

INSIDER SCHOOL: HOW DOCTORAL STUDENTS LEARN CONVENTIONS,
STRATEGIES, & BULLSHIT

by

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(Under the Direction of Peter Smagorinsky)

ABSTRACT

As part of their doctoral education and disciplinary enculturation, doctoral students need to learn how to write the diverse types of academic texts required of them as scholars. These texts exist in nested and dynamic contexts (Prior, 1994, 1998), and learning to write them includes as much knowledge of the content and language of the discipline as learning to navigate the field and processes of publishing. This dissertation presents part of a larger qualitative study and draws upon sociocultural studies of language and learning (Vygotsky, 1987, Wertsch, 1991, 1985) and composition (Smagorinsky, 2001, 1991) to inform the investigation of how doctoral students learn to engage successfully in the challenges of academic writing and public scholarship. Eleven participants enrolled in a literacy education department were interviewed twice on their experiences as writers and their specific processes for composing selected texts. All interview data were analyzed, and this dissertation presents a foundational argument for subsequent reports, focusing primarily on the student culture within the department that emphasizes the importance of publication and the ways different students learn to write within that context. Particular attention is paid to the strategic knowledge students use in order to leverage limited knowledge, experience, and power into a positive outcome—an outcome that

allows students to meet expectations of professors, editors, reviewers, and peers. These strategies are considered in terms of academic bullshit (Smagorinsky, Daigle, O'Donnell-Allen, & Bynum, 2010) and the relative merits of bullshitting and the term itself. This dissertation illustrates a range of learning opportunities within the department, with some students experiencing intense, detailed apprenticeship on content and strategies for producing and publishing texts, but some students receive little guidance or instruction on writing or engaging professionally in the disciplinary community. Strategic knowledge is often tacit and often not conveyed formally. While professors are valuable sources of this insider knowledge, students connected to their peers may share these strategies with one another; however, underlying competition among students can possibly limit students' disclosure of tactical knowledge.

INDEX WORDS: doctoral students, academic writing, chronotope, mentoring, bullshit

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

“And he just knew what to say. It was one of these things – and he would help me when I would write something. He would sit there and he would literally say, ‘Say this, say that like this. Don’t say it that way, say it this way.’ Like what’s the difference? He’s like, ‘Just trust me, say it this way.’ So he clearly knew the expectations.”

~ Zorko¹

Zorko’s recollection came during an interview when he was talking about the trouble he had shifting his language and his writing proficiency into the style of educational research texts, which he described as cold and harsh and dry. Writing had never been an obstacle in school for him before his doctoral program, and he was terribly frustrated that criteria for how to write well in this genre eluded him. Zorko told me of a peer who had graduated a few years before and so only overlapped time in the doctoral program with Zorko for a year. The confidence with which his peer approached writing, the certainty of precise word choice and how to put them in order still impressed Zorko years on, when he found himself at the same point in his program his peer had been so knowledgeable yet having acquired none of the confidence and, he felt, little of the knowledge to know whether to say it this way or that way.

¹All participants’ names are pseudonyms. Most are chosen by participants, and in other cases participants didn’t choose to change the first random pseudonym I assigned.

Professors’ names are elided in brackets [my professor] instead of pseudonyms to minimize the likelihood of identifying the professors and, consequently, students.

There is always variation of writing abilities within groups of students, so it is not unusual in itself that Zorko saw his peer as a more confident and knowledgeable writer in this genre. Zorko was, however, an accomplished writer in other genres, which only exacerbated his frustration as a writer in a doctoral program. Because writing is a primary vehicle for building and communicating one's identity as a scholar, how students perceive themselves as academic writers is tied to how they evaluate their abilities as potential professional academics. This study focuses on doctoral students in a literacy education program through the prism of composition, considering the aspects and influences in their processes of becoming academic writers.

In this chapter, I discuss my rationale for engaging in this project, drawing an initial picture of myself as a writer of school texts and student of writing in how this shaped my original approach to this research. I provide a broad overview of the entire project and the scope of analysis, from which the findings reported here were selected to present the primary argument in establishing the context of the study; without this premise established, all other findings would be incomplete. Thus, additional findings have been relegated to subsequent manuscripts. This larger analysis is presented briefly here in order to contextualize the findings presented in this dissertation. Finally, I introduce factors of my own subjectivity as they played into the whole course of the study and dissertation.

Contextualizing the Project

The purpose of this study was to draw upon interviews with doctoral students to learn about how they identified themselves, their strengths, their histories, their obstacles, and their processes as writers, especially in terms of producing the texts required of them as novice scholars in educational research. The original angle rested on a presumption that students

struggled with some aspect or some project of advanced academic writing and engaged other strategies and knowledge to mediate those composing challenges. And, I assumed, at least some of them bullshit some of the time; I was curious to see when and how those strategies came into play. Through application of Bakhtin's (1981, 1986) theories of dialogic language and the work of Vygotsky (1987), Wertsch (1985), and Smagorinsky (YEARS) in considering sociocultural processes of language, learning, and composing, I sought to explore students' experiences of learning to write the specialized texts of scholarship in educational research.

Genesis of the study

The most apparent influence on my choice to develop this project for my dissertation is in a previous study that I worked on for three years and ultimately published with my advisor. It was a study in which we interpreted a high school student's navigation of a difficult essay assignment as an exemplary process of bullshitting to ameliorate the gap between competence and expectation. I related my own experiences as an adolescent writer to the student in our study, seeing the recipe of the form of the texts as ripe for appropriation or exploitation when the task itself was less than compelling.

As a graduate student, the forms of the academic articles seemed quite obvious to me. My struggles as student writer in graduate school were, I assumed, unique to me and not due so much to the text but to the writer. I still considered that some required tasks in school were formulaic, and I was interested to see how other graduate students experienced school writing and the transition to public academic writing. I assumed that these forms for texts were obvious to other students, that they could use them to structure their words across daunting gaps in knowledge or confidence, and that it was likely that, at least on occasion, the investment was in completing the task more so than earnestly doing every step with deep sincerity. After all, it was

still school, and some school tasks were perfunctory. I was curious about what resources doctoral students used for writing, how they came to develop them, and when they invoked various strategies and knowledge.

Crystallizing the problem

It was interesting for me to hear my own assumptions voiced by participants in our interview conversations. Like many of the students I talked to, I assumed that people in doctoral programs—especially people in literacy education doctoral programs—were accomplished writers. And so, what was the rationale for studying them? One critique of our article on the high school student was that she was an exceptional student and not representative of most adolescent writers. What, then, did I expect to gain from studying people whose school writing was strong enough to get them to this level of schooling?

Doctoral students need to learn how to define themselves and identify with specific academic communities. Moreover, they need to be accepted as members in these academic communities. This means that students must learn both the content of their disciplines and the ways that professionals act, think, speak, and write in relation to researching in their fields. This conventional knowledge, or “knowledge of the social or situational understandings that govern behavior under particular circumstances” (Smagorinsky & Smith, 1992, p. 291), is a necessary component of successful doctoral studies. Students must learn when and how to demonstrate what they know in a manner that accords with professional and social conventions. Students must be able to compose for defined audiences in a way that presents their research as a felicitous contribution to the disciplinary conversation and so must access a number of tools in order to develop the knowledge needed to produce different kinds of academic texts.

Researching doctoral students-as-writers was compelling to me on a few levels. First, I figured people had many different techniques for responding to challenging writing tasks. If such a belief were true, a study like this could consolidate and bring forward an array of knowledge about writing and perhaps benefit others with new possible strategies. Secondly, I was aware of the detail and extent of my own apprenticeship in academic writing, and I knew (albeit generally) that not all students had such an opportunity. Thus, I was primarily concerned with the following question: What various opportunities exist and are effective for students to help them develop the knowledge and skills to be professional academic writers? Finally, I was interested to learn about the types of writing tasks in which students engaged, how they perceived those tasks and texts, and how they evaluated the qualities and values of a multitude of school and scholarly writing. In part, I wanted to see if/what they identified as required writing tasks that were amenable to bullshitting to consider the cycles of schooling that perpetuate bullshittable writing projects.

Writing exists within nested and dynamic contexts (Ding, 2008; Nystrand, 1986; Prior, 1992). Students learn to write in contexts that are rich with their current and previous experiences, texts they've read, and conversations with peers, teachers, and people outside their academic discourse community. Nystrand (1986) argues that students' writing reflects the dialogic contexts of the text and the ways the writers actively negotiate meaning with the readers. Writers communicate their understanding of the content of their text as much as they demonstrate their understandings of their audiences and how they anticipate their texts will be received and interpreted. The boundaries and expectations indexed by these textual choices represent the disciplinary knowledge that defines the community of which students are trying to become members.

Research Questions

The ultimate focus of this research obtained throughout the course of this study, though more precise wording and sub-questions were developed to hone the analysis at different points in the process.

This dissertation represents selected findings from the extensive analysis of my whole dissertation study, emphasizing a salient contextual tension experienced by doctoral students enrolled in a department of literacy and language education. While the primary purpose of this study was to learn about individuals' processes of composing and experiences learning to write the specific academic texts required of them as students and scholars, much of the analysis in other aspects of the study responded to or entailed the findings presented herein, namely the varied experiences of learning within a common expectation of performance. Thus, the question guiding the overall study is:

What are ways doctoral students learn to perceive and complete their writing tasks?

The findings presented in this dissertation relate to these specific questions:

1. How do doctoral students learn the roles available for themselves as students and scholars?
2. What opportunities do they have to access strategies and insider knowledge for navigating efficiently as they enter new territory?

The Big Picture

I gathered and analyzed a substantial amount of data in the study in service of the first two questions above. Because of unexpected and confounding data, I engaged in rounds of analysis, reordering and regrouping people, themes, tasks, and numerous other dynamics as I sought to develop understanding of the complexities I uncovered. As the analysis became

coherent, I realized that the scope of the full project far exceeded the dissertation text. In order to clarify the relation of the selected findings in this dissertation to the whole, I will briefly present the findings across the entire study.

Things to learn

Text criteria: This analysis tracks changes in the words used by participants to identify and describe the more concrete, textual components of academic texts including the form, lexicon, tone, and other qualities of the text itself. The findings include both corpus and individual analysis, noting changes for participants between the first and second interviews.

Writing processes: Somewhat a summary of the fine-grained analysis of processes listed below, this analysis within Things to Learn addresses more holistic aspects of writing as something that doctoral students and professional scholars do. For some students, doctoral studies were the first experience of revising a school paper at all. Some students didn't consider themselves as writers or as having much experience or competence with writing, while others saw themselves as proficient creative writers but not academic. Most were shocked and overwhelmed at the expectations to write. And so for all participants, learning *that* writing is a primary activity necessitated revisiting and extending existent writing processes.

Content knowledge: The analyses for content knowledge were most interesting and useful at the individual level rather than across all eleven participants. Analyses include but are not limited to how people talk about content knowledge, evaluate themselves relative to what they think they ought to know, and how that knowledge contributes to their identities. Content knowledge analysis also overlaps with analyses of developing personae.

Disciplinary conventions: Analysis of participants' knowledge and application of conventional knowledge within shifting disciplinary communities and activities is felicitously woven throughout the larger study rather than being particularly substantive, or concise, on its

own. In this grouping, analysis of disciplinary knowledge broadly looks at how people talk about recognizing the unique, specific, and dynamic nature of how knowledge is validated and constructed continually in different contexts.

Opportunities to learn

Professors: Learning from professors is one reason people enroll in PhD programs instead of just living in the public library. Analysis focused on students' opportunities to learn from (or with) professors includes details on apprenticeship, class structures, professional expectations, task-specific expectations, communication, co-authoring, feedback on writing, and insider knowledge about the discipline—personalities and tensions, language use and meaning, strategies for negotiating with editors or employers, etc. The rich data on learning from professors of course overlap with many other areas of analysis.

Peers: Analysis of peer dynamics looked at how people identify peers, writing groups, quality and focus of peer feedback on writing, collaboration and competition.

Reviewers/Editors: This opportunity to learn analysis looks both at students learning from other reviewers/editors when they submit articles and students' experiences serving as peer reviewer for professional journals and reviewer/editor for the online journal published by the graduate students in the department. This analysis includes aspect of power dynamics, language, explicating structure, disciplinary content knowledge, tone and its effects on manuscript authors. Some participants elected to share published manuscripts with their historical trail of incarnations, including correspondence with editors. These detailed textual evolutions have not been analyzed and coded, but they were points of conversation in the text-based, second round of interviews.

Texts: Not particularly surprising is that many participants identified reading other texts as a primary mode of learning. Participants read journals for content, citations, tone, structure, and other textual models. In addition, participants strategically perused journals to target article submissions based on previous articles the journal published in terms of content, theory, methodology, and editorial/review board preferences. Reading served as a pre-writing process, an anxiety-producing writing block, and a strategy for working through writing blocks.

Developing a persona

Self-as-writer: As mentioned above in Writing Processes as a Thing to Learn, the primacy of writing in a life of teacher education and research presents an acute project of developing an identity in disciplinary communities through public texts. This analysis includes aspects of personal confidence, ethics, politics, and other ideas of texts serving as actions of the self.

Theorizing self and scholarship: A noteworthy sub-set of Self-as-Writer analysis is the manner and degree to which coming to understand and appropriate theories of language, society, teaching and learning, identity, power, truth, etc. affects a person's developing scholarly self. In one aspect, the theory one chooses to engage in a publication aligns oneself with particular intellectual camps. In another way, theory becomes so personal that not only does it influence how and what one writes, but the questions theories afford and constrain become closely tied to the writer—so much so that I had to forgo this very interesting analysis for the dissertation lest all the participants be unmasked.

Teacher/scholar: This analysis builds on the findings presented in this dissertation, primarily in the way that students perceive and perpetuate a bifurcated career path, and they spoke often of the pressure to write scholarly stuff even if they wanted to write for classroom

teachers. “A canard,” my advisor asserts. Nevertheless, the pervasiveness of this imminent, irreversible choice haunts the halls. While this issue is touched upon in the findings presented here, the extended analysis of teacher-scholar tension looks at participants’ attributions of the notion, the ways they describe the differences between the two types of text, and how they navigate the path that seems to diverge.

