I conducted two individual interviews with each participant and follow-up interviews in person and via email as needed to

clarify quotations, to exchange writing samples, and to talk about our progress on our projects. In the first interview, in addition to gathering demographic information (race/ethnicity and sex) for comparison with university and survey information later, I asked the students to share information about their writing history and current writing experiences and habits. Additionally, I learned about the students' general perceptions of the program and writing support offered in the program in which they are enrolled (e.g., "Why did [they] choose this program," "How does the school/program provide support or instruction for [their] writing? In what ways have [they] used the resource/s/ available?"). (See Appendix B for Graduate Student Initial Interview and Second Interview Guides). In the follow-up interview, my questions focused on the writing samples, interactions with support since the first interview, progress on the thesis and dissertation, and the students' potentially changing perceptions of herself or himself as a writer. Informants also brought new writing with them and their advisor's or committee member's response to this interview. Kelly, the M.A. student in English, provided me with several drafts and comments from her advisor regularly. Danielle, the Ph.D. student in English did the same. Being in the same department made exchanging drafts and information convenient.

All interviews with graduate students were conducted on a voluntary basis. The interviewees were chosen from the pool of respondents to the survey who expressed interest in participating in the study, in order to represent a range of disciplines. I conducted the interviews in a study room in the Mary Couts Burnett Library, a local coffee shop, and in my office (at the request of one of the participants). I audio recorded and then transcribed each interview from the recordings. I de-identified the subjects in the recordings by removing any statements that might reveal their identities. Repeating the

same contact procedures—typically via email—I elicited feedback on new writing activities or experiences in the follow-up interview. The follow-ups were scheduled within four months of the initial interviews. The initial interviews began in April 2006 and the second interviews were completed in June and July 2006. Mary's second interview was completed via email in August 2006. I continued to contact participants through February 2007 to follow-up on interview data and to continue our discussions of the writing samples.

I collected sample writings from each case study participant. Each participant provided samples of her writing to the initial interview for analysis. In addition to the thesis and dissertation draft in progress, I solicited three pieces of writing: a piece she considered successful, a piece she struggled with, and a work-in-progress. I encouraged the participants to bring any kind of writing they wanted to share. I did not restrict the pieces to parts of the thesis, dissertation, or project because there might have been other writings the students consider successful or difficult. I found that these self-selected writings provided valuable insights into the students' perceptions of their own development as writers and, at times, their struggles to negotiate the demands of graduate writing. I received writing samples from the participants and continued correspondence regarding these samples until February 2007 from three participants, the two dissertation writers (Mary and Danielle) and one thesis writer (Kelly).

Graduate Professors/Advisors

The second population of participants includes graduate professors. In a Web-based survey, I gathered information about thesis/dissertation or equivalent projects in

their program and discipline and how they envision the advisor' role in students' projects. I recruited subjects by contacting every professor at TCU via email (1) briefly describing my study and (2) requesting their participation in a survey (offered through the online survey tool Zoomerang) which asks fact-based questions about their experiences teaching graduate students and supporting their writing projects (see Appendix C for Graduate Professor Survey). Twenty-one faculty members responded to the survey. This survey enabled me to collect information on what kinds of projects the professors sponsor and in what way (i.e., how often do they teach graduate courses, on how many graduate project committees do they serve, how they define the final project). Furthermore, the survey helped contextualize the data gathered from the graduate student survey.

I invited faculty respondents to participate further in the project by sitting for an interview with me, and I conducted interviews with all but one of the volunteers.[12] (See the Graduate Professor Interview Guide in Appendix D). Five professors volunteered, representing the Department of Art History, Department of Education, Department of Communications, and Brite Divinity School. By interviewing all of those who volunteered, I was able to get representation from a variety of disciplines and from all of the programs represented by the case study participants except for the M.A. and Ph.D. programs in English.[13] I conducted these interviews in the informant's office in every instance except for one. One faculty member wanted to meet in my office. I audio

[12] One faculty volunteer and I were unable to schedule an interview time that met her demanding research, teaching, and travel schedule.

[13] One faculty member from English volunteered but had to cancel our interviews after they were set up due to work and family schedule conflicts. Since I depended on interviews with people who volunteered from the survey and did not solicit interviews from people who did not complete the survey, I relied on my own insider knowledge about the English Department.

recorded and transcribed interviews from the recordings and de-identified the subjects in the recordings by removing any statements that might reveal their identities.

Graduate Writing Center Consultants

To add to the institutional representatives perspective and to further contextualize the data on graduate writing, I interviewed two Graduate Writing Center consultants in the William L. Adams Center for Writing in April 2006 to collect information about how those who consult with graduate students view their role in instructing and supporting graduate writing. (See Appendix E for Graduate Writing Center Consultant Interview Guide). Using the same process as with the professors, I conducted these interviews in the informant's offices. I audio recorded and transcribed interviews from the recordings, and I de-identified the subjects in the recordings by removing any statements that might reveal their identities.

In addition to the two interviews I conducted with consultants, I observed face-to-face consultations with graduate writers during fall 2006 and spring 2007. I also noted the concerns that graduate writers bring up in their requests for help via the online writing lab. As a graduate writing consultant at the Center myself since fall 2005, I have been consciously noting the concerns that graduate students bring to their sessions in face-to-face and online writing lab consultations.

Data Analysis

Published scholarship, institutional and program information, and the writers' histories and experiences that I collected from the following data—survey and interview

responses, writing samples, TCU institutional research data, and graduate program policies and documents—comprise the disciplinary, local, and individual contexts for graduate writing, particularly for thesis and dissertation writing. These three contexts are comprised of textual activities, human interactions, and social conditions that potentially shape graduate texts. I discuss these contexts in detail in Chapter 3, Introducing the Contexts of Graduate Writing. These contexts are adapted from the five rhetorical contexts outlined by Christopher Thaiss and Terry Myers Zawacki in *Engaged Writers and Dynamic Disciplines* that correspond to the complex sets of conventions for undergraduate writing. These contexts include the academic, disciplinary, subdisciplinary, local, and individual or idiosyncratic. The three that I develop based on the highly specialized writing practices in graduate school and the specific demands on graduate writers include:

- disciplinary (and subdisciplinary): published scholarship, faculty perspectives and student research interests that fit within the larger discipline
- local (and programmatic): program policies, curriculum
- individual: student's individual research or professional interests and social/ethnic and educational background

All of the data I collected was "read" as a response to the contexts in which it was produced. For example, a professor's description of the master's thesis (from the graduate professor survey) is considered in its disciplinary and local context. For another example, a case study participant's description of the thesis (from an interview) is considered in its disciplinary, local, and individual contexts. In a similar way, I analyzed the thesis writer's writing samples as responses to the disciplinary and local expectations for writing that the

student writer must negotiate in order to meet the demands of the writing event as well as a response to the individual context. Depending on the case, these expectations for writing the thesis and dissertation range widely. In Chapter Three, I outline three major aims and purposes for the thesis and dissertation described by professors in the programs represented by the case studies: Art History, Journalism, English (literature and composition/rhetoric), and Biblical interpretation (Brite Divinity School). These three aims are the demonstration of accumulated knowledge, the production of new knowledge, and the demonstration of a research process and product. While these aims are not all inclusive, they provide a flexible framework in which to analyze the writing that is expected of the degree candidates. The terms and expectations that led to these categories emerged from the data, but in order to create these categories, I used details such as repeated terms. For example, faculty respondents frequently used the terms "mastery," "originality," and "beginning of one's career," among others when asked to describe the thesis and dissertation. Although these aims are helpful for thinking about the expectations that students consider when writing their texts, the lenses I use to analyze the writing are the three contexts. Therefore, I focus on the expectations set up by the discipline and examine published writing about writing and research in the discipline. Then, I turn to the local setting by examining the program documents such as website or graduate program policies, referring to interviews with faculty, referring to surveys, and expectations set up by the local setting/context. Last, I refer to interviews and survey data to finally tell one of the many stories about writing experiences that the participants have allowed me to tell.

Researcher Positionality

In the epigraph above, Robert J. Nash claims that the more a researcher tries to intentionally separate the self from the research the more difficult the research process becomes. Experts in composition research methodologies Joanne Addison and Sharon James McGee summarize characteristics of feminist research in their introduction to *Feminist Empirical Research* that challenge traditional research practices:

> We would argue that there are two basic tenets of feminist empirical research: (1) the explicit starting point of feminist empirical research is one's political commitments, and (2) the goal of feminist empirical research is social and individual change. (3)

These characteristics adopted by many researchers insist that we do not try to separate ourselves from our knowledge-making. To deny our own positions in politial and social institutions and to deny that we have an interest in affecting change is to assume gender and politically-neutral positions and to insist on objectivity in order to conduct our studies. Throughout my research, I have disclosed to my participants my position as a Ph.D. candidate who is interested in how programs, faculty, and students can work together to support the writers as they negotiate the demands of the thesis and dissertation process, the textual bridge that links graduate student writing to professional writing. I have also made it clear that participants' stories are the core of the project, and the conclusions drawn, changes proposed, and implications developed are ultimately intended to open up conversations about students' writing experiences in graduate school and to improve writing pedagogy across the graduate curriculum. Kirsch in "Methodological Pluralism" implores researchers to disclose the relationships they share

with participants that go beyond researcher relations (262)—whether researchers and participants are peers and friends or faculty colleagues. As readers of research studies, we need to understand the relationships between researchers and participants since they are likely to influence the exchange of information between participant and researcher and the impact of the researcher's presence in the participant's life during the course of the study. When the empirical portion of the research for my dissertation began in April 2007 and the graduate student volunteers contacted me, I realized that I was already acquainted with several of them. Two of them were fellow members of the English Department: Kelly, the M.A. candidate writing a thesis in literature, and Danielle, the Ph.D. candidate writing a dissertation in composition/rhetoric. Both Kelly and Danielle joined the study because they wanted to "help contribute" to their/our graduate program and to the larger disciplinary scholarship on writing in graduate school. Mary, the participant writing her dissertation in Biblical interpretation at Brite Divinity School, participated in a pilot study conducted for my dissertation prospectus and she wanted to participate in my dissertation study as well. She said that talking about her writing helped her gain perspective on it. During the course of the study and afterward, Kelly, Danielle, Mary, and I have written one another on email, have talked over the phone, and have talked in person about more than academic and professional issues. Our friendships have developed during this time, and we have come to understand one another's personal interests more than we did before the project began. Although I did not know Lori, the M.S. candidate in journalism, or Sheila, the M.A. candidate in art history, before beginning this project, our working relationships developed differently over the course of the project. Lori and I have continued to correspond via email, chatting about her experiences in the graduate

program and her writing, of course, but also about our jobs and personal interests. Sheila and I mostly remained business-as-usual in our correspondence. Because several of the graduate student participants and I have developed friendships, we have felt comfortable talking about the struggles and the triumphs we have had as graduate students.

As Elizabeth Chiseri-Strater points out, objectivity is indeed not possible, particularly in qualitative studies of writing. In "Turning in upon Ourselves: Positionality, Subjectivity, and Reflexivity in Case Study and Ethnographic Research," Chiseri-Strater argues that researchers need to reflect upon and write about what shapes their interpretations, i.e. the way they tell the stories that emerge from the data. The researcher herself has a history and experiences just as the participant does. Thus, the researcher must consider what she is "positioned to see, to know, and to understand" (116). Chiseri-Strater explains that her position as researcher and student enabled her student participants to trust her in a way that they might not have if she had been a researcher far removed from the experiences of student life. I also enjoyed the benefits of building rapport that my position as graduate student, specifically as a Ph.D. candidate, has enabled me to establish with the case study participants. Lori told me that she joined the study because she "[thought] it sounded interesting" and she could "appreciate how hard it is to recruit subjects." (She has conducted empirical research for her thesis project, which I discuss in greater detail in Chapter Four). Additionally, other participants joined the study because they "think [the] dissertation sounds interesting" and want to "help contribute" to graduate writing research. I believe that their desire to help a departmental colleague (in Kelly's and Danielle's cases) or a fellow graduate writer (in the other cases) further compels me to earn their trust in me as a researcher.

Reading the Data

The case studies tell stories that show how graduate student writers traverse the textual bridge (i.e., the thesis or dissertation) into professional writing. I arrange the stories according to the degree sought and to represent a developing understanding of how writers negotiate the multiple contexts in which they write (disciplinary, local, and individual), how they develop a writerly identity that meets the demands of these multiple contexts. In order to determine how the writers engage in this process, I read writing samples after participants indicated which pieces they considered a success after completion, a struggle to complete, and which one(s) were still in progress. By examining the whole texts and zeroing in on the sections that the writers pointed to as successful or unsuccessful moments during the writing process, I looked for the negotiations students made between their own interests and those of the professor and the discipline. Adding an important ethical dimension to the practice of data analysis and the researcher's positionality, Newkirk insists in "Seduction and Betrayal in Qualitative Research" that researchers put themselves in the position of the informants: "As a simple rule of thumb, we might ask how we would feel if *we* were the subject of this study" (8). So I asked myself how my own writing should be read if we are to learn about the negotiations I make to meet the demands of the disciplinary, local, and individual contexts in which I write. Although I told the thesis and dissertation writers that "I am analyzing not judging/evaluating your writing," I wondered if they really understood how I would read their work. Despite my regular assurances that I was interested in how their writing "matched up" or "responded to" the expectations set up by their disciplines and their

programs and not in evaluating their writing, the case study participants apologized for submitting messy drafts, "bad" papers, or incomplete work. Because they worried that I might judge their writing in an evaluative, teacherly way, I realized that it might be very difficult for them to imagine why anyone would want to read their writing for any reason other than to judge or evaluate it. Why should they expect me to read their writing differently than their professors do? As the survey data in Chapter Three and the case study material in Chapters Four and Five indicate, most of the graduate writers I studied rarely seek help for writing from anyone other than professors.

Should the thesis and dissertation writers in my study think of me as an advocate or a peer because I too am a graduate writer? As the forthcoming chapters demonstrate, some graduate writers at TCU do not regularly share early drafts of their writing with anyone, thus are unfamiliar with non-evaluative feedback or analytical discussions of their writing. Because of their potential apprehension, I tried to make them feel at ease with my responses by talking to them about their goals in writing the texts, what they thought their professors' expected, what they learned from them or in what ways the writing might connect to the kind of writing they are doing now with the thesis or dissertation during the second interview and in follow-ups. In addition to asking them what they thought about the writing and what problem areas or successful moments they could spot in them, I talked to them about the ways that I was "reading" their writing. At times, I got positive responses, such as, "Now that I think about it, the real problem at the time was…" or "Since we're talking about it, I remember why I liked this paper so much." When the participant pointed to the unsuccessful spots and I asked why the struggle occurred, in most cases, the writer and I both agreed that there was some

disconnect between what the student thought the professor expected or what implicit expectations did not get articulated and how the student attempted to meet those expectations.

I tried not to talk too much during interviews because I didn't want to push my participants to agree with my interpretations. On one hand, I wanted the participants to know that I was interested in how they have tried to meet the demands of new writing situations and how they understand the thesis and dissertation in their particular disciplines. But on the other hand, I wanted them to know that they could tell me what they thought were the demands being made of them without the researcher imposing my assumptions about disciplinary difference that might not be there. I tried to keep my follow-up questions open-ended and facilitative as much as possible, and when I wanted more information about the writing samples, I asked questions such as, "Could you tell me more about how your professor responded? What did she write in her comments? What did she say to to you in an individual conference (or to the class)?" Then, I asked questions about the student's attempts to understand the comments: "What do you think that comment meant? How did you revise your thesis/dissertation proposal in response? Can you show me how you changed it?" Since the participants told me which piece was "successful," which was "difficult," and which was "in-progress," I was able to look for indications that the student writers were responding to the kinds of expectations that they described in the first interview and that the published scholarship described. As I read each sample, I examined how the writer's text responded to the assignment if it was for a class or how she interpreted the expectations of the writing task, how the writer's personal interests emerge or fade out of the writer's drafts, and how the writer's stated

understanding of the thesis or dissertation is demonstrated in her developing thesis or dissertation text.

My priority in this project has been to privilege the case study participants' experiences for several reasons. First, the graduate students have been *the* focus of the project, and all other informants' perspectives, although essential to provide context, have been ancillary to the graduate students' experiences. Second, stories about thesis and dissertation writing have been mediated by the researcher. The researcher always has this power to mediate the telling of the stories. My situatedness, which is very different from that of a faculty member or established scholar distanced from the experience of dissertation writer, has granted me a certain kind of power. I have felt empowered to advocate for and help the graduate student participants when the opportunity arose.

Unlike Chiseri-Strater's experience with professors who made her feel disempowered as a researcher, the professor informants mostly seemed positive toward me. In fact, they were enthusiastic about the prospect of starting dialogues about graduate writing instruction at TCU. They just did not know what to do to help. Throwing their hands up or sending students to the writing center seemed to be the answer, even when they really did not know what happens at the writing center. As a writing center consultant myself, I did see it as my duty to advocate on behalf of the writing center in such cases. Likewise, I found it important to share my awareness of writing center resources with the graduate students. Both Sheila and Danielle sought help on their dissertation from the writing center as a result of my suggestions, and Danielle became a repeat visitor as I discuss in greater detail in Chapter Five.

Chiseri-Strater says that self-reflexivity in ethnographic research is "what we learn about the self as a result of the study of the 'other'" (Chiseri-Strater 119). In this way, the self becomes the object of study. In my project, this self is reflected in both my own positionality as dissertation writer and researcher of thesis and dissertation writing. My position is illuminated by my effort to study the academic communities at TCU in which I participate; these communities include the discipline of composition and rhetoric, graduate students at TCU, the Ph.D. program in English, and the cadre of composition and rhetoric students. By studying one's own community, the researcher attempts to "make the strange familiar," as Beverly Moss describes it. Moss explains that ethnographers who study their own community are likely to be familiar with the social and rhetorical activities of the community and have preexisting connections to the community. She outlines questions for researchers who study their own communities:

> (1) What role does an ethnographer's degree of membership in a community play in successfully carrying out the study? (2) How does the role of the researcher affect the preexisting relationships in this community; specifically, how he or she is perceived by the community and how he or she perceives this community? (3) Will the ethnographer make assumptions about what certain behaviors signify or how meaning is established in this community based on previous knowledge or on the actual data collected? (4) Would an outsider attach more significance to observed patterns than the insider, based on degrees of distance? (5) What issues might an insider face when writing up the ethnography? (163-64)

The above questions have helped to shape my treatment of the data collected and they help to complicate the ways in which I perform the self-reflexivity expected of ethical researchers.

Researcher as Participant-Observer

A purely observational role is impossible and highly undesirable in the pursuit of my research goals. If I wrote up a study of thesis and dissertation writers based only on observations of them in writing center consultations, in the classroom, in meetings with their advisors, and perhaps as they wrote in artificial settings, my dissertation would be a singular voice reporting on what I saw. Such a report is antithetical to the contextual approach that case studies provide. I decided instead to take on the role of the participant-observer. The participant-observer's presence often shifts (though not necessarily seamlessly) between highly participatory and virtually invisible. Most feminist researchers agree that invisibility is impossible, but Bishop offers an apt description of the "distant white-coated clinician, the spy, the fly on the wall" at one end of the spectrum of participant observation (74). At the other end is the participant-observer who has "gone native" and "tainted the site" (74). I am a participant-observer native to disciplinary and local contexts in which my research participants write: I too am a Ph.D. candidate. My department is English, and my disciplinary specialty is Composition and Rhetoric. The way I interpret the data that I collected reflects my position in these contexts. So, I assume the researcher's interpretive stance whose position presents me with the responsibility to acknowledge my positions and keep my preexisting connections

to my discipline, graduate program, and my own personal interests in mind, as Moss describes is critical in studying one's own community—where one is already native.

Researcher as Storyteller

As I engage in the very process I am studying, I attempt to make my ethical and narrative choices transparent throughout this dissertation. Like many scholarly projects, this dissertation started from my recognition of my own needs which, in turn, motivated my search of scholarship. As one of the many agents influencing the writing of theses and dissertations in five programs at TCU, I have envisioned myself as researcher of communities that I am fully and partially a member. As researcher and data source, I strive to be the reflexive researcher that Kirsch, Chiseri-Strater, and Newkirk advocate. Additionally, I strive to meet the ethical imperative that undergirds this entire project: responsible self-reflexivity. I use the term "responsible" to denote the critical and "know-when-to-say-when" concerns that I have had from the very beginning of this project. I have been asked, "Are you one of your own case studies?" over and over again from participants and from other interested parties. The quick answer is "no" because I could not figure out how to interview myself and study my own writing without the metadiscourse spiraling out of control. The more accurate answer is "sort of," for the process and product of this dissertation are my story. The Afterword outlines more specific details about the contexts and conditions in which I have produced this document. I contain my brief narrative to the Afterword in order to keep my own self-disclosure from speaking louder than the participant's voices as John Van Maanen warns the "confessional" write-up may do in his book *Tales of the Field: On Writing*

Ethnography. Since I am the author of this dissertation, not a pseudonymous case study participant, my voice will inevitably be the first and last voice, but perhaps not the most memorable one you hear.

Similar to Christine Pearson Casanave, I am interested in how graduate student writing might become more visible in the disciplines so that graduate students can "reflect on their own work as developing scholars and critics, as members of a community who have an active role and stake in the knowledge generated by the course which formed the original occasion for inquiry" (Casanave 297-98). But I will add to her comment that when students' perceptions of their own texts, the texts themselves, and the institutional representatives that sponsor them become the subjects of study, students, professors, and programs will be better equipped to respond more responsibly to writing demands. Implicit in my study is the acknowledgement that the production of texts and enculturation are inextricably linked in graduate education. Paul Prior notes,

> We cannot look only for interrelationships among communication, learning, socialization, and social formation: Rather, we must grapple with the fact that communication is learning is socialization is social formation, that literate activity is not only a process whereby texts are produced, exchanged, and used, but also part of a continuous sociohistoric process in which persons, artifacts, practices, institutions, and communities are being formed and reformed. (139)

I contend that researchers, writers, advisors, and other sponsors of graduate student writing are agents of disciplinary, local, and individual contexts that shape and are shaped by the thesis and dissertation. Therefore, I agree with Newkirk that as a researcher I need

to reflect on my own discourse community to "explore the ways in which narrative conventions predispose [me] to account for data in a particular way" (Newkirk 132). I accept this challenge, acknowledging Pierre Bourdieu's contention that self-reflection into my research practices requires me to recognize that the representations I present in the case study chapters will be partial representations and that these perspectives are not equal to actual or primary experiences (19). As Linda Brodkey argues, "the single most important lesson to be learned from ethnographic fieldwork is that experience is not—indeed, cannot be—reproduced in speech or writing, and must instead be narrated" (26). These accounts are narratives that I present more fully in Chapters Four and Five and in the Afterword. Case studies demonstrate to us the importance of the researcher and participants taking advantage of the opportunity to share their developing knowledge about writing as that development occurs. I have taken advantage of my opportunity to share my own experience of developing an understanding of the process in others' work and in mine. And our narratives, our renderings, are no less valid than any other version of the truth.

This project aims for cross-disciplinary perspectives, but I acknowledge my departmental and disciplinary biases. These subjectivities help to shape my dissertation process and product. This project interrogates the ways rather than simply reflecting them. Since the inception of this project, I have hoped that the findings of this research and the stories that emerge would benefit thesis and dissertation writers and the sponsors of this writing. I agree with Charles Bazerman in *Shaping Written Knowledge* that the more we know about writing the better we will be able to write. I bring this same theory

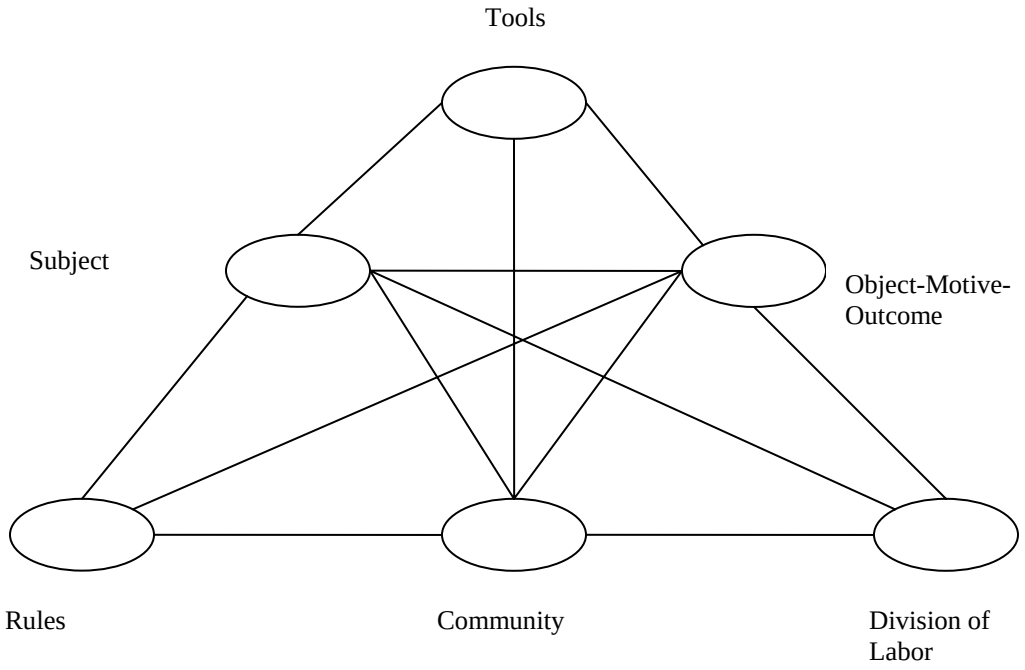
to the writing of the thesis and dissertation: Learning more about the process of writing the thesis and dissertation will help us make informed decisions about supporting it.

Chapter 3: Introducing the Contexts of Graduate Writing

Since the growth of social theories of knowledge-making and collaborative learning in the 1980s, contemporary scholars in composition have broadly accepted that writers come from different places and bring different knowledges to their classrooms. Activity theorists' socio-historic perspective on the writing process has deepened writing specialists' awareness of the role of genres in disciplinary and professional writing (Bazerman, *Shaping* and *Writing Selves/Writing Societies* [with David R. Russell]; Engeström, *Learning by Expanding*; Prior, *Writing/Disciplinarity*; Russell, "Rethinking" and "Activity Theory."). Activity theory helps us understand the ways in which individuals, groups (such as families, institutions, companies, and organizations), and written discourse interact. Researchers who employ activity theory as a framework are mostly concerned with the ways that individuals and groups engage in and negotiate their understandings of shared activities such as writing and other forms of communication. These understandings are sometimes contradictory, and activity theory offers a way to make sense of the reasons that people communicate in group settings (in groups as varied as school classrooms, workplaces, or even families) and the ways that they divvy up the responsibilities for getting things done. For example, individual members of a group each play a role in determining why and how to act (object-motive-outcome), what sources or tools are available and how to use them (tools and rules), etc. (See the diagram below). As indicated by the terms "Rules" and "Community," members need to learn and negotiate in order to work to their and their cohorts' satisfaction in order for the system to function. There's no clear indication who teaches whom in the diagram. All communities,

systems, groups are different, and each element in the diagram is influenced by the other elements, as indicated by the crossing and connecting lines.

Diagram 1. Activity System Triangle (Based on Engeström, *Learning by Expanding*)



The activity system triangle is a useful visual to keep in mind when considering the culture of graduate school. This culture is at its core interested in the disciplinary enculturation of the students, but it is also a community of students and teachers who work together in the graduate community with personal and professional differences. Not the least of these differences is their idea of the role of writing and writing instruction in graduate school

Past studies of graduate student writing have found that in graduate school, writing is assigned but not taught (Sullivan, "Writing in the Graduate Curriculum; Literary Criticism as Composition; Prior, *Writing/Disciplinarity*). College writers encounter new situations in each class, gaining disciplinary knowledge as they write their way into their target communities. Then the expectations become more specialized, as students are no longer summarizers or reporters, as described in Chapter One. Once they are graduate students, the students are expected to *know* the field and to write about it confidently. This is a tall order especially for people who, in some cases, are entering a new field. Graduate school raises the stakes at the course level, and then, exponentially at each subsequent stage. These graduate writers do not reach candidacy status without their own individual histories, as socio-historic studies such as Prior's suggest. At the advanced stage of graduate school, we may believe that graduate students have been sitting in the same classrooms for several years, and they must have some similar preparation. Graduate students have many different research and professional concerns, and faculty work with diverse students with any number of talents and preparation for graduate school.

Graduate writers come from all walks of life and from many different educational backgrounds. But does coursework supersede the experiences students have brought with them to graduate school? Are they really in the same place at the same time when they reach the threshold of M.A. or Ph.D. candidate status? Do faculty expect that students naturally have different levels of ability and there's nothing they can do about it?

I make preliminary claims in this chapter about what and how graduate students write and how they seek help (if any) to meet the demands of graduate writing. In a similar vein, I address how faculty envision their roles in shaping graduate writing and developing graduates as writers entering the profession. These claims are largely based on survey data.[14] The surveys begin to tell valuable stories about thesis and dissertation writing at TCU. They indicate that graduate students across disciplines encounter many kinds of writing, but that they write some common genres across the curriculum. They also suggest that graduate students turn to professors and peers more than any other source for writing support or instruction, but most of the people who do seek such assistance only do so occasionally. The majority of respondents claim they ask for writing help with increased frequency as they begin the culminating project. Such patterns point to the sustained or increased attention graduates pay to their own writing as they progress in their programs in spite of (or perhaps because of) the decrease in regular meetings with professors and peers once coursework stops.

Writing researchers and WAC specialists Christopher Thaiss and Terry Myers Zawacki have studied faculty in fourteen different disciplines, finding that the teachers

[14] Complete survey data for the graduate student survey available online at http://www.zoomerang.com/reports/public_report.zgi?ID=L22LH9PCLNCD. The password is studentresults1. Complete survey data for the professor survey available online at http://www.zoomerang.com/reports/public_report.zgi?ID=L22LRHQL5DAF. The password is professorresults1.

within the same discipline believe that they share the same expectations of good writing. Frustrated by students' inability to meet the demands of writing assignments, teachers in the Thaiss and Zawacki study and in other studies of faculty across the curriculum such as Walvoord et al. in *In the Long Run* and McCarthy et al. in *Whose Goals? Whose Aspirations?* turn to WAC specialists to help their students improve writing performance. But faculty expectations rarely reflect a consistent set of values or conventions that students need to learn once and perform for each writing task they encounter. When the teachers talk about their expectations and share grading rubrics in WAC faculty workshops, they are surprised by their own "misperceptions of uniformity" (59-60). Internalized writing practices that seem transparent to faculty (i.e., good writing is good writing, regardless of situation) often go unarticulated. Under closer investigation, however, faculty's expectations actually correspond to five rhetorical contexts that if under-recognized can lead to "misjudg[ement] of student ability and the student's 'alienation'" (60). These five contexts correspond to the complex sets of conventions including the following:

- academic context—writing standards that reflect a disciplined, reasoned tone written for a rational and/or skeptical audience
- disciplinary context—writing standards that can include research methods
- subdisciplinary context—writing standards that can include the teacher's research interests that fit within the larger disciplinary standards
- local or institutional context—writing standards that reflect the university's policies or practices

- idiosyncratic or personal context—writing standards that reflect the teacher's particular "unique vision." (60, 95)

Faculty tend to describe the qualities of good writing in general terms that largely correspond to the conventions of academic writing. According to Thaiss and Zawacki, academic writing demonstrates critical and "disciplined" thinking, a controlled reasonable and rational tone, and an awareness of a skeptical reader who expects this reasonableness and rationality (5-7). More questions prompt the faculty in Thaiss and Zawacki's study to gradually reveal significant differences in their conceptualizations of good writing in their disciplines, indicating that disciplinary writing demands finely nuanced conventions and practices.

The disciplinary context includes writing conventions and research practices that have become normalized, so much so that, in many cases, members of the discipline have internalized them. Composition and rhetoric faculty spend a great deal of theoretical and empirical energy on studying the rhetorical nature of their own work, and, interestingly, some disciplinary faculty reflect on their own writing practices in similar ways. One of Thaiss and Zawacki's faculty participants, research scientist and science writer Trefil, emphasizes the differences between the writing he does for publications in scholarly journals versus those in science journalism. Thus, if faculty begin to recognize that the qualities of good writing are not necessarily transferable from one task to another—what they already have experienced in their own writing—then they begin to better understand the challenges students face as they attempt to write multiple genres for multiple audiences. By extension, a teacher's subdisciplinary interests, such as her or his research specialty, influence expectations or conceptualizations of good writing.

The subdisciplinary category outlined by Thaiss and Zawacki corresponds to these specialized interests. To continue the example from above, Trefil sees himself as an academic and a popular writer. He may be well aware of the distinction in his own writing, but is he as astute in determining the difference when he assigns writing to his students? Does he assign only strictly academic genres or public ones as well? Thaiss and Zawacki ask similar questions. Trefil reveals that he does indeed ask the students to engage in a variety of genres, depending on the course—general education course for first-year students; course for majors; or course for English and science majors (63-64). Trefil's specialized writing experiences and research interests directly influence the writing he assigns and the writing he expects from his students. In turn, the writing he assigns is certainly influenced by his own department's expectations or guidelines for the courses he teaches: the local or institutional context.

Documents that outline department guidelines for scholarly activity and service represent the institutional culture. Program or department documents listing procedures for tenure and promotion procedures, for instance, indicate disciplinary (i.e., epistemological) interests. As important for faculty preparing for tenure, however, are the local expectations.

Even more localized are classroom contexts. Teachers may be familiar with students who comment that they have had teachers who graded writing based on personal taste or standards rather than on academic ones. Initially, faculty may disagree that they have done this, for they may believe that their evaluation practices are entirely based on disciplinary and institutional conventions. However, Thaiss and Zawacki find that faculty work from assumptions about writing that come from a variety of sources including the

personal. In fact, Thaiss and Zawacki's final category, the idiosyncratic or personal, in some cases reinforces the broader contexts in which the teacher works.

Although Thaiss and Zawacki focus on faculty instruction at the undergraduate level, these five rhetorical contexts make a useful frame for analyzing the complex sites in which the graduate students write. I do, however, make a few adjustments to the Thaiss and Zawacki descriptions to better suit the graduate student population in my study. Since textual production is central to the process of disciplinary enculturation, I place the writer's text at the center. I collapse the academic, disciplinary, and subdisciplinary contexts because graduate students are likely to perceive their writing as academic, disciplinary, subdisciplinary, and professional all at once, even if they themselves do not use these terms. Academic and disciplinary writing are distinguished in WAC and workplace writing scholarship, for instruction in these types of writing at the undergraduate level may have different aims (Días et al. 1999). Academic writing refers to professional writing of academics, but it also includes writing as an exercise or for educational purposes (4).