Voice: While not unrelated to the other components of developing a persona, the analysis focused on voice draws heavily on dialogic theory (Bakhtin, 1981, 1986) in tracing words and tracking tensions in participants’ texts, revisions, feedback to and from others, appropriating the language of the discipline, theorists, and professors, and participants affective evaluations about how the language of the text reflects themselves. Voice appeared as a specific point of concern and discussion throughout the interviews, and the analysis of voice ties into many other analyses.

Processes for composing

Reading: As mentioned above, all participants talked about how reading fit in to their processes for writing. The analysis focused on reading as a composing process details when, what, where, and how people read in connection with their writing projects. While there is an analysis across all participants, the specifics of reading behaviors is more informative in the individuals’ case analyses.

Dialogic weaving: Reading is one source of dialogic weaving, as when participants type quotes selected from readings—sometimes well in advance of a writing project, sometimes at the beginning of a project on a particular topic or idea. These quotes are often rearranged as a skeleton for a rough draft, onto which writers summarize, elaborate, and connect to build momentum for their writing. Some participants also or instead used quotes from their own data

as part of the initial skeletal arrangement. Dialogic Weaving addresses also the harvesting from one's own prior texts and copy/pasting freewriting or course papers. A final and fascinating dialogic weaving is how participants talk about their professors' voices and maxims coming into their heads as they write, showing up in chosen vocabulary or critiquing (constructively or not) the evolving text.

Blocks and fixes: The analysis of writing blocks, instances when participants identified themselves as having trouble figuring out what to say, is mildly informative across all participants, but it is more useful within particular cases. While I anticipated that this question of blocks and strategies to remedy those occasions would be a focal point of analysis in studying bullshitting, the personal variation makes the blocks informative in context of other details of the participant as a writer, student, teacher, scholar, spouse, parent, and other forces exerting pressure on abilities to sit down and write.

Evaluation: The analysis of terms used to evaluate the quality of writing overlaps with knowledge of textual criteria and with addressivity. In terms of criteria, the analysis looks at the language used by participants (like "good," "deep," "effective") both across the corpus and in individual cases, including comparisons of individuals' first and second interviews. In terms of addressivity, the Evaluation analysis highlights when participants infer or anticipate how their readers (usually professors but also reviewers/editors) will respond to the text.

Addressees

The concept of crafting utterances in order to have a particular effect on the person(s) to whom the utterance is addressed is inherent in consideration of composition. The analysis of addressivity, then, is woven into other analyses where participants are anticipating specific or general responses to and interpretations of their texts. This includes concrete textual features

("[my professor] really has a thing for headings/APA/etc.") and how particular errors are acute irritants to certain readers. It also relates to citations and to less tangible things like wanting to please or make proud a professor. The notions of voice and creating a persona overall is entailed in addressivity, as its focus is on how the words one chooses will be interpreted.

Bullshit

The bullshit analysis is complicated, not so much because the findings are complex but that they rely on nearly all the other findings. The questions of whether, when, why, or how doctoral students bullshit draws from these other analyses of what, when, how students participate in the growing challenges of scholarship. Bullshitting requires opportunity, motivation, and knowledge about what can be exploited toward what ends. But bullshitting is not necessarily nefarious—rather, it is an important tool in the array of strategies for neophytes to step into the game. Calling something—especially someone else's something—bullshit is a contentious move, regardless of how I triangulate the data. This conundrum is addressed but not solved in the chapter of findings. The bullshit included in the findings selected for this dissertation is not comprehensive. Rather than a write-up focusing just on the bullshit analysis that would need to survey the findings listed above, this dissertation serves as a reference point for that future survey.

Typology of bullshit found: The next chapter elaborates on types of bullshit relevant to academia. There were some instances of generative bullshitting, wherein the process of writing through a knowledge gap by strategically using any available knowledge, the writer comes to better understand the ideas eluding him or her at the outset. Citation practices were generative bullshit in some cases and not in others. For instance, Vladimir used his peer's suggestions to add particular citations without reading extensively from those sources. However, he applied the

growing list of sources he ought to know to his own reading goals so that in writing subsequent texts he would know the ideas and people cited frequently in the discipline. Other participants, however, added strategic citations of articles published by professors, editors, or journals in order to foster positive response from anticipated readers.

There were more instances of participants identifying some sort of posturing or bravado, often someone else's but occasionally one's own. Bullshitting also included purposefully crafting a text to meet the idiosyncratic needs or criteria of a particular addressee in order to assure approval, including eliding or creatively representing components of the work that potentially would be problematic. Other bullshitting included making revisions one didn't like or agree with in order to satisfy the gatekeeper, be that a professor or editor, rather than argue for one's own style or interpretation. In addition, there were multiple instances in which participants categorized the behavior of another as bullshit, in the most colloquial sense of general disapproval, devaluation, or disgust. These were frequently related to power dynamics in which professors or editors seemed to lean on power in lieu of merit when forcing students' choices on what or how to write.

Bullshit vs. strategy vs. a rose by any other name: A constant question in the course of doing this study was on the necessity of using the term bullshit at all. Specifically, what was my authority to name someone's behavior as bullshit when they didn't name it as such? Of course this is precisely how it's used in the world, but it didn't seem adequate for purposes of a research study. Nevertheless, the value of investigating bullshit in academic contexts obtains, primarily because its presence is widely but broadly recognized. A full analysis of this bullshit question situates instances of strategy within the corpus of data, the individuals, and the theoretical implications of naming bullshit as I see it.

Owing to the dispersion of the bullshit analysis across the larger study, in that it is constituted by diverse findings not fully represented here, the argument of interpreting bullshit is burgeoning but not fully formed.

The Role of Context

Construction of this department: The ways students continuously reconstruct the culture of the department is a primary focus of findings presented in Chapter 5. The influence that this culture of expectations and achievement has on students' goals and the ways they perceive and approach writing tasks informs other analyses.

Literacy educators as critical students: An interesting dynamic within the context of this study is that nearly all participants have some experience as teachers and most as teachers of literacy in some form. As such, many participants reflected on their own experiences as students relative to their experiences as teachers. These comments generally were made, in the conversational context, as brief asides to a central story. Moreover, any comments even slightly critical of professors were hedged, buffeted by positive comments, and participants paused to address me to affirm the confidentiality of the interviews. These teacher-as-student evaluative comments included issues such as: content, timing, tone, and mode of feedback on writing; clarity of expectations and evaluative criteria on writing tasks; and manner (or lack) of instruction on how to produce texts commensurate with high professional standards.

Me, me, me

Finally, designing, conducting, analyzing, and writing this study has provided ample opportunity for me to confront myself: in academic roles of a writer, scholar, student, friend, peer, teacher, researcher; in personal roles of sister, daughter, aunt, granddaughter, niece, cousin, neighbor, friend; as the angry high school student who somehow manages to linger in my mind;

as a person engaged in a tremendous, chosen project For the most part, these are not confrontations and challenges I am particularly eager to publicize (to the crowd of nobody reading this dissertation.) Some problems, especially the methodological quagmires, do warrant further analysis in order to improve my thinking as a researcher.

The Dissertation from the Big Picture

Due to the numerous and diverse yet overlapping findings, it was difficult to pare the study down to a manageable dissertation. The following sections give a brief explanation of how the dissertation was constructed relative to the entire study. In the methods chapter I provide more extensive detail on data reduction.

Selecting the findings

Because the genesis of this research was in a study of a high school student who successfully bullshitted her way through a tremendously challenging essay assignment (Smagorinsky, Daigle, O'Donnell-Allen, & Bynum, 2010), the original lens of my dissertation research was on the same type of generative bullshitting—where the byproduct of figuring out how to make up content to fit the criteria is actually figuring out the ideas themselves (to some degree). From the perspective of that study, I was anticipating focusing my dissertation on doctoral students' construction of writing tasks and the knowledge they engaged to navigate those tasks, particularly when they weren't confident that they knew all they thought they should. While this is still the overarching project, I have culled the full analysis described above to a manageable size for this dissertation piece, setting aside for future articles much of the data and theoretical explication and synthesis entailed in other findings.

Two things shaped my selection of the findings presented in this document. First, I realized that the underlying pressures and tensions within the student culture in the department

influence most of students' experiences as writers in these doctoral programs. Moreover, it became apparent that, ubiquitous as this dynamic was among students, faculty readers would not accept its existence as mere matter of course and so any other interpretative argument that included this pressure as a factor relied on the argument for the pressure itself. The second influence on my selection of these findings about the construction of the department was a result of my personal reactions to the stories participants told me about their experiences as writers and students. In addition to this widely perceived pressure on performance, there was wide variation in students' abilities to meet those expectations and their opportunities to develop the requisite skills. The distress expressed to me by participants related to these demands and often dissatisfying support from professors struck me deeply, and it compelled me to interrogate the differences in students' experiences learning to write within this department.

Selecting the data

An additional filter on the quotes presented here removed potentially identifying details, like research topics, sometimes theory, professors' names, and details of circumstance or conversation which may be memorable to others present in the story. Consequently, some participants' voices appear rarely or infrequently if our conversations consisted largely of specific or unique topics which would reveal their identities.

Writing for anonymity

The presentation of this qualitative study is unconventional and purposefully obfuscatory. The information that participants disclosed about their experiences as writers and students included personal frustrations with themselves or their professors, and all students were still enrolled in the department as I wrote and defended my dissertation. As my participant Paola said,

You have to kind of balance everything else. Because we're dependent on all these people. You know, I can sit here and joke about my committee and I can—and I'm fond of each and every one of them—but any one of them could get me.

And so, in my writing, I try to balance clarity and effectiveness in presenting data without, as is more conventional, presenting a clear and detailed picture of each person whose words I use as data. Thus, the presentation of data perhaps reads a bit clunky, but my priority was to mask as much as possible the identities of people who generously told me about problems and triumphs that would not necessarily be disclosed in open, public conversation.

The pseudonyms are also intentionally awkward, echoing the dissonance between the presentation of my argument through data and the conventional qualitative practice of choosing pseudonyms that are harmonious with the detailed profile written to build a personal image. Names, then, are not ethnically, culturally, etymologically, aurally, or otherwise related to participants' actual names. In each awkward pseudonym I reiterate my concession to anonymity at the expense of crafting images of people that may affectively, or subconsciously, lend credence to a data-based qualitative argument.

In the next chapter I will present relevant literature on doctoral students' enculturation into the disciplinary conventions of their academic fields, including learning what defines success and value.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Developing identities as academics, scholars, researchers, or some such term—the title itself being a project of identification—is a challenging process. For doctoral students in education, not only are they often faced with the academic or practitioner divide, but they generally have experience as teachers, which mediates their role as student and the ways they evaluate their experiences. Jazvac-Martek (2009) writes that “[t]he academic identity that develops through the doctoral journey represent a dynamic configuration of elements that are simultaneously internal, or psychological and development, and external, involving the social and disciplinary” (p. 253). New doctoral students are presented with a number of challenges. Weiland (2008) suggests that students undergo a crisis of identity and, even though matriculation into a doctoral program suggests that they have histories as successful students, many students doubt their abilities to meet academic, research, and professional expectations.

Socialization

In addition to developing content knowledge and research skills, doctoral students experience a process of socialization into the academic profession and the doctoral experience through interactions with and observations of other graduate students and faculty (Austin, 2002; Delamont, Atkinson, & Parry, 2000; Weidman & Stein, 2003). Socialization models of doctoral education tend to frame the student as trying to emulate and conform during the program and distinguish an independent identity after graduation (Weidman & Stein, 2003), and although this paradigm has been highly influential in higher education research, more recent scholarship is

pushing back on this assumption of passivity in students (Anthony, 2002). Socialization models focus on a unidirectional assimilation of individuals adopting the values, practices, and norms into their identities. While incorporating some of the literature from higher education research that tends to use this type of socialization model, my study is situated in a cultural-historical frame (Cole, 1996) that interprets individuals' social changes in mutually shaping interaction with the culture environment, in continual negotiation of identity in the process of learning and becoming a member of a new community. However, much research on doctoral students' experiences is in higher ed research, so I will present what is useful and relevant for establishing an introduction to this study that frames the issues around understanding dynamics of faculty-student relationships and other influences on students' development as scholars.

Advisors

Relationships with advisors are extremely influential in students' experiences. Advisors serve professional socialization roles in the department and shape the content and quality of their doctoral programs (Golde, 2005; Tinto, 1993; Weidman, Twale, & Stein, 2001). They also affect their experiences of developing identities in disciplinary communities through co-publishing, presenting, and training students in research (Lovitts, 2004; Lyons, Scroggins, & Rule, 1990). Unfortunately, advising experiences are highly unequal (Fagen & Suedkemp, 2004), and while some students have positive relationships and effective learning opportunities, other students may not. Some students may have advisors who do not engage students in conversation about their goals or may not provide students with opportunities to learn important disciplinary and professional knowledge (Austin, 2002; Fagen & Suedkemp, 2004; Lovitts, 2004).

Professors' varied styles of advising doctoral students has been research in terms of practices, factors affecting their ideas about advising, and how the advising affects students. Not

surprisingly, students who meet more frequently and develop a positive relationship with their advisor not only are more likely to complete their degree but generally do so faster than students who report less positive advising relationships (Ferrer de Valero, 2001; Golde, 1998; Lovitts, 2004). The emphasis on research productivity in a school affects how much time faculty devote to students (Fairweather, 1993), but other influences include the professors' own experiences as an advisee, how closely students' interests align with their own, what they perceive the students' needs to be, and how much the professor likes the individual students personally (Barnes & Austin, 2005). Advising is a complex, situated interpersonal task encompassing intellectual and social dimensions, and so it is not easily systematized. That there remains inequality in experience warrants continued attention to ameliorate this gap of opportunity.

Tacit knowledge

Students need to understand the ways of knowing and the ways of engaging in the discourse within the discipline in order for their audience to accept their texts as legitimate contributions. While much information is taught directly, for example in course readings and discussions, important yet subtle details of how the academic community operates are often left unsaid.

The appropriation of conventional knowledge requires socialization into the discipline in such a way that students learn the explicit and implicit values of the academic community, but socialization into a discipline is a complex and challenging process. One major obstacle to learning the conventions of the academic communities is that much knowledge in the department and discipline is tacit. Becher (1987) writes that "Tacit knowledge is that particular kind of understanding which is so taken for granted by those who possess it that it is never explicitly taught, but has instead to be acquired by sustained involvement in the relevant cultural milieu"

(p. 262). This sustained involvement can be framed also by Lave and Wenger's (1991) notion of *legitimate peripheral participation*, wherein new members learn the ways of their communities of practice by observing the established members, engaging in marginal or smaller tasks, assisting with central tasks, and practicing the ways of being in the culture as they work toward being accepted as full members in the community. While some tasks and values are explained clearly, much socialization into communities of practice requires new members to be attentive in their observations and interactions in order to glean the tacit understandings (Gerholm, 1990).

Students need opportunities to access this important professional knowledge. Within the doctoral program there is a range of formal and informal contexts for learning what they need to know to be successful students and scholars. Most of this sociocultural knowledge must come through interactions with their teachers and peers. Faculty mentoring is an important component of student success. In addition to explicit instruction in content knowledge such as key research in the history of the discipline, mentoring relationships afford students more opportunities to decipher the values of the discipline and ways of talking and writing about relevant scholarship in the discipline. For example, Parry (1998) suggests that "social conventions sometimes preclude knowledge disputes from being written up in texts" (p. 274). Such social propriety would require students to efficiently situate their work among relevant research yet define it in such a way as to avoid certain acknowledged, and perhaps unproductive, entanglements. Of course, students must also learn to distinguish between skirting skirmishes and eliding important challenges to their arguments.

Students who co-author papers with their teachers benefit from this activity in many ways. Florence and Yore (2004) argue that "authentic, collaborative writing experiences encourage growth and risk, make the implicit explicit, and reflect the interactive, constructive

nature of writing” (p. 644). The extended discussions about what gets included in the paper and how it needs to be said provide students with opportunities to hone their content knowledge and their understandings of disciplinary discourse. Florence and Yore found that in co-authoring arrangements, “negotiating shared meaning, addressing editorial and conceptual feedback, and augmenting arguments with additional evidence and new warrants led to knowledge building as well as improved text” (p. 659). Furthermore, when these papers result in conference presentations and publications, the students are introduced as colleagues in the academic community. Indeed, such relationships help students develop professional identities (Weiland, 2008) in addition to developing academic skills.

Thinking in Roles

The social psychology theory of role identity, Jazva-Martek (2009) argues, is useful in interpreting doctoral students’ experiences, looking at how students take up “acting and enacting the idealized conceptions of what good doctoral students and early career academic are imagined to be or do” (p. 255). In seeking these “idealized conceptions of the roles,” students monitor others’ feedback about their engagement of the roles for “legitimization and self-verification,” where the individuals internalize social feedback to self-evaluate. “Personal expectations ... form the basis for an evaluation of success or failure, or the sense of satisfaction or discontent” (p. 256), connecting this model of identity to self-efficacy, self-esteem, motivation, and other self-evaluative psychological, affective constructs (Stets & Burke, 2000). Jazva-Martek’s study is germane to my own as it too is based in the bounded site of a single school of education in a Research 1 university.

Doctoral students experience vacillating role identities, as they identify alternately between a scholar and peer among faculty at the college or in disciplinary communities and as a

student subject to many of the traditional institutionalized power dynamics of the student-teacher relationship. “Once doctoral students take on the agency required [to shift] role identities, there are more opportunities for the idealized standards of these roles to be legitimized” (Jazvac-Martek, 2009), and, so long as students take up the role in the manner others have also constructed “good doctoral student [or] early academic” (p. 255), they will be able to evaluate themselves successfully and reinforce that identity. Activities including co-authoring and presenting with professors, “receiving constructive or even negative feedback on written papers or proposals” (p. 258), working on grants, and interviewing for jobs are situations in which students reported a stronger identification with professional academics.

Understanding the requirements and details of academic life and gaining the skills and confidence that one can meet those expectations contribute to a sense of agency, which McAlpine and Amundson (2009) assert “represents the fact that students, and individuals generally, construct their histories, ‘re-story’ themselves, in terms of personal intentions and the ability to influence in various ways the experiences they have” (p. 112). This construction of self through story is relevant to the idea above of social constructions of idealized “good doctoral students” (Jazvac-Martek, 2009, p. 255) as students construct goals for their academic selves. Developing academic identity includes “student experiences of agency as they engage in academic practice and link these present actions to past experiences and future intentions” (McAlpine & Amundson, 2009, p. 112), and so the characteristics and histories of themselves as students and teachers mediate their developing and dynamic goals.

Peer groups

Peer groups and institutional dynamics also affect how students construct their goals and demonstrate agency in engaging in practices of the academic community. Weiland (2008)

suggests that students rely on their peers to distil the purpose of post-graduate studies and to decipher the expectations of them as students and neophyte scholars. Furthermore, becoming a member of a peer group supports students' developing ideas of theory and research in the field as they begin to establish their own research and identity within the broader academic community.

Assimilation is not a universal outcome, nor always a desired one. Student may find that values of the academic community in their institution are not ones they ascribe to, and they reject the program or academic field (McAlpine & Amundson, 2009). Program culture is another cause for attrition (Lovitt, 2004). In a collaborative culture, peers act as mentors by cuing newer students to things such as the structures and politics of the department (Gerholm, 1990) and how to select classes or professors (Noonan, Ballinger, & Black, 2007). They are also important as classmates and writing partners, reinforcing or challenging each other's interpretations of disciplinary norms. But peer relationships are not always positive and benevolent. In competitive circumstances, students may withhold tacit knowledge from their peers in order to preserve an advantage that relatively unknown information can provide. Gerholm (1990) argues that "competence in the cultural life of the discipline and the department functions as an informal sorting device" (p. 263); those students who can play the part have an interest in maintaining an edge over potential competitors for scholarships, grants, and jobs.

High expectations

Sweitzer (2009) posits that "socialization susceptibility and learning orientation" (p. 11) are key areas where individual differences affect students' experiences in the doctoral program and how they respond to the programs affordances and constraints, including possible relationships and activities. In a program that where "the primary message and expectation

communicated to students” (p. 12) emphasized research productivity as success and the purpose of study in the program, students adopted “performance orientation learning goals”

which occur when individuals are motivated by the desire to demonstrate adequate mastery while simultaneously displaying tendencies to conceal low levels of ability.

Socialization efforts that encourage students’ activation of performance orientation as the primary goal may persuade students to adopt an ‘all or nothing’ metric of success. (p.

13)

Sweitzer found in her study that students with this orientation toward “tangible goals such as publications in top-tier journals and placement post-graduation at highly ranked research institutions” (p. 12) built relationships with other students who had the same focus and with faculty or institutional assistantships “that further supported publication and placement as metrics for program success” (p. 12).

This high pressure for performance context describe here connects to Jazvac-Martek’s (2009) study on role identity discussed above, sited in a Research 1 university. Sweitzer (2009) identified a primary message defining achievement, akin to the role definition of “good doctoral student [or] early academic” (Jazvac-Martek, 2009, p. 255). By communicating and reinforcing messages valuing research productivity and publication during doctoral studies, departments create this culture in which an “all or nothing” metric of success” (Sweitzer, 2009, p.13) puts tremendous pressure on students to achieve these competitive goals and measure their success or failure as a “good doctoral student” against this idealized role.

But not all people respond in the same way. Sweitzer (2009) found that the students who had a “mastery orientation toward learning” (p. 14) did not embrace the role of high performer in the manner that their counterparts did. Rather, their focus was on learning and developing skills

and competence instead of trying to “conceal low levels of ability” (p. 12). Sweitzer concludes that

It may be possible for a student to accept the given roles of doctoral student, research assistant, and teacher but not place the roles in the same priority that veteran organizational members assign the given roles. (p. 14)

And so while the primary message is pervasive, it is not deterministic of all students’ goals and experiences.

Engaging in authentic work of scholarship is a powerful influence on students’ understanding of academic achievement but can also contribute to increased stress. McAlpine and Amundson (2009) found that students were frustrated by the emphasis on preparation to be “academics at research institutions, something they also desired, but saw little opportunity for achieving since the reality was employment in universities where teaching was valued more than research” (p. 115). Any employment was competitive though, and the students “saw disciplinary expectations changing, especially the perceived need to publish before graduation to create an academic identity; this was seen as daunting” (p. 115). Students need support in their programs, and rather than framing students as individuals in competition, departments should foster a collective identity to improve their experience (McLaughlin & Tierney, 1993).

Bullshit

As developed throughout this chapter, the academic writing tasks of doctoral programs require a semblance of proficiency with at least some specific components: content—lexicon, disciplinary relevance, theory and methods of research, discourse conventions of argument, etc.; genre—overall structure and purpose of text; and the constructions of writers, addressees, and contexts of interaction for which the text is composed. Thus, the knowledge required to produce

any one text is vast and intangible. A process for doing so regardless, then, is essential. One way to navigate such a situation is to draw on the tools that one does have and maximize their effect. And yet, because of the many ways the term bullshit is applied to behaviors and situations, bullshit needs to be defined for the contexts and behaviors where it may be an appropriate descriptor.

Know your audience

Bullshitting entails dialogic relations within a defined context: There must be a bullshitter and a bullshittee, and the shared knowledge between them about the purpose of the interaction, the tools for communicating and constructing meaning, and the relative value of the, well, the bullshit, as the object of negotiated meaning. Academic ways of being are also dialogic constructions, where the identities, values, discourses, texts, goals, and relationships happen within socially-mediated settings, inherently requiring participants to recognize a shared “conceptual horizon” (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 282) and conventional ways of conveying and constructing ideas. Thus, Bakhtin’s dialogic theory emphasizes the *addressee* and the way the speaker includes the addressee in the construction of the utterance because “every word is directed toward an answer and cannot escape the profound influence of the answering word that it anticipates” and “structures itself in the answer’s direction” (p. 280). Whether in writing or other discursive moves, doctoral students are learning to incorporate their understandings of who their addressees are and compose in collaboration with the language of the community. Indeed, bullshitting is impossible without this awareness of context, as “the accomplished bullshitter must be a keen student of what people tend to regard as true, if only to cater to those tendencies as to serve her own ends” (Fuller, 2006, p. 243). Furthermore, since “bullshitting can flourish only in an environment that is secured by people who do more than just bullshit” (De Waal,

2006, p. 103), students use their disciplinary knowledge to index people who know and can associate themselves with that scholarship.

Frankfurt (2005/1986) asserts that a person bullshits when faced with “obligations or opportunities to speak about some topic [that] exceed[s] his knowledge of the facts that are relevant to that topic” (p. 63). The course of doctoral studies is rife with potential for such an experience, perhaps even more so than the undergraduate experience of which Bartholomae (1985) says that students are frequently called upon speak and write in the academic languages “or carry off the bluff” (p. 273). These descriptions resonate with Goffman’s (2005/1961) “divergence between obligation and actual performance” (p. 107). In such cases of obligation in academic contexts of unequal power regardless of whether or not the episode is *being graded*, the socially constructed understanding of appropriate response is generally not *Golly gee! I’m over my head; I simply don’t know that*. Instead, any student oriented toward a goal of some type of academic success needs to pull on the heavy duty waders and figure out how to get out of the creek.

In the course of their studies students are learning rhetorical conventions, but they are also developing conceptual knowledge about their topics of inquiry. They are learning how to interpret theories, how to apply them to new situations, how to argue for their relevance in interpreting data. These explorations in articulation can be generative (Vygotsky, 1987), leading students “to more precise ideas and conceptions that may (or may not be) weeded out by some form of reason, experience, formal testing procedure or logic” (Perla & Carifio, 2006, n. p.). As was the case in our study (Smagorinsky et al., 2010), writing through these challenges can result in a stronger understanding of what one did not understand well at the outset.

Other aspects of role distancing and embracing frame interpretations other types of academic bullshit. The whole sense of *The Game of Academia* percolates through the chronotope, an heuristic for the networks and power dynamics at play in getting published, getting jobs, getting opportunities to review articles for journals. Kimbrough (2006) argues that in competitive circumstances “to forgo the use of bullshit is thus to settle for being a loser” (p. 6), which could be selective shaping of content or other strategic moves or “expedient behavior of creating and presenting a set of information” (Levin & Zickar, 2002, p. 257). That is, by ascertaining the evaluative criteria or performative expectations for different academic tasks or ways of being, students are better able to strategically present themselves and their knowledge. In order to access networks of opportunities, which may then in turn require and advance actual knowledge, at times there are reasons or payoffs for crafting one’s presentation of self to meet the precise needs of the situation.

This detailed knowledge of criteria and relative value that affords students with the opportunities to bullshit successfully is itself a valuable tool. Bartholomae (1988) posits that “writers who can accommodate their motives to their readers’ expectations are writers who can both imagine and write from a position of privilege” (p. 277). Student writers need to develop this awareness of the readers’ expectations, an understanding of how the addressees will begin to make sense of the text, in order to write with authority in the disciplinary community. This addressivity requires the speaker to have some conception of who the addressee is, and it also entails that the speaker has a sense of his or her own identity and what will be projected through the utterance. Part of understanding one’s audience requires a conception of how the speaker or writer is situated within the context. In order to understand how established academics and “old-

timers” (Lave & Wenger, 1991) perceive novices’ attempts, students need access to those people; mentors who openly share that evaluative knowledge give students an edge in the game.