In order to more explicitly connect the graduate programs to the institutional culture, I place the term "programmatic" into the local context category. Ironically, the faculty responses to the surveys and interview responses do not necessarily reflect the values implied by the institution—that is, local or programmatic representatives—and combining these categories reveals these differences in real contexts. Values for writing held by TCU faculty emerge via the survey data introduced in this chapter and documents such as university, college, or department policy on graduate student issues such as admission to candidacy status or submission of thesis and dissertation. The students and

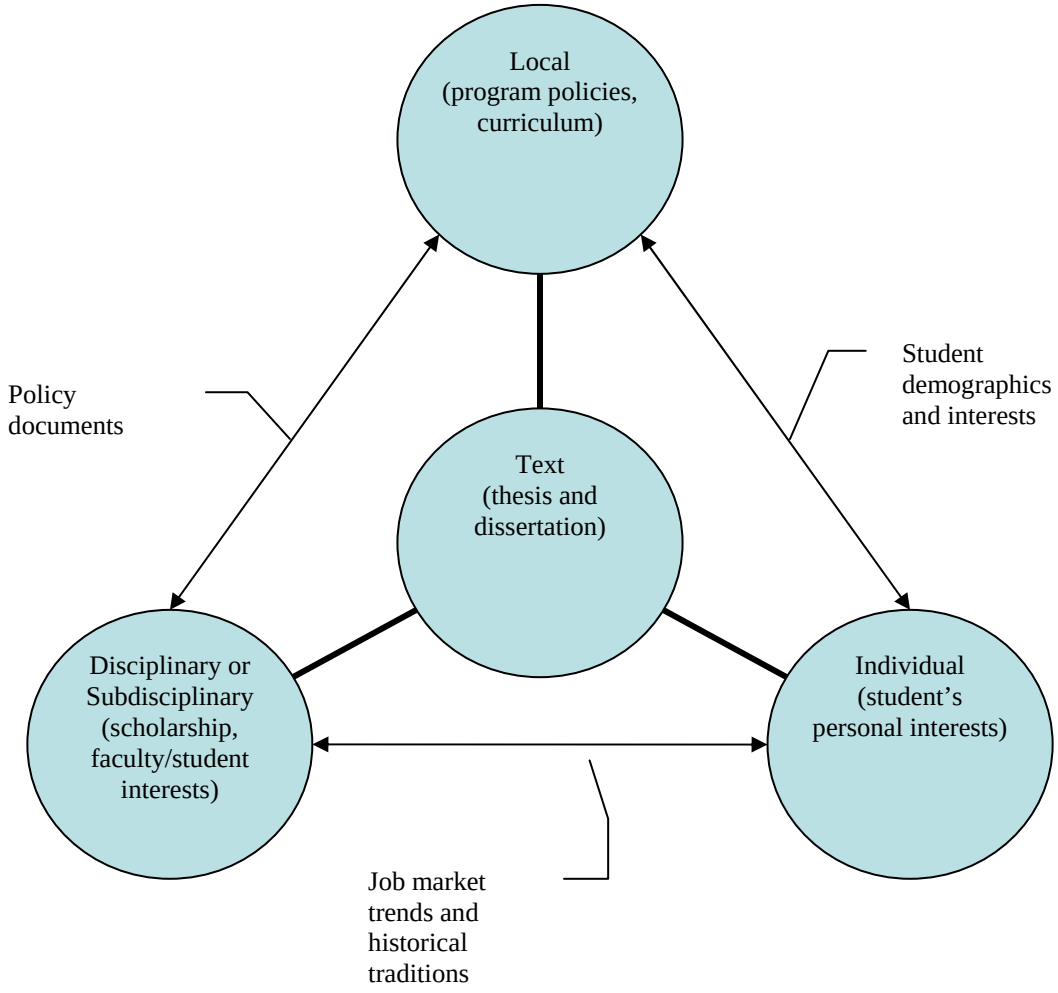
professors work in programs that are situated within the university, so combining the local and programmatic enables me to unpack how the students write within the constraints and supports provided by professors, programs/institution, and disciplines.

My project places graduate student writers in the foreground instead of their teachers, focusing largely on the student writer's perceptions of disciplinary and programmatic expectations for their theses and dissertations. Therefore, I insert "student" and "individual" where Thaiss and Zawacki might use "professor" and "idiosyncratic." Thus, my interpretations are based on the following contexts for graduate writing, particularly for thesis and dissertation writing. These contexts are comprised of textual activities, human interactions, and social conditions that potentially shape graduate texts:

- local (and programmatic): program policies, curriculum
- disciplinary (and subdisciplinary): published scholarship, faculty perspectives and student research interests that fit within the larger discipline
- individual: student's individual research or professional interests and social/ethnic or educational background

In order to show the relationships among these contexts, I present a radial diagram below. The text itself is at the center, for textual production is central to the disciplinary enculturation process of graduate school. The interaction between text and context and amongst the contexts all potentially impact one another, as indicated by the connective lines and arrows. I visually present these interactions as non-hierarchical because a text may be influenced by each at different moments or all at once.

Diagram 2. The Contexts of Graduate Writing.



The activities representing interaction between different contexts suggest possible conditions for changing or shaping a context. For example, let's say the English department's guidelines for writing a dissertation prospectus require that the prospectus be no longer than twenty pages. Based on my knowledge of the department's discussion of the prospectus, such a requirement reflects the disciplinary research practices of literature students, who tend to write compact discussions of methodology. In contrast, composition and rhetoric students doing empirical research tend to write more detailed descriptions of methodology. The prospectus length requirement also reflects local interests of the department's graduate committee, who instated this policy to ensure students would not spend an inordinate amount of time on the prospectus, thus slowing their progress on the dissertation, and to streamline the reading time for faculty who might be overextended. This prospectus policy would affect the texts produced by writers. Students conducting empirical research would either have to work closely with their advisors to keep their methodology discussion complete yet brief enough to meet the policy's guidelines, or they would need to work with the department's graduate committee to revise the policy or make a case for exceptions. Ultimately, how faculty and the disciplines they represent envision the role of writing in general and writing the thesis or dissertation specifically, and their role in shaping these texts, impacts what and how the graduate students write.

Surveying the Local Context: Graduate Student Surveys

The survey data presents two major findings. Graduate students seek help from resources whom they consider experts on a wide variety of academic and professional

writing (although some of these forms are common across disciplines). These writers who seek help have done so with increased frequency as they progress in their programs. Why would M.A. and Ph.D. candidates seek assistance more frequently than neophytes? Presumably, advanced graduate students have proven themselves worthy of embarking on the final project by passing (through) the heavily guarded gates of graduate school—admissions, coursework, qualifying exams. The history of research on graduate student writing suggests that graduate writers, much like basic writers, are not deficient. But they may be underprepared for the new writing demands. Similar to any writer who encounters an unfamiliar genre, such as the freshman student attempting to write a five to seven page researched argument for the first time, the advanced graduate student will have questions about process, requirements, and expectations. She will want to know how others before her have done it. And she will want to know how she can create a text that fits the parameters of the assignment and satisfies the disciplinary, institutional, and her own personal interests.

In 2003-2004, Texas Christian University awarded 429 master's degrees and 21 doctorates, approximately a quarter of the degrees conferred that year at TCU (Institutional Research 44). A Carnegie-classified Doctoral/Research university,[15] TCU is a private school that mostly recruits undergraduates and graduates from its own geographical region. Historically affiliated with the Christian Church, Disciples of Christ, TCU shares its campus with the self-administrated Brite Divinity School. Nine schools and colleges at TCU and Brite offer graduate degrees. TCU graduate students generally

[15] This information is based on data from 2003 and 2004 according to Carnegie Classification of Institutes of Higher Education. More information on the Carnegie system is available at www.carnegieclassification-preview.org.

do not come from widely divergent ethnic backgrounds, but they do enter the university's halls with very different educational and professional backgrounds and interests. As indicated in Chapter Two, the graduate student survey yielded widely ranging results regarding their pursuits: ninety-five total respondents from ten degree types including Doctor of Philosophy, Master of Arts, Master of Science, Master of Business Administration, Master of Science in Nursing, Master of Business Administration/Doctor of Education, Master of Liberal Arts, Master of Education, Master of Arts in Counseling, and Master of Divinity; and from all nine colleges and schools.[16] I emailed all graduate students at TCU and Brite, but the message itself targeted those beginning the thesis or dissertation process. The majority of the respondents (56 of 93) came from four schools and colleges including Humanities and Social Sciences, Communications, Business, and Education. In Table 1, I list the college or school and departments that each of the ninety-three student respondents represent. These figures include a range of respondents. Thus, these figures include responses from those who are enrolled in the first semester of coursework through the last semester of thesis or dissertation writing.

[16] Not all 95 participants responded to every survey prompt. In some cases, only 92 or 93 responded.

Table 2. Graduate Student Survey Respondents and Their Representative Programs

Program	Number of Grads	Percent of Respondents
College of Humanities and Social Sciences	22	24%
College of Communication	12	13%
School of Business	12	13%
School of Education	10	11%
College of Science and Engineering	10	11%
Seminary	10	11%
College of Nursing and Health Sciences	8	9%
School of Graduate Studies	6	6%
College of Fine Arts	3	3%
Totals	**93**	**100%**

All of the respondents named their own professional specializations, so the list became a bit more difficult to manage than if I had simply listed categories from which they could choose. Graduate students' subdisciplinary interests do not always reflect the language of the local or programmatic context. When respondents did not name the program specifically, I either included them in the "general" category with those who simply listed the department or placed them under a program that their response matched most readily. For example, "counseling, administration, gifted education, business" corresponds with education because all of these research interests or specializations can be covered in that program. I list how many students responded from each school or college, and I only break down the specific specializations for the programs represented by the case studies—Art History, Communication Studies, Divinity, and English (Literature and Rhetoric and Composition). (See these breakdowns in Tables 2, 3, 4, and 5). If a respondent listed two areas of specialization within the program, then I counted the first one listed as the primary area. For example, one person listed "English, American Lit/Rhetoric," and I counted that response under literature. Many students in the English department and other departments conduct research and teach in multiple areas within their own disciplines. Additionally, some descriptions do not reflect the language adopted by the departments. One respondent in English used "Writing Studies" (Table 2) to describe specialization. Individual faculty members might also use this term, but the department does not list this as an area of concentration. Thus, I place this response under "Rhetoric and Composition." A similar situation occurred in a response from a graduate student in the School of Divinity: this person listed "Black Church Studies," and I had to decide in what category to best place this description. The School lists this as an area of

interest but not a degree area. Since focused study of a particular social or ethnic group that might span a range of religious practices resembles study of pastoral or church activities more than close biblical study, this description seemed to fit pastoral theology and counseling (See Table 4).

Table 2. Department Representation of Graduate Respondents in the College of Humanities and Social Sciences

Department and/or Specialization	**Number of Responses**	**Department and/or Specialization**	**Number of Responses**
American Literature	4	History (general)	2
British Literature	4	American	2
Rhetoric and Composition	7	Latin American	1
Writing Studies	1	Military/Naval	1
English Total	**16**	**History Total**	**6**

Table 3. Department Representation of Graduate Respondents in the College of Communication

Department and/or Specialization	**Number of Responses**	**Department and/or Specialization**	**Number of Responses**
Communication Studies	1	Journalism (general)	3
		Advertising/PR	7
		News Editorial	1
Communication Studies Total	**1**	**Journalism Total**	**11**

Table 4. Department Representation of Graduate Respondents in the College of Fine Arts

Department and/or Specialization	**Number of Responses**
Art History (general)	2
Contemporary Art	1
Art History Total	**3**

Table 5. Department Representation of Graduate Respondents in the School of Divinity

Department and/or Specialization	Number of Responses	Department and/or Specialization	Number of Responses	Department and/or Specialization	Number of Responses
Biblical studies/inter-pretation (general)	3	Pastoral Theology and Counseling (general)	1	Seeking Ordination	1
New Testament/Old Testament and Early Christianity	2	Black Church Studies	1		
Hebrew Bible	1	Youth Ministry	1		
Biblical Interpretation Total	**6**	**Pastoral Theology and Counseling Total**	**3**	**Master of Divinity Total**	**1**

How representative of the graduate population are these numbers in the above tables? According to TCU's 2005 Fact Book, the largest graduate schools include business with 425 enrolled, nursing and health sciences with 244, the seminary with 320, and education with 172 (Institutional Research 40-43). Perhaps the survey reflects interest from graduate students in the most writing-intensive programs. Since the largest number of participants originated from the College of Humanities and Social Sciences, particularly the English department; College of Communication; and School of Business; we could assume it is true that students in these large programs do a significant amount of writing and they have something to say about it. Interestingly, however, the College of Communication's journalism specialization is a relatively small cohort of graduate students—less than twenty students with advertising/public relations and news editorial combined. Likewise, the College of Fine Arts only had ten graduate students in art history in 2005 (41). The disproportionate representation from these smaller programs indicates a similar trend: though small in number, the students do a significant amount of writing and they have something to say about it.

However often the respondents are writing, they do write a wide variety of texts, several of which are shared across disciplines. As noted in Table 6 below, the most common kinds of writing in graduate school are the presentation (PowerPoint or poster), research report, response paper, summary, and the review.

Table 6. Kinds of Writing Most Often Completed by Grads

Kind of writing	Number of responses	Percent of responses
Presentation	55	58%
Research report	54	57%
Response paper	50	53%
Summary	48	51%
Review	45	47%
Seminar paper	38	40%
Reflection	35	37%
Proposal	32	34%
Thesis-driven essay	27	28%
Annotated bibliography	26	27%

By all appearances, graduate writers across the curriculum are expected to produce the presentation, response, summary, and review or some mixture of these more frequently than other genres. Certainly, some of the same people who write summaries might also make presentations or prepare seminar papers. Many of those surveyed provided multiple responses due to the nature of this prompt, "What kinds of writing (communication of ideas through textual or visual media) have you completed most often as a graduate student at TCU? (Choose all that apply)." I intended these results, hoping to find out what kinds of writing students are expected to do, and knowing that their writing is not likely limited to a singular genre.

Some writers actively seek assistance as they encounter these multiple and often new genres. These writers tend to seek support primarily from disciplinary experts. And they rarely pursue non-disciplinary resources of support and instruction for their writing despite that the university has made multiple resources available to them. Others decide to "go it alone." It's important to note that my survey question asked, "When you need assistance with your writing, from whom do you seek help? (Choose all that apply.)" Responses from this question would inaccurately determine that graduate students frequently pursue assistance from a wide variety of sources, so the importance of this question emerges in juxtaposition with the following two: "When you need assistance with a conference proposal or paper/presentation, grant or funding proposal, manuscript for a journal, or other professional document, from whom do you seek help?" and "How frequently do you seek help with your writing?" Graduate students turn to experts such as peers in their department or their major professor/advisor in far greater numbers than any other source. The numbers and percentages are represented in Tables 7 and 8 below.

Table 7 shows the sources that graduate students consult for help with their academic writing, and Table 8 shows the sources they consult for help with their professional writing. Interestingly, the graduate writers surveyed prefer different sources for help with academic writing than for professional writing (conference proposal or paper/proposal, grant or funding proposal, manuscript for a journal). The numbers show some difference between assistance sought for academic versus professional writing. For example, sixty-four seek help from the major advisor. In this case, we might assume that the students look to their primary advisor for instructional or, perhaps, collaborative support for professional work as opposed to fifty-five for academic work. Significantly fewer (only eleven) visit the writing center when they need help with academic writing. [17] This source ranks lowest on the list of choices. It is telling that only five informants visit the writing center for help with professional writing. It seems that students are especially concerned that experts assist with genres under this rubric. There's relatively little change in the number of those who do not seek help.

[17] The writing center at TCU is not unaffiliated with any particular department. I will discuss this graduate writing center housed at TCU in greater detail and how non-disciplinary/non-expert resources such as the writing center might support graduate writing in Chapter 5.

Table 7. Sources of Assistance for Writing Sought by Graduates

Source of assistance	Number of graduate students	Percent of graduate students
Peer (graduate student)	57	61%
Major professor/advisor	55	59%
Spouse/significant other	22	23%
Friend	21	22%
Other professor	13	14%
Writing center consultant	11	12%
None/don't seek help	4	5%

Table 8. Sources of Assistance for Professional Writing Sought by Grads (e.g., conference proposal or presentation, grant proposal, manuscript for journal, etc.)

Source of assistance	Number of grad students	Percent of grad students
Major professor/advisor	64	74%
Peer (graduate student)	45	52%
Spouse/significant other	15	17%
Friend	8	9%
Writing center consultant	5	6%
None/don't seek help	3	3%

Despite the variety of support that appears to be available to graduate students, they do not seek this support often. Table 9, “Frequency of Assistance Sought by Grads,” provides a more contextualized version of graduate writers’ search for writing assistance. Six of the respondents “almost always to always” seek assistance, but sixty-six (more than ten times as many) only “occasionally to never” do.

Table 10. Frequency of Assistance Sought by Grads

Frequency	Number of grad students	Percent of grad students
Rarely to never	33	36%
Occasionally	33	36%
Frequently	20	22%
Almost always to always	6	7%

Admittedly, I found the results of frequency of help sought quite compelling. I responded to my own survey, and I am one of the six who "almost always to always" seek help. After closing the survey and reading these results, I wondered if my terminology offended some people. Should I have used "seek feedback on" instead of "seek assistance with"? Or would "support or instruction," the terms I use regularly in this dissertation, have been more appealing? Still, 49% stated that they seek help "about the same as" they did before starting the culminating project, and 30% said they seek help "more than" before. Thus, the advanced graduate students claim to seek help more frequently than less experienced students. By the time graduate students have reached the advanced stages—candidacy status—they interact less with professors and peers in classes but they also tend to have less shame in admitting they do not know how to approach a writing situation. After all, the assumption that graduate students and faculty hold is that a graduate students first entering the program should know how to write papers and any work demanded of them in coursework. No one has published a book on how to write papers for graduate classes, but numerous how-to books are published on how to write the thesis and dissertation.

Surveying the Local and Disciplinary Context: Faculty Surveys

Since graduate students rely so heavily on their committee members and departmental peers for help when they need it, what is it that these disciplinary resources provide? The most obvious answer is, of course, a direct link to disciplinary content knowledge. But, perhaps, more importantly, departmental faculty and peer mentors offer psychosocial support. I also conducted a survey of graduate professors at TCU University

in order to better understand the kinds of writing the graduate students do and the ways this writing prepares them for writing in their professions. I wanted to find out how the faculty work with graduate students on their writing, so I first needed to figure out what kinds of writing they expect from their graduate students and how they support the production of these texts. Thirty-one professors responded to the survey, twenty-one online and ten on paper. The largest response came from English, education, and history. Contrary to the student representation of programs, some of the larger programs, including business, had little to no faculty representation (see Table 10).

Table 11. Faculty Respondents and Their Departments and/or Specializations

Department and/or Specialization	Number of Responses	Percent of Faculty Responses
English (Rhetoric and Composition=6)	11	35%
Education	5	16%
History (European History=2)	4	13%
Communication Studies	2	6%
Geology	2	6%
Chemistry	1	3%
Biology	1	3%
Physics	1	3%
Psychology	1	3%
Music/Piano Pedagogy	1	3%
Business	1	3%
Sociology	1	3%

Respondents from most departments listed their department affiliations and the degrees or programs available only. However, in the English and history departments, several respondents listed disciplinary and subdisciplinary interests within their departments. Two of the four history professors listed their focus as European history. Six of the English faculty differentiated themselves by listing their program as either "English: Rhetoric and Composition" or simply as "Rhetoric and Composition." The other five in the English department listed only English or English "MA and Ph.D." These five did not indicate their area of concentration. Two faculty members from Communication Studies took the survey but did not indicate a specialty, distinguishing the disciplinary (or subdisciplinary) contexts in which they work.

It would be difficult to determine from the survey research whether or not a particular program at TCU is writing intensive. However, graduate faculty assign and supervise many different kinds of writing at TCU, and much of the writing indicated in Table 11 below shows that they do collect some form of written or presentational texts from graduate students at least at the end of the semester. Many of the faculty, however, assign writing throughout the semester. In addition to extended research projects, faculty assign shorter texts such as reviews, proposals, summaries, and response papers in their courses.

Table 12. Kinds of Writing Assigned by Graduate Faculty

Kind of writing	Number of responses	Percent of responses
Seminar paper	19	61%
Research report	17	55%
Review	16	52%
Proposal	13	42%
Summary	12	39%
Response paper	11	35%
Reflection	10	32%
Presentation	9	29%
Annotated bibliography	9	29%

With TCU faculty teaching anywhere from one graduate course a semester to one every three semesters in addition to their thesis and dissertation committee work, not to mention their undergraduate teaching commitments, and directing several theses or dissertations at once, these expert resources may be spread pretty thin. Out of the thirty-one who responded to the survey, twenty-one informants are directing at least one thesis or dissertation and three respondents are directing at least three theses or dissertations in addition to serving as a "reader" for other theses or dissertations. As the graduate student informants indicate, they do seek support from faculty more than any other resource. And with all of the writing that the surveys suggest students are being asked to do, graduate students appear to have ample opportunities to solicit support for writing from their professors. But how do graduate students learn what's expected in the writing they must do post-coursework (i.e., the thesis and dissertation)? How do professors, who are very likely working with numerous student projects both in the classroom and beyond, articulate the expectations they have for thesis and dissertation?

How professors conceptualize the thesis and dissertation potentially has a major influence on the student writing under their advisement. In fact, the professors' individual descriptions of the purpose of the thesis and dissertation reveal consensus and difference in writing across disciplines and *within* disciplines and programs. Graduate writers, then, must produce their texts with respect to these revelations. In the paragraphs that follow, I discuss select responses from the faculty survey and interviews from the departments of the case studies—art history, English, communication studies, and divinity.[18] I asked

[18] The five programs represented by the case studies are situated in four different colleges and schools: the College of Fine Arts, the College of Humanities and Social Sciences, the College of Communication, and the Divinity School. Although I invited via email any graduate student beginning the thesis or dissertation

respondents to “Briefly describe the primary purpose of the thesis, dissertation, or the equivalent project as you understand it.” Faculty responses tend to fall along disciplinary and subdisciplinary lines, though not clearly along departmental boundaries. Their descriptions indicate one of some combination of the following aims: the demonstration of accumulated knowledge, the production of new knowledge, and the demonstration of a research process and product. These categories provide a flexible framework in which to analyze the texts. The demonstration of accumulated knowledge refers to an emphasis on mastering disciplinary content and developing disciplinary methodological practices. When the production of new knowledge is privileged, the writer is expected to develop a new theory or apply current theory to empirical data. The demonstration of a research process and product refers to an emphasis on articulating a scientific or social scientific research method while presenting the results of the research in a widely readable or, even publicly readable writing style. I developed the categories in Table 13 based on survey responses and interviews with faculty. I have included in this diagram only the programs of the case study participants. (For a list of the responses from all faculty participants, see Appendix F.)

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process to participate, all of the volunteer participants are female. They belong to different age cohorts: twenties, thirties, and fifties. Three are Caucasian, one is Caucasian-Native American, and one is Cuban.

No faculty from the Department of Art History or the School of Divinity responded to the online or paper survey. However, Professor Greg McAllen, who has directed eleven of the fifteen theses in Art History since 2000, and Professors Lisa Watson and Andrea Oswalt (pseudonyms), who direct theses and dissertations in divinity, did offer descriptions in personal interviews. I include their responses to the thesis and dissertation description question in the survey discussion here.

Table 13. Aim/Purpose of the Thesis and Dissertation

Demonstration of Accumulated Knowledge	**Production of New Knowledge**	**Demonstration of a Research Process and Product**
Art History Divinity Literature Rhetoric and Composition	Journalism Rhetoric and Composition	Journalism

These three categories emerge from the descriptions provided by the faculty in surveys (online and on paper) and in interviews. These categories are useful in understanding the disciplinary and local contexts in which graduate writers engage in the thesis and dissertation process. Although a deeper analysis of these responses follows in Chapters Four and Five, the case study chapters, I elaborate on how I developed these categories out of the faculty survey and interview data.

Despite the absence of art history faculty representation in the survey results, Professor Greg McAllen enthusiastically discussed the purpose of the thesis in the art history program. He emphasizes a thesis model focused on student interests and professional goals but clearly demonstrative of the students' learning in the program:

> It's a chance to bring together different aspects that the student has learned over the three previous semesters, as well as their undergraduate background. That's also one of the reasons we've kept the thesis fairly open in terms of what the student wants to do. . . [The thesis is] meant to be more of an opportunity to bring these various skills that students have and help them refine [them for] a meaningful project. We hope that it will have some use for them.

The thesis in art history should demonstrate "originality" and a "professional quality" with a clear "methodological framework" informed by the methodologies the writer has been exposed to throughout her graduate and/or undergraduate education in art history. McAllen emphasizes that the thesis should be compact, and in fact, students are limited to fifty pages, despite their freedom to do what they want.

Brite Faculty emphasize the loneliness of the dissertation writing. In their experience working with graduate students, these projects, meant to initiate the students into a community of scholars often leaves them feeling isolated and lonely. However, the two professors I interviewed share their optimistic view that the difficult process the students endure, largely out of tradition and rites of passage, places them in the world of research they so eagerly pursue. For this reason, I place their descriptions of the thesis and dissertation in the category of demonstration of accumulated knowledge.

Students may choose from several different degree programs—the Master of Arts in Christian Service, Master of Theological Studies, Master of Divinity, Doctor of Ministry, Doctor of Theological Studies, and Doctor of Philosophy—and in these programs, they may write a thesis, dissertation, or a special project. Professor of Biblical Studies Lisa Watson says that these texts should "inaugurate the student into the world of research [and] demonstrate to scholars and to [the student] that she is ready to enter the world of biblical scholarship." Unfortunately, however, she laments that the dissertation writing stage can be the "loneliest time of one's life." Associate Professor Andrea Oswalt specializes in pastoral theology and counseling and has worked with students in the program for fifteen years. She sees such projects as an "inherited part of academia" that, for some students, can be disappointing: "When it's over, sometimes students feel like it's only 'that? I didn't do everything I had hoped to do.'" But she encourages her students that the culminating graduate student project is "not the final word." Instead, she defines its purpose as being a "launching pad for further research."

The M.A. and Ph.D. programs in English require graduate students to take courses in literature and rhetoric/composition. Master's and doctoral students learn to teach

writing, and some M.A. students work as teaching assistants with literature professors. Since the department values both practical and theoretical dimensions of scholarly work, Master's and Doctoral students are typically highly active in gaining administrative experience through the multiple administrative positions available, teaching at the university, and showcasing their research at conferences and in publications. Although faculty collectively believe in holistic professional development, they differ in how they view the role of the thesis and dissertation:

> I see the purpose of a thesis as an opportunity to focus on a substantive research project that allows the student to begin to participate in scholarly conversations in her/his field—to both learn about the field and work to become a voice within that field. I see the dissertation as doing that on an even more professionalized level in which the student seeks to produce publishable articles or a revisable book-length project (this is possible for the thesis, too, but I see this as a clear goal for the diss.) I also think that producing both kinds of texts helps teach students how to embark on longer writing projects that teach them—as no class assignment can—how to endeavor in a writing life where research and writing are a part of their work activities.

> [T]he M.A. is the "finishing" degree for the B.A., and the thesis should establish a student's ability to manage a long, relatively complex and in-depth study. The Ph.D. dissertation is a collaboratively written document for the purpose of preparing a new scholar for work in the discipline.

These responses, both contributed by professors who self-identify as scholars in composition and rhetoric, show a significant difference in how faculty perceive the purpose of the thesis. If the M.A. is a "finishing" degree, then could one also envision the thesis as potentially "publishable"? Since several composition and rhetoric faculty indicate the expectation that the thesis make an "original contribution," I place composition and rhetoric under two different aims of the thesis and dissertation—demonstration of accumulated knowledge and production of new knowledge Interestingly, however, the first respondent I listed suggests that the thesis writer "focus on a substantive research project that allows the student to *begin* to participate in scholarly conversations in her/his field—to both learn about the field and work to become a voice within that field" (my emphasis). Another professor (not quoted above) commented that the culminating project is a "capstone" intended to show a researcher-writer's promise in which she or he "[learns] through the composing process." The suggestion of learning and beginning indicates that the student will either go on to doctoral study or a profession, and in this way, perhaps the Master's can be both segue and "finishing" degree. Thus, the culminating project in rhetoric and composition might fit under the rubric of demonstration of research process and product as well.

Literature professors offered these responses:

> A thesis or dissertation is intended to represent a culmination of the candidate's work, representing his or her level of sophistication and accomplishment. At the same time, the project is intended as an original contribution to the candidates' particular research field.

> To master scholarship in a field of study, to produce original, argument-driven research in that field, and to position your contributions in relation to existing scholarship.

In contrast to the thesis in rhetoric and composition, the thesis in literature should demonstrate not potential but sophistication and mastery; therefore, I place literature squarely under demonstration of accumulated knowledge. Another description more firmly states the importance of the thesis as a statement of accomplishment. Its purpose, according to this person (not quoted above), is "to master scholarship in a field of study, to produce original, argument-driven research in that field, and to position your contributions in relation to existing scholarship."[19] One respondent from the literature faculty, however, pointed out that the thesis (or dissertation) is the beginning of one's writing: "one's thesis/dissertation should not be the best/most valuable contribution you make in your career. It's the beginning."

Scholarship in literary and writing studies have debated regularly over what, how, and why we should (or should not) write. In literary studies, product tends to be privileged over process according to Patricia Sullivan in "Writing in the Graduate Curriculum: Literary Criticism and Composition." Not only is reading the most important activity of graduate courses in literature, students' analyses are shared with classmates through discussion or oral presentation rather than through written texts (par. 11). Sullivan notes that the writing the students completed during her study was only for evaluative purposes (par. 11). As Sullivan explains, compositionists tend to see the concept of "mastery" or good writing "as much a function of context—the particular task

[19] Some differentiated between thesis and dissertation, but others did not. I extracted mostly responses that distinguished between them.

at hand and the situation or situatedness of the writer—as of personal experience" (par. 15).

The survey responses from faculty in communication studies suggest that they consistently concern themselves with process and product. Communication Studies, a professional program at TCU that prepares graduates for careers in writing for general publication or public information as well as marketing and advertising, envisions graduate texts as opportunities to professionalize students and serve a larger, public audience. Students working in Journalism Advertising/Public Relations (Ad/PR) and News Editorial may choose to write a thesis, but most in the Ad/PR program choose to complete a project related to their current jobs. (Typically, students pursuing the MS in Journalism have full-time jobs). Two faculty members from this department, which includes the specializations of Journalism, offered these responses:

> When we conduct [a thesis], the purpose is to produce findings which contribute to knowledge in the discipline. The expectation is that this knowledge will be shared, through publication or other means, with scholars in the discipline.

> To help a student understand how research is conducted, from the question origination based on an in-depth literature review, to constructing methods for gathering data to answer the question, to analyzing results and then discussing the results and implications.

The faculty respondents emphasize that students should understand the research process and then add to disciplinary knowledge, sharing that knowledge through publication. The

responses above indicate process-oriented and professionally-focused views of the thesis, essentially representing a consistent view of the thesis's purpose with the department's curriculum. In order to facilitate these processes of understanding research and publishing the results and implications, the department requires students to take two courses that aid students in the thesis proposal writing and thesis research and writing process. These courses, the Proseminar in Journalism and Mass Communication and Research Methods, are designed to teach students how to write a literature review and conduct research, respectively. The curriculum in the communication studies program reflects their recognition that instruction for writing advanced academic genres might require its own course.

Because student writers must negotiate multiple, and often, competing influences to produce the thesis and dissertation, they need to understand the genre expectations. But students struggle to understand what's expected of them even when their professors provide syllabi, assignment sheets, and content reading, and they and their classmates engage in in-class conversations during coursework. It's difficult enough to make sense of expectations in the classroom. How can they do it once they no longer have these mechanisms in place? How can students negotiate the mismatch in expectations and conceptualizations of writing/expectations of genre among themselves and their teachers, their discipline, and their institution? Are students aware of the genre expectations (the roles) of their texts? Once these genre expectations are articulated, then how do actual student texts fit the roles that have been carved out for them? In the chapters that follow,

the three contexts I use to analyze the student texts—disciplinary, local and individual—enable me to highlight the ways these five different writers respond to the expectations of the thesis and dissertation writing in five different disciplines.

Chapter 4: Writing the Thesis in Context: Art History, Literature, and Journalism

The master's thesis demands intensive and rigorous research and writing that demonstrates the student's knowledge in a given field or discipline, indicates his or her ability to conduct a research project and write a coherent and cohesive document that presents the results and implications of the research, and showcases his or her potential for future scholarship. Such expectations are similar, no doubt, to the work expected in a dissertation. Thus, in many cases, the expectations of research and writing for the thesis and dissertation differ by intensity or time commitment more than kind. However, as faculty with different job titles—from assistant professor to associate provost—representing multiple departments suggest, their descriptions of the thesis and dissertation are not the same, nor are their expectations for producing them. My own description that opens this chapter, as comprehensive and inclusive as I attempt to make it, bears the many marks of disciplinary and subdisciplinary influence. As a researcher of writing who has written a master's thesis in American literature, my own assumptions about the purpose of the thesis derive from that experience. Likewise, my assumptions about the purpose of the dissertation derive from the traditions of writing and research in rhetoric and composition.

Since faculty in the same departments describe the thesis and dissertation multiple ways as I point out in Chapter Three, it is not surprising that what constitutes intensive and rigorous research and writing and the potential for future scholarship differs greatly across disciplines. James E. Mauch and Namgi Park acknowledge such disciplinary differences in their book *Guide to the Successful Thesis and Dissertation*, noting that the culminating text of graduate school should indicate a student's ability to conduct research

"with substantial independence" and "to report the results in a sensible and understandable fashion" (4). Mauch and Park, then point out that "[t]here are marked differences among fields as to what constitutes 'independence' and 'significant' in the research process and product" (4). Unfortunately, they undercut their own assertion by adding, "Yet, essentially the same principles [of research and writing] apply to thesis and dissertation study in all professions and academic disciplines" (4). Although graduate students may appreciate the tricks and tips for avoiding writer's block or starting a writer's group, and many of them (including myself) turn to such books when they begin thinking about their projects, readers might be better off avoiding these generalizations about the thesis and dissertation.

Despite current debates surrounding the rigor and independent research in the thesis writing process, the Master's degree itself has something of a dubious past. In his national study of graduate education published in 1960, *Graduate Education in the United States*, Bernard Berelson includes a history of the Master's. During what he calls the "pre-history" of graduate education period until 1876, Master's degrees were awarded to third-year alumni who had managed to stay out of trouble. Quoting Richard Storr, the degree recipients were recognized for "staying alive and out of trouble for three years after graduating from college and by giving very modest evidence of intellectual attainments" (6). It took nearly thirty years to phase out "honorary and unearned" versions of graduate degrees, according to Berelson (10). A 1910 survey by the American Council of Graduate Schools sought the purpose for the Master's, finding that most master's recipients become high school teachers and that the Master's program is typically better in departments with no doctorate (18). In contrast to the doctorate, which

is a research degree (Berelson; Katz and Hartnett), the Master's has since the early twentieth century been largely considered a teaching degree.