While these perspectives on conscious engagement of a role address academic bullshitting insofar as how one constructs oneself relative to particular situations of obligation-performance divergence, the possibilities for bullshitting hardly end there. Embracing the role, for example, doesn’t necessarily stave off all bullshit identification. Postman (1969) says that “one man’s bullshit is another man’s catechism” (p. 3), and one person’s (over)eager taking up of academic discourses has potential for appearing abrasively as posturing. Students who inappropriately engage overly-formal registers, speaking in esoteric jargon or quoting Foucault (even in earnest), risk being labeled as bullshitters by their peers. Such posturing bullshit can also (if not more easily) appear in written texts. These may be instances of inflated or pompous prose, which Postman (1969) defines as “the triumph of style over substance” (p. 1). This evaluation is more of a rhetorical judgment than an epistemological one. Cohen (2006) argues that any writer is capable of producing such bullshit, regardless of the merit of the ideas presented beneath the obfuscatory style. That is, ideas are inaccessible due to the use of “discourse that is not only obscure but which cannot be rendered unobscure” (p. 130). In some cases, this bullshit may reflect disciplinary language conventions where simplicity and clarity in composition is regarded as an indicator of lack of facility with the presumably dense ideas contained in disciplinary tomes that in turn require similarly obtuse exegesis. Or such bullshit may be an instance of deceptive composition wherein the façade of academic writing is intended to distract from the intellectual tenor beneath.

Of course, a certain amount of role distancing behavior—a slight wink of self-mockery to indicate that one is fully aware of how ridiculous and pretentious the exaggerated discourse is—

transforms the peer dynamics and permits one (among many) to try on the foreign ways of being. Perla and Carifio (2006) argue that such bullshitting allows students to explore and develop this knowledge by experimenting with “various thoughts and attitudes in order to see how it feels to hear themselves saying such things and in order to discover how others respond, without its being assumed that they are committed to what they say” (n. p), and so school communities are natural stages for such exploration.

Learning the language well and becoming facile with the discursive moves does not preclude bullshit, however. Fuller (2006) argues that such extensive training results in “institutionalized immunity to bullshit” (p. 246) because “the time required to master a body of knowledge virtually guarantees loyalty to its corresponding practices and central dogmas” (p. 245). That is, in appropriately the language of a discipline, one also assimilates its often tacit values (Gerholm, 1990) and risks losing the ability, or at least the inclination, to critically examine one’s ideas from another perspective.

As one becomes a member of particular disciplinary communities, one is becoming not a member of others, and thus learning to draw the identifying lines in the sand. From an established disciplinary home, one can dismiss other camps as “new criticism bullshit, Marxist bullshit, feminist bullshit, Marxist-feminist bullshit, deconstructionist bullshit, statistical bullshit, [etc.]” (Eubanks & Schaeffer, 2008, p. 375). This cacophony of bullshit labels indexes rifts in meaning among communities “who not only disagree with the other theory or discipline but who, in some ultimate way, deny that it yields knowledge” (p. 375). While hardly an ideal outcome, enculturation processes often do provide opportunities to develop such arrogant myopia.

In sum, bullshit is inherently dialogic and situated in specific cultural-historical contexts. Processes of learning discourses and ways of being academic produce space and at times the

need for bullshitting. Thus, this chronotope represents the space-time of the doctoral journey with its many tasks and tools, and opportunities to learn how to develop and use the latter to interpret and complete the former. While bullshit is not necessarily a tool for every obstacle, the nature of the journey—the doctoral program and its myriad dialogic intersections and tensions for obligatory performances—constitute a chronotope fecund with potential strategies for each step in the journey.

Perla and Carifio (2006) ask “what is the price and the consequences of just simplistically and unilaterally severely reducing and choking off bullshit in daily discourse, particularly educationally?” (n.p.). In learning to structure academic arguments, for example, it is helpful if students can draw on content they understand while struggling to transform it into appropriate and effective academic discourse. Such composition could result in overly or awkwardly verbose prose, the kind of dense, jargonistic, obscure bullshit of Cohen’s (2006) scorn, but in time students learn how to adapt what they know into how they need to say it. Alternatively, students may use the structure of an academic text that they understand as a scaffold for discussing ideas that they don’t yet understand but are willing, or obligated, to write.

The question that was raised repeatedly in the early stages of my study was *Is it still bullshitting if they’re doing it sincerely?* Until I conducted my interviews, I couldn’t really grasp what an earnest bullshitter could sound like, even though the high school student in our study surely was (Smagorinsky et al, 2010); I assumed, as did many people in my study, that being in a literacy doctoral program meant you were a pretty good schooly writer and thus, I figured, probably had a least some kind of cynical removal in situations of deliberate choreography to pull of the bluff. I learned that while the awareness is usually there, the cynicism isn’t inherent. For these sincere but uncertain writers, they were embracing the role of the competent academic,

hoping that whatever they produced would be good enough. The dialogical self (Hermans, 2004) also allows for the complexities of these events, as sincerity doesn't require a thorough and undifferentiated consciousness constructing the composition.

But sincerity itself is a rather nebulous question. In asking if it is *still bullshitting if they're doing it sincerely*, the question collapses *it* into simple, singular terms. The project of my chronotopic theorizing is to name the dimensions of bullshit—making visible the indicators at the points of intersection where bullshit writing can occur—and consider the relations among these characteristics over the course of students' participation in their doctoral programs. As Prior (1994, 1998) argues, students often incorporate distinct personal goals, even ones seemingly at odds with the assignment, into what appears to be a clearly defined academic writing task. In which case, sincerity as an expectation overlooks the laminations of students' experiences that afford sincerity relative to any number of aspects of the project in which the students engage. Likewise, Eubanks and Schaeffer (2008) argue that these tacit expectations for constant sincerity in writing invite bullshit when “the student has done all that is asked, except to be sincere—about the content of the writing and about his or her presentation of self” (p. 380). Because each person constructs a unique setting even in the same context and company, the expectation that everyone has the same understanding of the task, the same conception of the goal, and the same values on which to strike sincere invites misunderstandings.

This apparently insincere academic bullshit may not always be insidious. In the course of doctoral studies, students are required to complete tasks that are beyond what they consider their ability or authority. For example, students review books written by eminent scholars in their field, or critique published research articles, or propose some bullshit theoretical construct. In these cases, while the effort to complete the task in a manner acceptable to the audience may be

sincere, the presentation of self must be distorted or, at best, inflated to project confidence and authority in an arena where one has little.

Composing Academic Texts

In the sections above I have summarized research on doctoral students' enculturation to their programs and disciplinary communities. The literature emphasizes the centrality of identity and goals in students' process of becoming scholars. In the sections below, I summarize briefly the role of written text in the work and identity of academics. While this focuses on the written text and the conventions of disciplinary communities encoded in it, I do not intend to "conflate the publicly displayed reasoning in a small range of high-visibility public formal texts with the full complexity of discursive activity in the fields or with the cognitive and material work that goes into the production of [them]" (Bazerman, 1997, p. 306). Rather, through the dialogic and sociocultural theories presented in the next chapter, the written text serves as a move of engagement in the disciplinary conversation, carrying with it contexts of the research and researcher through the *intertextual* weaving of disciplinary literature (Fairclough, 1992). The texts index the conventions of epistemology and actions, richly encoding the text with the author's knowledge about the *addressees* (Bakhtin, 1981) who will be co-constructing meaning with the marks on the page (or screen).

As researchers inquire into the tasks which doctoral students must learn to complete, there is growing research into the specialized writing demands. Student writing exists within nested and dynamic contexts (Ding, 2008; Prior, 1992). There are important nuances in the multiple academic texts students must learn, and students' ability to discern them vary widely. Therefore, students must access a number of tools in order to develop the knowledge needed to produce different kinds of academic texts.

Textually mediated knowledge and identity

Language and texts operate in contexts; they are not neutral nor do they follow universal norms (Bakhtin, 1980). Interpreting these academic texts as socially-mediated (Vygotsky, 1987), then, suggests that the shared features of the texts index understandings of the culture in which they are produced. Indeed, Parry (1998) argues that the organization of academic texts and the importance of that organization highlighted by particular discourse features “reflect the nature of the knowledge base” of the discipline (p. 280). For example, conventions such as subjectivity statements or detailed explication of data analysis demonstrate the values of the writer relative to the expectations of the audience to recognize factors influencing the conclusions of the research.

Application of disciplinary conventions in texts indicates the writers’ conception of their audience as well as a broad understanding of the academic culture. Hyland and Tse (2004) posit that metadiscourse such as signposting and attitudinal markers guide the readers’ attention to the text and are products of writers’ consideration of readers’ potential understandings. These rhetorical moves serve to clarify their arguments and make readers aware of the writers’ preferred interpretation because “readers always have the option of re-interpreting propositional information and rejecting the writer’s viewpoint, which means that writers have to anticipate and respond to the potential negation of their claims” (Hyland & Tse, 2004, p. 173). Therefore, writers consistently reformulate their statements to specify and delimit the desired meaning. Argumentative features like concessive conjunctions voice contradictory interpretations that are viable within the discipline from different epistemological or methodological stances. Such dialogic processes that filter and funnel the meaning of the text demonstrate the writers’ awareness of readers’ contexts and the prior knowledge they may bring to the text and the writers’ understanding of the ways these texts operate in disciplinary conversations.

Doctoral students enact multiple roles in the course of their programs. Golde (1998) argues that “new students are simultaneously directly socialized into the role of graduate student and are given preparatory socialization into a profession” (p. 56). Frequently these roles are overlapping as students are positioned to engage in professional tasks for which they are yet to develop full competence. Indeed, the nature of the doctoral program is for students to develop proficiency with research and scholarship under the guidance of their committees. As such, their major writing project, the dissertation, reflects countless conversations and revisions. The readings and writings students engage in throughout the course of their programs support this developing proficiency. Students have many opportunities to explore and practice the skills they will need to become full members in the academic communities.

Guess (2008) writes that there is common knowledge about dubious writing practices among academics, such as using unread or irrelevant citations. I argue that doctoral studies also foster discursive practices of varying integrity and purpose. Students share tacit knowledge about teachers and classes (Gerholm, 1990), including the kinds of writing that need to be produced. In this way students create understandings of how to be successful in their studies.

Students must understand the discipline in terms of “the ontology, epistemology, traditions of evidence, warrants and claims, conventions of argumentation, procedures of inquiry, and problems” (Florence & Yore, 2004, p. 273) in order to appropriately address their readers. Doctoral students need to learn who their audiences are and how to persuade them. Ultimately, writers are arguing for the importance of their research, and “writers who can successfully predict something of what their readers will know of their subject and expect of its presentation are more likely to be convincing” (Hyland, 2007, p. 267). Doctoral students must develop their

abilities to demonstrate their content knowledge through the conventional structures of written communication.

Hyland (2007) argues that these commonalities are more than just academic style but are collective responses in the discipline to obstacles in persuasion. Members in the community continually refine the concepts and values of the discipline, “enthusiastically prais[ing] and promot[ing]” (Becher, 1987, p. 266) the work that shapes knowledge in a way members see as advancing and improving the discipline. The qualities of the texts that are validated serve to reify the way knowledge is valued. Thus, the texts that are venerated represent how meaning has been negotiated and the continuous process of reconstructing how the academic community defines itself. Therefore, as Hyland asserts, the features of the text that communicate meaning to the community can be interpreted as values of the discipline.

Of course, in spite of these commonalities, disciplines are far from monolithic. There are always tensions among scholars about ways of defining, researching, and interpreting questions in the field. However, disciplines are regulated in different ways, and the power to shape knowledge values is not equitably distributed. Florence and Yore (2004) name journal editors and peer reviewers “disciplinary gatekeepers” with whom writers must negotiate in order “to have their claims included in authorized and canonical” knowledge of the community (p. 640). Moreover, Prior (1994) identifies these gatekeepers as “an elite group that imposes its language, beliefs and values on others through control of journals, academic appointments, curricula, student examinations, research findings and so on” (p. 522). In this sense, doctoral students need to learn how to write in ways that demonstrate understanding of the norms and expectations of the academic community in order to negotiate having their new research accepted into the shared knowledge.

Barton and Hamilton (2005) argue that the process of negotiating meaning within textually mediated social worlds is not one of trying to build consensus but reflect the community's "often ambivalent engagement" (p. 25) with articulating tacit or incomplete aspects. Rather than minimizing disagreement these negotiations of uncharted territory "are often the creative lifeblood of social change and challenge" (p. 25). In this way, the constant remaking of academic text conventions reflects choices and arguments and values of diverse voices within the academic community as people push the boundaries or break the rules of what has been allowed to represent collective knowledge. Students need to learn how to "must manipulate these worlds in order to produce texts that can be in dialogue or conflict with, yet be appropriate to, the communities they are addressing" (Johns, 1997, p. 70). Students are working to become scholars with authority and voice in the conversations that shape disciplinary knowledge.

I use the vague term *academic texts* as the object of students' writing development. But of course there is no single, correct, monolithic genre of academic text, nor is there an authoritative prototype for any of the many types of texts produced within academic scholarship. Disciplines have expectations for both conformity and individuality. The genres of academic texts are conventions within the disciplines that serve communicative as well as socializing purposes and are reified through disciplinarity. Doctoral students must learn these different genres and know when and how to apply their knowledge. In the next sections of this paper I review research on conventions in academic texts, specifically dissertations, theses, and research articles, and I discuss the identified text conventions in terms of how they index disciplinary norms and students' processes of learning them.

Writers construct their audiences and their own identities by situating their research within a body of existing literature. Citations signal that the writers know the research and

theories recognized by the academic community to which they are directing their texts (Becher, 1987). Citations also serve to position the writers within these communities through the research traditions and ideological perspectives with which they identify (Hyland & Tse, 2004). Social conventions govern the roles of citation in critique in rhetorical style, authority, and for building the appropriate context of the dispute within the discipline (Parry, 1998). Thus citation plays a significant role in the writers' authority and identity relative to their readers and colleagues.

Students struggle with this conventional knowledge. The rules governing when, how, and why writers use particular sources are generally tacit, and students are often expected to glean them through extensive reading. However, without sufficient disciplinary knowledge, students are not prepared to evaluate the merit of publications and so miss the opportunity to discern how certain authors are being used to index ideological alignment or to support the veracity of a claim. Parry (1998) argues that referencing can serve as a "covert form of persuasion" (p. 287), but this effect is lost on students who don't understand what the writer intends to communicate. When they write, then, students do not initially have the knowledge to use citations effectively and are prone to underuse in ways that weaken their arguments and obscure the relevance of their research (Hyland & Tse, 2004).

Because referencing is a conventional practice, there is a common understanding of what is meant by the action. That is, a writer refers to another text as a source and support for the present claim. However, the interpretation of a citation to mean that the writer has read and deliberately selected the source text allows for the exploitation of the convention. In this way, students are demonstrating some level of conventional knowledge when they overuse citations, "quoting famous people to show that one keeps good intellectual company, and giving a vulgar display of erudition" (Becher, 1987, p. 268). Indeed, professional academics exercise a range of

tactics that rely on the acknowledged, explicit conventions of referencing that students must also learn, whether to discern them in others' work or employ them in their own.

Wright and Armstrong (2008) studied the phenomenon of citation errors, specifically tracing one heavily cited methodology article. They found that approximately 30 percent of articles citing the original misreported or misrepresented findings or previous studies discussed in the original. Either the work was sloppy or intentionally deceitful. Similarly, Guess (2008) writes of common knowledge that "researchers tend to cite papers that support their conclusions and downplay or ignore work that calls them into question" (n.p.). Other dubious practices Guess mentions include referencing scholars whom the authors are hoping to impress and citing friends' articles even when they're not relevant. Additionally, the flip side of knowing how to use citations to bolster one's authority is that "authors add references that they have not read in order to gain favor with reviewers" (Guess, 2008, n.p.) and editors. Learning how to use citations appropriately reflects a process of understanding disciplinary knowledge of content and communication. However, as students learn how and why citations work in argument, they also develop awareness of potential for strategic, if not deceptive, referencing practices.

Tacit knowledge plays a number of roles in enculturation. Ultimately, it operates as a method of identifying which people are members of the community. People must know the rules for participating in order to be accepted, and doctoral students must learn the ways to act in the difference activities of being a scholar.

CHAPTER THREE
THEORETICAL FRAME

Writing is a literate activity—

a volitional, goal-directed, tool-mediated action in a social context.

This chapter presents a theoretical frame for interpreting and representing writing as the central project of the doctoral journey. I appropriate the work of Vygotsky (1987) and Bakhtin (1981) to construct the writers' contexts using sociocultural and dialogic theories, drawing also on the work of Prior (1998, 1994) and Wertsch (1991, 1985). These latter two writers have synthesized aspects of Vygotsky and Bakhtin in studies of situated social action, including speech and composition. I have been working to develop a synthesis of these theories using Bakhtin's concept of the chronotope as an organizing frame for refracting the experiences and specificities of individuals' experiences in their doctoral program through these common shaping forces.

Appropriating Bakhtin's Chronotope

As a literary theorist, Bakhtin (1981) developed the chronotope to identify the structure of particular types of narratives, such as Greek romances, adventure novels, and biographies. Bakhtin defines a chronotope as a time-space of "intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships" (p. 84). The way time is organized—for example, out of sequence, irreversible, static, dominated by chance, etc.—and the powers it has over other events, such as chance meetings, quests, and transformations, contribute to the chronotope. Within a particular chronotope, space can have varying degrees of such qualities of uniqueness, familiarity,

isolation, relevance, or other various constructions relative to the temporal structures that guide the types and importance of experiences and actions. “Time, as it were, thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible; likewise, space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot, and history. This intersection of axes and fusion of indicators characterizes the artistic chronotope” (p. 84). The chronotope is a construct oriented toward narrative and representation—thickening time emphasizes the relations of time to events, to situations, to people’s lives.

The chronotope facilitates the reader’s understanding through sequences, twists, variations, or contradictions of a text. The chronotope is not a prescriptive plot structure but an analytic tool for constructing meanings of events as they are told by the author. For example, in this chronotope of the doctoral journey, there are established markers of progress—comprehensive exams, prospectus—markers that are not guaranteed, are experienced differently by each student, with a constellation of invited professors sitting on committee, mediating (but not always defining) the tasks and criteria for success. Within the chronotope, the absence of something expected (achievement criteria, effective mentoring) is more tangible and positioned—even in its absence—relative to other factors influencing the ongoing journey or to other students who had those experiences.

In researching doctoral students’ experiences of developing their academic selves through writing, I use this time-space construct to guide the analysis and representation of rich data, in which individuals’ experiences differ vastly yet as a chorus create a coherent and harmonic whole. Prior (1998) argues that “chronotopes are the organizing centers of writing research, driving the way objects and sites are bounded, defined, and animated in ‘natural’ sequences of action that obscure the fuller ecology of literate activity” (p. 248). Too narrow of a research lens

elides the nebulous and recursive processes that shape and are shaped by forces within and beyond the immediately observable context. Too wide, and the context is diluted. Thus, in constructing this chronotope, it is necessary to define its borders—what does this doctoral journey chronotope do?

The multidimensionality of the chronotope extends theoretical work in writing research and represents the sociocultural and dialogic understandings of students' experiences of being socialized into academic writing activities and academic selves. It is anchored in the social contexts of the doctoral degree course of study, an administrative structure nested in the contexts of the department, college of education, and university. On a different dimension, it is connected to disciplinary contexts in nested and overlapping ways. It is constituted by the faculty who create policies, make decisions on award and assistantships, teach, (and those who don't) and otherwise engage with creating the degree programs and requirements. These systems create the potential in this department for the experience of the doctoral student journey, and without those conditions, there would be no chronotopes here. Probably there are similar and different ones elsewhere, but not contextualized and constituted dialogically within the histories and people that make this department unique. The chronotope would also be moot with no student. The student culture is continually recreated with each new student and the changes and departures of students within; there is contact for collaborating and for sharing the communal knowledge about courses, professors, procedures, and such things as *Did you hear about who got the dissertation award?* And in identifying what happens in these social spaces, it again becomes possible to see the effects of its absence—as in the case of Zorko, a participant in my study and part-time student who had limited opportunity to access the tacit knowledge and support of his peers. The social

context—itself ephemeral and dynamic—anchors the constructs of the chronotope to create the spaces in which these components intersect.

So what does the chronotope offer to this dissertation study? Bakhtin (1981) writes that “[t]he chronotope is the place where the knots of narrative are tied and untied” (p. 250) and thus serves an essential role in organizing events to communicate particular meanings. Furthermore, because “chronotopes are mutually inclusive . . . they may be interwoven with, replace or oppose one another, contradict one another or find themselves in ever more complex interrelationships” (p. 252), using a chronotope in this dissertation creates spaces for those additional dimensions and relations among me, my subject, my participants, my histories, my readers, and my own projected futures. Using a chronotope in this dissertation creates spaces for those additional dimensions and relations among me, my subject, my participants, my histories, my readers, and my own projected futures. I’m choosing not to foreground the figured worlds as the synthesizing language and construct for representing the data analysis. Even though describing and reporting figured worlds of doctoral students would then engage me in dialogic shaping of those worlds, the chronotope offers me additional dimensions and narrative possibilities to attempt to represent the complex experiences of the students and of myself engaged still in this text. This text is a live, dialogical process—simultaneously existing as a tool of analysis as I write; operating in the removed time-spaces of when my professors are reading, hearing, responding to, and evaluating it; and serving in the future time of my dissertation defense and beyond as artifact (hopefully) of my scholarly competence.

In addition to the dialogic interactions among the chronotopes outside the text and the focal one represented within it, employing this theoretical construct of the chronotope facilitates my representation of time. Bakhtin (1981) argues that “it is precisely the chronotope that

provides the ground essential for the showing-forth, the representability of events” due “precisely to the special increase in density and concreteness of time markers” (p. 250) as they exist in individuals’ lives and as they measure historical time. The events and experiences I’m writing about happened in the interwoven worlds of the Roman calendar years, the influential year numbers attached to each person’s existence as a doctoral student, and the laminated times of the interview events, participants’ writing experiences that we talked about, and various stages of analysis. Moreover, I am a fifth year doctoral student, interpreting and writing up a study about a journey I too have been engaged in during these years. As such, my authorial choices for the narrative structure I give to the data contribute to the construction of meaning as much as the voices of the participants themselves “without violating the objective course of time in the event” (p. 255) of the doctoral journey. The temporal sequences of this chronotope encode the knotted nature of transformation, learning, and the relationships among people that help and hinder along the way.

I next present the theoretical constructs that inform my analysis and interpretation of the data in my study in terms of how they contribute to the doctoral journey chronotope.

Dimensions of the Doctoral Chronotope

In the following section I develop the theoretical dimensions of the chronotope of the doctoral journey.

Time

Time, in this chronotope, is layered, folded, reflected, refracted, and projected. The roles and rules of time on the doctoral journey are central to the ongoing development of meaning, contributing to students’ construction of settings and goals, the ways they measure themselves and position themselves relative to peers, and how they evaluate the investment required relative

to the ultimate value of a PhD. The specter of The Future leans over every writer's shoulder. The vanishing gateway from the world left behind triggers a reassessment of whether this is the right place to be and demands (pseudo)confidence that the door on the other side is attainable.

The end game is nearly always the driving force for action. The purpose of enrolling in a PhD program is, if nothing else, to get a PhD. In some ways it is the only concrete goal students have at the beginning of the quest. The impetus for enrolling is described differently by every participant, and often there are multiple overlapping, competing, or complementary goals that weave and change throughout the journey, but the chalice maintains a constant spot on the horizon.

When newcomers join a social group—whether a human baby to the world or a first year doc student into the program—they join a dynamic culture that is in continual reproduction. As the group anticipates its members growing and changing, implicit processes within the social formations and activities anticipate and realize social futures aligned with the cultural values. These processes of *prolepsis* (Cole, 1996) are so ingrained with cultural norms that the realization of these projected futures is seen as the normal course, of the way things are. Applying this concept to the chronotope provides a space to consider whether the policies, practices, and pedagogy in the department are explicitly and deliberately enacted to bring about social futures of highly productive education researchers.

Students quickly come to see the possible academic paths, with more specificity about the details of how they may fit into those possible futures as they journey through courses, build relationships with professors and fellow students, and participate in academic activities. Of particular note in this chronotope is the ubiquitous imperative of the future: Any student with any real potential for success has an articulated future that refracts the present in order to give

constant form and purpose to every academic step. Inherent to having an image of the future-present is the understanding that the projected future transforms to reflect changes in the student's perspective, developing skills, knowledge, and academic interests. In this sense, the chronotope shows time folded in on itself “to perceive the very stages themselves in their simultaneity, to juxtapose and counterpose them dramatically, and not stretch them out into an evolving sequence” and represent the world by “conceiv[ing] all its contents as simultaneous, and to guess at their interrelationships in the cross-section of a single moment” (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 28). Two classmates side-by-side can be, in a sense, two years apart—a difference reified in the standard question among peers: *What year are you?*

This present-future, as a component of this chronotopic lens, shapes the journey and provides a place to place the message, the often tacit but powerful message valuing scholarship. Until I conducted these interviews, I did not consider the weight of this expectation on us, the students, as individuals and collectively. And, since the importance and stability if not existence of this expectation for top-tier publications has caught some faculty by surprise, I suppose it will be helpful to have a place to indicate—See? There? Plain as day.

While nevertheless shifting and changing, the present-future promises—and demands—transformation. Not only does a graduate have a piece of paper to frame, but the paper serves as testimony that the Doctor named on it has *earned* it through successful navigation of a course rife with dragons and quicksand and other obstacles that only could be overcome by a person of superior intellect and strength of character. This is not to say that students live with illusions of grandeur. Rather, as I was told in my first semester seminar: *To finish this, you have to get smarter. You may think you're smart now, but as of now you know nothing. This is going to be*

*very, very hard.*² Such transformations are marked by trials and rituals and “leave a deep and irradicable mark on the man himself as well as on his entire life” (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 116).

Bakhtin (1981) says that transformation “unfolds not so much in a straight line as spasmodically, a line with ‘knots’ in it, one that therefore constitutes a distinctive type of *temporal sequence*” (p. 113; emphasis in original). I find this conception germane to the doctoral journey chronotope, with constraints of generalizability yet nevertheless presenting conclusions potentially relevant beyond the study. This idea of transformation can support the abstraction of a dozen individuals’ experiences in a coherent way because, Bakhtin explains, “the make-up of this idea is extraordinarily complex, which is why the types of temporal sequences that develop out of it are extremely varied” (p. 113). That is, there are some inherent intersections within the space-time of the doctoral journey, but the uniqueness of individuals is not disregarded.

Furthermore, writing itself—the primary artifact of students’ transformation into Real Scholars—is historically bound. Bazerman (1997) writes that “timeliness and type of utterance is crucial in the unfolding events, with only a limited range of types of utterances/texts being allowable, relevant, and effective at any moment” (p. 304). Published articles are links in a chain, or a web-chain, drawing on previous research and, if they are valuable, informing the conversations of the discipline. The projection of publication, the expectation that students will create their own links, is—in an artistically dramatic sense—one way of establishing academic identity, of connecting one’s work, and so oneself, with the established web.

²I emailed two classmates (participants in this study, as it happens) from that seminar to confirm my recollection—

One wrote: “I don’t remember her saying that, but I do remember her saying, *Nice is a four letter word* and *If you’re sleeping you’re not working hard enough.*”

The other remembered the bit I was talking about and wrote: “I can still see her looking straight at me and saying, *There’s no turning back.*”

In the chronotopic representation of the doctoral journey, time becomes another substance of meaning that can be questioned, emphasized, and manipulated in order to consider its relation to how the people on the journey make sense of themselves as scholars-in-becoming.