Finding more specific descriptions of the thesis and dissertation can be complicated, for the writers may reach the end of their project before being able to define the thesis or dissertation for themselves. Departments that house graduate programs offer statements on the purpose of and process for completing the thesis and dissertation. Before choosing a master's or doctoral program, potential students visit department Websites to peruse course offerings, admissions criteria, and graduation requirements. Each graduate program in this study includes at least a cursory mention of the thesis, dissertation, or equivalent project on its Website. As graduate students progress, they can consult graduate program policy documents and departmental faculty as well as more advanced peers for more extensive and specific guidelines on how to begin, produce, and submit their culminating texts.[20] The three thesis writers in my project whose stories are the heart of this chapter, have not engaged in explicit discussions with faculty—thesis committee members or coursework professors—about the purpose and function of the thesis nor have faculty explained to them what the thesis might look like in their respective disciplines. According to the these students, the writer and the potential director discuss possible topics and research methods. Their later meetings center around setting and adhering to timelines and exchanging draft and teacher response.[21] These writers speak confidently about their disciplinary knowledge, but less so about rhetorical

[20] The Department of English posts its graduate program policies on its department Website. The Departments of Art History and Communication Studies distribute policy documents to currently enrolled students.

[21] Master's students in Communications Studies who are in the Journalism program have the option of choosing whether or not to write a thesis or complete a practical project, which is typically designed by the student in consultation with a faculty advisor. Those who choose to write a thesis are typically in the Journalism: News-Editorial track, which I will discuss more fully in Part Three of this chapter.

and genre knowledge of the thesis. They speak at length about their many interests within their fields and how they could take their projects any number of directions. When asked about the purpose and function of the thesis, they either pause for a long time before attempting a response or answer, "I don't know," and then pause.[22] Their answers tend to stay in the realm of the general, and the circular—a "serious" or "extensive" research project that shows that the student can conduct such a project. Not surprisingly, they all share the sentiment that if their directors and committees would "ask for the same thing," then the thesis would seem less mysterious.

Since faculty are such highly regarded resources of support and instruction for graduate student writing, they can assist students as they attempt to incorporate their own interests, their own voices, with the interests of disciplinary and local contexts. In this way, students and teachers need not necessarily change or even expand their notions of what the thesis *should* be or do but share these notions (e.g., students ask more questions and teachers make expectations more explicit), explore the possibility of research and writing partnerships that expand beyond the academic, and, as a result, strategize ways to (re)shape the thesis in ways that meet the expectations and goals of everyone directly involved in the thesis writing process.

Sheila, M.A. candidate in art history, has returned to graduate school after working successfully for thirty years as a support technician and technical writer in the computer industry. In the early stages of writing her thesis, Sheila is trying to figure out

[22] I asked graduate interviewees a series of questions including the following: Describe the purpose of (writing) the thesis as you understand it. How do you describe the relationship between the thesis/dissertation/project to your profession? What is the role of the thesis/dissertation/project for you as an emerging professional? What do you hope to gain from the experience of writing a thesis?

how to develop a scholarly voice while maintaining her sense of self as she writes her thesis.

Kelly, M.A. candidate writing a thesis in literature, is a former undergraduate of TCU's English department and is the only one of the thesis writers who seeks an academic career. A prolific writer and serious student, Kelly's proposal is approved fairly quickly despite her tentativeness early on in the process. She has to learn how to go beyond what's expected in coursework writing and show that she is indeed ready for advanced graduate writing and for embarking on doctoral study, which is the next step along the trajectory of her academic career.

Lori, M.S. candidate in journalism, comes from a humanities background but brings professional work experience to her graduate program. As she finishes the thesis proposal and writes her thesis, Lori realizes the valuable insights that industry professionals can provide a Master's thesis.

In the following sections of this chapter, I place Sheila, Kelly, and Lori's thesis writing experiences in conversation with published literature on writing in the discipline (disciplinary context), publicized literature on writing in the program and faculty expectations (local context), and the individual writer's own personal histories as writers (individual context) in order to show how these three women demonstrate the diversity of preparation for thesis writing and their emerging conceptualizations of this process.

Part 1, Sheila's Context: Writing the Thesis in Art History

> Most art historians who write do not think of themselves as writers, even though, paradoxically enough, that is what they are—by definition.
>
> Paul Barolsky, "Writing Art History"

The Disciplinary

Much of the published literature in Art History's landmark journals—*Art Bulletin* and *Art History*—centers on interpretive analyses or historical fact-finding missions of works of art. David Carrier distinguishes art history from art criticism by the role of the author and his or her pursuit of truth in interpretation. Carrier, who is a prolific writer of art criticism and history and Professor of Art History at Case Western Reserve University jointly appointed as Professor of Philosophy at Carnegie Mellon, explains that art historians search for facts, and art critics search for a story. In his terms, present-day professional art historians create art historical texts, and both critics and art historians create art writing (*Artwriting*). In *Principles of Art History Writing*, Carrier argues that critics present a singular perspective based on their experience with an object and historians build arguments based on available evidence. Thus, "[m]odern art history can exist as an academic discipline only because art historians are able to agree about what disagreements are important and how to disagree" (6). Although some interpretations are better than others in such a system that proposes truth can be found, Carrier maintains that no single method of interpretation is privileged (4). He says a good interpretation is based on these practices of objectivity: finding facts, presenting a plausible conclusion, and offering an original perspective (6-7). The good writer articulates the rhetorical process by which he or she reaches a conclusion or moves from evidence to claim. Art historians depend on these "conventions or rhetoric of writing" and "[t]o understand these

rules is to [indeed] focus on artwriting as a form of writing" (6-7). The central questions, then, are: What methods were used to reach a conclusion about the object? How is the object treated in the written article? And where is the author in the article? If it's art history writing, the author collects facts and reports objectively but does not refer to him or herself in the text. James Elkins, Professor of Art History, Theory, and Criticism at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, explains that Carrier's insistence on truth-seeking in art history writing "sounds wrong" because art historians see truth as a "quality" of good art historical writing rather than the aim of good art historical methodology (123). Elkins himself is regularly criticized in the Art History community for being "too concerned with his own writing" to write anything of interest to the discipline (Duskova 187). Critically examining everything from the use of new technologies and new media in the teaching of art history to the goals of art history writing, Elkins has spent many years challenging the practices of the discipline. In contrast to Duskova's denigration of Carrier's preoccupation with the transparency of writing in Art History, Elkins credits Carrier for holding up a "dark mirror" to the discipline. He says that Carrier writes like an art historian and his writing is a study in disciplinary practice. Furthermore, Elkins's prolific work and that of Carrier's provide a useful framework for understanding the disciplinary values of writing in Art History.

First, Elkins provides a convenient (if slightly accusatory) list of qualities of the different kinds of writing art historians produce. Much of the work he discusses in *Our Beautiful, Dry, Distant Texts* fit into his "meandering meditation or slowly shifting 'picture'" category (231). The others, however, are quite different and numerous:

> [T]hey are sharp, even harsh attempts to stake out some interpretive ground. They say what they mean as efficiently as possible, with a coldness and an authority that are far from the pictorial texts I have been imagining. A great deal of normal art history works this way, and I might even say that the short-essay form. . . lends itself to this kind of pointed argument. (231)

Generally, academic writing in Art History resembles published writing of professional art historians. Art history writing centers on a researched argument about an object or work of art. Acceptable resources of support for an interpretation include the object, a textbook (if in a class), a theory or theoretical framework to analyze the object, and standard or other works of art to which the object is similar or related. The final requirement is most important if the writer is doing a patronage study or provenance, a study of how and why the object was created (and who commissioned it, if that is the case). Writers must analyze the work, not just describe it, and the details build up to an argument. In the college setting, some professors may prefer students not to use personal pronouns, and few scholarly articles ever do. The professors aim to teach students to write how about the formal elements of an object evoke a response, not why the work made the viewer feel a certain way. In *How to Write Art History*, Anne D'Alleva firmly advises writers:

> [A]rt history isn't opinion, it's interpretation. . . .That is, in doing art history you have to be able to deal with the available evidence in a way that meets not only your lecturer's expectations but also the standards of the discipline. (69)

The interpretation expected of art history writers is systematic, for writers should engage in what D'Alleva calls a "careful process of interpretation" that leads not necessarily to the one correct answer but to the most convincing one given the available evidence about the object of art, the artist, and/or the conditions surrounding the production of the object.

How does one learn how to write about art? Rudolf Arnheim describes his course on comparative psychology of the arts in the essay, "Beyond the Graces and the Muses," published in a 1982 issue of the University of Michigan's English Composition newsletter. In this essay, he describes the frequent theoretical and philosophical readings that he assigns in order to help students understand the similarities and differences among media (photography, painting, dance, etc.). He believes critical reading will lead students to insights about interpreting the cognitive aspects of art. The "perfunctory character" of writing in the course, however, can be diminished by allowing the students to pursue a term paper project of their choice (62). In this way, the students deepen both broad and specialized knowledge. Despite his seeming emphasis on reading as the primary mode of learning, he challenges his students to write outside of their specialty in "their own voices": "To step beyond the safety of one's own precinct without becoming amateurish or superficial offers the possibility of thinking more freely, deeply, and originally than one might otherwise" (62). A scholar frequently cited in published scholarship and theses and dissertations in the 1980s, Arnheim was a top scholar at University of Michigan, well-known and respected in the art world. His notion of writing as "perfunctory," a burden that students and scholars must bear to disseminate the information they gather about the objects under study, has endured in the discipline. While some scholars of Art History imagine themselves writers, most do not (Elkins 2002 and 2000; Barolsky 1996).

In spite of his assertion featured in the epigraph above, art historian Paul Barolsky questions whether writing about art matters: "Do we need to write or speak about art in order to express coherent ideas about it? No" (403). Barolsky claims that informed interpretations take many forms—in museum exhibits, in other visual representations such as art, and in multimodal forms. Stuart Thomson, Professor of Art and Education at Seton Hill College in Pennsylvania, suggests opening up expectations of scholarship and publication in art education because practices and needs are diverse. Thomson asks, "Can hugely different statements and ideas always be boxed in the same container" (59)?

The Local

TCU's graduate program in Art History, housed in the College of Fine Arts along with Studio Art and Music, has grown to fifteen students enrolled over only four since 1998 (TCU Institutional Research [2006] 41; [1998] 47). Certainly, the program's geographic proximity to a thriving metropolitan arts community would be attractive to many students. Since students interested in art history are studying alongside studio artists and graphic designers, they are encouraged to collaborate with peers and professional art historians and artists on writing projects outside of the classroom and during internships. These internships are the integral component called the "museum experience" that most firmly connects TCU's graduate students to the world-class museums in the local area. Because of the centrality of the museum experience, courses and seminars in the art museum and the study of the art object dominate the curriculum here. Students can take elective courses in art representative of different historical periods and geographical areas. Graduates of this program typically accept entry-level museum

jobs, a few take instructional positions at a museum. Since the program began, three have gone to Ph.D. programs. Whatever professional or academic position they choose, most have gotten jobs quickly, according to Professor Greg McAllen.

Each graduate program represented by the case studies offers a glimpse into its requirements for completing the thesis. The passage below is taken from the Website sponsored by TCU University's graduate program in Art History. The quotation that immediately follows the program's statement about the thesis is derived (again) from the interview with Professor Greg McAllen.[23] I include these public and *local* perspectives in comparison to the individual faculty perspectives that demonstrate a local yet *disciplinary* (and subdisciplinary) conceptualization. The juxtaposition of these highly contextualized perspectives highlights the differences between the kinds of information readily available and not-so-readily available to students:

> The thesis is to be fulfilled by a paper, or its equivalent, that demonstrates advanced research skills. The thesis should be the result of independent study, the revision and improvement of a seminar paper, or writing generated by the student's museum internship. ("Thesis Requirement")

> It's a chance to bring together different aspects that the student has learned over the three previous semesters, as well as their undergraduate background. That's also one of the reasons we've kept the thesis fairly open in terms of what the student wants to do. . . [The thesis is] meant to be more of an opportunity to bring these various skills that students have

[23] I asked faculty in the survey to "Briefly describe the purpose of the thesis/dissertation/equivalent project as you understand it." As mentioned in Chapter 3, no professors in Art History responded to the survey.

> and help them refine [them for] a meaningful project. We hope that it will have some use for them. (Greg McAllen)

Essentiallly, the thesis in Art History at TCU is an extended seminar paper that should not exceed fifty written pages and should take the student no longer than two years to complete. The graduate faculty who developed the program that began in 1998 did not want the thesis to become an "albatross" (McAllen). In the past a writing workshop course was offered to help students develop thesis ideas. McAllen wants to do it again because students benefited, but bureaucratic and staffing issues have made it difficult to for them to offer it in the past couple of years: who will teach it, what might that person not teach in order to teach the workshop, or what other course will have to be cut so that this course gets on the schedule. Or it might just be a matter of getting it back into the rotation.

Proposing the thesis project in Art History is a matter of verbal negotiation between student writer and the director and the committee members. Once the writer gets the thesis proposal (verbally) approved, then her research process gets underway. During the summer between the first and second year, the program makes travel funds available for students who need to travel to do thesis research. So students are encouraged to have their thesis proposed as early as possible so that they can procure these funds if they need them. Because the program is so closely tied to museums, a representative from a local museum is typically the "outside" reader. But when critical theory is heavy in the project or when the work is closely tied to literary studies, a member of the English department graduate faculty will join the committee. The committee is usually formed at the beginning of the third semester, once the student has taken all of her required courses.

The committee meets approximately three times a semester, and the director looks at the first draft before it goes to committee. Although officially students have their final semester to work only on the thesis, faculty recommend they begin much earlier, in the summer before because "without fail, even the best students have a meltdown" (McAllen). McAllen should know, as he has supervised eleven theses since 2000. The thesis is evaluated on whether it is a publishable text. Although none of the past or current thesis writers have published their theses or portions, they are encouraged to do so. According to McAllen, when the thesis is good, it demonstrates "originality, professional quality, a clear methodology and thesis and follow-through." He notes that students who write a thesis have appreciated the honor of museums asking for a copy for their own libraries. Finally, the students participate in a "capstone conversation" two weeks before the final version of the thesis is due.

McAllen describes the types of theses that students in the program have produced. One student with strong background in painting and drawing wanted to create an illustrated thesis with drawings, which to him sounded like a graphic novel. He told her that he would be very willing to work with her on such a project, but she didn't know what a graphic novel was. It ended up being something in between and, in McAllen's terms, it was a great success:

> That's the kind of project that others might think of as not very scholarly even though it was very research heavy…about the sculptures at the [local modern art museum] coming to life at night and talking to each other, speaking the words of the artists. She read lots of interviews or did interviews with artists. We're sort of open to that [kind of creativity].

Some projects are more theoretical than the above project and others develop out of the internship experience. Wade Wilson's formal analysis project entitled, "A Study of Three Post-Modern Figures in Art, Architecture, and Literature," is essayistic and brief (approximately fifty total pages with images in the appendix and on an accompanying CD). In addition to his own interpretations of the objects of art and literature, Wilson conducted secondary research comprised of critical articles and essays to support his argument that an artist, architect, and essayist are postmodernists.

In the following passage from his unpublished thesis analyzing one work each by Postmodern representatives of art, architecture, and literature, Wilson demonstrates the art historian's position as distanced and objective reporter:

> [New York artist David Salle's] use of a fragmented facial image recalls Henri Matisse's image of a woman's head in *Green Stripe* (*Madame Matisse*), 1905, oil and tempera/canvas, 15 7/8 inches by 12 7/8 inches, States Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen). In *Green Stripe*, Matisse portrays a woman whose face is split vertically in half. Her features are sternly depicted; the right portion is more realistically painted while the left is green and black. The sharply angled chin notable in the Matisse painting anticipates Salle's treatment of the chin. Salle takes the idea of a split face a step further than Matisse. The face in *Shower of Courage* is split horizontally, and the image is cut off just above the flaring nostrils. As a result, Salle gives the viewer the anger of the figure who remains unidentifiable. (8-9)

Wilson successfully places the object of interpretive analysis at the forefront. He explains the artist's technique, and he places that technique, practice, and the result in sociohistorical context: Salle's *Shower of Courage* resembles Matisse's work, and the informed viewer will acknowledge the resemblance.

In a vastly different project, Morgan Hollie Womack's "Selected Paintings of McKie Trotter" is a provenance (a study of how and why the object was created). Womack searched archives of letters and museum materials, interviewed members of Trotter's family, and examines and interprets paintings that are similar to Trotter's. Womack also conducted secondary research including consulting critical articles on Trotter's exhibitions and information on the political and historical context and artistic movement of which Trotter's work is considered to be a part. Like Wilson, Womack's thesis is essayistic. However, as a provenance, Womack basically tells the story of how the artist's paintings came into being. Wilson's and Womack's examples, as well as the illustrated thesis that McAllen describes, demonstrate the diverse range of thesis projects that art history graduate students produce. Because the faculty at TCU expect students to demonstrate what they have learned academically as well as what they can do professionally (especially in terms of the museum experience), the thesis at TCU reflects the dynamic world of writing as an art historian. McAllen advocates opening up expectations for the thesis because creativity and professionalism are compatible, and any knowledge-making activity may demand greater flexibility on the writer and the committee's part, as in the case of the student who wrote the illustrated thesis. As long as the process by which the writer reached her conclusion is clear, the thesis in Art History can take a variety of forms.

The Individual

Sheila, the M.A. student of Art History featured in this chapter does not consider herself a writer and claims she "did not come to the [Art History] program to learn to write." A self-proclaimed "loner," Sheila has never relied on anyone to motivate her to write. Her mother taught her to write thank-you notes when Sheila was young, but otherwise she credits much of her writing ability to her love of reading. She talks at length about how much she's always like to read and that reading, learning, and pleasure are inextricable. On the other hand, the only truly pleasurable writing experience Sheila recalls is when she wrote a play "as a joke" with her fencing team buddies. At work and school, writing is a task imbued with requirements and obligations. But the self-sponsored playwriting, the only creative writing she recalls, freed her from the impunity of the performative writing of school and work. In her 2001 study of over eighty people from different birth cohorts, Deborah Brandt found that reading has almost always been prioritized over writing in public and academic cultures (163). Writing has been considered "fraught with consequences," and far more resources have been used to encourage reading in educational institutions, and writing in school, unless clearly sanctioned by teachers, "could bring punishment and censorship more readily than reading" (166). Reading, however, remains a pleasure that no requirements, courses, or committees can "destroy" (Sheila).

Sheila attributes much of the writing work done in graduate school as game-playing; she's noticed others getting by with very little and she admits that even she has made it this far by simply "paying attention" to the rules. Like Jonathan Ackerman (Nate in the Berkenkotter, Huckin, and Ackerman study), she's not always highly invested in

the work she produces. Sheila seems keenly aware of the possible limitations of her transition into the profession. She claims that a job in a bookstore will suit her just fine if that's where she ends up, but she says she would enjoy working in a museum, doing research and publishing since "people should know" about the objects of art she's studying. However, she is careful not to pour her heart into her work: "I'm also not doing anything that I have a heavy emotional investment in."

But what kind of investment does it take to enculturate oneself into a field, and how long might it take? Sheila explains one surefire way of getting by with very little, of playing the game of reading articles and writing critiques of them: "If you play the game, you read the first and last page and [just start writing]." She claims she can accomplish this because she's a good reader. Christine Pearson Casanave asks in *Writing Games* how far or well a Master's student can even expect to advance to a specialist position in a couple of years' time (83). She finds in her study of five Master's students in second language programs that it's not clear whether students at this level actually can advance, for they may only be able to move into the "peripheries" (85, 131). Situated learning theorists Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger (*Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation*) and Etienne Wenger (*Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning, and Identity*) see learning as a process inherent to the newcomers' "gradually increasing participation in a community of practice" (page). As newcomers increasingly engage in the community's activities (rhetorical and textual practices), they gradually move from peripheral to full participation.

Writing assignments in graduate school that help facilitate the movement from the peripheral to full participation engage the student in disciplinary or professional activity.

Faculty at TCU value both academic and professional experiences and think these best prepare students for careers as art historians. Both McAllen and Sheila echo the qualities that Elkins lists when they describe the qualities of good writing expected in graduate courses at TCU. Students should demonstrate critical thinking; state a clear thesis; present an easily recognizable introduction, summary, and conclusion; and marshal evidence. And they should do all of this efficiently. McAllen explains that undergraduate and graduate writing should demonstrate these characteristics, but that he and his colleagues expect graduate writers to exceed the undergraduates in "quality." Professors try to teach students to write compact and arguments based on verifiable evidence. The courses are writing intensive, according to McAllen. In a typical seminar students write four to five critiques of scholarly articles or a short analytical essay, each of which are five pages or less in addition to a larger researched paper. Teachers normally see stages or "chunks" of the larger paper throughout the semester and provide feedback. The critiques can also function as process work to help with the research for the larger paper since students normally use these critiques as sources. In the research methods course, students engage in weekly writing that prepares them for their semester-long projects. The lion's share of this academic writing falls into Elkins's "pointed argument" category. Sheila describes the arguments she has written in her courses and explains her ease of stating an opinion. However, she struggles with articulating the "steps" that lead her to that opinion:

> [I]t has not always been clear to me when [I am permitted or required to express an opinion or position], and I have not forced my opinion as much as I should have even though I have lots of them, as anyone in the program

> knows me will tell you. . . . I'm having a little more trouble with that. I guess because basically still writing to please somebody else. So it'll be interesting to see what happens with the thesis because the subject is mine and I have to satisfy the thesis committee. . . . That's been my problem in writing in grad school. I know I have opinions but I'm not sure how I got there. I don't know the steps . . . how to show my argument. . . . In Art History, you have to be able to explain how you got from A to B.

Uncertain of how and when to assert herself as a knower and writer in Art History, Sheila retreats to the uncomfortable position of "writing to please somebody." David Bartholomae attributes student reluctance to participate in new academic discourses as their struggle to "mimic" the language of the university (page). The curriculum (undergraduate but no less valuable to consider for graduate writing) he initiated at University of Pittsburgh encourages students to incorporate their own experiences into their discussions of others' experiences and ideas so that they can more effectively engage in academic writing instead of mere mimicry. In *A Teaching Subject: Composition Studies Since 1966,* Joseph Harris's pedagogy similarly advocates students' awareness of their previous experiences as they encounter new ones. But Harris more pointedly addresses how students can "work not only within but against the constraints of a given discourse—of how they can take its methods and use them for their own aims, inflect it usual concerns with their own" (34). In his genre-conscious pedagogy, Harris asks teachers to rethink their conceptualization of voice as something that is internal and instead understand it as a "stance [the writer] takes toward …other social codes and voices" that emerges "in the ways she makes use of the language and methods of her field

or culture" (34). As the writer negotiates the range of voices encountered in texts, class discussions, and elsewhere, she will develop an authoritative stance built not simply on content knowledge but on rhetorical awareness of disciplinary culture.

Lizabeth A. Bryant in her book *Voice as Process* recounts her experience struggling to enter the conversation in a doctoral program in Composition and Rhetoric. She describes how both her speaking and writing voices changed dramatically depending on whether she was teaching her composition classes or sitting in her graduate seminars. Acknowledging her graduate student position who humbly stood at the heavily guarded gates of a full participation in an academic discipline, she decided to work her way in. Eventually, she became conversant in the issues and developed her own scholarly voice and made her way in.

Writing and disciplinary enculturation are disconnected in Sheila's rendering of writing instruction in graduate school. She wonders about the tangible value of academic writing experiences. She didn't go to graduate school to learn to write or to learn about writing, so, essentially, learning about writing is beside the point. In fact, she regularly remarks that she already knew how to write when she came to the program. However, as often as she asserts herself as a capable writer, she comments that her professors suggest that she revise and edit her papers more carefully. When she says she can write, she refers to the physical act of writing and describes a time-tested process.

When Sheila discusses her writing process, she actually elaborates on her reading practices and then describes her writing in terms of the mechanical and physical act of writing or the computer technologies that have, according to her, eased the physicality of writing:

> For the short [writings] … I read the article, I usually make notes on the back of the last page. . . , but I end up having to try to find where certain points are made. If they refer to other people or other experts, oh yeah, well prove that. Then once I have done that, I sit down and get my little blank format document guide with all the approved format margins and all that stuff and start typing. I generally start at the top. The introductory paragraph is usually pretty simple, so a few lines and just leap in and my argument, then a summary paragraph, which is usually pretty simple. Then do a proofread and rearrange if it needs it.

Sheila reads speedily and then mines the text for useful material rather than systematically analyzing and synthesizing potential sources. Her efficient though not entirely successful strategy provides her with weak support for arguments.

When she struggles with a piece of writing as she does with a critical essay written for a recent course, she assumes the problem comes from her lack of content knowledge. According to Sheila, this lack of knowledge could be remedied by more reading:

> **Angela**: What makes [this critique paper] not as good as other things you've written?
>
> **Sheila**: I think part of it is my ignorance of the area. (Speaking slowly) It makes me uncomfortable and so, I have to dwell on trivialities because I don't know anything else. And, I don't feel like I give the article or its writer its due because I don't know enough to do a really good critique. . .
>
> **Angela**: What would help make this writing more successful?

> **Sheila**: Well, if I'd had more readings that week. I think that maybe it was one of those weeks I only had one article and only that one to critique. If I had had some other stuff to read, relate to it, I would not have done the critique until I had read all of it probably. It would have made for a better product or at least made me feel better about it. I might not have said anything different, but I might have felt better about it. So, perhaps that by letting me off, the professor wasn't really helping me.

Sheila attributes her struggle in this essay and the resulting poor evaluation of it to her professor not assigning more reading rather than to her own reading strategies.

Although she could not recall the title, Sheila remembers how a book she read on writing the thesis defines the thesis proposal: "According to the book I read, what you need to do is prove that the subject is big enough and small enough to cover and that there are enough resources available to make it reasonably possible." Synthesizing the book definition with her perception of the expectations in the art history department, Sheila explains the thesis itself as "proof" that

> you can do the research to find out information that is available but not easily available. That you can use the factoids that you find to develop an argument…. [By the time the project is finished], you look at [your object] slightly different than others and that you can back up those differences and argument such that people looking at the statue after reading your work can look at it differently, see what you're talking about.

Sheila equates a successful proposal and thesis with research skills and rhetorical facility. In order to meet the expectations of the department and the larger discipline, the thesis

writer must "prove that [one] can write a coherent paper: beginning, middle, end, because this would expected for anyone who's been in school …. at this level." In this way, genre knowledge reflects one's knowledge of content and potential for knowledge-building. The writer must "prove" her worth to conduct research, make a claim about an artistic object, and disseminate the research and the claim. Sheila's understanding of the thesis emphasizes legitimization, undoubtedly a criterion of academic writing, but she extends this expectation of legitimacy outside disciplinary boundaries. She explains, "If you can do that for one subject, you can do it for many subjects. And so your usefulness as a generator of ideas is … well, it is proved to some extent." Sheila believes that the thesis itself legitimizes the degree-holder outside the discipline as well. Thus, the required expertise of community members extends beyond the "tangible and public demonstration" within the disciplinary culture described by Ken Hyland in *Disciplinary Discourses* (10). Hyland explains via expert in critical discourse analysis Norman Fairclough, "Genres provide insights into these academic cultures, their routine rhetorical operations revealing individual writer's perceptions of group values and beliefs. Genres are not therefore only text types but imply particular institutional practices of those that produce, distribute and consume them" (Hyland 11-12). For Sheila, the thesis should verbalize her own perception of an object that she must then convince others is worth seeing. But unlike Nate and Lizabeth Bryant, she has not made the decision to integrate her voice with that of the discipline, whether and with whom she chooses to identify and to confront are up to her once she feels equipped to make that decision. She has not learned how to work within or against the genre constraints that participants in the community of Art History have. Throughout her graduate school experience, Sheila has

struggled with constructing an authoritative voice in art history. For thirty years, she worked in the computer technology field where she was the content knowledge and genre knowledge "expert." But in this new community, she recognizes she's a novice fully dependent upon the instructional support of professors, the experts. In her estimation, genres are fixed forms that ideas fit or not. She expects her committee to tell her what to do to "fix the problems because that's their job."

Now that she's settled on studying a bronze statue of a Native American warrior by Alexander Stirling Calder, "An American Stoic," Sheila has set to work on searching for resources for her 25-30 page paper, but she's largely conducting this search on her own. Independent research typically characterizes a graduate culminating project, but she admits that more frequent conversations with her director, visiting the writing center, and perhaps writing a more extensive proposal might streamline this process. Since a more extensive proposal is not required or regularly written by master's candidates, Sheila's one-page outline of the study and list of resources are intended to help guide her process. She includes highlights of biographical information about the artist. Although this information is clearly connected to any sort of specific research question, a study of an object will commonly include details about the artist. Since there is no review of literature or discussion of other works in the same movement (arts and crafts movement), it is unclear how the project is motivated by trends, issues, or an identifiable problem in art history scholarship.

In the list of available resources, she includes places where she might find articles and books and she lists some of these sources, which indicates that she has done some legwork. We discussed in an interview how finding sources now will make the thesis

writing much easier later, and she showed me her tables and charts of sources that her previous experiences in technical writing simplified for her. However, this list leaves open several questions for the committee to discuss: Where do studies of the object, the movement it's a part of (arts and crafts movement), and its relationship to other works point? What other primary texts (artworks) might be useful to the study? By way of comparison? What do these other books and resources say about the object of study? How will they inform the project? How do they inform the research questions? How do they necessitate the study?[24] At the time this chapter is being written, Sheila has yet to draft chapters or sections of her thesis.

[24] During the verbal negotiation between the student and committee that McAllen described, the student proposes the object(s) or figure/artist or issue for study, the methodological and/or theoretical framework, research question or problem to be addressed. The student also provides a list or is prepared to discuss resources she will consult. Essentially, the student must justify why the study is important or relevant to current Art History scholarship. Finally, the student and committee discuss a timeline for completion.

Part 2, Kelly's Context: Writing the Thesis in Literature

> The operative principle here—and it applies to all arts and sciences—is that constraints are the necessary stimuli to creative work.
>
> —Robert Scholes, *The Rise and Fall of English*

The Disciplinary

English studies includes the study of the English language, English and American literature and other literatures written in English, literary theory/critical theory, and in recent years has included film and multimedia. In the broadest sense, English studies encompasses the consumption and the production of discourse. In fact, in 1998 renowned theorist and teacher Robert Scholes argued for a curriculum in English studies that will "lead students to a position of justified confidence in their own competence as textual consumers and their own eloquence as producers as texts" (66). But members of English departments have not always ascribed to this vision, nor do they to this date. Literature faculty and composition and rhetoric faculty had begun separating their departments by the time composition emerged as its own distinctive field after 1963, the date that Richard Braddock, Lowell Schoer, and Richard Lloyd-Jones published their report *Research in Written Composition* and Alfred Kitzhaber released *Themes, Theories, and Therapy*. As early as the 1980s, Louise Weatherbee Phelps took the writing program out of English at Syracuse and Maxine Hairston was arguing for the independence of writing programs. Literary scholars saw themselves as focused more on the consumption and theoretical side of discourse studies, and compositionists were considered practitioners, that is teachers of writing.

Nevertheless, a career in the professions of English (of any discipline in English) has almost always meant a career as an academic, especially for the Ph.D. recipient. For

the Master's degree holder in English, however, the profession of English has equated to teaching at the secondary level or teaching part-time at a four-year college or university, possibly full-time at a two-year college.

The major journals in literary studies including *PMLA* (the publication of the Modern Languages Association) and *American Literary History* publish critical analysis essays that are argument-driven and theoretically grounded. In the last ten years, more authors who employ rhetorical analysis have found their way into these journals. Essays in these sorts of journals, which have low acceptance rates, tend to be written by experienced scholars who know well the genre expectations of scholarly articles and the process of journal editing. Scholars and teachers of literature engage in other kinds of professional writing including writing book reviews and popular criticism as well as writing poetry, plays, screenplays, novels, other kinds of fiction, and creative non-fiction.

The Local

The Department of English offers the M.A. and Ph.D. in English with concentrations in literature (English or American) or composition and rhetoric. This well-established program with over twenty full-time faculty houses three endowed chairs: one in literature, one in rhetoric, and one in creative writing. Doctoral students are required to take both literature and composition and rhetoric courses, but there are no required courses for master's students. The English department offers a research methods course occasionally, but it is a seminar in rhetoric, therefore, intended for composition and rhetoric students. Literature students never take it. Furthermore, as Sidney I. Dobrin

asserts, research methods courses are not writing instruction courses (page, “Writing across the Graduate Curriculum”).

In graduate literature courses, the writing is more intensive and extensive than in undergraduate courses. Graduate students regularly write critiques, book reviews, proposals or abstracts, or critical essays. Graduate writers learn to engage with critical theory in their writing and are expected to know how to conduct close reading/textual analysis. One professor in English has noted, “Any master’s student in progress worth his or her salt can do close reading.” In some cases, students will begin writing theory and conducting archival research and other forms of primary research including recovery work of an author. However, such work is less common in theses than in dissertations because of genre and time constraints: a thesis is written in a matter of months, and a dissertation is written in no less than a year (normally).

Faculty in the Department of English engage in their own active writing agendas and they teach students to develop their own by assigning a variety of writing practices in the classrooom. These people are active scholars, most of whom present at conferences yearly, publish articles and book chapters once or twice a year, and some of whom have written multiple books. Creative writers among the faculty publish poetry, stories, and novels both online and in print. Some faculty also write for broader public audiences and contribute to local newspapers and other more popular venues. Coursework writing assignments (abstracts, conference proposals, book reviews, etc.) and the program’s culture motivate students in this program to become conversant in the discourses of the field, thus become active in scholarly conversations through conferences and publication.

When students begin the thesis process in literature, they choose a director would normally be a well-liked professor from a course and in the students' specific field of interest. In the past the graduate program director assisted students in choosing their thesis and dissertation advisor, but more recently, this choice is up to the student (and, of course, the professor). After the student and her director agree to work together, they form a committee and include one "outside" reader who may be someone in the department but should be someone outside of the writer's specialization. The student is writing for an audience of disciplinary representatives but, theoretically, the project should have some wider relevance.

The passage below is taken from the Website sponsored by TCU University's graduate program in English. The quotations that immediately follow the program's statement about the thesis is derived (again) from the graduate faculty surveys. I include these public and *local* perspectives in comparison to the individual faculty perspectives that demonstrate a local yet *disciplinary* (and subdisciplinary) conceptualization. In order to understand the thesis and its proposal according to the policies, one must look to the dissertation, which gives a student "experience in reviewing a body of literature, researching a significant subject, and writing a book-length study of that subject" (Graduate Program Policies). The dissertation is

> an original investigation of a topic of significant interest to scholars. . . . [in which the] writer must take and defend a position, not merely recite and rehearse what others have said. The text's bibliography must reflect the historical and contemporary scholarship pertinent to the field. The dissertation gives the student a thorough knowledge of a scholarly subject,

> and provides a solid foundation for future teaching and continuing publication. (Graduate Program Policies online)

The department policies claim little difference between the thesis and dissertation: "While much shorter and less substantial than a dissertation, a thesis is in many ways quite similar. The director's, committee's, and student's responsibilities parallel the procedures and obligations outlined for dissertations, including a final public "defense" of the thesis" (Graduate Program Policies online). As also reflected in the professors' descriptions, the definitions of thesis and dissertation may only be different in scope and substance. As a result, the thesis proposal should outline a project like a dissertation proposal, but be "less substantial."

The juxtaposition of the highly contextualized perspectives of the thesis highlights the differences between the kinds of information readily available and not-so-readily available to students:

> While much shorter and less substantial than a dissertation, a thesis is in many ways quite similar. The director's, committee's, and student's responsibilities parallel the procedures and obligations outlined for dissertations…the only notable exception in policy is that, unlike dissertations, M.A. theses receive letter grades. (Graduate Program Policies online)

> A thesis or dissertation is intended to represent a culmination of the candidate's work, representing his or her level of sophistication and accomplishment. At the same time, the project is intended as an original

> contribution to the candidates' particular research field. (Graduate Faculty in English via survey)
>
> To master scholarship in a field of study, to produce original, argument-driven research in that field, and to position your contributions in relation to existing scholarship. (Graduate Faculty in English via survey)

The qualities of originality and mastery are repeated in the descriptions above as expectations for the compact packaging of the thesis, but literary and rhetoric and composition scholars acknowledge the elusiveness of both of these qualities (Clark; Scholes; Armstrong). Clark calls "originality" a myth, noting that we all build on the work of others thus no project is truly original. She explains: "An important way to think about creativity is that it can exist only within the context of a particular genre and that a thorough understanding of and familiarity with a genre is a prerequisite for working creatively within it" (5). Robert Scholes's point "that constraints are the necessary stimuli to creative work" is echoed in Clark's sentiment. If originality is virtually impossible, then must one master a field of knowledge and its genres in order to work creatively in the field? Paul Armstrong further asserts that mastery may not even be possible nor desirable given the divergent perspectives on what and how to study texts (101-03). He offers three main goals for a graduate curriculum: 1) Students should gain competence (not mastery) in a variety of areas; 2) students should gain expertise in one area; and 3) the curriculum should help students decide which community they wish to join.

In contrast to the literature faculty above, composition and rhetoric faculty define the purpose of the culminating project as follows:

> I see the purpose of a thesis as an opportunity to focus on a substantive research project that allows the student to begin to participate in scholarly conversations in her/his field--to both learn about the field and work to become a voice within that field. I see the dissertation as doing that on an even more professionalized level in which the student seeks to produce publishable articles or a revisable book-length project (this is possible for the thesis, too, but I see this as a clear goal for the diss.) I also think that producing both kinds of texts helps teach students how to embark on longer writing projects that teach them—as no class assignment can—how to endeavor in a writing life where research and writing are a part of their work activities.

> [T]he MA is the "finishing" degree for the BA, and the thesis should establish a student's ability to manage a long, relatively complex and in-depth study. The Ph.D. dissertation is a collaboratively written document for the purpose of preparing a new scholar for work in the discipline.

Within the composition and rhetoric camp, there's a major difference in how faculty perceive the purpose of the thesis. If the M.A. is a "finishing" degree, then would one also envision the thesis as potentially "publishable" as one might the dissertation? None of the responses contributed to the survey from Literature mentioned the possibility of publication, but several in literature and composition and rhetoric indicated the expectation that the thesis make an "original contribution." This response recalls the interest of literature faculty for students to develop an original idea. Interestingly,

however, the first respondent I listed suggests that the thesis writer "focus on a substantive research project that allows the student to *begin* to participate in scholarly conversations in her/his field--to both learn about the field and work to become a voice within that field" (my emphasis). Another professor commented that the culminating project is a "capstone" intended to show a researcher-writer's promise in which she or he "[learns] through the composing process." The suggestion of learning and beginning indicates that the student will either go on to doctoral study or a profession, and in this way, perhaps the Master's can be a segue/"finishing" degree. As far back as 1902, the Master's degree was arguably the "steppingstone" to the Ph.D. (Berelson 185). Thus the M.A. degree prepares the student for the Doctorate, which is the goal for most M.A.'s in English at TCU.

This representative sample of literature responses below emphasize the importance of contributing new knowledge. But in contrast to the Composition and Rhetoric responses, the thesis should demonstrate not potential but sophistication and mastery:

> A thesis or dissertation is intended to represent a culmination of the candidate's work, representing his or her level of sophistication and accomplishment. At the same time, the project is intended as an original contribution to the candidate's particular research field.

Another description more firmly states the importance of the thesis as a statement of accomplishment. Its purpose, according to this literature professor, is "to master scholarship in a field of study, to produce original, argument-driven research in that field,

and to position your contributions in relation to existing scholarship."[25] The emphasis on the thesis as a sophisticated demonstration of one's mastery over scholarship in the field. One respondent from the literature faculty, however, pointed out that the thesis (or dissertation) is the beginning of one's writing: "one's thesis/dissertation should not be the best/most valuable contribution you make in your career. It's the beginning."

The literary thesis at TCU reads as a series of mini-papers contained by one sustained argument. Each chapter stands on its own as an independent study of text(s), author(s), or theme(s). Carefully balancing his own voice in the multitude of others who have written about Flannery O'Connor's stories, Brian M. Fehler, for example, situates his argument as following in an emerging, yet rich tradition of rhetorical analysis of literary texts. He focuses on one work of literature at a time in a chapter, but other theses may take on several works, especially if they are not very long or dense texts. While the range of subjects is broad, the writing style, tone, and structure in theses at TCU tend to look much like Fehler's. He writes elegantly and clearly yet formally, asserting his major claim early in the thesis and his chapter claims early in the chapters and then uses textual evidence grounded in rhetorical analysis to support his claims. This essayistic style is common in theses at TCU.

The Individual

Kelly first started "writing seriously" when she was fourteen years old. Her mother inspired her a few years earlier by trying her hand at writing a novel, but it took

[25] Some respondents differentiated between thesis and dissertation, but others did not. I did not encourage or discourage a distinction between the types of projects. Thus, instead of extracting the responses that distinguish between the thesis and dissertation here, I address the possibility that respondents envision the thesis and dissertation as similar endeavors. I will revisit these responses from Department of English faculty members in Chapter 5, Part 2 in Composition and Rhetoric Ph.D. candidate Danielle's story.

Kelly a few years to dedicate herself to a life of writing. Once she did, family and friends took notice and Kelly soon became known as "the poet." In addition to poems, Kelly writes stories, plays, screenplays, and creative non-fiction. Despite making a prolific creative writer out of herself, Kelly has found that school responsibilities can hinder her productivity. Nevertheless, she finds a way to satisfy her love of writing.

Kelly shares Sheila's opinion that good reading makes good writing. Graduate school has presented her with serious writing challenges, greater ones than she expected. Kelly earned her Bachelor of Arts from TCU University. Although she intended to move on to what she considers a more prestigious institution to study literature, three of her dream programs rejected her application. She decided to stay at TCU and complete her MA and try again or, perhaps, see where the Ph.D. from the same school can take her. In a fiercely competitive academic job market, her concerns are legitimate. She knows staying at the same institution for all three degrees has its disadvantages, but she believes she's gotten a thorough and sufficiently rigorous education at TCU.

In two of her courses this past year, Kelly has wondered (as many students often do) if she was the only one who did not know how to write the papers she was assigned. In one case, it was an abstract. In the other, more frustrating situation, it was a critique. Faculty in the English department often assign the "critique" or "review" essay. In such essays, students typically respond to the argument of a published article or group of articles by first summarizing or synthesizing the central argument, then positioning the work or works in the larger body of literature, and last arguing its salience (if reviewing one piece). The construction (process) and structure (product) of the critique varies, depending on the professor's instructions or, perhaps, on the writer's evaluation of the

piece and the organization of the piece itself. Kelly felt somewhat familiar with the sort of critique I described since she had already completed one semester of graduate school, but the assignment that she struggled with asked for something a bit different.

She explains how different and why the assignment was such a struggle for her:

> We were given two [critical] articles, and we had to pick one about the Wife of Bath's tale. And you had to pick one and kinda argue against it, kinda take issue with it. And for me, I mean I got an 88 on it, so it wasn't like a failed paper. But I felt that it was really hard for me to write. . . . I felt that it was very difficult to be given an article and to take issue with it if you don't have an issue with it. That was, for me, the hardest.

She summarized the experience: "I wasn't really engaged. . . but I did my work." Although Kelly recognizes the value of taking a position and pushing herself to join the scholarly conversation, she does not feel engaged when the parameters are so narrowly set or when she's not sure what the professor expects. Clark maintains that students may respond to writing assignments, interpreting them literally, when the instructor envisions a more contextualized, rhetorical role for the writer ("Genre Writing" 8). Although Clark describes this situation in an undergraduate context here, the same can be applied in a graduate classroom. Students do not know what the instructor envisions, however, unless they are told, especially when they are encountering new genres. The teacher in Kelly's Chaucer class wanted the students to mimic an activity that disciplinary participants commonly do. Because the activity was artificially imposed, Kelly had a tough time meeting the teacher's expectations. She had to force herself to "fake it," as she told me. In Lave and Wenger's framework the student writers would have to select articles that

they did indeed disagree with in order for legitimate learning to take place. This is not to say that students cannot learn from the assignment the teacher gave; in fact, Kelly says she did gain some valuable practice in writing against a well-wrought argument, so she had to work very hard not to pick the easy fight and create a strawperson argument in the process.

M.A. students in the English department typically take courses the first two to three semesters and then research and write the thesis during their last two semesters. However, these students take courses even in their final semester. Some begin the thesis proposal during the summer before the third semester in order to maximize the amount of time they can conduct research and write chapters. Kelly began her third semester with full draft of her proposal (prospectus)[26] and her research well underway. As Kelly began her prospectus process, she wrestles with these contradictory and often implicit purposes for the thesis held by faculty within her own department. She began her proposal process by relying on the English department's Graduate Program Policies (GPP) document.

Kelly predicted that after her proposal is approved she would then embark what would feel like a long process because "everybody wants something different." She has three committee members, two from Literature and one from Composition and Rhetoric. Although the faculty respondents regarding the purpose of the thesis include some common terms—original contribution, sophisticated rhetorical moves, sustained argument, extended and substantive research project, and expectation to share the knowledge—there is no guarantee of consensus once a committee is formed. Faculty can

[26] In the Department of English, both MA and Ph.D. students refer to the proposal document as the "prospectus." I will use this term when quoting an interviewee or a document authored by a member of the department. Otherwise, to maintain consistency throughout the chapter and dissertation, I will use "proposal" because all of the other case study participants use this term.

make some generalizations about the thesis, but what individuals actually want in a particular project surface as the work gets underway. Once the writer and committee are working on a particular project with more specialized focus, many competing interests engage in the shaping process. Disciplinary, local, individual faculty come to play and sometimes in concert and sometimes in conflict with the individual interests of the student. If the thesis is supposed to (insert any definition/purpose) and then address a local and disciplinary audience, then one would expect the committee to have the student's success in the local and disciplinary cultures in mind. However, there's no predetermined order or hierarchy (as my radial diagram in Chapter 3 indicates) of the contexts. So, if the thesis does not satisfy the local guidelines or standards, then it does not matter if it is a fantastic demonstration of accumulated knowledge. Likewise, it does not matter if all of the university deadlines are met and all of the proper documentation filed if the thesis fails to indicate that the student is (potentially) capable of independent scholarship.

Kelly's perception of the thesis proposal is limited to that of a "blueprint" to keep her on task. Her self-described "tentative" writing in the proposal shows her waiting for directions from her director so that she could move forward to the work of the thesis. Instead of making preliminary claims based on the literature review and a close reading of the primary texts, which she hoped to show that she could do, she carefully summarized previous studies and generalized about the kinds of theories that could potentially inform her project.

In her proposal, Kelly sets out to argue that women are central to James Fenimore Cooper's Leatherstocking Tales and they drive the plot and give readers a sense of

America. She plans to answer how (and why, as suggested by director) Cooper "revises" the character of the ideal pious woman from *The Last of the Mohicans* (Alice) to *The Deerslayer* (Hetty) and the character of the dark woman from *Mohicans* (Cora) to *Deerslayer* (Judith and Wah-ta-Wah). In the last chapter, Kelly plans to use Catharine Maria Sedgwick's *Hope Leslie* to show more complex characterizations of women than the binaries prevalent in Cooper's work. Her director suggests that she consider the literary-historical context of the 1820s-40s to help her contextualize the books. In an end note, her director writes: "Your bibliography will need to develop much more broadly to incorporate texts on gender, authorship, and the literary marketplace 1820s and 40s, as well as all recent criticism on Cooper and Sedgwick (even if it doesn't directly pertain to your argument, you need to show that you are conversant with the scholarship.)" In a final note about Kelly's proposed methods of study, her director indicates that she has some "reservations about close reading as only method." Kelly's director is concerned that her proposal indicates that her project may not meet the expectations as outlined in the faculty respondents' descriptions of the thesis: Kelly's proposal needs to show that she is "conversant with the scholarship" and that she can conduct independent research, that she can go beyond what's expected in the classroom and employ theory and not only close reading or textual analysis (i.e., methodological sophistication).

In a later iteration of the proposal, Kelly has changed the focus of her thesis to the religious and social practices that grant agency to marginalized figures, specifically women and Native Americans. And will turn her attention to Cooper's *Mohicans*, William Apess's *The Experiences of Five Christian Indians*, and Susan Warner's *The Wide, Wide World*. In the time between these two versions of the proposal, director and

writer exchanged drafts and notes about what direction the project might take. Kelly's director advised her to read more scholarship about contemporary (historical) issues and current trends in critical analysis to help Kelly get a clearer understanding of issues that American literature scholars are talking about (or will be talking about). To help her write the proposal in a way that would ensure it gets a pass from the committee, she needed a more cogent argument for the importance of her project but also the directive comments from her director telling her how to know what to cut and how to rearrange, that is to revise and edit to ensure that her document meets the guidelines.

In response to Kelly's introduction, her director offers directive commentary about adding to the literature review, changing organization and adding complexity to argument, even adding new dimensions such as integrating "some discussion of black, Native American, and immigrant women's practices." In the early writing process of the introduction and the chapters, Kelly returns to her comfort zone: supporting her argument with textual evidence.

Kelly's director commends her for providing textual evidence in the following passage from her Chapter 1:

> Considering all of these events, Cooper works singing into the text in a way that shows the power of Gamut and his singing ability. In many ways, Gamut moves the plot along as his singing gives him agency in the Mingo camp. Yet Hawk-eye still frowns on the idea of a man singing. He enjoys listening to the songs and even cries upon first hearing Gamut and Alice sing (68-9); he characterizes nature in terms of song, with water and wind often harmonizing throughout the text; he uses the "music" of the crow to

> signal to his friends (252); he characterizes the sound of his gun in terms of song, with the crack of the rifle being a "note" (252); he even uses poetic, rhythmic language to persuade Chingachgook and Uncas—speech that is comparable to musical composition. Hawk-eye may not realize how important song is in his life, but Cooper gives his readers evidence that allows them to register the importance of music even to those who denigrate it.

Kelly continues supporting her argument that religious practices (such as singing) affords agency to the powerless in Cooper's text by offering similar kinds of close reading of the text for four more pages. Her director wants her to balance this smart textual analysis with more argument and "padding." This padding for Kelly's argument should come from scholarly criticism, thus placing Kelly in the scholarly conversations surrounding the text rather than only keeping her inside the text itself. After revising this first chapter, Kelly again struggles to incorporate critical support. Specifically, the director advises Kelly to review Cooper scholarship and situate her own argument in the conversation. Here, the director is advising her in a common disciplinary practice, one that the faculty in the department agree that students must do.

In a letter to Kelly, the director discusses strategies for how Kelly might set up the introduction to chapter 1: "Okay, now I think I've written the intro for you! But sometimes it is helpful to have someone else tell you what they think yo're saying. Do you see how I was striving to connect your ideas in a logical, cohesive manner so that it builds toward a larger point?" The director goes on to encourage Kelly, congratulating

her for the analysis work she has already done and motivating her to continue her forward progress.

By the time she drafts her second and third chapters and the conclusion, Kelly is incorporating more criticism, placing her own arguments in the field (in chapter 2). But in a draft of chapter 3, her director notes that Kelly's "voice …gets overshadowed by critics' voices." This pendulum shift in Kelly's writing suggests her attempt to follow her teacher's guidance, but she has either interpreted the guidelines too narrowly (as Clark says students often do) or simply practiced a strategy with which she is unfamiliar. The emphasis on situating argument with criticism and theory, having a sense of history/being a part of a tradition, both of these are indicators of one's cumulative knowledge and also a demonstration of the ability to conduct independent research/write an extended argument on one's own (especially important in the humanities). If this is indeed the beginning of her research and writing career, then this is the right time for her to learn what the thesis is and how it functions through exchanges with her director and the rest of the committee.[27] Through the thesis writing process she learns what it is, but would her thesis be *better* if she had a working definition of it in the beginning/what her committee expected in the beginning? Would she have felt better about her own writing had she known what they expected? She says yes. It is just as likely that her committee might not know exactly what they are expecting beyond generalized perceptions before she starts writing.

[27] I've seen comments of only one other who offered mainly suggestions for editing.

Part 3, Lori's Story: Writing the Thesis in Journalism

> From new media to old, much of journalism is just plain common sense.
>
> —Doug Fisher, *Common Sense Journalism*

The Disciplinary

Journalists are writers. Journalists working in the advertising and public relations sector write public statements and press releases for organizations and institutions; journalists working in print, online, broadcast media write news, feature, or opinion articles for newspapers and magazines and radio or television. Additionally, academics specializing in the study and practice of journalism and mass media writing, write research articles and scholarly arguments. Learning to write is paramount to academic and professional journalists' educational and professional success. Scholars and practitioners in communication studies and journalism, however, face the challenges of a fast society that demands its news in soundbytes and HTML. Likewise, graduate programs face the challenges of preparing professionals for these demands.

In a study published in *Newspaper Research Journal* in 2003, Frank Fee, John Russial, and Ann Auman report that while technological skill is increasingly addressed in journalism and communication studies, more traditional editing skills, critical thinking abilities, and rhetorical facility with technology are emphasized rather than using the latest technologies. In other words, they advocate a pedagogy of transportable skills or, as Doug Fisher calls them, common sense knowledge. Fee, Russial, and Auman recognize that such knowledges are not common especially in a diverse society and in graduate programs populated by students with widely divergent preparation and interests. They assert that "knowing when to use which forms to tell which stories may be as valuable a

skill tomorrow as knowing how to import a photo into a Quark page is today" (34).[28] Consequently, they suggest that programs consider developing a series of editing courses instead of expecting teachers to integrate all of the new technologies and more traditional editing skills lessons into their classes. In "Searching for the 'Ideal' Graduate Public Relations Curriculum," Linda Childers Hon, Kathy R. Fitzgerald, and Margarete Rooney Hall examine a communications and public relations master's program to find out if it was indeed satisfying students' desires according to its publicized claims. The researchers found that students were largely dissatisfied because the program claims to cover a general education in mass communications and specializations in journalism and public relations. But the courses tend to focus more on journalism, and advertised courses of interest to public relations students are infrequently offered. Graduate programs in journalism and ad/pr consistently revise their curricula to meet academic and professional market demands (Hon et al.). Public relations professionals who responded to phone interviews and focus groups indicated that professional experience and writing skills play the most important roles in the graduate student's preparation for professional life. Interestingly, public relations educators offered mixed reactions when asked whether students preparing for careers in private or public industry or in academia. One respondent said, "It's all about how the students prepare before graduate school" (134). When asked how the program meets the expectations of students, most said "programs should allow students some level of personalization" (134). Students were generally pleased with the "quality" of instruction but less satisfied with "content" of the curriculum. Many think the overemphasis on theory is detrimental to the professional practice and writing instruction, essentially echoing the responses of professionals.

[28] Quark is a commonly used software package for newspaper and magazine design.

Student frustration over not getting what they expected the program would offer prompts Hon and her team to recommend that graduate programs in journalism and advertising/public relations regularly revise their curricula to meet academic and professional market demands. In another well-documented study of communications and journalism pedagogy, Mark Massé and Mark Popovich from Ball State University conducted telephone and website surveys to over four hundred schools in an effort to "profile" the typical U.S. journalism professor. They discovered that journalism teachers tend to see themselves as "coaches" or "editors" (rating themselves on a continuum of 1-10, 1=editor and 10=coach) (225). Teachers in both groups rarely teach using what the authors call "progressive" approaches—writing as process—despite the introduction of composition theories into journalism in the 1980s and the teachers' "inclinations" (214, 230-31). The more traditional teachers continue to teach by giving lectures and using editing exercises rather than focusing on student writing, which is more preferable to students and more in line with what scholarship in journalism promotes according to these published studies. In TCU's communication studies program, however, the integrated writing paradigm that Massé and Popovich privilege is in process.

The Local

The program at TCU is designed so that students who have different professional goals can tailor the curriculum to meet their needs. Thus, all students in Journalism take a few required courses including the Proseminar in Journalism and Mass Communications and Research Methods, and then they select the courses that match their particular specialization: Advertising/Public Relations or News Editorial ("Courses of Instruction").

In any specialization in communication studies or journalism, students are expected to write research papers, case studies, and article summaries, according to Dr. Brenda Graham, Associate Professor of Communication Studies and former Graduate Program Director.[29] TCU's program, while committed to offering students practical experience through internships, does emphasize academic ways of conducting research and writing in its curriculum. Students are expected to learn how to conduct research and communicate the findings, creating "new ideas, going beyond what others have done before them, [and] contributing to a pool of information" (Graham). In her twelve years at TCU, Graham has seen the graduate programs in Communication Studies and Journalism functioning "like an apprenticeship program" with the thesis playing a crucial role in the apprenticeship process that eases the transition into professional or academic positions. Most students she has worked with are interested in pursuing a Ph.D., and the thesis is the first step toward doctoral study.

Master's students focusing on journalism can choose the non-thesis or thesis option. The Journalism specialization is fairly new, so some of the details about thesis writing in the program are still being refined. Most of the Advertising/Public Relations students choose the non-thesis option. Since most of these students are employed full-time, these culminating projects can be coordinated with an ongoing initiative or issue that he or she would like to explore at work such as a marketing or advertising plan. A portion of these projects is delivered orally and/or visually depending on the project and

[29] The Master's program in Journalism, once housed in the Department of Communication Studies (formerly Speech Communication) has recently developed its own curriculum and established it own school. What is now the College of Communications was previously included under Fine Arts and Communications. Since 1998, the College of Communications began developing programs distinguished from the Fine Arts, focusing the curriculum more on media arts and applied communications rather than fine arts and aesthetics.

audience intended. The written portion is typically much shorter than a thesis, and because it is a practice-oriented project, requires a proposal but a cursory literature review and minimal attention to theory, if any at all. By contrast, the thesis requires an explicit research project involving a clearly defined analytical process and theoretical framework.

The passages below is taken taken from the Website sponsored by TCU University's graduate program in Communication Studies, which includes the two tracks in Journalism. The quotations that immediately follow the program's statement about the thesis is derived (again) from the graduate faculty survey and interview with Professor Brenda Graham. I include these public and *local* perspectives in comparison to the individual faculty perspectives that demonstrate a local yet *disciplinary* (and subdisciplinary) conceptualization. The juxtaposition of these highly contextualized perspectives highlights the differences between the kinds of information readily available and not-so-readily available to students:

> The thesis track is for students who plan to pursue a doctorate. ("Master of Science in Journalism")

> When we conduct one, the purpose is to produce findings which contribute to knowledge in the discipline. The expectation is that this knowledge will be shared, through publication or other means, with scholars in the discipline. (Graduate Faculty in Communication Studies via survey)

> To help a student understand how research is conducted, from the question origination based on an in-depth literature review, to constructing methods for gathering data to answer the question, to analyzing results and then discussing the results and implications. (Graduate Faculty in Communication Studies via survey)

> The good thesis gets finished on time, teaches the writer and audience about the research process, and asks good questions and generates more. It has a heuristic quality. Some might say that the thesis should be published but I'd rather see [students] do what they're passionate about. (Graham)

The curriculum in Journalism reflects their recognition that instruction for writing advanced academic genres might require its own course. In order to facilitate these processes of understanding research and potentially publishing the results and implications, the department requires students to take two courses that aid students in the thesis proposal writing and thesis research and writing process. These courses, the Proseminar in Journalism and Mass Communication and Research Methods, are designed to teach students how to write a literature review and conduct research, respectively.

In contrast to the absent proposal in Art History thesis process and the streamlined proposal in a Literature thesis, the proposal in a Journalism thesis project is not only essential, it is substantial. The proposal in Journalism, like that in Literature, must argue the thesis project's relevance and feasibility. Perhaps more importantly for the students taking on these projects, the thesis proposal bears great resemblance to the thesis itself. In fact, the two endeavors are so closely tied that students often end up nearly completing

the thesis by the time the proposal is officially approved. The proposal includes sections such as an introduction and literature review, methods, results of the study, analysis of results, and a discussion of them. An appendix will include all tables, charts, interview questions, or any other empirical data not already included in the proposal. Before officially beginning the thesis, then, the student "defends" the project much like students in the sciences do. This defense differs from a final thesis defense in the humanities (such as the "capstone conversation" in Art History or the defense in Literature) in that the student gains approval for proceeding with the project and receives suggestions toward revising the research and writing plan at this time from the committee. Since faculty in the Journalism program expect students to show their skill at designing and implementing an empirical project as well as presenting it textually to a scholarly audience, the methods and content analysis sections are extremely important in both the proposal and the thesis itself. An examination of sample theses shows that faculty require students to follow a protocol for arranging their texts, so the theses look similar in terms of organization into chapters (i.e. they use introduction, methods, results, analysis, and discussion or IMRAD format).[30]

Writers work very closely with the director, submitting drafts and discussing revision options. Graham says she likes to see numerous drafts and will meet with her students one on one and "talk through" her comments page by page. The director works with the writer on constructing answerable research questions to building an argument to learning how to edit the near-final draft so that it meets departmental and university guidelines. Typically, once the proposal is approved, the committee does not see a draft

[30] Theses in Art History and Literature tend to be more essayistic and argument driven, and there's also less standard practice in terms of chapter headings and subheadings in these theses as well.

of the thesis until a couple of weeks before it must get final approval. After the final approval, the writer can make some final revision and editing changes as requested by the committee. In most cases, these are minor changes including correcting subheadings and ensuring they meet the standard guidelines. The approved theses from the program, despite the wide variety of research foci represented in them, share similar features such as headings and subheadings. Wei Zha's thesis, "An Inside Look at Soft News in the Chinese Local Television Market" examines the assumed tendency to report too many features and human interest stories at the expense of hard news coverage in the most popular local news stations in a mid-size media market in China. Using the IMRAD format for the write-up of his study, Zha's paper shares the headings and subheadings of other projects produced by graduates of the Communication Studies program. Because committees expect thesis writers to conduct empirical research and most theses employ quantitative research (some use qualitative in addition to the quantitative, which I will address below in Lori's story) and the IMRAD model is regularly used in published literature to share the results of studies, faculty expect thesis writers to learn how to write this kind of research report.

The Individual

Lori remembers writing extensively in most of her college classes, even in classes she did not expect to write, such as the sciences, as a classics and communication arts major at a small liberal arts college. She credits several sources with encouraging a love of writing and keeping her motivated even when she's "ready to be done" with graduate school: teachers who praised her, including her mother and sister who are English

teachers; journalism classes in high school; creative writing projects when young; college professors who encouraged her; a peer in the journalism program; and her "research partners" who helped shape thesis by participating in the research and offering her advice on the design of the project and final writing of it.

Like Kelly, Lori has enjoyed writing most of her life, and she likes to talk about creative writing. As a child, Lori wrote poems and submitted them to anthologies. Her teachers, mother, and sister appreciated her writing and encouraged her to keep writing. Unfortunately, her busy work and school schedule have practically eliminated creative writing from her life now. While Kelly seeks out venues to publish her creative writing and keep that part of her writerly self alive, Lori has decided to give that self a break until she finishes school. However, her goals are to continue working to pay bills and do freelance writing, and perhaps, "way down the road," pursue her Ph.D. In her own words, "I would want to be a journalist. But the more I got into school, it was harder and harder to make that [happen]. . . .I just fell into more communications and marketing communications. I guess I've just always been taught that being a journalist is impractical and being a creative writer is impractical, so I went a different direction."

In high school journalism class, her meticulous writing style and the seeds of newspaper and mass media writing took root. She explains that learning how to use a quotation, explain it, and then transition into the next idea and how to "visualize situations . . . made a huge impact on my writing and on my career path." That interest in analytical and creative writing strategies and attention to detail characteristic to Lori's writing resurfaced in college classes, in a paper analyzing scenes from a movie for a

video lab class. Lori's professor wrote on the paper, "This is the kind of paper that makes me glad to be a professor." I agreed with Lori that she should have framed it.

Again, Lori's meticulousness served her well as she began developing an interest in empirical research. She recalls growing weary of "writing summaries and making inferences" about topics teachers assigned in most of the research she did in college, and her voice increases in volume and speed when she talks about one paper she wrote that she "actually came up with an idea no one had really done before and that was a really neat feeling to do that and kind of have my own ideas." In graduate school, some classes that required two to three page mini-papers every week seemed hard at the time, but she valued being able to write what she wanted and being able to formulate an argument based on conclusions she made from readings and issues covered by the media. Her favorite writing project during graduate coursework was a paper on media ethics in which she got the chance to conduct interviews with media professionals, thus the seed of her upcoming empirical project was planted.

In her recollection, the curriculum design suits students' needs, but professors and students do not explicitly discuss the value of the writing produced beyond the immediate rewards of the classroom environment. Lori describes how she understands the purpose of her graduate courses and her experience in them:

> [I]deally, you would do your literature review in Proseminar, do your research in Research Methods and turn that into your thesis, and you've already got all this work done. You wouldn't have it done, but at least you'd have it started and already have some articles or whatever. But no

> one really tells you that. In hindsight, we (the students) didn't know that was how it was supposed to work.

Based on an unsuccessful attempt at a senior thesis in college and on the much improved experience in her current program, Lori recommends thesis writers take a class and examine thesis models or examples. She says professors *should* "tell [students] what is a literature review, what is a method" and model the process for the students and have them practice it even before officially starting the thesis. Then, she says, student writers will not have such a "nightmare experience" trying to write.

Now that she's here at TCU in the Journalism: Advertising/Public Relations track, writing a thesis, she has taken courses in both journalism and advertising/pr. And rarely does an Ad/PR student write a thesis or attempt publication, explains Lori:

> We have the option to do a project or a thesis. So most people do the project just because they want to finish sooner and it's easier, and it's not the sort of thing you submit for publication. There's not a lot of really substantial work coming out because people have the option to take the project route.

Because of Lori's interest in advertising/public relations and journalism and a more "academic" education, Lori identifies more with the journalism students on the News/Editorial track. One of her peers, a career journalist, has been a mentor to her. He is the only graduate student in her program with whom Lori seems to feel comfortable sharing her writing concerns. Interestingly, her comfort level with him coincides with her growing sense of community with professionals in the fields she's studying in her thesis project: theater management, arts critics, and newspaper journalists. During the course of

her pilot study for her proposal and her ongoing research for the thesis, she has consulted with professionals on ideas for research and they volunteered to participate in the qualitative portion of her project. Additionally, they suggested other potential participants for her to contact.

Like Zha's thesis, Lori uses standardized headings and subheadings to divide the sections and standardized chapter titles (e.g., Introduction; Literature Review; Rationale and Site Selection; Hypotheses, Research Questions, and Methodology; Content Analysis Results; Focus Group and Interview Results; Discussion; and Appendix). During our second interview, I asked if she'd started writing chapters and she said, "I'm not writing chapters." She said she and her director haven't talked about it and she assumed everything would be divided just like the proposal—introduction, literature review, method, analysis, etc. like the IMRAD format. Her instincts were correct. The thesis in journalism does typically follow this format, but it does use headings similar to those of the research report and use them as chapter titles (like Zha's). She learned more about how the thesis itself might "come together," as she put it, while writing her proposal since this piece of the process is integral to thesis writing in her program. Generally, the proposal includes all of the quantitative and qualitative research apparatus, the hypotheses and research questions, and preliminary conclusions. By the time the proposal is "done," the thesis itself is near completion. The majority of Lori's revisions occurred after email or face to face discussions with her director. Her committee did not see the thesis draft until she was preparing for her defense, as is standard in the program. She began the thesis project unofficially in her Research Methods course (her thesis advisor was the teacher) when she became more interested in the idea of theater coverage in the

local media. She was working at a theater, and wanted to find out if coverage really had declined in the local media or if theater managers "were just complaining because they weren't getting good PR or whatever." She selected five theaters in town and analyzed their coverage in 1991 and 2004 by examining the kinds of articles featured in the newspaper. In her literature review, she discussed how listings had increased and theater professionals suspect that listings have increased and in-depth stories have decreased. Therefore, she analyzed types of stories that were making up coverage of these theaters and compared them from 1991 to 2004. Her hypothesis was basically correct and, because she found the project so interesting and her professor and her colleagues in the theater thought it a worthy study, she decided to pursue the project for a thesis. Once she started, however, she discovered that her study was too ambitious:

> My [director] and I were just talking the other day about how it's becoming a lot bigger than it was supposed to be. I'm looking at 5 theaters and their coverage 1991 and 2005, and I'm looking at every single article in [the two local newspapers]. I had just done the [one paper] before but I expanded it to [the other] this time and I'm analyzing, once again, I'm doing the type of coverage: feature story, is it a listing, a news story, you know what kind of story is it. Preview? I think those are the only categories I have. And then I'm doing word count. If it's a review, I have like this huge list of things I'm coding for. Do they talk about the set, the costuming, the lighting? Do they talk about, give information about the playwright? Do they give background info on the script? Do they talk about the directing? So basically, the only stories that I'm analyzing like

> that are the reviews. So first I kinda go through and see what's making up the coverage. Is it listings, or features, or reviews? If it's reviews, then I'm analyzing all that stuff. . . It's really overwhelming. . .but no one has done what I'm doing. No one. That's neat.

In addition to the quantitative analysis she planned for herself, Lori will also conduct a significant amount of qualitative research including focus group interviews with theater practitioners in the area. She's especially proud of her initiative in taking on a project that does not "just replicate" a method but one that invents its own coding system and integrates quantitative and qualitative analysis. Very few theses in her program do that.