Setting

Setting as place is clearly central to the chronotope, but in a sociocultural use of the term it is essential. Setting is a dynamic and unique co-construction by an individual interacting with the people, discourses, institutions, and environments that contribute to the context (Smagorinsky, 2010). Setting mediates the meanings of all that happens inter- and intra-personally. In this chronotope, there are many factors external to the individuals that are common, in a general sense, but even that apparent sameness is subject to individuals' unique histories. For instance, I worked as a department secretary at the university where I got my masters degree to take advantage of the tuition remission benefit, and I was privy to the workings of departments that are generally invisible to students. That experience has affected the relationships I've built with the administrative people in my own department office; also, the insider knowledge I gained in that job contributed to my habitual behaviors of circumventing "rules" like "deadlines" across the bureaucratic world of this university in my student experience here. A minor detail. But it most certainly contributed to my construction of setting in a way quite different from my peers.

The interactive and recursive construction of setting, then, is dialogic, as people negotiate meanings and relationships through words and actions. In terms of schooling and situations of writing, these dialogic settings become *laminated* (Prior, 1998), with layers upon layers of historical settings of school writing existing in relation to the others. Prior developed this idea in his own use of the chronotope, which he used to distinguish and combine these layered situations

of writing. His chronotopes, such as “the chronotope of the classroom” and chronotopes of the “artist-writer” and of the “writer-reader dyad” (p. 249), were chronotopes unique to each individual, each person having his or her own typified experience of writing in the time-space of particular but recurrent writing experiences. In his research, Prior found that these college writers draw upon seemingly distinct writing chronotopes for different purposes while composing in other situations, making space for their own goals and personally relevant projects within the assigned task. (See Roozen, 2010 for a similar perspective of interwoven writing selves.)

The figurative spaces of doctoral students’ journeys are, of course, not limited to the concrete (literally) walls of the university building in which they may(not) have offices and may(not) meet with their professors regularly. The spaces where their lives are happening outside school are inextricable from the ways they experience the spaces inside. For example, I absolutely hated to work in the graduate assistant office I was provided—stark white concrete block walls and florescent lights. Other people spent structured work weeks studenting in these boxes. But other people didn’t (foolishly) choose to live in basement apartments with little natural light, so the lack of it in their offices was not a suffocating factor for them. Prior and Shipka (2003) studied the many choices people make about the spaces (noise, light, food, furniture, etc.) in which they work on their writing (Chin, 1994). Not only is the setting constructed, but in many ways (like my peers’ office lamps, décor, and background music), so is the space itself.

Another aspect of setting is the socially-constructed communities that are not bound to physical place. One way of perceiving cultural mediation of setting is in terms of communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991), in which people have established conventional ways of being through words, actions, and other tools for interacting with people and the environment. The

frame of communities of practice positions newcomers in the periphery of the socially-mediated activities central to the communities— in this case of doctoral student enculturation, it is the literate activities, texts, and discourses that constitute disciplinary knowledge. In this model, legitimate peripheral participation facilitates people's moves toward full membership through progressive involvement from observation to assistance or apprenticeship, whether by direct or indirect instruction. In practice, however, this ideal outcome is not universally realized; many factors affect individuals' enculturation progress and acceptance.

This representation, therefore, lacks attention to power structures and tensions at play as individuals integrate with existent social groups. Regardless the degree of apparent cohesion, groups are hardly monolithic. Barton and Hamilton (2005) argue that the process of negotiating meaning within textually mediated social worlds is not one of trying to build consensus but reflecting the community's "often ambivalent engagement" (p. 25) with articulating tacit or incomplete aspects. The student culture in this department is influenced by the direct and indirect messages students receive or interpret, the opportunities students have to develop knowledge, skills, and understandings of conventions of academia, and the channels through which students construct the rules, hierarchy, values, alliances, and other folkloric (Gerholm, 1990) knowledge of the community all contribute to the mediated context of individual students' experiences.

Textual-mediation of identity in academic communities is a dominant motif of the chronotope. Because writing is an important tool for engaging in academic arenas, it figures heavily into the potential professional selves of student-scholars. Writing is the primary vehicle for scholars to make themselves, and their merits, known to a broad disciplinary community. Scholars make a case for their acceptance in dynamic and overlapping realms through the words they use and how those words index their professional competence, theoretical alignment, and

methodological orientation. Recognizing the nuances of meaning in lexicon, jargon, and citations is key to building oneself as a knowledgeable member of a particular community (Hyland & Tse, 2004; Johns, 1997). Bazerman (1997) argues that when writers demonstrate proficiency with the conventions of texts,

insofar as each text and each genre implies a set of relations, recognized social positions and roles, stances of cooperative or competitive work, and sets of typified discursive relations, learning to formulate statements of the accepted genres integrates the novice into roles and positions within structured relations. (p. 304)

Thus, the ways individuals construct their audiences are dialogical products of their understandings of groups' conventional tools and values. The degree to which students learn the specificity of these expectations affects their ability to develop texts that are acceptable and accepted.

Disciplinarity

The chronotope as a narrative construction highlights the recursively linguistic socialization of students into academic writing practices. Prior (1998, 1994) incorporates a dialogic perspective into Lave and Wenger's (1991) claim that the socialization of an individual into a community of practice reshapes the whole community in order to incorporate the new member. He argues that disciplinary socialization is not limited to a process of making room for the neophyte and her Big Ideas among the important things the community already talks about, but rather "enculturation [is] a continuous [sic], heterogeneous process of becoming, the historical co-genesis of persons, artifacts, practices, institutions, and communities through everyday mediations of activity and agency" (Prior, 1998, p. 244). While students are learning the ways of knowing and being in their disciplinary communities, their participation contributes

to the interpretations, understandings, and practices of their communities. This dialogic transformation of a discipline through its socialization of new members is what Prior calls *disciplinarity*. As with the communities of practice construct in general, integration of the new member through concurrent transformation of the discipline is an optimal but not guaranteed outcome.

The language of the discipline creates and is created by the conventions of the disciplinary community. When students encounter an academic text, the text is deeply intertwined with the histories of the discipline, the authors, the topic of inquiry, and the intended audience. Students learn how to situate their work as scholarship in the discipline: which researchers and theorists are important, how words index particular conceptual or theoretical alignment, and how to conduct and report research in a way that meets the conventions of their discipline. The language they take up connects them to the ideas of the community; Vygotsky writes that “every word is a concealed generalization” (1987, p. 47) entailing the conceptual classifications as they have been socially constructed.

Dialogism

More so than this relatively obscure work on the chronotope, Bakhtin’s (1986, 1981) major theoretical work explored dialogism, or the relation of words to every context of utterance. In Bakhtin’s view, words carry histories of their use that echo in every utterance, with or without the speaker’s awareness; meaning is negotiated as speakers anticipate the response of the audience addressed; the addressee actively constructs meaning; and the utterance joins the ongoing trail of the words. Thus, words are “half-ours and half-someone else’s” (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 345), and speakers are always exploring the borderlands, always navigating meaning and self through words. There are myriad voices that contribute to the ever-expanding histories of

language, and within this cacophony is constant tension between common unitary language and centrifugal force toward uniqueness and dynamism.

Constructing understandings of how these voices vary and the nuanced borderlands among plethora of scholarly voices is central to the process of understanding the roles of academia available and desirable. When academic discourses become less intimidating and more familiar, writers see that “such practices are hybrid and overlapping, with blurred edges. This [hybridity] means that boundaries themselves are significant, generative spaces” (Barton & Hamilton, 2005, p. 18). It is not a straightforward development of discourses, however, that brings writers to the awareness of such borderlands or understandings of how to engage creatively within them

Dialogical self

The specialized language of academia and the intertwined ways of thinking and being present a challenge for the novice academic beyond merely learning the rules. Bartholomae (1988) argues that “students have to appropriate (or be appropriated by) a specialized discourse,” (p. 273). Even with multiple academic *speech genres* in which the style, lexicon, and structure range in formality, purpose, and audience (Bakhtin, 1986), students nevertheless are faced with an apparent binary of *my voice* and *sounding all scholarly*.

Bakhtin describes *ideological becoming* as the “process of selectively assimilating the words of others” (p. 341), but the question for budding scholars is *into what?* Where do these new words fit? What do they do? The growing awareness and understanding of the diversity of disciplinary niches inside what had previously seemed a clearly defined field of study (e.g., literacy education, or even adolescent literacy) offers students a range of voices to explore, mimic, mock, slowly sort through and try on for size.

Hermans (2004) proposes the concept of *dialogical self* as a way of understanding the various and sometimes competing voices that engage within the self, as “a dynamic multiplicity of relatively autonomous I-positions in the landscape of the mind” (p. 19). That is, the dialogical self consists of multiple voices and characters that engage dialogically in constant processes of understanding and becoming, with unequal power between selves or volume of voice, pushing and pulling and negotiating meanings. Rather than relatively fixed characteristics of self that distinguish a person’s authenticity in any given context, the construct of the dialogical self permits ambivalence and simultaneous competing voices.

As a theoretical tool developed for narrative therapy, the dialogical self concept inherently focuses on the narrator as a creative and “motivated storyteller” (Hermans & Hermans-Jansen, 2001). That is, it is not that the construct represents the internal (and thus essentially unobservable) thoughts; rather, it provides the listener and the narrator a frame for making space for multiple dimensions of being through tracing the dialogic trails within narratives. As such, the dialogical self as a construct in this chronotope is not representing evidence of people’s thoughts. Instead it is providing a metaphor for envisioning the ways people describe the multiple voices of historical, present, and future selves that contribute to the meaning they construct in various settings. It is an informative component of this chronotopic theorizing in that it blends dialogic theory with sociocultural understandings of situated and relational self.

Affect

This chronotopic construct also incorporates research and theory on the relation among emotion, thought, and composition as elemental to the development of selves in academic ways of being. From a cultural-historical perspective, the setting of one’s experience contributes to

how one constructs that experience emotionally as well as the cognitive and mindful aspects of how one makes sense of it.

Roth (2007) argues that emotion is often elided in psychological research on cognition. He references Vygotsky's (1986) observation that the separation of intellect and affect "is a major weakness of traditional psychology, since it makes the thought process appear as an autonomous flow of 'thoughts thinking themselves,' segregated from the fullness of life, from the personal needs and interests, the inclinations and impulses, of the thinker" (Vygotsky, p. 10; cited in Roth, p. 40). Near the end of his life, Vygotsky was exploring the relation of affect to how humans construct their experiences by applying the Russian term *perezhivanie*, which he explained as:

The emotional experience [*perezhivanie*] arising from any situation or from any aspect of [a child's] environment, determines what kind of influence this situation or this environment will have on the child. Therefore, it is not any of the factors themselves (if taken without the reference of the child) which determines how they will influence the future course of his development, but the same factors refracted through the prism of the child's emotional experience. (Vygotsky, 1994, p. 339)

This emotional prism, then, is a constant filter for cognitive interpretations of situated activity that become interwoven with the context to create meaningful texts of the events. While recognizing this above quote is a translation and I cannot read the original Russian text, *arising from* seems to constrain the emotional experience to being an inherent product that is engaged in mutual-shaping (*refracts*) with the context and the individual. These emotional prisms, however, are themselves dialogic products arising from an individual's history, and various situations create, contribute to, and change prior prisms. Rather than being constrained to arising from the

situation, emotional experiences can be introduced to the environment from previous or otherwise distinct situations.

This latter perspective has led to a manifestation of *perezhivanie* in dramatic theory, which frames the emotional experience as a tool accessible for shaping the actor's performance. By engaging *perezhivanie* convincingly, the actor constructs the character's context and experience for the audience by appropriating the emotional experience and refracting the meaning outward. In terms of writing research, this conscious engagement of an emotional experience is related to meta-cognition in situations where writers navigate a challenging immediate context by mediating it through previous positive emotional experiences of successful composing (Smagorinsky & Daigle, 2011). That is, by strategically reliving the emotional experience and consciously engaging an "emotional rudder" (Immordino-Yang & Damasio, 2007), writers are able to access the effective cognitive tools that facilitate successful completion of the daunting writing task.

Doctoral students have laminated histories as writers which contribute to their constructions of settings in the multiple writing tasks of their PhD programs. The affective experiences work in concert with cognitive tools, including their knowledge of disciplinary content and genres, to shape the ways they engage as writers and how they project their future-scholar-selves.

Role

Thus far, the chronotopic theory as presented above can be summarized as follows: Doctoral students with unique and laminated histories are journeying as student-scholars in simultaneous but not necessarily identical time-spaces, building relationships with peers and faculty and the broader academic communities. Their affective experiences contribute to their

constructions of settings and writing tasks and can serve as tools for navigating the challenges of academic life. They are learning, appropriating, and assimilating the voices in the discourses of disciplinary scholarship and academic ways of being, mediating the development of their selves in dialogic relation with their histories, their futures, and the many voices of the present settings.

A related consideration is how these voices manifest in discursive moves as students navigate their way to graduation, publication, and beyond. The exploratory nature of these ways of being in the academic world can be seen in terms of Goffman's (2005/1961) discussion of roles, particularly *role embracement* and *role distancing*. Transforming into Someone with a PhD is a complex process, in which individuals select from the cacophony a style or two of academic writing that they can weave into themselves, make choices about what to study and how to frame it, and determine what kind of work they want to do. Not only are there many niches, but there are many hitches and obstacles in trying these different roles. There are also many factors that influence what variations are presented, recommended, expected, or allowed. Regardless, trying out new ways of being academic is necessary, and inherently affective. Conscious engagement of affective experiences can facilitate students' construction of contexts, including the ways they present themselves relative to the people and tasks involved.

This dramatic lens for analyzing doctoral students is helpful for categorizing people's choices, actions, and ways of talking about the characteristics of academic roles relative to themselves. Simplistically, it would seem that of course students *want* to be identified as academics (unless they were on a covert PhD mission I suppose), and that their development of academic discourses, curriculum vita, and professional networks contribute to their academic selves. As such, Goffman's (2005/1961) role embracement, "an admitted or expressed attachment to the role; a demonstration of qualifications and capacities for performing it" (p.