Most of Lori's revisions to the proposal and the thesis occurred as a result of email and face to face meetings with her director. She heavily revised the Method and Content Analysis sections, but made only minor changes to the rest:

> The content analysis section I rewrote like 3 times. I started out with like 20 tables and I had to keep simplifying and simplifying- it was just way too difficult to read (note the large amount of tables in the appendix). [My director] also kept focusing on going back to my hypotheses and making sure that what I was presented directly addressed each hypothesis. I also ran into the problem of trying to explain the implications within the results section. I was going into my opinion about the results in the results section instead of putting in the discussion. She said it needed to more "dry." I did the same thing in the focus group results—went into discussion within the results section instead of explaining it all in the discussion. My results

> section shrunk from like 60 pages to 30 pages with all the revisions to the content analysis section.

The opinions that Lori cut out and replaces with "dry" writing include eliminating her use of terms and phrases such as "interestingly" or "comes as no surprise" and replacing them with the following:

> Regarding the decline in news stories, three out of five theaters had a decrease in the number of stories from 1991 to 2005…While the [other newspaper] data showed a decrease in only two theaters. …The high number of news stories in 1991 can be attributed to the fact that Theatre Three was going through a major financial crisis in 1991 that was extensively covered.

In one representative email exchange between Lori and her director, her director tells Lori to simply cut one of her tables from the Content Analysis section since it is does not pertain to one of her hypotheses. Novice researchers in Communication Studies commonly include every minute detail of their research, overcompensating for their lack of experience writing about their research process (Graham). Another pitfall of the novice researcher is forwarding an argument when discussing the results of the study. For Lori, asserting a position is a preferred strategy for writing that she had become accustomed to in much of her writing experience as a classics major from a liberal arts college. She had just recently started learning about integrating empirical studies and writing using the IMRAD format. In fact, she had only written one paper—the one in her Research Methods course—using this format. Thus, these practices have not become normal to her yet. But her director told her that most of the details Lori was including in her Methods

and Content Analysis section were “plain common sense” to researchers and practitioners, and there’s no reason to include every step one takes in the research process.

Lori also turned to professionals in her field for guidance as she designed her project. Like Sheila, Kelly, and the majority of graduate students I surveyed, she claims that professors and peers in her own department have been most influential on her writing processes. However, she admits that the theatre managers, arts critics, and journalists did prove invaluable to her project, and she hopes that her project will be of use to them. Lori graduated in December 2006. She submitted her thesis on local newspaper coverage of the arts to the university library and to her “research and writing partners.” These partners included industry professionals—theatre managers, arts critics, and professional journalists, with whom she’d worked as an intern and theatre office manager, who suggested survey and interview questions, introduced her to potential participants, and themselves ended up participating in her focus group and interviews. Her collaborators got no official writing credits, but they were integral to the development and production of her project. From the proposal stage, Lori told me that she wanted these professional folks to be able to read her thesis and to perhaps make use of the findings. Even more important to her than publishing any part of it in an academic or general public forum, she wanted to distribute her work to colleagues.

Industry professionals, in Lori’s case, are a *real* audience that certainly complicate her purpose in writing the thesis. Her committee, although regularly encouraging her to send out manuscripts for publication, did not particularly insist that she send out her thesis or even parts of it. If she does, then, “The expectation is that this

knowledge will be shared, through publication or other means, with *scholars in the discipline*" (emphasis added). Not with industry professionals or with the general public. But Lori's experience and her personal interest in working in collaboration with professionals enabled her to find a purpose *beyond the academic*. Thus, she makes the transition into professional writing, transforming her thesis into a remarkably transitional text that also satisfies her own interests, local interests, and disciplinary interests.

The textual culmination of graduate school demands an intermingling of contexts, and each context has its own values. The individual values that come into play, that is, Lori's values for writing in general and for researching and writing the thesis intermingle with those of her chosen discipline and the department in which she's chosen to pursue these interests. She previously saw research as a process of "summarizing and making inferences." But she came to see writing as a knowledge-making activity, as inquiry, as she continued her work in journalism and expanded her repertoire to quantitative (result of the two courses) and qualitative research. She moved out of her comfort zone of writing, but the results surprised her and made for a more complex and comprehensive project.

Lori's experience epitomizes how the transition from academic writer to professional is the moment in which the student and the program, indeed, the discipline(s) would be well served to consider how industry professionals can be valuable resources and even partners in thesis writers' projects. This strategy of partnering with professionals changed the shape of her research by opening up opportunity to conduct qualitative research that would complicate her study (in a positive way). This strategy (re)shaped Lori's thesis writing by expanding her sense of audience thus motivating her

to report the results in a way that satisfied the disciplinary expectation to maintain a distanced, invisible researcher stance but to avoid unnecessary jargon, which she did in the final version of the thesis.

Part 4, Writing the Thesis across the Curriculum

These case studies begin to provide a comprehensive view of thesis writing at TCU. Like their counterparts in the surveys, all three thesis writers agree that some of the most beneficial support for their writing come from disciplinary resources but the cases add that the kinds of support they seek include receiving explicit guidelines and close guidance from their directors. Furthermore, they adapt their help-seeking behavior as their needs change. Sheila, who has actively disengaged in many ways from seeking out available resources, admits that she will need to recommit herself to her work because her committee "keeps telling [her] to spend more time working on my writing and figuring out what I really want to do. That's a sign." These writers indicate that graduate students define the thesis differently not only depending on their disciplinary and departmental alliances but also on their own personal writing histories, attitudes toward writing, and professional goals. Lori's interest in finding her own professional path lead her to work with industry professionals to create a project that expands the aims of a thesis; Kelly's interest in satisfying her committee, thus what she perceives as disciplinary conventions in order to get accepted into Ph.D. program and eventually become a full-fledged member of the academy; Sheila's interest in rediscovering her own voice, more important to her than aligning herself with disciplinary standards—"that is what [the committee] is for." Mark N. Popovich and Mark H. Massé conducted a study ("Individual Assessment of Media Writing") on media writing students and their final research question addressesed whether the classroom instruction affects student attitudes toward writing. They found that students who come to class confident about their writing or those they term "Optimists" were "eager to write, acknowledged the requirements of their craft, and

worked to meet deadlines and achieve a successful outcome" (351). The students who came to class worried about their ability as writers and "[b]y contrast . . . acknowledged their lack of commitment" (352). By the end of the courses Popovich and Massé were studying, they labeled the optimists "Professionals" and the doubters "Pessimists" because the students' attitudes during the 16-week writing course had continued on the same trajectory they started. The Optimists/Professionals became more positive and looked forward to a writing-intensive job, and the Doubters/Pessimists became more negative and hoped to avoid a writing-intensive job or to only write when he or she had full control over the situation. The researchers ultimately found that a semester's worth of instruction could not change the Doubters/Pessimists attitudes for the better, i.e., to make them more confident about their writing or at least more interested in strengthening their craft. Could the same trend occur for graduate students progressing into candidacy? Is there nothing that teachers can do to make optimists out of doubters or professionals out of pessimists? Perhaps during a 16-week course, there's little a professor could do to undo years of doubt and timidity or transfer years of confidence in one field to another. In both kinds of situations, professors and students can at least have open discussions about thesis expectations.

The three writers' conceptualizations of the thesis are refined through the writing process. Although they think that knowing exactly what their committees expect, getting consistent explanations of the purpose and audience of the thesis along with model texts, and having courses included in their curriculum that specifically teach strategies for writing the thesis or any extended research project would make the process easier or would make the process less mysterious.

Sheila, Kelly, and Lori's experiences indicate that support for writing the thesis proposal requires specialized support: a need for direction and consistency in support and instruction for writing the thesis proposal, and in varying degrees, a desire for a singular purpose for the thesis proposal and the thesis itself. Ultimately, I suggest that those of us who potentially influence thesis writing—for example, peers, professors, industry professionals—support a writer's progress by 1) engaging in explicit discussions of genre expectations, 2) providing models and guides for the genres/texts we assign, and 3) including industry professionals (other academics included) in our classrooms and in our research projects as writing and research partners. In order to place genre and the transition into professional writing front and center in graduate pedagogy, I turn to Irene L. Clark's suggestion that teachers and students envision the thesis proposal as a rhetorical genre: an argument aimed at justifying the need and reasonableness of the study. Clark sees the proposal as crucial in the thesis process, for it not only sets up the project, it makes explicit the implicit by foregrounding these important questions:

- What is the *function* or *purpose* of the proposal? That is, what is a proposal supposed to *do*?
- For whom is the proposal being written? For what *audience* is the proposal intended?
- What *role* should the writer of a proposal assume? (43)

These questions can help the thesis writer developing a flexible but clearly defined plan for the thesis in the form of a proposal (whether it's in the form of a conversation or a written document). But these are also questions the writer can ask the director and committee. Bryant explains her enculturation into her new discourse community as a

process that began with her using the terms of the community at the end of questions. Eventually, she developed an authoritative voice in which she integrated her personal experiences and philosophies into the normal discourse of Composition and Rhetoric. In order to reach full participation in a community, newcomers must gain competency in the content (and they are unlikely to *master* all of the content) and control over the genres and rhetorical moves. Genre and rhetorical knowledge do not emerge out of content knowledge (Geisler; Berkenkotter, Huckin, Ackerman).

Aviva Freedman cautions in "Show and Tell? The Role of Explicit Teaching in the Learning of New Genres" that explicit teaching can be harmful, indeed, dangerous if teachers oversimplify the rhetorical complexities of genres or students obsess over features (244-45). On the other hand, other scholars including James Martin (*Factual Writing: Exploring and Challenging Social Reality*), John Swales (*Genre Analysis*), Joseph Williams and Gregory Colomb ("The Case for Explicit Teaching") maintain that explicit attention to genre can provide writers with knowledge about processes and the products.

This examination of theses-in-progress highlight the potential for making explicit the implicit guidelines for thesis writing and the tacit genre and rhetorical knowledge writers need to take on this important culminating project. Students can find theses on dusty library shelves or perhaps through Dissertation Abstracts International, but they often must petition former students for sample proposals. And even with samples or models, the students do not see the process which formed the proposal. Clark proposes a set of strategies to help grads write the proposal and the thesis. These strategies, based on rhetorical theories of genre and process-centered pedagogy, enable the student to see the

proposal as a planning document and the thesis itself as an articulation of a recognizable problem and a demonstration that the student is "worthy of entering the disciplinary conversation" (143). Grads face the proposal under high-stakes pressure, whether they're planning to pursue doctoral study; continue teaching in secondary schools; or work in the private, public, government, or non-profit sector. Entering into the unknown based on a sense that others have managed before is naïve on the part of the student and unwise on the part of the program and thesis committee. More visible pedagogy that supports graduate student progress moves students toward students' and programs' goals more effectively. I suggest that faculty and students engage in open dialogue about expectations for thesis writing within these contexts so that students can work within and against the genre constraints. Furthermore, I agree with Charles Bazerman that the modus operandi for writing specialists is that the more we learn about writing, the better we can write, and by extension, teach writing.

Chapter 5: Writing the Dissertation in Context: Biblical Interpretation and Composition and Rhetoric

Academic lore offers many metaphors for the dissertation experience, suggesting that writing the dissertation can be anything from the most exciting to the most disappointing period of the academic experience. For some the dissertation is the launching pad to a career, but for others it is just another hoop to jump through along the way toward reaching the *ultima thule* of one's formal education. Earning a Ph.D. generally indicates that a person is an expert in a field of study and is thus qualified to conduct research in the target area, but it is the demonstration of this research that actually credentials the degree holder. Thus, the production of the dissertation is the process of credentialing one's (emerging) expertise and (potential) capability of producing publishable research in the target area.

Doctoral students encounter another significant moment on the way toward earning the Ph.D. In the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, graduate schools developed fellowships to encourage young people to join doctoral programs. But as early as the 1930s graduate programs were trying to slow down the influx of students. Why restrict the numbers of intelligent, qualified candidates? By the 1930s enrollments rose and numerous programs opened up across the country, so schools like Harvard began enforcing stricter admissions standards (Berelson; Geiger). The Graduate Record Examination (GRE) was established in 1937 as a gate-keeping mechanism to slow down enrollments. Composition and rhetoric scholars Heidi Estrem and Brad E. Lucas note, "Whereas the dissertation was initially a mechanism for managing student populations, the growth of doctoral education prompted more and various forms of evaluation" (398).

These evaluations, placed strategically during graduate school progress, are mostly still in place. Doctoral students take exams after a year and a half to two years of coursework. Next, they embark on the proposal process, and then the dissertation. Finally, they complete the oral defense/exam.

The doctoral exams comprise the process that I call the textual bridge between graduate student and candidacy status, also known as preliminary, qualifying, or comprehensive exams. In Stephen M. North's estimation, the exams in a "magisterial curriculum" are characterized by emerging scholars attempting to satisfy the expectations of their faculty judges through ritualized testing. The students' performances alone, regardless of how well they might do, cannot take them across the bridge into candidacy. They must be escorted by faculty who approve of their views or share their interests, according to North. Certainly in doctoral programs in which a few sought-after professors have limited time and attention because of the number of projects they direct, North's view is not at all far-fetched.

As literacy and linguistics researcher John M. Swales in *Genre Analysis* defines it, the dissertation "can either be a *rite de passage* into the targeted discourse, or an exit qualification that enables the holder to leave the university world and enter another one" (Swales 187). Ph.D. recipients enter this other world of professional work that expects the degree-holder to be an expert in historical, theoretical, and rhetorical knowledge. This expert represents the discipline. In his introduction to a collection of essays on the future of doctoral education across disciplines, Carnegie Foundation researcher Chris Golde theorizes the relationship between the expert and the discipline in his essay, "Preparing Stewards of the Discipline." He explains how doctoral education prepares scholars who

will “critically conserve” ideas and create new knowledge in their writing, teaching, and other applications of this knowledge. These emerging stewards, in their disciplinary infancy (i.e. as doctoral candidates), build their textual bridge to stewardship under the direction of disciplinary faculty who are already stewards. The dissertation writing process itself can be a manifestation of this transition from student to professional, or in Golde’s terms, the beginning of stewardship. Golde’s positive outlook on the potential of the dissertation is best understood in historical context of the tradition of research on doctoral education and dissertation writing.

In stark contrast to Golde’s positive outlook on the potential of the dissertation, professors of education Patricia Hinchey and Isabel Kimmel are among scholars who present grim pictures of the purpose of the dissertation and the need for reform. Hinchey and Kimmel declare that the dissertation is “born largely of a need to keep students in line, used more as a hazing ritual to screen out the unsuitable than as a meaningful educational experience, and offering the student little of use in a life after graduate school” (91). They further claim that “Today’s ritual dissertation is so educationally bankrupt, in fact, that it cannot even pretend to constitute real practice in research and writing” (91). Dull writing is expected, even valued in the dissertation. Page Smith in *Killing the Spirit: Higher Education in America* concurs. In fact, Smith describes the graduate writing process as the antithesis to creativity and learning:

> It was as a candidate for the Ph.D. at Harvard that I first encountered the Cult of Dullness. Since boyhood I had aspired to be a writer. I was not sure what kind of writer, but some kind. So with my first graduate research paper I tried to write as well as I could. My professor, the urbane

> Crand Brinton, warned me gently that, although he himself did not object to a well-written paper (I don't see how it could have been *very* well written at best; it was on some obscure point of natural law), his colleagues might be put off. They might suspect that I was not thus a suitable candidate for the Ph.D. I encountered the problem again when I sent my doctoral dissertation to a typist to have it typed. The typist called shortly to express her concern. It did not read like a Ph.D. Was I sure it would be acceptable? What was the problem? I asked. Well, she was enjoying reading it, and that made her uneasy on my account. She was concerned that it might not be accepted. It was not as dull as she felt it ought to be….
>
> The Cult of Dullness not only survives; it flourishes. . . . (110-12).

Smith continues his description of the dissertation:

> Not only is the Ph.D. dissertation constrained by the requirement that it be original (in the sense of dealing with material never dealt with before) and dull; it must also conform to the prejudices of the examiners. In other words, it must not be too original. Especially on the theoretical side, it must be compatible with the current "thinking" in the field. It must not be too advanced, and it must have no truck with notions now considered obsolete (although in fact these obsolete notions often return in time as the latest finding). It thus manages the not inconsiderable feat of being both stultifying and capricious. (110-12)

Smith's description of his own experience captures the paradox of writing one's dissertation: the dissertation is not solely the graduate writer's project. The constraints that Smith encounters—the dissertation must be original but not too original, theoretically sound but not too far off the beaten path, and, finally, well-written but within the discipline's rhetorical conventions that he must demonstrate he has full control over—actually clashed with his own personal interest in writing a dissertation that was, in his opinion, interesting to write and enjoyable to readers. A commitment to being a steward of the discipline demands that the writer represent the discipline to the (academic) public in his or her writing, but a commitment to one's own interests demands that the writer represent the self to the (academic) public in his or her writing. It is at such a point of conflict between the goals of the discipline and the individual that the relevance of the dissertation project may seem elusive to the graduate student writer, and the writing process can suffer.

These experiences and observations of intellectual bankruptcy and capriciousness have motivated numerous calls for reform of the dissertation. In his 1990 article, "The Ph.D. Squid," Theodore Ziolkowski recommends that students "learn the style used most widely in journals of the field, to practice the art of selective quotation, and to recite the credo of scholarly ethics" rather than include a literature review, extensive footnotes, and other "cumbersome" but all too common features of the dissertation (Ziolkowski 194). As Swales notes, these common features and the discursiveness of dissertations clearly distinguish the graduate student writer from the professional writer.[31] In his study of six

[31] Perhaps, this is what my friend's professor was referring to when he instructed her to "stop writing like a student" in his comment on her dissertation prospectus. My own readers are likely to resist the discursiveness in my dissertation as well, but like my friend, I am working in a tradition of practice in my

dissertations at the University of Michigan, Swales finds that dissertation writers use a great deal of metadiscourse, that is "writing about the evolving text itself" (188). He notes that dissertation writers offer signposts, forecasting statements, and recapitulating statements to their readers, even more than addressing the content of the study itself. Dissertation writers extensively discuss what they are going to do or reiterate what they have already said. Swales points out that "dissertation authors never give advice to their readers since their primary and pre-designated audience is a very small group of specialists in their field who act as counsel in the process and judge of the finished product" (188). What these writers must do if they want to usher their writing into the scholarly field as professionals and publish the dissertation is give advice and make recommendations to a broader audience (189). Therefore, the writer's position, and authority, shifts dramatically when the writing goes public (even if it is an academic public). The dissertation writer may begin the process with admirable goals to design and implement a groundbreaking research project and write a dissertation that effects change in her institution, field, or the academy itself.

In *We Scholars: Changing the Culture of the University*, David Damrosch likewise recommends reform of the dissertation process: he claims that a student might benefit from writing several articles under the supervision of several advisors instead of one book-like document under the supervision of one advisor. Such a reconsideration of the dissertation's process would encourage faculty and students to reconceptualize the dissertation's purpose as well, engendering a vision of the dissertation as a series of

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own discipline and program. In an attempt to curtail readers' resistance to my discursive and reflective comments, I move them to footnotes or hold them until the Afterword.

"quasi-independent" essays that do not only prepare the student for entering scholarly conversations but actually foster scholarly conversations. As Damrosch sees it,

> A student might gain more from working closely with four different people than from making do with the perfunctory guidance of only one sponsor whose interest is not truly engaged by the topic. As I have been arguing, collaborative work involves a whole range of activities, not only joint authorship or team teaching. These may be the most visible kinds of collaboration, but they may be the only or even the most common form of work, even for intellectually sociable scholars. Graduate education is a crucial period for fostering the basic collaborative skill of attending closely to other people's ideas, approaches, and perspectives. (162)

Perhaps Damrosch's proposal for collaboration is what the composition/rhetoric professor whom I quoted in Chapter Four had in mind when she or he defined the dissertation as a "collaboratively written document for the purpose of preparing a new scholar for work in the discipline." However, dissertations in composition/rhetoric at TCU are primarily written under the close supervision of a director and the more informal consultancy of the committee members. The collaboratively written part of the professor's response is more descriptive of the advisor and student's relationship in most cases, even across disciplines at TCU. This is not to say, however, that individual professors who chair committees would not supervise a student's process differently. In fact, the professor may very well not employ a strong chair model when chairing a dissertation committee. I am pointing out that the strong chair model is the most common in the English Department and in these case studies.

A brief examination of the history of the doctorate and the dissertation in the United States tells us that many of the current debates surrounding the doctorate have a long history and, in some cases, are holdovers from past concerns. Bernard Berelson conducted a national study of theses and dissertations, and examined students' academic records and interviewed graduate faculty and academic deans in the late 1950s. He also historicized graduate education from its beginnings in the nineteenth century (when Johns Hopkins was founded and offered only graduate courses) in *Graduate Education in the U.S.* Berelson's list of issues that pre-dated graduate education and were also of concern in the 1950s (and it's no stretch to argue these are still relevant today):

- Faculty resistance to change
- Tension between research and practice as "primary objectives of graduate study"
- Impact of a dynamic body of knowledge
- Conflict between influences on educational policy inside and outside the academy. (8)

Despite the tension between research and practice or training for a profession being the purpose of graduate study, the purpose of doctoral study has largely been research. Doctoral programs developed because of pressures of science and the need for intensive research (Berelson; Katz and Hartnett). In terms of the dissertation itself, Berelson reports that "[t]he demands of research and training for research, culminating in the doctoral dissertation, have been at the heart of controversies about graduate study from the start" (12). According to his findings,

> The traditional conception of the dissertation is clear. It was supposed to be an original and significant contribution to knowledge. Now that, of course, is only a statement of intent. The decision as to what was sufficiently original and significant, what was contributory, and indeed, what was knowledge, was left to the departments, as no doubt it had to be. (173)

He suggests that the alternative to envisioning the dissertation as "an original and significant contribution to knowledge" is to consider the dissertation "an instrument of research training" (174). Berelson reports that faculty in his study tend to see it as an instrument of training but students see it more traditionally, as an original and significant contribution, suggesting the disconnection between what professors think about the dissertation process and what students think about it as they begin the process. While these fifty-year old research results do not match up exactly with the results of my current study, the disconnect between how faculty and how students envision the purpose of the dissertation is again showing up in this project.

Graduate education in the biological and physical sciences seems to contradict the research findings that indicate miscommunication and misunderstandings among students and faculty. In "Unmasking Certainties and Embracing Contradictions: Graduate Education in the Sciences," research scientist Yehuda Elkana from Central European University claims that the natural sciences seem to suffer fewer internal controversies and external challenges than the social sciences and humanities but insists that there is fundamental controversy in the natural sciences. She writes that doctoral students "tend to internalize a sense of consensus in the sciences because a great majority of their

supervisors, without much critical reflection, hold this notion" (71). Supervisors believe it is easier, more efficient, for "the speed and depth of the training of the doctoral student" not to "waste time" teaching the contradictions (71). In order to develop stewards of the discipline, Elkana argues that teaching the contradictions and making students aware of different paradigms, and preparing the students to find and then map a problem in the larger field are essential curricular and pedagogical goals. In doing so, dissertation writers will be empowered to embrace risk and rigor as they think critically and conduct independent research, goals that are highly valued in the sciences, according to Elkana. The Carnegie Initiative on the Doctorate states that "one responsibility that a steward has to the disciplinary community is to conduct their [*sic*] own research and scholarship according to accepted standards of rigor and quality." Elkana points out the problematic nature of the Initiative's statement:

> It is precisely in inculcating the doctoral student with demands of rigor and quality that supervisors, believing that they know what the scientific method is, exactly, and that their chosen method is identical with quality and rigor, stifle all budding attempts at risk-embracing questioning. (75)

Dissertation supervisors who insist that their own method is superior to others may envision the student's dissertation as an extension of their own projects or research agendas, or they are those supervisors who are empire-builders (to use Latterall and Selfe's term that I introduced in Chapter Two) concerned with the students proving their worthiness to conduct research (note the circular logic). These supervisors may be lacking a willingness to embrace risk themselves.

In the interest of what's best for students, faculty, and programs, literary scholar and theorist David Damrosch likewise argues for pedagogical change that will visibly affect students' professional development. He insists that we must foster the development of collaborative, sociable scholars. Damrosch suggests that graduate students be trained to be as serious about work on campus and in their departments as they are about their work off campus in books, in journals, and at conferences (76). In terms of the dissertation process, he suggests that we rethink length requirements (if, indeed, the program has them) so that the dissertation might better reflect the kind of writing emerging scholars will do as professionals. On a related note, he questions whether the traditional dissertation is productive activity for the student, especially in the professions, sciences and social sciences in which articles are valued and published far more frequently than books. In the humanities, he thinks that if the scholarly monograph matters so much, then why not write the dissertation like a book—a position he shares with other scholars. Thus, Damrosch's suggestion that the dissertation be written in the way that will best benefit the students and train them to be intellectually sociable, that is train the students to be scholars whose intellectual interests extend outside of their own specialties. Damrosch argues that academia needs more people who recognize that complex problems cannot always be solved by a single disciplinary perspective or practical approach, much like Elkana's perspective of scientific research. He says that reform of the Ph.D. is possible: "it is the genius of the university that you can change virtually every *aspect* of the Ph.D., just so long as you still award a degree of that name" (141-42). A commitment to preparing students to work as collaborative, sociable scholars requires training them to represent the discipline publicly at conferences and in published

scholarship but also to represent the discipline in their own programs during department meetings with departmental and university colleagues and during meetings with students. In Damrosch's estimation, "fostering collaboration at the graduate level, we are likely to be led to alter every aspect of our programs" but "even a systemic change is no be-all and end-all" (158). But a return to Ziolkowski's "The Ph.D. Squid" offers optimism: "Departments should be happy to appoint well-trained young Ph.D.s who have demonstrated their commitment by moving expeditiously through a reasonable program to a degree that certifies their competence to begin a career in teaching and scholarship" (194). Trudy L. Hanson adds that the Ph.D. degree itself does not serve the needs of all graduate students in a talk entitled, "The ABD Phenomenon," presented at the 1992 conference of the Speech Communication Association. Hanson proposes names for degrees that reflect the interests of the students. For example, a student interested in teaching should receive a Certificate of Advanced Graduate Study (C.A.G.S.) instead of the Ph.D. (cited in Hinchey and Kimmel 148-49). Hanson's proposal offers options to students who might not want the Ph.D. or benefit from receiving it.

Preparing young scholars effectively yet expeditiously is no panacea for the ills of graduate education, but demystifying the dissertation writing process may be a start. Arguing for the need to make the process of dissertation writing transparent, Karen M. Cardozo maintains in her contribution to the 2006 issue of *Profession* that explicit and formal instruction in dissertation writing "may hold the key to the retention and promotion of diverse students and faculty members in the humanities" thus "generating more collegial and productive institutional communities" and "ensur[ing] the healthy future of academe in general and humanities study in particular" (152).

Berelson, Bowen and Rudenstine, Damrosch, Cardozo, Hinchey and Kimmel, and others theorize the often contentious role of the dissertation in the making of the professional academic. The dissertation is one of the textual bridges along the way toward stewardship, and Elkana adds that we must "[a]bandon the conventional wisdom that good preparation of a scholar means that the university has actually taught all the knowledge necessary for the future scientific work of the Ph.D." (91). In response to the aforementioned calls for reform, I turn to the disciplinary and local sites of contention surrounding the dissertation process. Ph.D. candidates in English at TCU and in Biblical interpretation at Brite move closer to the student-to-professional textual bridge upon completion of required and elective courses and comprehensive exams. All of the writing prior to the dissertation process, however, works toward learning outcomes for the individual courses based on disciplinary, local, and individual (i.e., the professor's individual) concerns.

Figuring out how to successfully navigate the exams, prospectus, and dissertation processes can prove challenging for Ph.D. students at TCU. Potential doctoral students will research Websites to peruse course offerings, admissions criteria, and graduation requirements in the same way that master's students will do. Doctoral students take note of qualifying exams processes and dissertation guidelines in particular. Graduate students can find formalized descriptions of the exams, prospectus, and dissertation on the program websites or in program documents such as graduate program policies. However, these publicized descriptions are purposefully general to both satisfy and reflect the dissertation writing expectations established by dissertation committees in the programs. These official but broad, even vague descriptions cannot offer the graduate students the

personalized advice that only their advisors can. Furthermore, it may be that through the experience of writing the project, working with their committee and perhaps with other resources of support and instruction, that the writers are able to understand the purpose of these activities for themselves. In fact, it is nearly impossible for a writer to be able to fully understand a process without undergoing it herself. Dissertation writers willingly turn to the voices of experience—their advisors and professors in their programs. The students consider them their primary resources of content and rhetorical knowledge and genre conventions.

Doctoral exams are the common transition between coursework and the dissertation prospectus or proposal for both of the case study participants in this chapter.[32] Significant research in graduate education suggests that the highest rates of attrition occur post-exams, with as many as 70% not completing their programs after entering candidacy, according to Ziolkowski's 1990 article (185). Bowen and Rudenstine claim in their 1992 report, however, that "no one has been able to say with confidence what proportion of students who enter doctoral programs eventually earn doctorates" (xv). Due to irregular record-keeping, many of the programs that Bowen and Rudenstine studied could not answer retention and attrition questions with any certainty. Bowen and Rudenstine were able to show that in their study 60% of the students graduate from programs in the humanities and social sciences at the smaller schools with low faculty-to-student ratios and good funding (154). These bleak figures indicate that it is worth inquiring about the connection between the exams and the dissertation.

[32] In this chapter and subsequently, I use the terms *prospectus* and *proposal* interchangeably because the dissertation writers in my case study research use both terms.

In Ann M. Heiss's study of graduate programs at ten universities, she found that over half of the students she studied in the humanities, social sciences, biological sciences, and physical sciences had received no instruction in how to prepare for their comprehensive exams (223). In a satirical commentary contributed to *Education Week*, Sam Wineburg, Professor of Education and part-time Professor of History at Stanford University, offers as one of his ten imperatives for preparing future scholars:

> Abolish Comprehensive Exams. Requiring our young to master a body of knowledge is so Old School (besides, there's Google). And the practice of making students sit and write for three hours, all alone, surely constitutes cruel and unusual punishment. Our job is to liberate students from tradition—not bind them to it. We must be midwives to their muse, collaborators to their creativity. They—not us—must determine the knowledge they need for their development. Require courses? A canon? A body of knowledge that might provide weight and gravity to their theorizing? Phooey! (par. 5)

Despite Wineburg's pessimistic view of alternatives to a mastery model of the doctoral exams process, it is important to note that it is impossible for even the most accomplished scholar to master disciplinary knowledge given the volume of materials available and the constantly shifting perspectives on what knowledge is valuable in a discipline (Clark; Armstrong; Scholes). And certainly, a graduate student will not master it in her limited, albeit focused, time attending to the extant literature and building her own arguments through what is likely to be her first independent research project. Thus, students and faculty need to reorient elitist notions that graduate students enter programs

ready to talk the talk and walk the walk in terms of genre and rhetorical knowledge. Some enter the ABD community still mumbling and stumbling. Unfortunately, a few of them will never leave. Graduate students are not likely to enter a graduate program expecting *not* to finish; however, after a semester, they may find that the program is not what they expected or that they do not want to finish. Heidi Estrem and Brad E. Lucas point out: "Just as future scholars are about to embark on their dissertation projects, it seems that in some instances the possibilities for authentic agency are reduced to compliance with faculty visions of the examined students' answers to faculty-supervised questions" (403, 408). Ann M. Heiss asserts that over half of the respondents in her study of twelve disciplines in ten different universities shows that faculty and students see the importance of eliminating or modifying at least one portion of qualifying exams so that they better reflect the assessment practices and learning goals of the program (113-14). Since most students "approach them with little knowledge of their purpose, format, scope, or any previous experience in the oral defense of their knowledge or point of view" (223). The real question is not whether these seemingly implicit processes *should* be taught but rather *how* they can be taught.

Writers in the English department and in the Divinity School are expected to begin preparing the prospectus soon after passing their exams, if not during exams preparation. Once the exams are completed, many writers need downtime following the physical, mental, and emotional roller coaster of exams. And although the prospectus or proposal also plays a crucial role in the dissertation writing process, students may find it difficult to begin as quickly as they are expected to do. Irene L. Clark's discussion of the proposal as argument in *Writing the Successful Thesis and Dissertation* emphasizes the

importance of teaching degree candidates how to write this important document. These writers may want to know what a proposal looks like or how long it should be, but they should also sit down and discuss answers to the questions I quoted in Chapter Four, which I repeat here:

- What is the *function* or *purpose* of the proposal? That is, what is the proposal supposed to *do*?
- For whom is the proposal being written? For what *audience* is the proposal attended?
- What *role* should the writer of the proposal assume? (43)

Clark insists that the dissertation writer and sponsor can explicitly address these questions, returning to them as the dissertation writer continues working on her proposal. But Damrosch points out, too often faculty practice the pedagogies they learned. They had to learn how to write on their own, so the writers in their charge must learn on their own as well.

The featured thesis writers in Chapter Four speak confidently about their disciplinary knowledge and less so about rhetorical and genre conventions of the writing expected of them in graduate school. When asked about the purpose and function of the dissertation, the writers envision the project much like thesis writers see the thesis: an extended research project that demonstrates that the student can conduct such a project.[33] In contrast to the thesis writers, however, the dissertation writers studied here describe their difficult entry into the disciplinary knowledge as well as the rhetorical and genre

[33] I asked dissertation writers the same series of questions as I asked the thesis writers, which included the following: Describe the purpose of (writing) the dissertation as you understand it. How do you describe the relationship between the thesis/dissertation/project to your profession? What is the role of the thesis/dissertation/project for you as an emerging professional? What do you hope to gain from the experience of writing a dissertation?

conventions of their chosen fields. Both of the dissertation writers in this chapter discuss moments of success and struggle as they encountered knowledge-making and knowledge-sharing practices that were new to them. They have felt as if they must earn the respect of their advisors and, at times, compete for their praise and support, hoping that their advisors would agree that they are indeed "cut out" to write a dissertation. Mary, a Ph.D. candidate in Biblical Interpretation, and Danielle, a Ph.D. candidate in English specializing in Composition and Rhetoric, are both planning careers as professional academics. These two dissertation writers attempt to depend on faculty in their programs to get the support they need to write for academic purposes while in graduate school but find that there are other resources that provide different but no less essential kinds of support, and the graduate writers studied here reach out beyond these programmatic and disciplinary sources, even turning to a somewhat controversial resource—a professional editor—in Mary's case. Because Mary is not finding the support for her second language learning in her program, using a professional editor is necessary to learn to write academic English. Because Danielle is not finding programmatic support for her own realization that (dissertation) writing is difficult, she takes the initiative to visit the campus writing center. In doing so, she must admit to herself that she needs help.

In the following sections of this chapter, I place Mary's and Danielle's writing experiences in conversation with the multiple contexts in which they write. These include published scholarship on writing in the discipline (disciplinary context), publicized documents on writing in their specific programs and faculty expectations (local context),

and the individual writer's own personal histories as writers (individual context) in order to show how these two women demonstrate the diversity of preparation for dissertation writing and their emerging conceptualizations of this process.