102), seems appropriate for those situations in which students dive in to the role, take up the language, walk the walk, and do their best to pass as members of the club, or at least not be kicked out. Goffman writes,

to embrace a role is to disappear completely into the virtual self available in the situation, to be fully seen in terms of the image, and to confirm expressively one's acceptance of it.

To embrace a role is to be embraced by it. (p. 102; emphasis added)

In the challenging and uneven transformation from outsider to academic, there are a great many times when the task or situation at hand is beyond one's zone of confidence. One way to deal with this insecurity is to jump right in and fake it till you make it—to engage the emotional experience of the virtual self, the accomplished academic, and refract to the audience a meaning that shows seamless blend of the virtual academic self and the disciplinary context. Ideally, the community deems the performance acceptable (or at least tolerable for the time being), and effectively, the role embraces the student-academic. In these linguistically constructed, textually mediated communities, the academic roles are discursive, and embracing the role to demonstrate competence means taking on the language, in the many complex ways of dialogism presented above.

Finding one's own writing voice(s), or creating the space for one's voice, is a dominant component of the doctoral quest, for it is more than the words themselves that one seeks—it is the thinking those words crystallize, or blur, in the process of questioning, understanding, and explaining one's world. This dialogic transformation of thought is the intangible essence of journey, or at least that works for Romantics who quote Bakhtin:

When there is no access to one's own personal "ultimate" word, then every thought, feeling, experience must be refracted through the medium of someone else's discourse,

someone else's style, someone else's manner, with which it cannot immediately be merged without reservation, without distance, without refraction." (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 202)

Even when the desire to develop oneself in a new world is sincere, the process is surely not without awkwardness and doubt.

There are times when, for whatever reason, giving a convincingly sincere performance isn't quite right and if "the individual can slip the skin the situation would clothe him [sic] in" (Goffman, 2005/1961, p. 104), the fulfillment of the role with distance is a better fit. In some ways, this deception can be seen as "some kind of defensive function" (p. 105) to engage when, if one is likely to be judged poorly in a task, it is preferably to demonstrate an obvious lack of effort. But this role distancing also serves a pragmatic function, when one needs to engage the role to meet the audience's expectations while recognizing that it is a means to an end. This type of role distancing serves to "suggest that the actor possibly has some measure of disaffection from, and resistance against, the role" (p. 103). In this chronotope, those ends range from participation grades for discussion board postings, course papers, prospectus and dissertation approval, to publications, CVs, and job seeking. (Interestingly, comprehensive exams seemed exempt from this role distancing orientation in my study, and in my experience, but this finding will be elaborated on in the analysis chapter.) For many of these tasks, the criteria are learnable (even though access to that knowledge is uneven), and on occasion particular criteria can or must be met through shortcuts or tradeoffs.

Goffman (2005/1961) argues that "the concept of role distance provides a sociological means of dealing with one type of divergence between obligation and actual performance" (p. 107), but I argue there are two: the distancing is useful when there is a gap between competence

and criteria for performance or a difference in values between the performer and the audience. The latter discrepancy Goffman identifies as the move of a subordinate who “is careful not to threaten those who are, in a sense, in charge of the situation, [but] he may be just as careful to inject some expression to show, for any who care to see, that he is not capitulating” (p. 107) and thus still maintains some kind of control over the situation, satisfying the judge but withholding personal investment. In this case, the divergence is in that *I can but I don't want to*. In the former case, however, the divergence is in *I can't but I bet I can get you to believe otherwise*. This orientation echoes the dimension of faking it discussed above, but in this case the affective stance frames the audience as naïve and in role embracement, the audience is idealized and acceptance matters.

Incorporating role embracement and distancing in the chronotope facilitates the analysis and representation relative to the question of authenticity when students encounter new challenges as they engage in scholarly activities. Because of the tacit conventions of disciplinary communities, newcomers often struggle to interpret the affordances and constraints of different situations. Students must compose efficiently and effectively for the specific task with a gap of confidence or competence. While role embracement suitably characterizes the sincere costuming into “the virtual self available” (Goffman, 2005/1961, p. 102), role distance provides a frame for the seemingly same but affectively different event of effective composing without deep, sincere personal investment in the content of the composition—bullshit, so to speak.

Conclusion

The chronotope and socio-cultural theory serves as a tool for my analysis and representation of my study on how doctoral students navigate the journey of learning the academic ways of being and appropriating academic discourses to define and meet their goals.

This theoretical lens frames “the way objects and sites are bounded, defined, and animated in ‘natural’ sequences of action that obscure the fuller ecology of literate activity” (Prior, 1998, p. 248) and considers the experiences of student-scholars in the folded and knotted temporal sequences of becoming, writing among the shadows of the future and the laminated, heteroglossic settings that echo with voices from within and beyond the walls of academia. The chronotope construct incorporates sociocultural and dialogic theories of language and situated learning and facilitates my narration of this research, a project which culminates my own doctoral program.

An importance of the chronotope is making visible the intersections of these forces that complicate the one-dimensional socialization of the communities of practice structure. Within the setting, “space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot, and history” (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 84). It is important to see that the discourse communities of which doctoral students seek to become a part are complex in order to make sense of the multiplicity of experiences within what first appears to be a fairly open and equal programmatic structure. Some of the tension for doctoral students as they evaluate themselves relative to their goals and to their peers perhaps can be attributed to a consequence of a simplified perspective. Prior (2001) argues that the concept of discourse communities defines performance and competence relative to shared knowledge and that variation, then, is due to “error, different levels of expertise, and competing community norms (whether between or within participants)” (p. 58). These simplified interpretations of performance and attributions of knowledge undermine the complexities of composition as a task, process, and product.

Students’ histories, identities, and goals affect how they experience the tasks of doctoral programs and the specific tools available to them. The heterogeneity of the students and their

learning processes makes it difficult to construct a general theory for describing how bullshit manifests in doctoral students' writings. Though they are in shared settings of their departments, disciplines, cohorts, or other related communities, each person constructs unique personal settings.

CHAPTER FOUR

METHODS

This study was initially designed to explore how doctoral students navigate writing tasks when they experience a gap between what they think they do know and what they think they ought to know to complete the task. To that end, I anticipated that I would learn about the ways writers perceive their various tasks and the sources of knowledge and skills writers drew upon when composing. The question changed from my prospectus *When and how do students bullshit their academic writing?* when I realized that not all of them do.

This broader question framed my overall analysis:

What are ways doctoral students learn to perceive and complete their writing tasks?

However, the answer is bigger than a dissertation. I do have very interesting data, however, and the full analysis allowed me to finally figure out a way to reduce the full picture to the scope of the dissertation. These two questions frame the presentation of findings:

1. How do doctoral students learn the roles available for themselves as students and scholars?
2. What opportunities do they have to access strategies and insider knowledge for navigating efficiently as they enter new territory?

Data Collection

The data collection for this study took place in three phases. The first round of interviews took place in the fall semester of 2009. Then, participants selected texts they had written and sent them to me via email. Following this, a second round of interviews took place in spring/summer

of 2010. I conducted all interviews one-on-one with the participants at a time and place of convenience for them—including homes, offices, coffeeshops, and restaurants. Interviews lasted between 55 and 75 minutes. I recorded all interviews and sent the audio files to be transcribed by an outside source. In total, this amounted to approximately 25 hours of interview data, which became approximately 213 pages of transcribed data.

For the first round of interviews, I used a common protocol (Appendix A) to guide the semi-structured interviews and asked additional questions to clarify or extend participants' comments. This interview was designed for people to talk about their experiences as school writers. Questions asked about self-perceptions before/in graduate school, about the criteria for academic texts, sources of learning what and how to write, and writing blocks. During interviews I noted particular comments that interested me and used those notes to ask additional questions later in the interview. I also noted observations or connections I made to other people's experiences (participants, myself, other friends or peers) as musings to drop into a file for later analysis my analysis file. To these interview notes I added other thoughts I had while replaying the interview audio file later when proofreading the interview transcripts. After the first round of interviews, I sent all participants their individual interview transcripts, which I had checked against the recording and edited as needed. I invited each participant to make comments to extend or clarify anything in the transcripts, but none did.

A second component of the study was gathering texts that participants had written at some point in their doctoral program. In my request I asked for them to select one or more texts that they determined represent something significant about their development as an academic writer, the composition of which were particularly challenging or successful in some way. I suggested the following as possible texts: course papers (perhaps selected from first year and

subsequent semesters or years); comprehensive exam question papers; dissertation; prospecti; published (or not) articles; multiple versions of a developing paper, perhaps revisions after peer/prof/editor/reviewer/neighbor feedback; multiple incarnations of an evolving idea/theory/method/topic/font choice over courses, over years. I got a range of texts, summarized in the table below.

While I did receive a bulk of texts soon after my request, some people did not send them until or they made substitutions to their first selections (e.g., substituting a newly published article or recently submitted dissertation chapter) the week before our interview. Thus, the texts I collected from participants immediately informed the interviews but were not analyzed as a corpus. However, as I noticed resonance of ideas, types of feedback or revision, or other aspects of the particular texts that informed my developing understanding of my inquiry, I made notes of my musings and some of these were incorporated in subsequent interviews.

| | |
|----------|--|
| Tobius | 2 course papers |
| Barnaby | 1 course paper in 4 versions |
| Sally | Prospectus in 3 versions 2 published articles |
| Carmen | 1 published article with reviews, revisions, decision letter |
| Winston | prospectus |
| Amalia | 1 co-authored article with professor in late version including track changes 1 published article with earlier draft and peer comments and her letter to editor with revisions |
| Paola | Prospectus Published article Course paper |
| Towanda | Published article with initial version as course paper Course paper |
| Vladimir | Late version draft and peer comments for book chapter Course paper and earlier version, with prof comments |
| Ruby | 2 published articles with letters to editor after revisions |
| Zorko | 3 comp papers in process |

Table 1: Participants' Selected Texts

The second round of interviews took place after I had done a preliminary analysis of the first interview data. This analysis informed my construction of the second interview. In addition to asking about individuals' specific writing processes for their texts, I developed questions to explore common or confusing ideas from the first round of interviews, including people's audiences and developing scholarly identities. Frequently, follow-up questions in these interviews focused on relationships with peers and faculty in terms of how they influenced writing, research, and scholarly goals, themes that were prominent in the first round of interviews. Even though these second interviews were intended to be text--based, the scope of what those texts entailed was broader and more complex than I anticipated initially.

Participants

Complexity should have been anticipated. The study consisted of 11 doctoral students in the same department--mine--all working on PhDs in education. This created a layered dynamic, as participants reflected on the pedagogical moves made by faculty members, their own pedagogical choices as teachers, and their relationships with me. Furthermore, even though I held my participants' identities in confidence, some of them shared with their peers that they were in my study. However, not all did. So in some cases, a participant referenced another knowingly, even instances when they had talked about the experience of being in the study (which I will address in the analysis). In some cases, participants unknowingly provided me with unexpected analyses on other participants' perceived writing abilities—for example, four participants mentioned Sally as being a highly competent, productive writer. Sally, however, was self-conscious and self-critical about her writing skills and processes.

At the time the study began, students' enrollment in their doctoral programs ranged from being in their first semester to being in their fourth year. The purpose of selecting participants

who had completed different numbers of years of their doctoral programs was to explore how individuals talk about experiences and how sources influence their understandings of the kinds of texts they are composing. However, while attending to the importance of opportunities to learn--for which time is indeed a factor--this design is not intended to draw conclusions of a developmental nature. Also, I selected participants for a relative balance of gender, ultimately having 6 women and 5 men. Again, this was not to study gender differences in writing experiences, but to have a diverse group of individuals who bring various educational and experiential lenses to the writing process. Of the 11 participants, 9 had backgrounds in K-12 teaching, and 5 of those 9 had literacy education focus.

Context

This study is situated in a large public university in the southeast. In spite of being a research extensive institution, the student demographics reflect its alternate role as a land grant, public school of education, participating in the training of teachers who come from in-state and stay in-state. At the doctoral level, about a third of students are out-of-state residents when they apply to the program. This duality is a ubiquitous tension, from deans' evaluations of professors' professional productivity. The great divide between "practitioners" and "academics" was salient in my study, as students work to craft their professional identities and are acutely aware of the pressure to choose one, and choose wisely, because you can never go back.

The prestige of the department comes from the reputation of highly regarded and influential professors in the diverse field of literacy studies. Indeed, this is why some students apply to be doctoral students in the department (but some do so because it's geographically convenient.) The degree to which they know or care about the department's reputation before matriculation quickly becomes irrelevant, as the expectations for being a graduate from this

department resonate in the otherwise empty, lifeless, cinderblock and florescent light hallways. Because, while people speak of the importance of the department in terms of its reputation, its manifestation as a community is commonly mocked. These strange dynamics will be explained and illustrated more in the analysis, but in describing the context, these words seem apt.

Because I'm up to here in it

Alas, my own subjectivity.

It wasn't all that long ago that I loathed and mocked subjectivity statements. "I'm a youngest child, grew up with a left-handed mom, I compost, and I'm a terrible driver. And these frame how I study the vocabulary acquisition of dogs." It seemed like people used it as a platform to publish their journal entries and label their most important personality and identity features, lest anyone overlook their impressive self-awareness and progressive social philosophies—regardless of how any of that related to the research they were presenting. And, as it happens, that which I mocked landed itself smack in my analytic process, over and over again.

A writer of bullshit. This one was fairly obvious, and made me cringe for the clichéd omphaloskeptic dissertation, except for the pleasant irony of it all. The importance to recognizing the tensions in my own school writing history was to make space for the possibility that not all doctoral students in literacy education felt cynical about their historical relation to perfunctory school writing. But not having, well, my history with school, was something I could barely grasp, so couldn't foresee what I'd be dealing with or if there was much to study at all.