Part 1, Mary's Story: Writing the Dissertation in Divinity School

> The aesthetic of the sublime …entails an engagement with two sorts of truth. To engage our scientific reason, interpretive writing must move toward an interesting proposition graspable by our everyday no-nonsense minds. But the dialectic of the sublime occurs only when the implications of that proposition play out within the imaginative worlds that are never quite fully determined. Successful interpretive writing on religion thus inevitably presents its readers with, first, explicit statements about traditions that we can discuss with colleagues, expand, and refine; and, second, insights into the human imagination that draw us in and fascinate us but that are intuitively sensed and not easily expressed.
>
> —Daniel Gold, *Aesthetics and Analysis in Writing on Religion* (95)

The Disciplinary

Historically, interpretation of sacred texts and the act of writing itself has been viewed as divinely-inspired. In her essay, "The Symbolic Significance of Writing in Ancient Judaism," University of Toronto Associate Professor of Near and Middle Eastern Civilizations Hindy Najman argues that writings became "a repository of religious authority" before the Babylonian exile, and "[a]t times God himself was depicted as a writer, and the portrayal of someone writing on God's behalf became a pre-eminent way of claiming authority for that person" (141).[34] Theologian and historian of Judaism and Christianity James Kugel explains how God's sacred language is mediated by texts in Kugel's discussion about the rise of Scripture in ancient Judaism: "God's part in the divine-human discourse, it will be remembered, was not alone mediated by live human beings; it was also carried by texts" (17).

The interpretation of sacred texts, likewise, has traditionally been conducted by an exclusive group of divinely inspired and highly trained individuals. A similar vision for

[34] Najman explains that religious scholars tend to agree that a significant shift from orality to literacy occurred after the return from exile and re-establishment of Jewish culture that was largely founded on the Mosaic Torah (141). However, she contends that the prominence of writing as the vehicle of prophecy and God's revelations was gradual and subtle, and that this transition has a long prehistory prior to the exile (144, 146-47).

the practice of Biblical interpretation still dominates the theological community today. According to the epigraph by Daniel Gold, Associate Professor of South Asian religions at Cornell and prolific scholar, the interpretation of sacred texts is a rigorous and religious experience that requires the writer to make arguments based both on available evidence, which is tangible or can be verified in some way, and on individual intuition. Likening interpretive writing in religion in part to the romantic expressive tradition of giving voice to the autonomous, independent self, Gold says that writing in religion begins within the writer and then moves outward:

> Understood as an art, interpretive writing on religion seems to give a vital place to the romantic expressive voice: after all, I was led to an aesthetic conception of writing on religion by a sense that successful writers manage to "communicate a vision" of their materials. Not a restrained, if enlightened, rationalism, much less any religious orthodoxy, but a kind of creative expression is crucial, I believe, if a piece of religiohistorical writing is to move others. This expression, however, is not exactly the self-expression of the romantic poet, which was valued as a usually exuberant outpouring of a unique creative genius. The vision expressed by the scholar … needs visibly to reflect some outside realities, somehow to represent the religious worlds of others. Religiohistorical writing is thus *also* a mirror with an external referent. (48)

To fully articulate his theory, Gold provides a metaphor of the unidentified flying object (UFO), which is the kernel of an argument or what he calls the "glimmering origin of a piece of religiohistorical writing" that is both the writer's vision and a possible reflection

of alien realities. He says that "[o]ut of the many fleeting, sometimes bizarre, *hunches* that first appear to us as UFOs, the finished object takes shape from one that leads to a sustainable truth" which "takes place through a dynamic of *private* vision and *public* articulation, of imitation and construction, of listening to alien voices and giving them an expression that resonates in our own world (52, emphasis added). Gold works from the notion that the independent scholar starts with private, intuitive "hunches" that become public when they prove themselves via research and analysis. Ultimately, the goal of interpretive writing in religion is to make intellectually and emotionally compelling arguments. Gold insists that such arguments are best when writing is developed by the practice he calls "soft hearts and hard minds," which he believes engenders the two sorts of truth inherent in the science and art of religious studies.

How does one learn to write in religion? The seminary experience is where men and women earn the academic credentials to become theologians and pastors or ministers. But does this credentialing include writing instruction? If so, what kind and to what end? Instruction in courses, one-on-one tutoring or advising, or group sessions? Learning to write sermons, documentation of pastoral counseling sessions, and/or interpretation of texts including but not limited to the Bible?

Jane McAvoy and Deborah Core developed a unique approach to writing instruction at Lexington Theological Seminary in Lexington, Kentucky. Seminary students frustrated by their professors' insistence that they improve their writing skills wanted to know, "What does good writing have to do with being a pastor?" and faculty wanted their students' writing to improve but wondered, "What does teaching writing have to do with being a seminary professor?" (47). Seminary professors recognized the

need for writing instruction but did not envision themselves as qualified to teach writing nor interested in learning how to teach writing. At Lexington Theological Seminary, faculty recognized the need for writing instruction and administrators acknowledged the need to sponsor the curricular and programmatic changes that writing instruction would demand. Jane McAvoy and Deborah Core developed a tutoring program for seminary students in which LTS would hire a writing specialist (Core) and she would meet one-on-one with students. Some of these students had been previously "remanded" to the writing center that was outsourced to a local college, others were enrolled in specific courses, and others volunteered to meet with her (48). McAvoy, a professor at the seminary, initially hoped to hire someone who could help develop a graduate writing center, but her fellow search committee members disagreed that such a center would work at LTS. Instead, they decided to hire Core who was Professor of English and freshman writing coordinator at Eastern Kentucky University to tutor students. After working with several students individually, Core decided that connecting the tutoring sessions more explicitly with classroom instruction would increase the viability of the writing program and potentially increase communications about how the program might best serve students and faculty. She collaborated with McAvoy and they ended up coordinating "writing intensive" classes with Core's tutoring. In order for other seminaries to benefit from this same kind of fruitful relationship, McAvoy and Core recommend that others hire a writing instructor with a background in theological studies (which Core has) to deal with the writing issues that seminary students have. McAvoy and Core's recommendation, regardless of its good intentions, indicates the great challenge that hiring a writing specialist with a particularly disciplinary specialty poses. Whereas LTS's recognition of a need and the subsequent

response demonstrates dedication to supporting student writing processes, their decision to hire a writing specialist to build a program that explicitly *supplements* the disciplinary content instruction in the classroom shows how challenging it can be to envision writing instruction as an essential component of disciplinary enculturation.

The Local

As an independently administrated and governed school, Brite Divinity School is affiliated with TCU and offers six degree programs. The school offers four different master's degrees: Master of Divinity, Master of Theological Studies, Master of Arts in Christian Services, and Master of Theology. The Divinity School also offers two doctoral degrees: the Doctor of Ministry and the Doctor of Philosophy. Students may pursue the Ph.D. in Pastoral Care and Pastoral Counseling or Biblical Interpretation. Brite also houses three unique community outreach centers: Stalcup School of Theology for the Laity, Pastoral Care and Training Center, and the Borderlands Center. Each of these centers and the wide range of study programs demonstrate the school's commitment to meeting the demands for religious instruction and support of a diverse community and population of students.

The Ph.D. in Biblical Interpretation, the degree program of primary focus in this chapter's case study of dissertation writing, at Brite is intended to

> prepare students for independent research and vocations of teaching biblical interpretation and related historical and hermeneutical areas in theological schools, colleges, and universities, or for the scholarly enhancement of ministerial practice. The Ph.D. program provides

> opportunities for study of the Hebrew Bible, Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books, and Literature of Early Judaism; New Testament and Literature of Early Christianity; Themes and Issues in Biblical Theology; the History of Biblical Interpretation; and Theological Hermeneutics. Students are guided to develop competence in original research and writing that advances theological understanding for the sake of church, academy, and society, as well as in pedagogical skills to convey this body of knowledge to others. (Brite)

The programs at Brite promote a breadth of understanding in Judeo-Christian literature and theology and a depth of "original research and writing" and "pedagogical skills." Graduates of the programs are prepared to become scholars and teachers either through church ministry or academic theology.

In most of their courses, Brite students write two- to three-page response essays and article summaries and critiques. They may also write a twenty- to twenty-five page seminar paper. In order to teach students who have had little writing experience before coming to Brite, Associate Professor Andrea Oswalt incorporates writing process activities into the class time in her Ph.D.-specific seminars. A group of students prepare a full draft, present it to the class, and then the group has a "dialogue" session like a panel at a conference. One student is even assigned to be an official "respondent" on the panel. Oswalt facilitates the process. She does have some students (especially master's) who have never written a research paper, so writing one for the first time in a graduate seminar is quite a challenge. To help them get started, she requires students to write a brief paragraph (an abstract) conceptualizing the project and listing some sources.

After completing coursework and the modern and ancient language requirements, the Ph.D. student in Biblical Interpretation chooses two areas of study for her exams. She may choose from the following areas: Hebrew Bible, Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical books, and literature of early Judaism; New Testament and literature of early Christianity; themes and issues in Biblical theology; history of Biblical interpretation; and theological hermeneutics. She studies from a reading list she develops in collaboration with her qualifying exams director and writes exploratory essays using the texts on her reading list. This part of the exams process (a sort of preliminary exam) can take from three to six months. After completing her essays, the student submits her essays to her committee members and, if the essays demonstrate that the student is prepared for her exams, then the student proceeds to the timed writing and the oral defense portions of her exams. These portions are administered three different times each academic year. The timed writing takes place over the course of a few days. On each day, the examinee composes a response to questions presented by each of her three committee members. Because the student has already closely studied and written essays in her primary areas of interest over the course of months, the questions the committee designs and present to her for the timed writing are based on her previously written essays. The student is also permitted to use (i.e., incorporate portions as needed) her previously written essays as sources in the timed writing. Qualifying exams in the Divinity School typically feed directly into the dissertation process particularly because the student responds to specific questions derived from the written material and the bibliography that the student has developed over a period of several months. According to Brite Professor Lisa Watson, the typical student who has invested a great deal of time and energy in preparing this

material will want to take the essays prepared for the exam topics and/or answers written in response to the committee's questions and directly use them in the dissertation. But Watson says that faculty want students to do more "outside work" in the dissertation. It is their hope that students do not rely on research and writing they have already done but that they build on this work by pursuing answers to questions that arise in this work. She does not say that using material from the exams preparation or the exams themselves is outright forbidden, but she emphasizes that the process of exams can help the student narrow the focus of the dissertation. Qualifying exams preparation and completion take several months in most cases for students at Brite, but the long, arduous process of qualifying exams make what, for some writers, can be an even longer and more grueling process of writing the dissertation proposal much more streamlined.

After students defend their exams at Brite, they write their dissertation proposals which must conform to a set of guidelines approved by the Ph.D. Committee. These guidelines are the same for each Ph.D. candidate in every program at Brite. In fact, the proposal standards are so specific that each proposal must follow the same format even for the title page. For example, the title page for each proposal looks like this:

TITLE

by

Author

Dissertation Proposal Form

Ph.D. in Biblical Interpretation

Brite Divinity School

Approved by Dissertation Committee:

Date: _____

_____
Dissertation Director

_____
Dissertation Committee Reader

_____
Dissertation Committee Reader

Approved by Ph.D. Committee:

Date: _____

_____
Chair, Ph.D. Committee

_____
Assistant Dean for Advanced Programs

According to Brite faculty and to Mary, a case study subject that is the focus of this chapter, the proposal may take students months to write, and the end product is approximately thirty double-spaced pages, including the list of works cited and consulted. Mary, one of the Brite dissertation writers who has been able to explicitly take portions of her qualifying exams and incorporate them into the proposal, finds that being able to use the exams writing she spent months preparing and defending streamlines the proposal process. Mary had little difficulty beginning to write her dissertation proposal at the same time she was preparing her qualifying exams since she began developing her theoretical lens for Biblical interpretation during her exams preparation. Although Watson clearly states that some dissertation supervisors, including her, eschew the direct use of exams material in the dissertation proposal and the dissertation itself, Mary has been able to do this successfully. This practice makes use of the exams beyond meeting a program requirement and satisfying faculty that she is "qualified to do advanced work" and that she has "mastered" a field of knowledge, as Ann M. Heiss describes is the purpose of doctoral exams in most programs according to her national study in *Challenges to Graduate Schools* (113). Acknowledging that the doctoral exams have played an essential role in preparing the writer for the dissertation process and allowing the writer to incorporate the exams themselves into the proposal writing process enables these important bridges along the way to follow a trajectory that leads productively into the dissertation.

In the proposal, the writer sets up her thesis (in approximately three pages) to introduce the argument and describes how and/or why she makes this argument, explains

methodology (this section may be quite thin in a Biblical Interpretation proposal), and then outlines chapters. In Mary's statement of thesis section, she builds a case for reading Biblical scripture through the lens of *resolviendo*, a theory of survival that is based on the Cuban experience of "making do" during the "special period" in Cuba. The "special period" began after the fall of the Communist block in 1989. This fall resulted in European socialist countries no longer supporting the Cuban economy. During this so-called "special period" in Cuba, which is still in effect:

> The government announced a series of restrictions of food, medicines and medical supplies, and gasoline… [which] has created enormous difficulties for Cubans, who can no longer buy what they need to survive with the salary they receive from the government. Cuban salaries supply only food and other needed goods for half of each month. It is in this context that the word *resolver, resolviendo,* began to acquire a special meaning for Cubans. *Resolver* in many ways became synonymous with struggling to survive. (Mary 2)

After describing the concept of *resolviendo*, which is both theoretical perspective and methodological approach in her project, Mary proposes how her lens fits into the current conversations of the field. She summarizes a review of the scholarship in her first chapter summary. Her subsequent chapter summaries outline how she will enact her theory of *resolviendo* by using her own readings of selected Biblical passages.

The dissertation at Brite, according to Oswalt, extends the students' studies during coursework, presenting them with "an opportunity to engage primary research and interact with people; not least of all, [the dissertation] authorizes [the students'] capacity

to deal with a project that size." This seemingly circular description of the dissertation process sheds light on Brite faculty's expectation that their students prove their writing worthy of standing alongside that of established scholars. Watson, whose specialty is in Biblical Interpretation, shares a similar view as Oswalt's. Watson believes that the dissertation "creates a professional" and "demonstrates to scholars that [the candidate] can do this work and enter the world of biblical scholarship." She also says that writing the dissertation is the "loneliest time of one's life." Unlike Oswalt who envisions dissertation writing as a process by which students work with a range of people in order to conduct and share research, Watson says "writing is a solitary" experience. Certainly, part of this difference derives from the kinds of research projects that students in pastoral care (Oswalt's subdisciplinary interest) engage in versus those projects that students in Biblical interpretation pursue. The view of writing as a solitary act reflects both historical and current impressions of the writing life for religious scholars, as noted by Najman who describes images of God as a writer himself, and Gold who claims that religiohistorical writing begins with the self and moves outward.

Once students are finishing coursework and especially once they have reached candidacy, Watson thinks of students as "almost peers" who genuinely want to learn and she says that faculty want to learn from them. However, Watson and Oswalt agree that most of the writing they see from Brite students is "competent," but, according to Watson, "quality is not to be assumed." Faculty expect writing that is organized, gives an overview in the first paragraph or early in the piece, has a central purpose, defines key terms, provides transitions or divides the piece into sections if it is long, and offers a summary at the end. The student writer should also position herself in the field, according

to Oswalt. She adds, “Frankly, sentence construction matters and it makes a dramatic difference if one comes in as a gifted writer.” If the writing is not, as she says, “gifted,” then she sends the student to the William L. Adams Center for Writing at TCU. Watson agrees that the writing center is an “important resource for students whose grammar, spelling, and composition skills are poor.” Both professors are fans of the work the writing consultants in the center do as long as they help students with patterns of problems and do not “give too much help” (Watson). But neither advocates the use of professional editors:

> If I become aware, I want to see the student’s own draft and I say so at the front end, especially in a Ph.D. seminar or when working with Ph.D. students on a dissertation. I’ve started to ask Ph.D. students not to use proofreaders or editors because I don’t want them to depend on them. You have to write all the time to solve your own problems or get help from a teacher. Faculty may not agree on it. But after the dissertation is done, faculty send it to a proofreader. (Oswalt)

These expectations that writing is a solitary experience and that if it gets difficult, then the implication is that writing every day can solve the problem. Just keep writing and the writing problems should solve themselves. From this perspective, writing is a lonely endeavor and seemingly, an end in itself. Constant writing does not equal good writing. And as over twenty years of composition theory and empirical research in writing has demonstrated, writing is a learned, social activity even for the best of us.

The Individual

The daughter of a Spanish professor, Mary grew up in Communist Cuba[35], but she left ten years after the "special period" began. Most of her formal education occurred in Cuba, including her early education all the way to her Master's of Divinity. As a high school student, Mary recalls only conducting research from the textbook. Her teachers rarely required analytical or argumentative writing. In her college composition course, she remembers writing expository essays on given topics, and this was the only writing course she ever took. Although she studied Spanish literature, the professors assigned "very little writing" in the courses in her major. For it was not until she entered a Master's of Divinity program in her native Cuba that she produced more than one research paper per course in the classes within her major area of interest.

As a new Christian when she entered the Master's program in Cuba, Mary felt that she had to "fight for her ideas" and learn "the language to balance the knowledge of the theology that [she] was gaining at the seminary" with her emerging beliefs. She explains:

> I think it was very interesting as a new Christian, not knowing much about Bible and theology but having to learn the language to balance the knowledge of the theology that I was gaining at the seminary. . . . My classmates were pastors, and they were guiding churches all along the way, but [they had] trouble with the writing. For me, the writing was no problem. I was [struggling] more [with] receiving a type of information that was new to me, as a new believer. …

[35] Mary left Cuba when she was twenty-nine years old, ten years after the "special period" began. She left Cuba to pursue her Ph.D. in the United States, and spent two years at another seminary before coming to Brite.

Initially, Mary says that writing was not a problem for her in her Master's program. But as we continued talking about her experience articulating her ideas and her growing understanding of how to balance intellectual and spiritual awareness of Christian doctrine, Mary reveals that she struggled with positioning herself in the field and in the faith:

> I didn't feel secure enough to say my theological ideas or fight for my ideas because I was so new. I was basically learning. The problem was what to choose from all of these sources what I want to say and what is my position. So now that I think back, that was part of my struggle. It wasn't the writing, it was how I [put] this piece in in a way that makes sense. But I was still learning.

It was hard for her to locate herself in the field because it was a strange land to her as an emerging scholar and a new Christian (even in her first language of Spanish). Mary says it was the thinking and the arguing, and the need to stake a claim in the field that was difficult for her. But these activities are made manifest in writing in graduate school, and this becomes more apparent in her experience as a Ph.D. student, learning to write in English, at Brite.

Mary had also managed to place well-received essays in two different Spanish-language scholarly outlets including *Perspectivas*, a highly-regarded journal in Biblical studies. At that time, a close friend recommended she travel to the United States and pursue her Ph.D. So Mary did, and her feelings of stability that were already hard-fought were shaken all over again.

Mary sums up her experiences of learning to write in English in one word: “Hell.” Then, she smiles and says, “I wasn’t prepared. It was painful. I cried a lot.”

Mary now recognizes that her own process of learning to write in English is reflected in her theory of *resolviendo* because becoming comfortable with her position as a Cuban academic had been one challenge and becoming comfortable with being a Cuban academic in America, in English, is another. She had become more confident in asserting her beliefs and more confident in her academic writing in Spanish. But her move to the U.S. challenged her spiritually and academically. *Resolviendo* became both the process and means of survival for Mary, the writer of academic English in a Ph.D. program.

Mary came to her current program at Brite after studying five years in university and seminary in Cuba (earning her Master’s of Divinity) in addition to her five years in seminary in the United States (two of which were at a seminary other than Brite). Mary does not consider herself a deficient writer, and neither will anyone who meets her or reads her vita. But she claims it has taken her five years of writing academic English to get her where she is now, in her words “better.” Because she grew up in what she calls a “very literate” home, she enjoys reading and writing. She also believes these activities to be equally valuable in advanced study. In this way, Mary seems perfectly suited for academic life, but she struggles to find resources to help her make the rhetorical moves and linguistic choices to fully enculturate into the new discourse community of theology and Biblical interpretation. From Mary, we learn that graduate students may not be getting essential instruction and support from their programs, and that such students may seek non-disciplinary or extra-institutional support because it meets the student’s clearly defined need/expectation for (a certain kind of) advisement.

Mary never took a writing course or "writing-intensive" course beyond her first year of college, and she explains that in graduate school she has learned *what* to write but not *how* to write. In several of her courses at Brite, she frequently wrote weekly article summaries, mid-term and final essay exams, and response writings, and a few seminar papers. She remembers writing up to sixteen pages per week in some classes. Two professors assigned final culminating projects. For one of her final projects, she wrote a 25-page syllabus with annotated bibliography for a potential undergraduate class. In an Old Testament course, she began developing her dissertation idea. Mary's professor encouraged her and "allowed" her to write a 45-page exploratory paper.

In her chapter on young bilingual faculty from her book *Writing Games: Muliticultural Case Studies of Academic Literacy,* Christine Pearson Casanave explains academic literacy is acquired "both interactively and incompletely" (29). She argues that students can learn *about* writing but cannot learn *how* to write through knowledge being passed down from expert to novice. Mary's experience corroborates Casanave's findings, for Mary has managed to figure out what her professors want and she produces it. Like the other writers in this study, she is a good student: she's trying to make all the right rhetorical moves to get by.

According to Mary, it takes major time and financial sacrifices to meet the writing demands she's encountering. Mary says that her current program provides little support for graduate student writing although frequent and lengthy writing activities are assigned in courses, a sentiment that is anecdotally supported by her peers in the Divinity School, especially second language writers. She has sought advice on professional development and networking as well as disciplinary knowledge from the woman she calls her mentor,

a professor at the seminary she attended in the U.S. prior to coming to Brite. She has also sought writing instruction and psychosocial support from a professional editor. Mary's mentor knew that Mary had not found her current program to provide the kind of writing instruction or personal encouragement she had hoped for. As a result, Mary's mentor recommended this editor because the mentor works with this editor as well. In terms of writing support, her mentor has helped her to understand difficult concepts and theories, her editor has helped her finesse her language and has taught her how to edit for herself, and the writing center consultants have been an in-town resource for writing and editing support. Not to mention, the writing center is an officially sanctioned resource of writing and editing support, according to Brite faculty.

Mary finds herself not only struggling with learning to write in English but also with how learning to write in English affects her writing in Spanish. Frustrated with the simplicity of the language she used to write her papers during her Ph.D. coursework, Mary tried multiple strategies on her own everyday to alleviate her problems, as is advised by some faculty, including Professor Watson, in the Divinity School. These strategies included experimenting with writing the complex arguments and complicated ideas she was thinking about in Spanish. Next, she would translate to English, but problems with linguistic transference proved equally frustrating. Another strategy included forcing herself to write in English. Mary describes her process:

> I need to keep it simple in English but ideas are often convoluted. I feel like I can't write the way I want because I deal with two languages. [I often] write out ideas and then edit them and get help editing from the writing center or from my [professional] editor my mentor introduced to

> me. I started keeping journals in Spanish at first and then in English to myself. Without the help of my editor, I [can only] write halfway between Spanish and English.

Writing out ideas and journaling to think and write her way into academic English enable Mary to "write in English instead of translate" from Spanish, but she laments that, as a result, she's losing her Spanish. In her terms, pushing herself to think and write in English puts her "halfway between" Spanish and English.

Without my prompting, Mary shares another related concern about her writing: a story about writing letters home and her liminal position between her now private discourse (Spanish) that takes a subordinate position to public/academic discourse (English): "My family tells me I don't know how to communicate in Spanish anymore. I have trouble talking to them." Mary is caught between discourses, and when I asked her if she wants to continue on this path, she says she knows success at the doctoral level depends on her facility with English. However, sacrificing her Spanish hardly seems worth it sometimes, according to Mary. Can Mary have both Spanish and English whenever and wherever she wants them—at home, in school, in her profession?

Elizabeth Chiseri-Strater stresses the need for many students to see their private discourses valued in academic settings (146-47). But how can Mary negotiate the complex enculturation issues further complicated by her cultural identity? Casanave explains, "writers never develop complete control over their ideas and their language" although the most capable do eventually manage to understand the "social and political nature of responding to viewers, editors, and coauthors, and the need to negotiate, compromise, and revise multiple times in order to bring a piece of writing to print" (30,

181). Xioa-Ming Li, a bilingual academic and author of a book about "good writing" in Chinese and American academic contexts, got mixed messages at her American university about what is good writing. Li asserts that determining what is "good" is a "messy and complex issue, anything but pure and simple" (qtd. in Casanave 186). By the end of her study, Li was "not sure who she was since she was able to view herself as both 'us and them' and as neither 'us [nor] them'" (qtd. in Casanave 186). But working under Donald Murray as a graduate student helped her understand the concept of voice, and for her dissertation she explored negotiating academic discourse as insider and outsider. Li hoped that theorizing her own negotiations of her Chinese cultural and American academic identities would help others who deal with similarly difficult identity struggles. Mary is engaging in a similar kind of process, theorizing the struggle to write and live "halfway between" Spanish and English. More specifically, Mary resolves to write and live "halfway between" her Cuban cultural self and her American academic self.

Theologians value interpretive writing that demonstrates personal engagement with the text as Gold explains in his epigraph to this part of the chapter. Mary has developed a theory of Biblical hermeneutics based on a feminist and cultural experience (a feminist and Cuban reading). In this way, she demonstrates how one incorporates the personal, political, and spiritual in the reading of sacred texts. Mary's concept of *resolviendo* ("making do"), which I explain in more detail below, is the very process she undergoes to write her way into the discipline. She notes in her proposal that she hopes her theory and methodology of *resolviendo*, and her own writing process, will help others.

As I talk to Mary about her literacy development in Cuba and in the United States, she laments her diminishing Cuban self even as she values her increasing facility with English. Like Li, as she becomes more comfortable writing in English, she wrestles with issues of community allegiance and national identity. When Mary writes emails or sends cards home, her family criticizes her Spanish and reminds her that she is losing her connection to home. Mary has decided to take on this dissertation topic, which is helping her bridge her Cuban and American scholarly identities and languages. She is writing a theoretically-grounded dissertation that is also quite personal, incorporating both languages as well.

By writing her dissertation, Mary wants to contribute to the Cuban, the feminist, and the personal experience of Biblical interpretation. One of Mary's committee members, a reknowned scholar in Latino studies, praises Mary in his comments on the first draft of her proposal for "bringing together the production and the consumption of the text through the concept of *resolviendo*… taken from the social-cultural context of the latter, the world of the critic, and invoked as angle into the former, the world of the text." Mary has demonstrated to him her ability to theorize the cultural, spiritual, and the personal—a key value in the writing of theological scholars. The more specific revisions that her reader asks for—to clearly indicate how other theories and methods inform and are informed by her theoretical approach and how her "own reading of what such a concept means and entails in Cuba itself"—call upon Mary to assertively position herself in her field and to explain how her work builds on the theoretical traditions in theology: "Your work should affect the theory upon which it draws. …[I]t is similarly imperative that you address how your work advances the reading of the texts in question in light of

their interpretive tradition." He implores, "This is the place where you reveal your sense of the past and the future as a biblical critic, indeed a critic with one foot in the ancient text and another in the contemporary 'text'." All of this, Mary must do with her theory in her head and her faith in her heart. This is the kind of writing Gold is referring to when he calls for "soft hearts and hard minds."

In *Minor Re/visions* Morris Young argues for engaging in private and public discourse simultaneously, thus adopting a willingness to "deterritorialize" language, to make it less the province of particular groups and "play out the tension between the public and private rather than accepting that the public and private must remain separate" (66-67, 72). When she writes and publishes in Spanish, Mary seems to separate her experience as a Cuban scholar from her experience as a Cuban graduate student in America. However, while in the U.S. she is working to establish herself in English, and upon returning to Cuba, which she plans to do at some point, she may have to re-establish herself in Spanish in terms of personal and familial relationships but will have to maintain her English-language academic literacy. Mary hopes her academic writing and research interests, beginning with her choice of dissertation topic, will help her maintain her Cuban identity as she develops an American one. Mary's project begins her efforts to deterritorialize the two languages she is between, and as Casanave suggests, collaborative and interactive models of instruction and support may benefit emerging scholars more than overvaluing the practice of writing as a solitary endeavor.

Working with her mentor and editor has helped Mary learn to participate in her chosen community of practice (Lave and Wenger) in more than a peripheral way (Casanave; Lave and Wenger). Mary's mentor has continually supported Mary's interest

in theorizing the Cuban cultural experience and Mary's personal perspective. Her mentor has been the disciplinary insider curiously inquiring about Mary's ideas when Mary needed an experienced scholar to provide feedback, and she has also been the disciplinary voice of experience for Mary, encouraging Mary to keep moving forward in her studies and her spiritual growth. The professional editor has provided reader feedback, general commentary like that she also received in the writing center, in addition to instruction on how to edit. When the need arose, her professional editor provided line-by-line editing for Mary as well. Perhaps most importantly, however, Mary's editor has been her go-to person for several years, knowing how Mary has struggled to learn to write academic English and knowing the difficulties she has faced in order to get "better" and develop the confidence she is finally enjoying. This editor has been the first person to encourage Mary when the writing got tough or congratulate Mary when progress was made. This editor has acknowledged that writing is difficult—in any language.

Mary describes the relationship she developed with the professional editor she has been working with for several years as "amazing." In one breath, Mary talks about the editor the way a person talks about a best friend and in the next, she describes her editor as a mentor. A mentor can be both, and although her professional editor is not a Ph.D. in Biblical Interpretation, she has helped Mary position herself as a theological scholar capable of asserting her position, "fighting for her ideas," but has also built her confidence in writing academic English. Mary says that she was overcome with joy when she sent a draft of writing to her editor and her editor sent a kind note to her: "[Mary], your writing has improved so much and I am proud of you. You will not need me much longer." When Mary received positive comments from her dissertation committee about

her proposal, she was happy and relieved. But it is this note of praise and care from her editor, her writing mentor, that matters most to her.

Mary has continually returned to her mentor, her editor, and the campus writing center for help when she had difficulty understanding an assignment or needed someone to read her writing and provide "any feedback or editing advice." The support from only one of these sources, valuable in different ways to Mary, could not provide all of the support and instruction she has needed. Thus Mary, like other graduate student writers finds herself seeking out new writing strategies and (re)turning to non-programmatic sources of support to meet those demands.

Mary hopes that her dissertation "will provide some insights for Cubans on the island, people not only in faith communities, but also outside of the, to draw pride from this work in understanding their own struggle for survival." She wants her study to enable people to "*name* their struggle instead of just *living* constantly in it" (Mary 21). In order to accomplish this goal of enabling others to name and to take control of their struggle, Mary also must struggle against writing "halfway" so that she can fight for her ideas. Mary does the best she can with the resources and opportunities available to her—writing in Spanish, then English; forcing herself to journal in English; applying her exams to her dissertation; finding professional help who turned out to be a mentor and a friend who is helping her to write not halfway between but all the way in. *Resolviendo*.

Part 2, Danielle's Story: Writing the Dissertation in Composition and Rhetoric

> Transforming the academy . . . becomes a monumental task: it challenges all aspects of the academy, from examining the most basic premises upon which disciplines are based to defining new goals, methods, and ways of doing research within and across disciplines. For women to engage in such a fundamental critique of the academy (and their disciplines) means treading on thin ice: on the one hand, women are working to join the disciplines (and often feel they must prove their ability to master traditional scholarship); one [*sic*] the other hand, they are questioning the very nature of the academic enterprise.
>
> Gesa E. Kirsch, *Women Writing the Academy: Audience, Authority, and Transformation*

The Disciplinary

Much like the potential of the Master's degree, Carnegie researchers Chris Golde and George E. Walker note that English's emphasis on preparation for the academic life limits our vision of the doctoral degrees' potential thus, "obscuring to near invisibility the significant contributions of English doctorate holders to the publishing industry, writing and editing professions, government and nonprofit agencies, and secondary teaching" (351). A doctorate in Composition and Rhetoric or in English with a specialization in this area also is presumably a credential to conduct research and teach at the university and graduate level. The job market for Ph.D.'s is extremely competitive in literature, but it is still good for those in composition. The MLA reports that there are more women Ph.D.'s than ever, increasing from 40% to 60% between 1977 to 1990 (Golde and Walker 352). In Composition graduate programs, like most other graduate programs in the humanities, students are required to take comprehensive or qualifying exams and write a book-length dissertation on a topic developed by the student in consult with her committee (352).

In "Rethinking the Ph.D. in English," rhetorician Andrea Lunsford suggests that doctoral programs become more inclusive and place more emphasis on pedagogy as they

pay explicit attention to literature, language, and writing combined (364). Likewise, Gerald Graff in the same collection of essays written in response to a call from the Carnegie Foundation, argues that literature and writing can coexist and benefit from staying together. Lunsford maintains, "the trend toward separation…may continue, but if it does, it will be in stark contradiction to the new and expansive definitions of reading and writing just described" (364). In these essays, both Lunsford and Graff write about their personal experiences, connecting their narratives to the broader disciplinary landscape. This rhetorical strategy, common in some research articles as it is in the academic essay in the writing of Composition and Rhetoric and English studies scholars, demonstrates the value that humanities scholars place on the individual's perspective on disciplinary or broader issues.

The Local

TCU's doctoral program in composition and rhetoric matriculates a small number of students each year, typically up to five. However, during their time at TCU, many graduate students who begin the Ph.D. with interests in literature develop a stronger interest in composition and rhetoric as a result of their teaching first and second-year writing or taking courses. As described in Chapter Four's section "Kelly's Story," doctoral students are required to take both literature and composition and rhetoric courses. Doctoral students must complete 54 total hours (up to 18 may be transferred), and some of these hours must be taken in British literature, American literature, composition theory, and history of rhetoric. Graduate students in the program typically write analytical essays, article critiques, and a seminar paper in their courses. They often

write weekly responses to course readings, and in some composition and rhetoric courses, they maintain research journals.

Once students have satisfied at least 48 hours of coursework and the foreign language requirement, they may take doctoral qualifying exams. The student chooses three professors with whom to she will prepare three reading lists and discuss possible topics that match her interests. These three areas are open, and can be three literature or composition and rhetoric or a mixture of them, and within these areas the student may develop focused content areas. For example, a Ph.D. student may create exam areas Composition pedagogy with an emphasis on critical pedagogy, ancient rhetoric, and women's and minority rhetorics (or these could be separate lists). The written portion of the qualifying exam, consisting of questions composed by the examiners, requires that the student write an extended essay response. The responses are written over the course of three, eight-hour days, and all three exams must be completed in seven days. The student writes the exam responses on a university or department-issued computer in an office or testing room without benefit of notes.

When a student begins the dissertation process, she typically chooses a professor to supervise the dissertation who is from her own field of interest with whom she thinks she will have a good working relationship. In the past the graduate program director assisted students in choosing the dissertation advisor, but more recently, the graduate program policies have changed. This choice is now up to the student (and, of course, the professor). After the student and her director agree to work together, they form a committee typically made up of two other faculty members in the student's primary area of interest and one "outside" reader who may be someone in the department but should

be outside of the writer's specialization. The student is writing for an audience of disciplinary representatives but, theoretically, the project should also have some wider relevance.

The passage below is taken from the Website sponsored by TCU's graduate program in English. The quotations that follow the program's statement about the dissertation are derived (again) from the graduate faculty surveys. I include these public and *local* perspectives in comparison to the individual faculty perspectives that demonstrate a local yet *disciplinary* (and subdisciplinary) conceptualization of the dissertation. The dissertation, according to the department's policies, gives a student "experience in reviewing a body of literature, researching a significant subject, and writing a book-length study of that subject" (GPP). To reiterate the department's definition of the dissertation, I repeat it here: The dissertation is

> an original investigation of a topic of significant interest to scholars. . . . [in which the] writer must take and defend a position, not merely recite and rehearse what others have said. The text's bibliography must reflect the historical and contemporary scholarship pertinent to the field. The dissertation gives the student a thorough knowledge of a scholarly subject, and provides a solid foundation for future teaching and continuing publication. (Graduate Program Policies)

Composition and Rhetoric faculty in the English department at TCU define the purpose of the culminating project as follows:

> I see the purpose of a thesis as an opportunity to focus on a substantive research project that allows the student to begin to participate in scholarly

> conversations in her/his field--to both learn about the field and work to become a voice within that field. I see the dissertation as doing that on an even more professionalized level in which the student seeks to produce publishable articles or a revisable book-length project (this is possible for the thesis, too, but I see this as a clear goal for the diss.) I also think that producing both kinds of texts helps teach students how to embark on longer writing projects that teach them—as no class assignment can—how to endeavor in a writing life where research and writing are a part of their work activities.
>
> [T]he M.A. is the "finishing" degree for the B.A., and the thesis should establish a student's ability to manage a long, relatively complex and in-depth study. The Ph.D. dissertation is a collaboratively written document for the purpose of preparing a new scholar for work in the discipline.
>
> I basically view the purpose of diss research as providing students with independent, hands-on (though carefully supervised) experience in the primary research methods and analytical skills expected of the discipline. Writing the diss should prepare students for the type of research/scholarship that will be expected of them after they receive the Ph.D. degree.

Interestingly, the first and second respondents I list suggest that the thesis writer "focus on a substantive research project that allows the student to *begin* to participate in

scholarly conversations in her/his field" and that the dissertation "should prepare students for the type of research/scholarship that will be expected of them" (my emphasis). Another professor commented that the culminating project is a "capstone" intended to show a researcher-writer's promise in which she or he "[learns] through the composing process." In this way, the purpose of this textual bridge is learning. To repeat the literature professor in Chapter Four: "one's thesis/dissertation should not be the best/most valuable contribution you make in your career. It's the beginning."

Ph.D. candidates in composition and rhetoric at TCU prepare dissertations under the supervision of one sponsor, which is common practice amongst universities, despite recent scholarship suggesting reform of the dissertation to take the form of a series of multiple essays or articles papers directed by multiple supervisors (Damrosch; Deats). A sampling of dissertations completed during the last seven years indicates that the monograph form is common in composition/rhetoric dissertations at TCU. These dissertations share some other common features. For example, many of them interweave personal narrative and theory. Invariably, every sample I examined included a distinct section on pedagogical implications, either as part of the conclusions chapter or incorporated throughout the text. The theoretically-grounded yet strongly pedagogical rhetoric of the composition/rhetoric dissertation is a distinguishing feature. This latter feature reflects the pedagogical culture in the Ph.D. program at TCU. Students are lead by example to enact in the classroom, the meeting room, and the community the theories they embrace in their minds. Composition and Rhetoric faculty, though highly motivated to contribute to the field through their own publication and conference participation and encouraging these habits in graduate students, try to make student learning a top priority

in their work. In order to make this happen, many of them research and write collaboratively with graduate students and join in on workshops to prepare conference proposals, in addition to employing and, in some cases, allowing for critique of, their own pedagogical strategies. Some of these strategies may be new practices that the professor is hoping to develop or even a tried and true practice that could use reshaping for new situations.

In her TCU dissertation *Critical Contentions: Feminism(s) and Critical Pedagogy in Composition Studies*, Stacia Dunn Neeley theorizes feminist and critical pedagogies, inserting as interchapters her personal reflections and confrontations with the very discourse communities she wishes to enter. For example, in Neeley's emulation of Sojourner Truth's "Ain't I a Woman?" entitled "Ain't I a Feminist?", Neeley confronts her own questions about feminist rhetorical action. She writes,

> That scholar over there claims that feminists need to have their own theoretical space, be theorized into academia, to trickle down, influencing women everywhere. I've never taught resume writing at a women's shelter or marched with my sisters in protest, and ain't I a feminist? Look at me! Look at my vita! I have read and studied, and passed, and matriculated, and no stereotypical definition of woman could stop me. Ain't I a feminist?

Neeley asks what and who determines legitimate rhetorical action, and she continues her "speech":

> Obliged to you for hearing me, and now this academic feminist has more to say.
>
> What is an academic feminist?
>
> A fish out of water?
>
> A reconnaissance specialist behind the lines?
>
> A comfortable spinner of ideas while women in the world struggle?
>
> A theorist focusing on gender when there is so much else that defines
>
> Woman? (145)

She goes on to describe how she enacts her feminism through critical pedagogy. The interchapters are a sort of experimental space for Neeley to creatively reflect on her pedagogy and the theories that inform it. Neeley's dissertation was directed by a specialist in composition theory and pedagogy, and it is a good example of how such a strongly pedagogical project both respects the tradition of feminism and critical pedagogy and critiques those theories.

A predominantly pedagogical TCU dissertation that I discuss briefly here is Catherine Gabor's *Leave the Room! Teaching Writing Beyond the Four Walls of the Classroom*. Directed by the same advisor as Neeley's dissertaton, this project that combined ethnographic research and teacher-research, involving Gabor and her own students in her study, positions the teacher and the student writers as agents of change. Therefore, her project is by nature pedagogical, but it is also an empirical study in which the researcher sought answers to pedagogical questions that classroom observations,

student and faculty interviews, and analysis of student writing could answer. The "Implications for Teaching" are a significant portion of the text.

The confessional rhetorical activities that D.B. Magee features in his project *Rhetoric, Community, and Meaning: Writing the HIV/AIDS Crisis* offer a glimpse into "how individuals with HIV and AIDS struggle to find meaning, a lifelong pursuit made immediately critical by illness" (Magee 5). Magee's personal narrative introduces his dissertation, and in this section he himself engages in a similar type of confessional. Thus, similarly to Neeley, not only does Magee declare the value of the rhetorical tools he uses to analyze the writing of the participants in writing workshops, he engages in the writing as well. Similarly to Neeley and Gabor, Magee includes an explicitly pedagogical element to his text. However, his discussion of pedagogy is reserved for one section of his conclusion chapter. Essentially, Magee's dissertation shows yet another option for the dissertation in Composition and Rhetoric at TCU. His project, directed by a professor whose specialty is in the history of rhetoric, emphasizes the personal narrative but de-emphasizes the pedagogical in comparison to Neeley and Gabor.

Doctoral candidates choose their dissertation supervisors and committees for a number of reasons, including potential for a good working relationship based on past experience; this past experience might also be assumed from the products produced by other dissertation writers, such as in Danielle's choice for her supervisor and committee. Some members of Danielle's committee worked on the dissertations I discuss above (especially Neeley's and Gabor's), and she is likely to be familiar with these projects. Since English Department faculty often refer to projects conducted by their previous students, Danielle has begun the realize the value of perusing these dissertations to get a

better sense of the range of dissertation writing practice common in her program. She has also realized the importance of knowing what is (not) possible by looking at what has (not) been done. Danielle sees these dissertation writers' personal investment in their teaching and new theoretical directions manifested in their dissertations. She hopes to create a piece that will similarly reflect hers.

The Individual

Danielle's favorite picture of herself as a young girl shows her at a party. She is sitting alone with paper and pen in hand, writing. Danielle says that when she was young, writing was her way of entertaining herself. It was also her way of getting noticed and recognition. She remembers participating in multiple reading, writing, and storytelling activities and competitions as an elementary and high school student. Danielle recalls "being good at writing what was expected." But it was in the English classes taught by feminist pedagogues that she began to experience her most rewarding writing experiences in college. In these classes she says that she began to see how academic arguments could be strengthened by calling upon personal experience as evidence. Danielle brought her emerging sense of personal experience as a valued form of knowledge making to her master's program at a regional state university in Texas and to the Ph.D. program in English.

As a graduate student on fellowship with no teaching or research obligations to the department or university, Danielle enrolled in four classes each semester of her first year of study in the Ph.D. program—a course load consisting of literature and composition and rhetoric classes. Danielle says that during this initial year of coursework

she found that professors of literature courses had very different expectations for writing than professors of composition and rhetoric. Since her educational background is in literature, she explains, "I [know] how to perform in literature classes." In literature classes at TCU, graduate students typically write a twenty-page seminar paper and one or two shorter literary or critical analysis papers. In some courses, professors ask students to lead class discussion or to prepare a brief presentation to the class to add to the class's discussions of historical, cultural, or critical context. In one of Danielle's classes, students had the option of writing a seminar paper or developing an annotated bibliography on an aspect of feminist critical theory.

In many graduate composition and rhetoric classes, students engage in more daily and reflective writing than in literature classes in addition to completing a seminar paper or research project. Response journals are common, as are daily or frequent writings that lead up to the larger project. In these courses, the writing moves toward a goal, according to Danielle. Even though the writing in these courses is designed to orient and prepare the writer for conducting a more extensive project, Danielle's confidence drastically changed once she was outside of her comfort zone of writing in her master's program: "Writing in the Ph.D. program? In Composition? The arguments need to be more sophisticated. I kept having these feelings of not being good enough. Even the response journals that could have felt like busy work were an exercise in sophisticated engagement." Practically every writing assignment in her doctoral program, especially her composition and rhetoric courses, posed a challenge to her. The writing valued most in composition and rhetoric is that which demonstrates a commitment to the discipline's critical history and some reflection on the writer's experience as a scholar contributing to this history. As Chris

Golde articulates it, the writer on her way to stewardship pays respect to the discipline's scholarly traditions and then contributes her own study or theory that adds to the traditions. The writer may critique but she does not assume that these traditions can be wiped out once her findings are published. This tendency in Composition is, as I discussed earlier in this section, grounded in its background in the humanities.

Graduate students in composition and rhetoric courses at TCU also write book reviews, conference proposals and papers, and article manuscripts for course credit, and they are encouraged, and often expected, to send out these pieces for review. In terms of the quality of writing, multiple professors in the department note in syllabi and in other classroom documents such as writing assignment sheets and in class discussions that they want graduate student writing to demonstrate the writers' deliberate rhetorical choices. It seems, then, that Danielle would welcome these opportunities to reflect on her awareness of a writer's own history and position in the field. The difference between writing in the Ph.D. program and in her previous educational settings, for Danielle, comes down to her struggle to negotiate *how* to personally engage but be "more sophisticated" about it.

Danielle came to the program at TCU with classroom and writing center teaching experience. She had also assisted in the administration of the campus writing center at her institution. Although her M.A. coursework was mainly in literary studies, she received "permission" to write a thesis on teaching assistants in the composition classroom. Despite composition teaching experience, work in the writing center, and completion of a well-received master's thesis in composition, Danielle still felt like an outsider to both the specialized discourse of composition and rhetoric and of her Ph.D. program. In order to get some one-on-one instruction and support in writing, she has actively sought the

support of her major advisor and her peers (which is typical of other grad students, as indicated in the surveys I discuss in greater detail in Chapter Three). She has also joined a writing group that meets approximately every two weeks. In spite of her efforts to learn the rhetorical and genre conventions of the field by regularly consulting with major professors and peers, Danielle has consistently felt that "there's a playbook" that "they" (faculty and fellow graduate students) are hiding from her. This playbook, according to Danielle, holds the secret plays she needs to produce the texts expected of her. This feeling has never been as powerful as when she took her qualifying exams and when she wrote her dissertation proposal.

When Danielle was preparing for her written and oral qualifying exams, one of her committee members told her that she should read the questions and answers written by a recently minted candidate who had passed "with distinction," a designation that is not clearly defined in the program other than that the decision to award distinction is always unanimous and based on both the written and oral performance. Danielle remembers that same professor telling her that Danielle should be able to do just as well as the candidate who passed with distinction. Besides, Danielle knew that other candidates had passed with distinction. In fact, she knew several people who had done so very recently. When Danielle in her words, "just passed" the exams, she began feeling especially alienated from the academic life she had chosen to enter. She wondered if this was really the right decision? Was she cut out for this? Had she disappointed her committee? Had they lost faith in her potential to conduct the kind of research writing required of a Ph.D. candidate? She was especially concerned when she struggled during her oral exam to answer questions central to her research interests. She explains:

> My exams experience wasn't awful. I got the questions I expected. But all hell broke loose in the orals. In my study group of four, three of us got distinction. What's worse is that I recently went to dinner with the advisor of one of my peers who had just completed her written portion, and [her advisor] said there's "nothing [Danielle's peer] could do short of not showing up and she'd still pass, and probably with distinction." I'm still feeling the effects and struggling with my prospectus. I have that sense of not having the playbook again.

Danielle was so tired, disappointed, and stressed after her orals that she missed her own celebratory dinner that was planned to commemorate the occasion of the four members of her study group passing exams. The stress-inducing and demoralizing experience of qualifying exams that left Danielle so tired and disappointed also left her concerned about moving forward to work on her prospectus. This unproductive, stagnant period following the exams is not uncommon even for students who have a relatively positive experience. In Danielle's particular case, this unproductive time further demonstrates her confessed need to be rewarded or simply recognized for the hard work of writing. In fact, Danielle repeatedly notes that "there's no programmatic or institutional recognition that writing is hard. . .We're comfortable talking about research but not about writing." In "Demystifying the Dissertation," Cardozo argues that humanities scholars do not talk about writing because of the resistance to professionalization. Rather than address what some scholars consider too practical, too unscholarly, that is, issues of writing, they would prefer to talk about theories, methods, and rigor. Humanities scholars are also mainly working from romanticized ideas about writing as a solitary act. In *Writing the*

Successful Thesis and Dissertation, Clark says that advisors need to know something about writing pedagogy, however, and they need to share their disciplinary and rhetorical knowledge with their students. Does it go without saying that writing experts should be the first in line to talk with their students about writing? Not according to Clark and not according to Danielle's experience. Even writing specialists do not readily express how hard writing is and do not always acknowledge that advanced graduate writers might need multiple kinds of support. Clark points out that advanced graduate writers need psychological as well as scholarly encouragement during the difficult transition into the profession. Unfortunately, as mentioned in Chapter Three, faculty are not well recognized for their efforts to provide this support for graduate student writers. There's typically little institutional reward for working with grads unless the advisor is directly involved in student publication. This is not so much the case since collaborative authorship, though gaining some academic credibility in the humanities, has not yet caught up to the preferential treatment of single authorship.

Danielle wants to write a dissertation that matters to her discipline and to her family. Her project is a labor of love, one that "centers on the role of place in the experiences of students within the university, and, in order to understand if, and how, place affects students, [she] focus[es] on the distinctions between location and place" (18). Between her disappointing exams experience that she thinks did not prepare her well for the impending struggles she has encountered while writing the prospectus, Danielle has felt that her writing and research progress have stalled. At the time of our second interview in September 2006, it had been almost six months since Danielle had started writing her prospectus. She had already submitted a draft of her prospectus to her

director and her committee. When I asked Danielle how writing the prospectus has affected her research and writing process, she promptly responds, “It’s stopped altogether.” She continues, “I know the prospectus is supposed to have value, but right now it seems like a waste of time.”

In her essay, “Writing Selves, Establishing Academic Identity” in Nancy Welch’s edited collection *The Dissertation and the Discipline*, Marilyn Vogler Urion insists that dissertation writing is necessary and valuable, but it too often involves unnecessary frustration and trauma. The process involves a lengthy, intense period of writing in a discipline-specific discourse, developing fluency with a vocabulary that is often unintelligible to anyone outside the discipline” (7). She sees the prospectus stage as the stumbling block for many because no one knows what the document should look like. Rigid guidelines or a lack of guidelines may be equally frustrating. Rather than provide recommendations for students, professors and programs to create templates for writing the prospectus or suggest students and their committees work ad hoc, Urion suggests envisioning the interstitial period during which students must relearn the language of the initiate as the time the student comes “alive with the potential to effect change” (10). Urion’s alternative requires a supportive committee and department dedicated to outlining the purpose of the dissertation, acceptable risks for the project, and a bibliography of works that shows a variety of projects. Rules must also be “successfully challenged” with the support of administrators (11-12). In other words, a precedent for change must be set.

For Danielle, shifting from qualifying exams directly into prospectus-writing was virtually impossible. She did not feel “alive with the potential to effect change” at all.

Danielle's exams, she claims, still haunt her as she attempts to prove that place matters and place sponsors literacy in the academy. She was challenged in the oral portion of her exams to assert how assigning place as a category of cultural difference matters to the discipline of Composition and how such a project might speak to teachers of writing. These are also the questions her director repeatedly poses in the margins of Danielle's prospectus draft. The struggle for Danielle is to address these disciplinary (and local, coming from her director) questions that she admits are legitimate and necessary but to answer them in a way that satisfies her own personal investment in the project. Her personal investment comes from her dogged persistence in showing her readers where she has come from and why she has ended up here, figuratively and literally. Danielle's interest in teaching her own students and her dissertation readers about the importance of one's geographic place (both historic and current) manifests in her writing. As she persistently writes passages such as "Where am I" in the middle of a research review or methodology section, her director comments, "You want to be explicit about your positionality, but it gets in the way of your explaining plainly what you are researching." Her director asks her to "[f]ocus on making these descriptions clear and concise as possible. Resist the impulse to be discursive and reflective here." In a revised version, Danielle keeps a personal narrative in her introduction but cuts the interruptive reflections. In the dissertation, she will likely include more reflective passages. But the prospectus, as the English Department graduate program policies document notes, "clarify[ies] the dissertation project and [provides] direction for research and writing" (12). The prospectus is a plan, and as Danielle sees it herself, "it's a malleable plan."

Before writing her dissertation prospectus, Danielle never solicited assistance for her writing from anyone outside of her trusted disciplinary colleagues (i.e., major professor, exams committee professors, peers in the English Department). Although she values the instructive written commentary, she worries that she cannot do the work on her own. She wonders, isn't this the intent of the dissertation? Isn't this what working through this process is supposed to demonstrate, that she can make an original, significant contribution to the field *on her own*? This model of the independent scholar is not exclusive to faculty; it is common among graduate students in the program as well. But I think Danielle is in the process of eschewing what Patricia Sullivan calls the "myth" of the independent scholar. Danielle writes in a final version of her prospectus:

> My study grows directly out of my experiences as a self-identified rural academic, but this does not lessen my research. Instead, my personal investment allows me to answer the call of scholars like Jacqueline Jones Royster. As a rural academic, I am committed to the people, places, and practices that were foundational in my development—an emotional connection I suppressed for many years until I read Royster's *Traces of a Stream*. Her methodology speaks to me—calling out the rural academic I had been denying. Royster says that in order to do my intellectual work, I must understand my intellectual ancestry. I must reconstruct why I believe and think as I do, situating my experiences within the historical context of the lives of others like myself. (Danielle 24)

Danielle's persistence in keeping passages in her prospectus about her rural background reflect her attempts to satisfy her own interest in making her project relevant to academy

insiders—the discipline—and academy outsiders—her family. In this way, Danielle negotiates the multiple contexts in which she writes her dissertation. And all of them are important to her as she shapes her own professional identity. According to compositionists Cindy Moore and Peggy Woods in "'She Herself is the Writing,' But the Form Doesn't Fit: The Dissertation as a Site of Becoming," another essay from Nancy Welch's *The Dissertation and the Discipline* collection, the dissertation process is an identity-shaping activity. Writing for Woods and herself, Moore says that through the dissertation process, "we're supposed to come into our professional self . . . But we see it as a collection of many selves" (Moore 71). Danielle's identity-shaping dissertation process must include her rural identity. For her, entering into Composition as a "rootless professor" (to use Eric Zencey's term from his essay, "The Rootless Professors"), without a sense of place or geographical history, is not an option.

After receiving such extensive comments from the director, Danielle got the crushing blow: Her "outside" reader, the fourth member of the committee who is a member of a department outside of English, questioned whether Danielle knew anything at all about conducting qualitative research. At first she was devastated. Then she wondered why she would get such a response since she had taken a research methods course. She deduced that it must be a writing problem. She recalls, "I've never been told as a graduate student how to ask for help. I've never been told about the writing center or any other means of finding support for my writing." Despite the fact that none of her professors had ever encouraged her to seek help from anyone other than them, from peers in her own department, or from reading other scholars' work, Danielle decided it was time to seek other resources of support.

Danielle was initially resistant to visiting the campus writing center, the William L. Adams Center for Writing,[36] for she feared that visiting the center meant she was "giving up on" herself: "I can play the graduate writing game well enough, but I still don't feel I'm smart enough or that I'm doing it right. So if I ask for help, am I giving up on myself?" Ironically, Danielle was assistant writing center director while completing her M.A. in English. But in her mind, going to the writing center as a graduate student equated to her admitting defeat. It meant that she could not handle the demands of graduate-level work *on her own.*

Danielle's story is critical to understanding the writing center as a resource of instruction and support for graduate writing, particularly as a site of collaborative knowledge-making. Therefore, I address the writing center as a resource on campus and consider how faculty, students, and writing center staff envision the role of the writing center.[37] Then, I discuss strategies for how a writing center can bring faculty, students, and consultants together in the interest of closing the gaps between genre expectations and student production of texts. A writing center is a major resource of non-disciplinary support for writers. Two decades of research and scholarship promote the writing center as a site of collaborative learning and instruction (Bruffee, "Peer Tutoring and the 'Conversation of Mankind'" [1984] 1995; North "The Idea of a Writing Center" 1984;

[36] The Center for Writing has been in operation for almost twenty years and has been under the direction of such highly regarded scholar-practitioners as Christina Murphy, Joe Law, Jeannette Harris, and Steve Sherwood (the current director). The Center for Writing has always been open to graduate writers, but just last year, the Center officially opened its "Graduate Writing Center." The Center launched a campaign advertising a trained staff of writing specialists including graduate students, but most notably, full-time faculty who are the graduate writing consultants.

[37] Centers at U.S. universities devoted to serving graduates include the graduate writing center at the Teachers College at Columbia University; at University of Texas at Austin, the Lyndon B. Johnson Graduate Writing Center and the Law School Writing Center; The Graduate Writing Center at Saint Louis University; The Writing Center at the Claremont Graduate School; The William L. Adams Center for Writing Graduate Writing Center at Texas Christian University; and a few others.

Lunsford, "Collaboration, Control, and the Idea of a Writing Center" 1991; Harris "Why Writers Need Tutors" 1995). According to Stephen M. North in "The Idea of a Writing Center," writing centers focus on the student writer or on the writing itself rather than disciplinary expectations.[38] North's article, which was published in 1984, was foundational for the field and for many early writing centers. The ideal writing center space, populated by folks highly invested in student learning, is where "individual needs are met," as Muriel Harris says in her 1995 article "Talking in the Middle: Why Writers Need Writing Tutors." In order to meet these needs, the writing center consultant is uniquely positioned as one of the participants in the construction of knowledge. In Andrea Lunsford's model of the collaborative writing center, writing centers are Burkean parlors in which knowledge is constantly negotiated among writer, consultant, and professor. This model challenges the notions of writing as a solitary activity and mimics professional discourse in the disciplines.

Unfortunately, faculty less familiar with collaborative learning and writing methods may fear that facilitating student learning turns into appropriating student writing or simply helping "too much." Brite professors Oswalt and Watson have wondered, "If they can't write, then how did they make it this far?" Going to the writing center can help graduate writers edit, perhaps, they say, but it shouldn't be a way for the students to get out of doing their own work. English department faculty have expressed concerns about student writing, noting that writing should demonstrate one's mastery over content and ability to enter the conversations of the field. And most in the English department do not discourage their students from visiting the writing center if their style

[38] According to Stephen M. North in "The Idea of a Writing Center," writing centers support writers. He argues that writers are best served in this environment when they come voluntarily not when teachers mandate the sessions.

or editing needs improvement, even if they also do not encourage it. They do not, however, see the writing center consultants as content-knowledge resources.

Will Denton, a long-time consultant and faculty member at the Center for Writing at TCU, agrees that graduate students should not come to the center for specialized disciplinary instruction. However, visitors to the center "learn under some of the best conditions possible." As he sees it, they get specialized writing instruction every time. When graduate students come, they get individual instruction from a highly-trained consultant who holds a graduate degree and who is almost always a published writer herself. In the same vein, consultants "teach in an ideal space," according to Denton, even when students come to the center by mandate. Denton tends to agree with faculty that writing center consultants are not content-area experts: "We're not experts in every subject, but we might be in our own. We are experts in writing… I do know how to teach writing in different disciplines even if I don't teach 'content.'" Graduate students who come to the writing center tend to become repeat clients—once they come, they return and prefer to meet with the same consultant, thus establishing a writing partnership.

Even in the ideal learning conditions of the writing center, Danielle found her initial visit mostly unhelpful. Danielle said, "I went looking for help on my methodology. But I met with someone in literature and I needed a specialist in research methods in writing studies. The [consultant] tried, but he couldn't help me with what I needed." After that visit, she decided to ask for a specific consultant or for a specific kind of session. She has now returned twice while planning and starting to write chapters.

During one of these more recent visits, I sat in on one of Danielle's meetings with Denton, who holds a Ph.D. in Composition and Rhetoric. Since thesis and dissertation

documents are usually too long to "cover" in a 30-minute or 1-hour session, Denton mainly tried to make her feel comfortable with him and tried to get a sense of her project, but she wanted answers; she wanted to know what to do.

Grad students come to the writing center with expectations similar to those of undergraduate students: they want answers. However, grad students may not enter into the writing center environment confident that the consultant can offer instructional guidance. As Carrie Shively Leverenz points out in "Graduate Students in the Writing Center: Confronting the Cult of (Non)Expertise," our response to the graduate writer should not be that we are not equipped to help them or that we do not have answers (57). Rather, we should embrace their needs, recognize their resistance, welcome the knowledge and experience they bring to the consultant session, and then negotiate strategies for how we can help them.

Because Danielle was still reeling from the blows of her exams and the negative response to her prospectus, she needed someone to tell her that her work was good. She needed to know that readers could benefit from or perhaps identify with her personal narrative and that her contribution to the field mattered. I noticed in Danielle's session with Denton that he frequently reminded Danielle that she had an interesting and worthwhile project, and he offered some very specific suggestions for answering the difficult question that gave her so much trouble during her qualifying exams: Does place matter to us as teachers and researchers of writing? Ultimately, he said: "Your project is really important and we need to know about place-based pedagogy and writing about place. But don't forget about *topoi*. That's where it all begins." Offering her both the psychological encouragement and the practical advice that Danielle has been looking for

everywhere she can, Will sets up another meeting: “Leave me what you have. Or work on [your first chapter] and send it to me. Most importantly, don’t get paralyzed. Write shitty first drafts. This is good, important work!”

Part 3, Instructing and Supporting the Dissertation across the Curriculum

Mary is caught between her Spanish and English languages, engaging in her own cross-cultural *resolviendo*; Danielle fears that the academic will trump the personal when it comes to meeting disciplinary and local expectations for the dissertation. Similar to master's students, even the best doctoral students can have a hard time understanding and meeting disciplinary, programmatic, faculty, and personal expectations for the dissertation with the available faculty and program support.

In her interviews with Opal Palmer Adisa published in *African American Review* in 1994, Jamaican writer Michelle Cliff describes how the process of learning to write grants one the highest kind of authority in the academy. But after completing her dissertation, Cliff felt "speechless" about her personal identity at a time when she felt most intellectually aware of her academic and professional identity. Mary and Danielle struggle with this same kind of identity crisis. Dissertation writers, like their thesis-writing counterparts, seek help from their major professors for help understanding the discipline's and program's expectations for writing.

Sociologist David Sternberg contradicts the commonly-held notion that only the smartest students survive in graduate school, indicating instead that "virtually the entire support system vanishes" for graduate students once they have completed coursework (13). Because these graduate student writers must negotiate multiple, and often, competing contexts of writing to produce required texts, the writers need to understand the expectations of genres they produce. But students struggle to understand what's expected of them even when the classroom environment offers syllabi, assignment sheets, reading assignments, professor-mediated discussions in class, and regular class meetings.

It's difficult enough to make sense of expectations in the classroom. How can graduate students understand what's expected of their writing once they no longer have these mechanisms in place? How do graduate writers get the assistance they need to produce the writing required of them in graduate school? We do not ask whether students should be taught strategies for critical thinking and reading or methodologies, and certainly we do not ask whether students should be taught content or disciplinary knowledge.

The dissertation writers in my study attempt to theorize their own cultural and personal experiences to make meaning for others, including members of their disciplinary and home communities. As they negotiate the demands for writing the dissertation and the multiple contexts in which they write, they realize that their programs' and their professors' ability to support these negotiations is limited. The writers need encouragement as well as practical advice. They need to know that their writing is indeed *good* or *improving*. Professors may be able to provide this kind of support, but the non-disciplinary resources, non-experts in my study have been particularly integral to the dissertation writers' emerging sense of confidence that has grown out of their understanding that writing can be difficult but it does not have to be a solitary experience. These resources, which may go untapped due to faculty or student resistance, can help to bridge the gap between genre expectations and genre production, specifically in terms of dissertation writing. Dissertation writers and supporters of these writers reconceptualize dissertation writing as a process with two goals. One of those goals is the discipline's goal to teach graduate students to become sociable, collegial members of the disciplinary community, i.e. stewards of the discipline. The other goal is the graduate writer's goal to mesh a professional identity with personal identity. By understanding that the dissertation

writing process is complex, collaborative, and motivated by these goals, we might broaden our knowledge of the range of mentoring, advising, and instructional resources available to support graduate students.

Both dissertation writers I feature in this chapter find supporters for the kind of writing they want to do, writing that can meet the expectations of their disciplines, their programs, and themselves. These helpful resources require Mary and Danielle to take some financial, professional, and personal risks. Faculty and students can work together with editors and writing center consultants to build a collaborative model of support for dissertation writers, and encourage greater collaboration between disciplinary and non-disciplinary instructors of writing.

Chapter 6: Supporting Enculturation, Production, and Instruction: Conclusions and Implications of Shaping Thesis and Dissertation Writing

> The chief obstacle to structural reform in the system is the fact that most of the people now in it are products of that system. By the very fact of them having done well in it, it has come to seem natural. I have argued for the importance of history in showing the constructedness of what is apparently natural, but it must also be kept in mind that the story of the university has usually been told by the victors.
>
> —David Damrosch, *We Scholars*

The purpose of writing case studies is to tell stories that provide insights into cultural practices. In this dissertation I have told a series of stories, selecting and ordering details and making decisions along the way about which version of reality I wished to represent. The accounts in this dissertation may be versions of reality, but they are based on writers who produce real texts that were written in complex situations. Sheila, Kelly, Lori, Mary, and Danielle negotiated the demands and expectations of their current writing situation, what they knew about writing before they encountered the current writing situation, and how other people influence their writing. Each generously let me depict a version of her experience so that I could bring together each writer's sense of her own history as a writer, her program's expectations of her writing performance while in graduate school, and her discipline's values of writing. In doing so, I am able to present more than a slice of graduate writing life at TCU. This dissertation is a study of current practices of writing and writing instruction that shows the history and informs the future of graduate writing and writing instruction in five different disciplines and four departments and programs at TCU, a Doctoral/Research institution. Researchers in writing studies can look to this dissertation as an empirical indication of the need for similar studies in other institutions so that graduate programs are well-informed about students' needs. Although it was not feasible for the scope and timeframe of this

dissertation, a long-term study of graduate writers, from entrance to graduate school until completion of the thesis or dissertation, would be a worthwhile next step in this work.

Generally, graduate students and faculty at TCU and Brite see graduate students as mostly highly motivated to learn the historical and theoretical knowledge of their disciplines. The graduate students vary in their views of how important written genre conventions are to their performance as emerging scholars or professionals. M.A. in Art History candidate Sheila, for example, sees writing as perfunctory despite the prominence of it in her potential line of work. But M.S. in Journalism candidate Lori and Ph.D. candidate Danielle both believe that learning to write is critical, even enjoyable when their good work is acknowledged.

Futures: The Responsibilities of the Discipline and the Local Institution

From the surveys and the case studies, we first learn that advanced graduate students need the guidelines, direction, and models for graduate writing they previously received when encountering new genres in undergraduate and graduate courses. Second, graduate faculty across the curriculum increasingly acknowledge the need for explicit writing instruction. Third, graduate students seek support primarily from those they consider experts, resisting or rejecting potential help from peers, writing center staff, or other non-specialists. Fourth, thesis and dissertation writers rarely pursue non-disciplinary resources of support and instruction for their writing despite the fact that the university has made multiple resources available to them. I will address each of these four findings in turn, noting potential for examination and perhaps reform of disciplinary, local, or individual practices.

- Advanced graduate students (i.e., students approaching candidacy or newly minted candidates) need the guidelines, direction, and models they previously received when encountering new genres in undergraduate and graduate courses.

Faculty may have experience writing the genres they expect their students to write, but they may feel at a loss for how to teach these forms of writing. Teachers often wonder how to articulate the purpose of a genre to students and how to assess it appropriately. Take the comprehensive exams for one example. In the Department of English at TCU, the graduate program has no criteria for evaluating them other than the following:

> Having fulfilled all other requirements for candidacy, students who pass both parts of their qualifying examinations, following a majority vote of their faculty committees, will be *admitted to candidacy*. Students whose performance (as assessed by a unanimous vote by their committees) ranks them in the top ten percent of TCU students taking such exams will be awarded a *pass with distinction*. Students with a marginal performance will be awarded a *low pass* and given an unofficial warning.

The policies go on to discuss the procedures for dealing with a failure. I wish to point out, as I did in Chapter Five, that how one passes with "distinction" is hardly clear. Neither is how one passes with a "low pass."

Consider also how the dissertation might be reviewed. How does the dissertation in its current form in the programs under study here serve the students and the faculty? As Damrosch suggests, students' and faculty's needs must be considered if a change is to happen. The problem is that it is simpler to assume that a system is working if no one

checks its processes. If most students manage to complete their exams, theses and dissertations albeit probably not all (does any program graduate all of the students it enrolls?), then does this mean the program is successful and that the students and faculty are satisfied with the curriculum and processes?

Andrea Lunsford suggests that revamping the first year or two of a program's curriculum into one that promotes collaboration would "almost certainly militate against any kind of general coverage exam" (365). She suggests "performative exams" in which students write individually and collaboratively and present results of their research to the university community. As Lunsford notes, this practice is more akin to the qualification process occurring in some departments such as the physical sciences. At TCU, this process is practiced in Physics and is called the "pre-dissertation." The hope for collaboration in graduate school reflects the "collaborative, sociable scholars" model set up by Damrosch that I described in Chapters One and Five.

If the dissertation itself cannot be reformed, then we might re-examine how it is evaluated or determine how it is evaluated. In most departments, the dissertation is not graded but evaluated on a pass or fail basis. While I am not necessarily advocating a grading system such as marking dissertations with A, B, C, etc., I am suggesting that candidates be made aware of and maybe even play a role in shaping how their writing is being assessed. Barbara E. Lovitts identifies four "grades" for dissertations she compiled based on her focus group research conducted over the course of a year: outstanding, very good, acceptable, and unacceptable. Lovitts suggests that programs develop rubrics by "analyzing existing products (dissertations in this case), or by reflecting on the objectives of a learning task" (par. 24). The purpose of developing these rubrics is to identify

criteria that can help faculty articulate the purpose and process of the dissertation and proactively discuss unacceptable work with students long before the defense (par. 2, 27). Such criteria can be shared in assessment materials and program reviews.

- Graduate faculty across the curriculum increasingly acknowledge the need for explicit writing instruction.

Every faculty member I interviewed talked about students' need to learn the genres and rhetorical practices of the discipline as well as more "basic" or "general" writing skills. The faculty also collectively agreed that candidates struggle with getting started writing the thesis and dissertation and need lots of guidance early on. This is not to say that they think all of their students are unqualified or underprepared for graduate-level work or for scholarly research. Advisors do not always know how to provide the instruction these students need despite the fact that the graduate students come to them for help.

The recognition of students' need for explicit instruction but fearing that they do not have the wherewithal to provide proper instruction is especially true in the case of faculty who work with second language writers. If advisors cannot provide second-language instruction and do not know how to respond to writing that demonstrates the features of English as a Second Language writer's problems adjusting to academic English, then these advisors and their programs should support students' efforts to find resources of support for their writing instruction.

- Graduate students seek support primarily from those they consider experts, resisting or rejecting potential help from peers, writing center staff, or other non-specialists.

Graduate students seek help from their major advisors first for a few reasons, according to my findings. They either want to be sure they are getting the correct/insider knowledge or most current insight into themes or issues or they want to ensure that they are not violating rules set forth by the program. At Brite, students are discouraged from using professional editors to help them with their writing. Students might also fear that they are perceived as "giving up" or inept if they seek help outside the department. Danielle, Ph.D. candidate in English hated the idea of going to the writing center even though she herself had co-directed one as a Master's student. She thought it was a sign of weakness to admit she needed assistance with her writing from a specialist in helping writers who struggle.

Faculty might also be interested in encouraging students to use all of the sources they can in order to become better writers since the faculty not only cannot provide all of the support students need, they typically receive very little to no reward for academic mentoring. In *Being Bright is Not Enough*, Peggy Hawley shares a comment from one of her colleagues on the lamentable state of institutional incentives for advising and mentoring:

> Time spent with students doesn't show up on the books anywhere, so it doesn't count, not even as teaching. The implicit statement is that it isn't important and this is bound to be reflected in student-faculty relationships. Because the system really discourages it, it takes the most dedicated

> faculty member to commit high quality time to students. Many give them short shrift and concentrate instead on their own research which *is* rewarded by the administration. (62)

The good news is that faculty can feel confident in suggesting their students seek support outside of the department. The increasing use of writing centers by graduate students may necessitate the development of different tutoring strategies than those offered for undergraduates.[39] Undergraduate students come to the writing center, voluntarily or involuntarily, for help on any number of issues: understanding a writing assignment, generating topics for a research project, organizing an essay, focusing on relevant experiences in an application letter, citing sources in a researched argument, or finding patterns of usage or grammatical errors. Similarly, graduate students may also ask for help with generating topics, organizing ideas, focusing experiences, etc. And any student can potentially benefit from the writing center's historically marginalized position which enables its consultants to both advocate and critique disciplinary discourse, as Elizabeth Boquet notes in her 1999 *College Composition and Communication* article "Our Little Secret." Graduate students are expected to demonstrate a critical awareness of the disciplinary conversations they wish to enter. Faculty expect graduate students to demonstrate this awareness, even at the moment they enter graduate school.

[39] Some writing centers provide services only for undergraduates, eliminating this resource for graduates completely. Writing centers depend on funding for the services they provide, and those housed in specific departments (usually English) may be less equipped than independent centers to support graduate students' writing. Some writing centers not specified for graduate students do provide services especially for them including dissertation and thesis workshops and handouts or other text-based resources or consultations. A few writing centers are designed specifically for graduate students and provide students with assistance on dissertations, theses, and smaller writing projects. They typically provide group workshops as well as individual consultations and are staffed by advanced graduate students, faculty, or professional consultants.

- Thesis and dissertation writers rarely pursue non-disciplinary resources of support and instruction for their writing despite that the university has made multiple resources available to them.

In order to help students take full advantage of the resources available to graduate students such as writing center services, Judith K. Powers recommends including the graduate advisor or professor in the consultations with graduate students. She insists that someone who is actively and critically engaged with the texts and discourses of the field should be involved, creating a "trialogue" that ultimately allows for each participant to bring her or his expertise to the experience (15). But as Carrie Shively Leverenz points out in her article, "Graduate Students in the Writing Center: Confronting the Cult of (Non)Expertise," faculty may be "unable or unwilling to provide such instruction" (56). She describes a conferencing system that excludes the professor's direct participation and emphasizes the tutor's role as "student advocate" (57). In this way, both professor and writing center tutor instruct at different sites and from different positions: the professor as representative of academic authority and tutor as student advocate. Both will have the student's interests in mind but will address these interests and influence them differently. The student explains to the writing center tutor what she wants to accomplish. With the student's (individual) interests and the professor's (disciplinary and subdisciplinary) interests in mind, the writing center, then, does serve as potential site of disciplinary enculturation, more importantly, (inter)disciplinary knowledge-making. The writing center that purports to teach people to be better writers and to focus on student learning will acknowledge the value of the student's individual interests in knowledge making.

Even if faculty and programs are not fully prepared to endorse professional editors (or if students are not prepared to pay for them), the writing center's unique institutional position enables it to support graduate student writers through the thesis and dissertation process. The writing center is an institutional site whose pedagogical practices are knowable to faculty across disciplines. Furthermore, the writing center becomes a site of collaborative knowledge-making by working with graduate faculty and students to close the gaps between expectations, assumptions, and writing performance. To do this, I propose two strategies for building writing partnerships and connecting tutorials to classroom instruction.

The first strategy is to build writing partnerships with and for individual writers. As Denton says, graduate students become repeat clients. To facilitate the most effective writing partnerships, writing center consultants should not be ashamed of saying "I don't know" or "tell me about your paper" instead of "this is what you need to do" as explained in Leverenz's essay. If the center is a site of collaborative knowledge-making, then students and consultants should be willing to ask questions and allow for the messiness of writing and learning. All of the case study participants told me about frustrating writing experiences when they misunderstood what was expected of them and disappointing response from teachers when they try to mesh a professional identity with personal identity. A subtle example is Kelly, who felt as though she was expected to write counterintuitively when she had to point out weaknesses of an argument presented in an essay that she had no problem with. Kelly found this exercise agonistic, but in her usual optimistic way, she knew she would have something to gain from it. An obvious example is Danielle, who was hurt by the comments she received on her methodology section of

her prospectus. Criticized for her attempt to unsuccessfully intertwine the personal with the academic, Danielle turned to an "outside" source, the writing center. Ideally, the writing center consultant would have some knowledge of the assignment as determined by the professor (and/or discipline). Then, the consultant asks what the writer wants to accomplish for herself with the text: What would you like to say? To whom? They can discuss some ways to accomplish these goals, perhaps explicitly talking about the student's goals as they compare and contrast with disciplinary goals. I see it as the writing center consultant's position to help the student meet her own needs but to be aware of what is expected of her. Of course, how the student actually completes the writing is up to her.

Another opportunity for the writing center to support graduate writers and the second way to build writing partnerships in the writing center is to provide the space and resources for writing groups. The center can promote a writers' group evening or special workshop for thesis or dissertation writers to let these folks know that the center supports their work. Since graduate students tend to trust their colleagues almost as much as their major professors, the writing center's encouragement and support of writing group development would not only help publicize the center in a positive way, it would provide thesis and dissertation writers with another source of advocacy support.

Since we are aware of the reservations that faculty may have about students (esp. graduate students) frequenting the writing center, the more that faculty know about what the writing center does, the better. And the more they come to the writing center, the better. A second way to connect tutorials to classroom instruction, and a natural follow-up to the previous strategy, is for the writing center to invite faculty members to

consultant in-service meetings/professional development sessions. In such an integrated session, faculty would be encouraged to bring sample writing assignments about which they can share with the writing center staff what expectations and objectives they have, what aspects of the assignment students handle well and what aspects students struggle with. Then, the consultants may ask their own questions. In Joan Mullin's chapter about assignments and expectations in *The WAC Casebook* by Chris Anson, Mullin suggests that faculty and writing center staff consider the values for writing that inform assignments and expectations so that consultants can "support ways in which [faculty expect students] to write and think" (40). Veteran writing center director Nancy Grimm in "Rearticulating the Work of the Writing Center" cautions that the writing center does not "supplement" the work of overburdened teachers or content classrooms that have little time for writing instruction. Rather, the model I recommend is one in which the center partners with faculty to do what the center has always aimed to do—improve writing and learning. Deliberate and explicit interaction amongst student authors and co-authors and their texts and the professors, editors, and other potential resources of support (e.g., writing center consultants) might enable writers to better understand the social and political nature of responding to the institutions that shape the texts.

Futures: The Responsibilities of the Graduate Student

In the epigraph to this chapter, David Damrosch argues that academia is doomed to repeat the past so long as its storytellers keep forgetting that they are indeed telling stories and not universal truths. But these stories, these constructed realities, seem true and natural enough, which makes them difficult also to articulate to those who wish to

enter academia. As Damrosch sees it, these new people with their new ideas threaten the "natural" order of things, and change will only happen when those in power have something to gain:

> The history of the modern university repeatedly shows that changes can occur when faculties perceive them as in their interest, while conversely any reform that is not in the interest of the faculty will wither on the vine. Nowhere is this more true than of graduate education, which has come to be guided almost entirely by individual departments, and largely by individual faculty members in the case of advanced students, often with only minimal oversight even from the department. (140-142).

Perhaps those who might wish to write a scathing review of academia are in political positions that prevent them from exposing themselves in this way. Graduate students are obviously the most subject to institutional hierarchies of power. But these subjugated individuals have some level of academic credibility they can take advantage of. The genres that may cause them the great frustration and difficulty also provide them the platform on which to begin their lives as scholars and professional writers.

A peer in my own department who completed comprehensive exams in October and has been working on her dissertation prospectus ever since told me that one of her dissertation committee members recently told her that now that she has passed her exams, she should just relax and finish her prospectus. He said, "We're your advocates now, not your judges." This major shift in thinking for a graduate student is much more difficult for the graduate student to make than faculty may realize. For the writer's work is always judged or evaluated while she is a student, and despite her committee's willingness and

efforts to make her feel like an equal. The hierarchies of power are institutionalized and two people—the teacher and the student—could not possibly dismantle them. However, Hinchey and Kimmel maintain that graduate students "need to question the assumption that they are entirely powerless" (154). Even those students who leave have acted rather than allowed the system to overtake them, for "[l]eaving is an exercise of power, not a failure" (154). Richard Rorty claims that the powerless are never completely without power, for they have latent power since they can always walk out the door (summarized in Hinchey and Kimmel 155).

A student might make the decision to stay and cry when necessary as Mary has, or like Sheila change topics when one isn't working for her, or like Danielle to swallow her pride when she visits the writing center to be pleasantly surprised by the help she gets. If this is the case, there are some other responsibilities that come along with continuing the thesis and dissertation process after learning about these women's stories. Thesis and dissertation writers should

- Take advantage of resources of support offered by professors and by the program. Ask for guidelines and models. Ask questions.
- Take advantage of non-disciplinary resources of support when possible, but first verify with the graduate program director or graduate school which resources are acceptable for use.

The multiple sites of support and instruction should not be at odds, and one should not trump or supplement the other. Rather, they provide a whole education for the student, who is after all at the center of our entire enterprise.

Afterword

At last, I want to answer one of the most commonly asked questions when people hear about my dissertation project: No, I am not one of my own case studies. My story is embedded throughout the dissertation, as it has unfolded before the eyes of everyone who reads it. Let me recall Beverly Moss from Chapter Two, if I may. In working to make the familiar strange for myself, I have intended to make familiar my dissertation process in Composition and Rhetoric in the Department of English at TCU. Following the trends that John Swales noticed in his analysis of dissertations at University of Michigan, I have made regular recursive moves and placed signposts throughout the dissertation to signal what I am trying to do. (Though I hope I have followed through and actually done it.) Thoroughly breaking the norms of practice that Swales noticed in his study, I made recommendations in Chapter Six. (How presumptuous of me!)

This project aims for cross-disciplinary perspectives, but clearly my departmental and disciplinary biases influence my thinking about the purpose of the dissertation as process and product. I have elected to include portions of the process journal that I maintained irregularly between February 2006 when I began drafting my dissertation prospectus and Institutional Review Board documents and conducting research until the time I submitted my first chapters to my committee.[40]

[40] I have maintained the spellings and punctuation from the original document, but I have eliminated names in an attempt to protect anonymity.

Angela's Dissertation, selections from "Dissertation Process Journal February 2006-July 2006"

2/19/06

I have indicated that my own process informs my study, and I believe it's my own stubbornness that keeps me working toward this degree. Some people really need to stop saying they don't know if they're doing what they should in grad school. What I mean is they do know what they're doing b/c they are accustomed to academic culture, an intellectual life. I've never understood it but I've been determined to work my way into it. Perhaps I am determined because it seems like the last place I should be. I have friends whose parents are teachers, academics, etc. Why am I suddenly ranting like a jealous kid?

2/22/06 I'm trying to work through the revisions [my director] outlined on my draft. I should type in the changes list I've been keeping. I want to do a little every day to get this done in a week, which is my deadline to get the revised version to [my second reader]. I did the easiest things first to make myself feel like I could do something, and I thought it would streamline my work later. Who knows? At least I can check things off. I did some two more difficult things tonight, so I'm working toward the more difficult things. Some things are not that difficult; they're just things I don't feel like doing, like messing around with the methodology section.

2/25 [A peer graduate student in the department] asked about my project and she told me I am the most positive about the prospectus of anyone she's ever

talked to. She said I seem to have myself together. I really appreciated that comment. It's especially valuable to me considering the nature of my project, and I told her I think that's part of the reason I feel OK about it. I also think having [my committee members] for mentors helps.

Making what seems to consume you the focus of your inquiry may be what keeps you from letting it actually consuming you. This prospectus has made me anxious but not like exams did.

I told [my peer] I see it as a means to an end, which is not popular to say for a writing specialist. Actually, it's not that bad to say. We know sometimes writing is a means to an end. Writing can get us somewhere, the document itself accomplishes something. When writing is a technology, it is a tool for getting something done. When writing is an activity (verb), it does something, it moves, works, acts. Sometimes it does something to us. So, the prospectus as document gets me closer to the producing the diss, to collecting data and analyzing it, etc. Writing the prospectus enables me to figure out the discipline I am trying to enter and to position myself. As Welch explains, I am writing this part, in part, [inspired by Welch] to claim authority, to align myself with certain people and their places in the discipline. I'm still identifying myself, but it feels less like a crisis as it did during exams.

So what does the document do for (to) me? What does the process do for (to) me? Are the answers the same as above? If I switch agent and agency or is it agent and act—it that what I'm doing or do I use different terms, have I forgotten Burke completely—then the perspective certainly is not the same. I'm not the same. I am changing as the document is changing. What I will do in the future changes and the document changes, and who I construct in the document changes. The notion of mediated authorship seems more relevant when I think of the document as agent: multiple people collaborating in the production of the prospectus and dissertation. What if I make a list of all the people who have had a hand in it so far? How long would it be and will I remember everyone? What about non-humans who have affected it, or is that too weird? Can I leave out animals and just think in terms of structures or institutions? (For instance, Enkidu bugs me when I try to write and sometimes he helps keep me from stressing out.) I'm only listing fairly immediate influences, not distant ones. I'll get into that maybe later when I start answering my own interview and survey Qs.

Influences (human)

Influences (non-human)

4/16/06 Easter Sunday

About time I got back to this, right? This PJ should help me write my Interchapters, so I'd better get to writin'.

5/13/06

OK, so I suck at keeping a DISS PJ. I'm trying to write this WAC conference paper, and I'm losing my mind. Here are problems: plenty of data, but what do I do with it? It's all conflicting, and I guess that's good. Is it? If everything came out the same, what could I talk about? I just don't know how to put it together. Particularly, I think I'm seeing vastly different views coming out of the same dept. yeah, my own. WTF. I'm really not surprised, the lit doesn't really argue against that, but I'mn just realizing that it's no wonder we're so confused in our dept and no wonder faculty argue over everything from hiring to grad policies. It's weird that I don't exactly understand what some people are saying either.

Is the diss the opportunity to interrogate/critique, but the thesis the opportunity to appease? On a personal level, yes, for me. On a disciplinary level, why would the thesis be designed this way? Is this so across the board? I'm really confused. Does a thesis propose to effect change? Does a diss? Should it?

6/19/06

I'm trying to cobble together some chapters—all at once b/c I've got to have drafts of chapters before I go on the market. I'm going, ready or not. It's just that

the market is really demanding—you gotta have at least 2 chapters, preferably 3. You should have publications, at least some stuff under review. A couple of people have said one publication is enough, and that's what I'm hoping for. I'm hoping one publication and something under review or maybe a book review is enough for an MLA interview. I'm really nervous about the job market. I'm also feeling overwhelmed by my diss project, but I keep reminding myself to let the stuff that seems in excess to go into articles or a possible book project.

7/17/06

I had another bad weather dream last night, but this one was almost humorous afterward. It was just soooo obvious. I dreamt I had a bunch of letters and forms with cards (like business cards) that I had to turn in to some office. When I had gathered all the letters, forms, and cards, I had to put them together. I organized them the way I thought they were supposed to go but realized they were stuck together or letters were together when they should be separated. The woman accepting the materials was cordial, but she said, "You know, you need to figure out how to organize these things. It's OK that they're not right because you're just starting out." I replied, as I was frantically trying to reorganize, "I thought these were right before I came here." So, I basically had a little mess I had to correct in front of her. Embarrassing, but she seemed to understand. She said, "You can't have it right until you do it a few times."

Alright, then, that's an argument for contemporary genre theory. ☺ But then came the wind. The wind made it more difficult to organize the papers. As soon as I would get them set, the wind would blow and make it hard for me to clip them together or mess them up again. It got darker and darker and I said, I think it's coming. Someone else yelled, "Is that for us?" And people started running. I looked in several directions, seeing dark clouds all over us. Then in a couple of places, there were tornadoes dipping, and then one close to us. Winds were whipping all around, and I started running toward homes and an institutional building. I couldn't decide whether I should go to a house and hope for a basement or go to the institution, which I think was a school. Probably was. Interestingly, this time, I wasn't trying to get other people to listen to my instructions or trying to protect them. So this one was a little different. But it was pretty obvious that I'm writing this diss and feeling confused, knowing that I don't know anything until I do it. And I'm trying to study the genre. I might go crazy, but I wouldn't be the first person.

After I finished exams and officially began my dissertation process, I realized what made writing seminar papers and preparing for exams most difficult was not that I lack content knowledge. I discovered that I did not understand these genres. What is their purpose? What does this writing mean for me as a student or emergent scholar? How does the influence of other people, the program, or the discipline shape my writing? Much like Sheila's story, mine would be about developing an authoritative voice without losing the voice I came to TCU with. I'm not sure where that old voice is but I think it

comes out when I'm tired or when I'm talking to my dog. Susan Latta says that "the dissertation is the first definition of our identities as professionals in the field" (16). I wonder if I sound like I'm talking to a dog.

An anonymous dissertation writer sent this list to me, in the spirit of *The Late Show with David Letterman*:

> Top 10 Annoying Things about Writing a Dissertation
>
> 10. People in your life, friends, family who think you've been writing a very long paper for the last five years.
>
> 9. Telling people how many pages you've written so it sounds like you are doing a lot of work and are really, really smart.
>
> 8. Telling your students about the dissertation process which spurs them on to ask: why would anyone want to do that,?" to which you internally ask yourself, "Yeah, WTF am I doing?"
>
> 7. After working for a year or longer, you come across research that proposes something remarkably similar to what you argue is a novel topic or approach.
>
> 6. Writing/reading this list as a creative outlet and/or procrastination technique.
>
> 5. Family members who tell others that you've been writing a paper for the last five years.
>
> 4. Realizing that after all of your hard work and little pay throughout graduate school that students you taught your first year of teaching are

probably out in the “real world” making a lot more money than you will ever make.

3. Getting a draft back from your committee with comments that make you feel like you are the stupidest person on earth and then thanking them for those very comments which make you want to crawl in a hole and die.

2. Explaining the significance of your work only to realize that it has no significance.

And…….

1. When someone asks you, “How’s your paper coming along?”

My answer: You tell me.

Appendix A

Graduate Student Survey

1. Sex

2. Race or Ethnicity

3. What degree are you pursuing?
[ ] M.A.
[ ] M.S.
[ ] M.S.N
[ ] M.B.A.
[ ] Ph.D.
[ ] other, please specify _____

4. What is your program and area (or areas) of concentration?

5. Describe your status in your program (e.g., second-year M.S.N.; fifth-year ABD graduating, seventh-year ABD non-resident).

6. What kinds of writing (communication of ideas through textual or visual media) have you completed most often as a graduate student at TCU? (Choose all that apply).

[ ] research report
[ ] lab report
[ ] proposal
[ ] review
[ ] summary
[ ] reflection
[ ] seminar paper
[ ] thesis-driven essay
[ ] dissertation
[ ] thesis
[ ] annotated bibliography
[ ] presentation (PowerPoint or poster)
[ ] course syllabus
[ ] lesson plans
[ ] observation report
[ ] memo
[ ] response paper
[ ] fiction
[ ] poem
[ ] other, please specify _____

7. When you need assistance with your writing, from whom do you seek help? (Choose all that apply.)

[ ] major professor/advisor
[ ] other professor
[ ] writing center consultant
[ ] peer (graduate student)
[ ] professional tutor/editor
[ ] spouse/significant other
[ ] friend
[ ] other, please specify_____

8. When you need assistance with a conference proposal or paper/presentation, grant or funding proposal, manuscript for a journal, or other professional document, from whom do you seek help? (Choose all that apply.)

[ ] major professor/advisor
[ ] writing center consultant
[ ] peer (graduate student)
[ ] professional tutor/editor
[ ] other, please specify_____
[ ] friend
[ ] spouse/significant other

9. How frequently do you seek help with your writing?

[ ] rarely to never
[ ] occasionally
[ ] frequently
[ ] almost always to always

10. Since beginning the thesis/dissertation/equivalent process, I seek help with my writing _____ I did before starting this project. (Choose one)

[ ] more than
[ ] less than
[ ] about the same as

11. In what situation(s) do you think you have learned the most about writing or communicating ideas for your field or profession? (Choose one)

[ ] taking courses/seminars
[ ] working in lab
[ ] attending workshops
[ ] working/collaborating with professor
[ ] working/collaborating with peer
[ ] consulting with writing center
[ ] consulting with editor
[ ] reading published scholarship
[ ] other, please specify _____

Appendix B

Graduate Student Interview Guide *(1-2 hours)*

Demographics and Background
What is your sex?
How do you describe your race or ethnicity?
What is your department and program?
How far along are you in your program?
If you are receiving funding (e.g., fellowship, assistantship), do you have a research, teaching, or administrative requirement attached to the funding you receive from the university or program? (i.e., what is your research, teaching, or administrative assignment?)
Tell me about your specific research and/or teaching interests.
Why did you chose this program?

Early Writing Experiences
Describe your earliest memories of writing.
Who influenced your writing?
Describe your earliest memories of writing and doing research at school.

College Writing
What do you remember about your early writing assignments in college? (Any subject)
What was writing like in your major/minor courses and other required courses?
Describe your writing habits/processes.
Tell me about your best writing experience in college. Your worst?
Who helped you with your writing in college?
How do you think the writing you did as an undergraduate has prepared you for the writing demands of graduate school?

Graduate School
Tell me about the writing you did in your course work.
Tell me about the writing you do in your current program assignment.
Describe your writing habits/processes.
What types of publication and conference work is typical of graduate students in your program?
Tell me about the thesis/dissertation process in your program.
How do you know what to do to get started?
Describe how you have adjusted to the writing expected in your program, i.e., what's different, similar, and who or what helps make the adjustment from course work to thesis/dissertation easier?
Tell me about your best writing experience in graduate school. Your worst?
Who has helped you with your writing?
How does the school/program provide support or instruction for your writing? In what ways have you used the resource/s/ available?

May I keep the writing sample(s) you brought with you today? I will read them before our next interview so we can discuss them.

Graduate Student Second Interview Guide
(45 minutes, excluding time to discuss writing samples, another 45 minutes; Some time was set aside for discussing the writing samples. The first set of questions focused on the samples specifically.)

Tell me about this sample of writing (i.e., genre or form, expectations or assignment, deadlines, etc.)
What are/were your aims in writing it?
Describe your writing process for this piece of writing.
What makes this piece good (or bad)?
Point to a place in the text where you believe you succeeded or struggled.
Who has helped you write it? In what way(s)?
What would help you make this writing better/would have helped this writing be more successful?

More general writing questions:

Since our last discussion, what new writing demands are you encountering? How are you adjusting to them?
Have you used resources for support or instruction in writing for your field differently?
Tell me about a situation, event, or activity you recognized significant literacy development as a graduate student. (If you think of more than one, feel free to write/talk about others.)
How do you describe the relationship between the thesis/dissertation/project to your profession? (i.e., what is the role of this project for you as an emerging professional?)
Since entering graduate school, how have you developed as a writer?

Appendix C

Graduate Professor Survey (*10 minutes*)

1.What is your department and program?

2.Describe your position/rank.

3. How often do you teach graduate courses?

[ ] once every semester
[ ] once every academic year
[ ] once every other academic year
[ ] other, please specify _____

4. What kind(s) of writing projects/assignments do you require most often in these courses, if any? (Choose all that apply).

[ ] research report
[ ] lab report
[ ] proposal
[ ] review
[ ] summary
[ ] reflection
[ ] seminar paper
[ ] thesis-driven essay
[ ] dissertation
[ ] thesis
[ ] annotated bibliography
[ ] presentation (PowerPoint or poster)
[ ] course syllabus
[ ] lesson plans
[ ] observation report
[ ] memo
[ ] response paper
[ ] fiction
[ ] poem
[ ] other, please specify _____

5. On how many post-coursework graduate projects (thesis, dissertation, or the equivalent) are you currently serving as committee director or member?

Director _____

Committee member _____

6. Briefly describe the primary purpose of the thesis, dissertation, or the equivalent project as you understand it.

Appendix D

Graduate Professor Interview Guide (*45 minutes- 1 hour*)

What is your department and program?
Describe your position/rank.

How often do you teach graduate courses?
What kind(s) of writing projects/assignments do you require in these courses, if any?
Describe the difference between the writing assignments you assign in undergraduate courses and graduate courses.
What are the qualities of good writing in an undergraduate course in your field?
What are the qualities of good writing in a graduate course in your field?
What is the difference between the writing you assign in graduate courses and professional writing in your field?
Describe how you typically work with graduate students on their writing.

How many post-coursework graduate projects (thesis, dissertation, or the equivalent) are you currently directing or assisting?
Describe the purpose of the thesis, dissertation, or equivalent in your program. Describe the project's purpose in your professional field.
What are the qualities of a good thesis/dissertation/equivalent?
What are some problems students have when writing a thesis/dissertation/equivalent?
Tell me about the writing concerns graduates bring to you.
Describe how you typically work with graduate students on whose project committees you are chairing or reading as a committee member.

What do you want your students to gain from the experience of writing such projects?

Appendix E

Graduate Writing Center Consultant Interview (*30 minutes*)

How long have you worked for the Graduate Writing Center?
What do you like about working with graduates?
Tell me about the writing concerns graduates bring to you.
How are these concerns similar to or different than undergraduate concerns?

Have you worked with any students on a thesis, dissertation, or equivalent project? If so, what aspects of the project do you help with or during what stages?
How are the writing concerns for coursework assignments different from those for the thesis, dissertation, or equivalent?
What kind of help have you been able to provide?
In what situations have you felt it was difficult to help?

Appendix F

Faculty Descriptions of the Thesis and Dissertation

Program	Rank/Position	Description of Thesis and/or Dissertation
Biology	Assistant Professor	1. To explain the research project 2. To elaborate on the backgroud material 3. To present the data obtained in the study 4. To draw conclusions from the data
Chemistry/Biochemistry	Professor	Get research ready for publication
Communication Studies, M.S.	Associate Professor	To help a student understand how research is conducted, from the question origination based on an in-depth literature review, to constructing methods for gathering data to answer the question, to analyzing results and then discussing the results and implications.
Communication Studies, M.S.	Professor	When we conduct one, the purpose is to produce findings which contribute to knowledge in the discipline. The expectation is that this knowledge will be shared, through publication or other means, with scholars in the discipline.
Education - secondary and administration	Professor	To help a student understand how research is conducted, from the question origination based on an in-depth literature review, to constructing methods for gathering data to answer the question, to analyzing results and then discussing the results and implications.

Program	Rank/Position	Description of Thesis and/or Dissertation
Education, School of	Professor	in my field, the purpose is a professional project w/ some impact on an institution or operating program and connected to the student's growth analytically and conceptually
Education	Associate Professor	entry and socialization into the academic /research community
Education	Professor	Beginning of research career, primary purpose is to hone the skills needed to contribute to the scholarly literature in a well-defined area of study.
Education	Professor	Dual purpose: to plan, execute and analyze an appropriate project; and to reflect on/interpret the learning & growth resulting from the project
English, Composition and Rhetoric	Assistant Professor	I see the purpose of a thesis as an opportunity to focus on a substantive research project that allows the student to begin to participate in scholarly conversations in her/his field--to both learn about the field and work to become a voice within that field. I see the dissertation as doing that on an even more professionalized level in which the student seeks to produce publishable articles or a revisable book-length project (this is possible for the thesis, too, but I see this as a clear goal for the diss.) I also think that producing both kinds of texts helps teach students how to

Program	Rank/Position	Description of Thesis and/or Dissertation
		embark on longer writing projects that teach them--as no class assignment can--how to endeavor in a writing life where research and writing are a part of their work activities.
English, Rhetoric and Composition	Assistant Professor	the MA is the "finishing" degree for the BA, and the thesis should establish a student's ability to manage a long, relatively complex and in-depth study. The Ph.D. dissertation is a collaboratively written document for the purpose of preparing a new scholar for work in the discipline
Geology	Assistant Professor	Environmental science (mainly in the Amazon) related.
Geology	Provost	An examination of the controls on the formation of karst topography (i.e., landscape evolution in areas where limestone rocks are exposed at the surface of the earth.)
History	Professor	To show that the student can do meaningful historical research and present it in a clear, thoughtful manner

Program	Rank/Position	Description of Thesis and/or Dissertation
History (European)	Associate Professor	The purpose is for the student to demonstrate all the basic skills of the historical profession: an understanding of the historical context, an understanding of the relevant secondary sources (what we already know about that context), and an argument supported by primary-source research. The content matters most, but style is important to the purpose as well: the thesis/dissertation must be properly documented, clearly organized, with a clearly stated argument and a clear indication of what its contributions are to the field.
Physics & Astronomy	Associate Professor (supervises graduate astrophysics program)	Your question is a bit vague ... I am assuming that you are requesting my opinion about dissertations in general, not a description of the specific projects which I am supervising. The dissertation is a unique step in the educational process, ushering a student from a world of passive learning into that of creative and independent thinking. The completion of a dissertation is the "stamp of approval", designating this person as one who is now capable of establishing his/her own research projects and being a mentor to others.

Program	Rank/Position	Description of Thesis and/or Dissertation
Psychology, Behavioral Neuroscience	Associate Professor	temporal learning in animals, the work involves data collection, analyses, and interpretation

Note: Responses such as "We do not require theses or dissertations" or no response were eliminated from this table.

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Personal Background	Angela Marta González Born November 20, 1973, Fort Riley, Kansas Daughter of Enrique González-Rodriguez and Frances Taylor González Married Michael Ryan Dungy September 26, 1998
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ABSTRACT

SHAPING THE THESIS AND DISSERTATION: CASE STUDIES OF WRITERS ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

By Angela Marta González, Ph.D., 2007
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Shaping the Thesis and Dissertation: Case Studies of Writers across the Curriculum concentrates on how writers learn to conceptualize and produce texts during the high-stakes transition from graduate school into the profession: writing the thesis or dissertation. Using a theoretical framework informed by rhetorical studies of genre and a methodological approach of case studies, González describes the writing histories and writing processes of five students as they begin crossing the textual bridge between writing as a graduate student to writing as a professional.

The five writers featured represent different fields of study including art history, biblical interpretation, composition and rhetoric, journalism—advertising/public relations, and literature. These stories demonstrate the ways that multiple contexts—the individual, local, and disciplinary—impact thesis and dissertation writing.

Shaping the Thesis and Dissertation presents four major findings. First, advanced graduate students need the guidelines, direction, and models they previously received

when encountering new genres in undergraduate and graduate courses. Second, graduate faculty across the curriculum increasingly acknowledge the need for explicit writing instruction. Third, graduate students seek support primarily from those they consider experts, resisting or rejecting potential help from peers, writing center staff, or other non-specialists. Fourth, thesis and dissertation writers rarely pursue non-disciplinary sources of support and instruction for their writing despite that the university has made multiple sources available to them. However, some writers seek mentors who are not sanctioned by the university (i.e. professional editors or industry professionals) because the writers do not receive the mentoring and/or support they need from their advisors.

These findings indicate that academic advisors provide the political position in the local institution and the insider knowledge in the discipline that thesis and dissertation writers need to help them navigate the thesis and dissertation process. Although non-specialists such as writing center consultants and professional editors cannot replace this invaluable advisement. As a result, this study demonstrates that the once seemingly tacit forms of advanced disciplinary writing are *teachable*, and that these forms are, in some cases, taught out of necessity by non-specialist or non-disciplinary sources.