A doctoral student. This identity piece turned out to be my biggest perceptive obstacle at the beginning. I moved here, to study in this department, with a professor whose reputation for apprenticing his students in the ways of academic writing and scholarship was acknowledged by every participant except the first year student, who hadn't been around long enough to get the

word. My experiences as *Peter's student* mediated my engagement with this study more than I expected.

The interviewer... who also happens to be One of Those Other Students. In my initial study design, I deliberated about participant selection. Contemplating previous studies on graduate student writing, I weighed time frames and data sources, units and methods of analysis. Ultimately, I decided to recruit participants whose academic discourses were accessible to me, whose academic department culture familiar, and whose aspirational disciplinary communities and roles recognizable—whether these things were referenced directly, described, jargonized, or indexed. And so it was a reasoned choice to ask friends and acquaintances in my department. But myopic.

The complexities of interviewing peers became more apparent as I worked with the interview transcripts, but the intensity of this dynamic was cued to me at the end of my penultimate interview: As we were packing up and heading to our cars, she said to me, “Do you have any of Peter’s students in your study? Because I bet they’d have some really interesting things to say about this.” Suddenly the vague statements about “I know some people..” and “I hear there are some professors...” and “...” crystallized—The person interviewing these people about their experiences as academic writers was One of Those Students who 1) came from a master’s program...2) moved here specifically... and 3) was privileged with the widely-regarded opportunity to learn to write from Peter.

Data Reduction

As mentioned above, I had 213 pages of interview transcript and 27 documents of texts selected by participants as significant to their academic writing selves. My initial project design considered some kind of textual analysis of these participant texts. However, through the initial

interviews, my readings of individuals' texts, and the conversations about the texts, my interest and attention turned to focus "on what a text does within local networks of activity rather than focus[ing] on what it says" (Bazerman, 1994, p. 84). Rather than the text-as-artifact line-by-line analysis of features like headings, citations, vocabulary, hedges, sentence and argument structure, etc. that I had initially thought would be richly informative to studying students' writing, what became interesting is how people talk about the texts, how they position the texts in their worlds; what the texts represent as significant in their development as academic writers—and it was much less concrete than what a detailed textual analysis could reveal. In that way, the recursive analyses of interviews reshaped the role that the texts-as-data play in this study. They were useful in preparing for and conducting the second interviews, and the informal analysis that happened with each subsequent set of texts for the next interview also figured in to the constant rethinking of what the study was asking, finding, and doing. But, data for coding and formal analysis were reduced to interview transcripts for purposes of this dissertation study.

Reshaping occurred also as I struggled with discrepant data. At the beginning, I thought I was studying bullshitting. I expected that I'd find it. Frankly, I couldn't imagine *not* finding it, though I was willing to concede that maybe everyone doesn't do it often, or as cynically, or even as deliberately as I expected. Smagorinsky (2008) writes, "Critical here is the notion of disconfirming or discrepant data, which some authors try to hide because they undermine a nice and neat interpretation that is aligned with a favorite theory or thesis" (p. 396). This statement is bemusingly problematic. On the one hand, my advisor wrote the statement, and if I learned anything these years, the importance of discrepant data surely is on that list. On the other hand, my advisor and I have really been enjoying our bullshit theory. So into that, try to juggle the interviews in which students were challenging me with their sincerity, with their focused,

arduous efforts to use every possible resource in order to become The Scholar (or even just to be Done). Another Smagorinskyism posed itself as the dialectical solution: *Shit ain't workin'* (Smagorinsky, in press). Once I stepped back from looking at navigating the knowledge gap in a particular writing project to looking at the bigger picture of writing in (or as) the project of the doctoral student journey, the formerly ill-fitting data were illuminative.

Another dimension of data selection is in the approach to the corpus of interview transcripts. I did one round of analysis by taking all 11 interviews and looking across them for connections and echoes. Before each person's second interview, I listened again to their first one and read their texts; after, I made notes about strings within their own set of data. I developed a coding system in Atlas.ti as I worked with one person's Interview1, and then tried to continue using and expanding it with their Interview2. Just when I thought it was beginning to make sense, I tried another person's Interview1 in the same coding system and came to a screeching halt. I tried looking back at Interview1s together. At just fourth year students. Panicked. Shit still ain't workin'. In each orientation toward how to group the data, I kept having difficulty with specific codes, of how to define and describe what I thought I was seeing.

In true dialogic fashion, I guess, I was finally able to figure out how to deal with the data once I had a sense of how I was going to tell the story of the study. Perhaps this is what I've read as the robust methodological process of using my *theoretical sifter*. From there, I worked back to determine what types of codes, what degree of detail and distinction would be necessary to present and warrant my interpretation, collapsing categories, merging codes from different participants' hermeneutic units (as Atlas.ti calls the collection of codes in one system). Ultimately the same hermeneutic unit was used for all 22 interview transcripts.

Data Analysis

As is apparent above, the analysis was recursive. Each interview was enriched by the voices of the ones that had taken place before it—the heteroglossic interview(er). I asked for explication of ideas that had passed by me nonchalantly with another participant but had magnified in the interim. My first round of interviews provided me with enough substance to grasp what my study could be: before I had asked 11 people pointedly to talk to me about their writing experiences, I had only the vaguest sense of what those might be, knowing only that they couldn't be exactly like mine. And so I did a preliminary analysis of replaying interviews and reading transcripts and talking to myself (deliberate heteroglossic methodological move, of course) and drawing, drawing, drawing trying to see the ideas at play in this study, in this chronotope of the doctoral student journey world.

The drawing, I suppose, should be explained. It's not like it's some published (aka, "real") method that I've taken up. (But now that I think about it, I find myself in that space my participants talked about—where even if it's my own thing, I have to find someone who's published it if I want to use it.[Vladimir, 2009]) It is a process of understanding that usurped my traditional linear notetaking when I was struggling to follow lectures in a philosophy of language course that was, figuratively speaking, blowing apart my mind. My notetaking became a construction in mind and on paper of visually representing ideas and relations between them: icons, mirror writing, overwritten text, crossword overlapping, letters in varying size/shape/color/orientation, sketches with intermingled words...an exploration of ideas on the page as I tried to make sense of abstractions. It worked, and has continued to work for me as a process of thinking.

In trying to understand the complexities of the worlds of my participants and all the dynamics of those worlds coming together, with mine, in the chronotope, my dissertation as process and object, it was again felicitous to sprawl out on the floor with giant paper and dozens of colors of markers. And I alternately listened to my research interviews and Django Reinhardt (a detail which does seem germane in context of the next paragraph), covering my walls with my data. This process developed themes, of a kind, to show commonalities. A few examples: orange cubes reflected constructions of time, dotted lines were projection (of ideas, emotions, identities, etc) that varied in color on differences of disciplinary realms, sources (and directionality) of learning, choices and detours, shifting communities, and things overlapped, intensified, and repeated to convey degrees of power and frequency and other relations. I think that's the best I can do to explain the drawing bit. And I'm not sure it's sufficient or necessary, but it was part of my process. There remain inchoate ideas represented in these drawings, but they served the purpose throughout my entire study of facilitating my thinking without the obstacle of finding the right words.

Introducing the construct of themes through this description of drawing plays into the way I think and talk about themes. I find this term to be used functionally in research articles, having had its life beat down into a boilerplate synonym for "main ideas" that's used to give credence to the analysis. (Though they do have life when they're "emergent" and they "appear" so I don't know why I'm so bothered.) For my purposes, in my world, in my writing, in my chronotopic interpretation, "themes" reverberate with the meanings imbued in the term in its other contexts, with the poetry of heteroglossia in all its dynamism:

As in a musical polyphonic composition, a particular idea or theme (e.g., aggression, love, jealousy) has not a fixed, self-contained, unchangeable meaning. Instead, by leading

the theme through the various voices, its many-facetedness and potentials can be brought to expression. (Hermans & Kempers, 2003, pg. 24)

To speak of themes this way makes space for the complexities within the chronotope, the time-space of “intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships” (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 84). This study analyzes and tells a story of the polyphonic chronotope of THESE doctoral students.

The themes did not, then, emerge purely as the Lady of the Lake. It was through a multiplicity of modes, voices, and tensions that the salience finally registered. At times it was more John Cage than Mozart, so the themes were a bit enigmatic. And some were there but just not so engaging—like Wagner, as my great aunt Dorrie says: “You might as well see the opera, but you’re not going to leave there humming any arias.” But once I could see the picture of it—the story I will tell in my next chapter—I again went back to the data and again recoded the instruments.

As I said, it was recursive.

Addendum: It was exciting to finally have a vision of how to make sense of these data, these people as data, and my relation to them as people and as *my data*, and I thought I might finally be able to show what this chronotope idea can do. However, not surprisingly considering my record, the scope of the analysis was still too much and too complicated to try to put together for the dissertation, especially with the extra constraints of keeping identities as obscured as possible. And so I had to reduce again, this time with the purpose of representing the context of the department thoroughly in order to give space for to recognize how much the tacit messages of achievement and awareness of inequity effect students’ experiences. I realized in conversations and comments from Peter on my draft that in order for anything else to hold, the data must support the claim for this interpretation.

Coding

The final codes and categories I report here are not entirely unlike the earlier incarnations of my attempted coding systems. Overall, it is simpler and cleaner, as redundancies and labyrinthine sub-sub-sub-categories were distilled at the analytic level. What ultimately made the most sense was to return to what I know: a Vygotskian frame for understanding people in contexts by looking at their goals and the tools that mediate their actions relative to those goals (Vygotsky, 1987; Wertsch, 1991). My main categories of *goals*, *tools*, *setting* reflect this theoretical foundation.

The sub-categories within *tools* represent another layer of dialogism, as I decided to carry in the frame of knowledge about writing as action-mediating tools—that knowledge of *genre*, *content*, and *process*—from a previous study (Smagorinsky, Daigle, O’Donnell-Allen, & Bynum, 2010). The data for the other study came from a think aloud protocol (Smagorinsky, 1994) that engaged at a more immediate moment of composition. Using interview data to explore writers writing from a different angle in a different context seemed more different with every pass. And yet, when it came to understanding the tools of these doctoral students as writers, some codes from the earlier study obtained. The *affect* code also draws on it (Smagorinsky & Daigle, 2011), insofar as I have expanded my understanding of and attention to the ways writers’ affective experiences affect their compositional experiences.

Within the aforementioned categories, specific codes were both deductive and inductive. Initial coding was descriptive and detailed (e.g., *process: procrastination: rabbit-hole reading* to instances of going off on citation trails to read more and more and more). As I was indeed looking for how students learn to navigate the textual demands of academia, I was attending to how they talked about the texts and the processes for writing them; in this way, deductive codes

were used. However, as described above, there was much that didn't fit these narrow categories, and so I created codes that connected resonant ideas for individuals or in the whole group. As it took a while for enlightenment to find me, these early inductive codes used participants' words to highlight reappearances or echoes of some aspect of their talk. While some codes made sense when carried over to other participants, these finely combed descriptions were generally limited in usefulness to the individual whose words informed the code. Recursive coding made connections across the participants along the chronotopic motifs as they became apparent. Final coding for purposes of this analysis incorporated the plethora of individualized codes in simplified forms that sensibly organize the data in as much detail is required to present my interpretation.

Codes Defined

The codes presented here are the main codes used for analyzing all 22 interviews after the various rounds of coding individuals' interview sets, first round interview sets, and other attempts to find common, informative ways to positively label and identify segments of transcripts. Within the categories and codes presented here, I occasionally use additional descriptive or connective words that may clarify or extend discussion of particular data but were not relevant for the whole group—residue of earlier coding rounds, so to speak.

Goal

Codes in this category apply to specific achievement markers and to instances in which participants talk about the relevance of those achievement markers.

Markers: This code is applied to instances when participants identify measurable and observable indicators of achievement, including *publication*, *comprehensive exams*, *prospectus*, *dissertation*, *graduation*, *jobs*—as the goal orientation of particular situations or actions.

Mediated: While all goals are mediated in some way by the social context, this code is applied to goals which participants attribute the development relative to or in convergence with another person or information provided by someone but do not describe tension or conflict in the influence. Its usefulness is in sorting goal codes rather than providing particular interpretive power. The goal coded as *mediated* would be co-coded with the person or situation the participants indicated as related to the development of the goal, either in *opportunity to learn* or connected to *setting*, in which, for example, the relationship with a professor influences the construction of the affordances of the setting.

Negotiated: Different from merely informing a developing goal, *negotiated* goals are ones which participants describe as developing through a process of engaged collaboration or negotiation, in which the final goal is specifically influenced by the values and desired outcome of another person but is not in conflict with the participant's values or desires. These negotiated goals are also co-coded with the agent and context of influence—in *learning opportunity*, where explicit instruction from a *professor* about the ranking of journals and order for submitting an article for *publication* changes the participant's choice for where to send the article, or, less frequently, in *setting*, where another person or entity limits possible action or creates opportunity that otherwise wasn't available:

Divergent: The code for divergent goal is applied to situations when participants explain that they way they interpret or construct the meaning of a particular action is different from the goal of another person—generally one with more power in the situation. This dynamic has been studied by Bazerman (1994) and Prior (1994) in terms of how students and teachers can create and maintain very different conceptions of the task at hand. *Divergent goal* codes are often co-coded with a *strategic move* and the person or entity defining the required action. For example, a

professor on the participant's committee wants to see coding procedures in the prospectus, and the participant wants her *prospectus* approved, so she *strategically* writes a method section with coding procedures that are not aligned with her post-structural methodology, but will nevertheless satisfy her professor—and thus meet the goal of writing an acceptable prospectus.

Role

Aligned with the literature review and theoretical frame, coding for how participants identify and respond to the roles available to them is central to the inquiry of this project.

Identify: This code is applied when participants articulate attributes of particular academic ways of being. The primary role focus in the analysis presented in this dissertation is the role of *good doctoral student*, with attention to *early academic* in some instances when participants discuss how their projected careers shape their construction of student roles. Roles of *teacher* and *student* are relevant as participants construct the possible actions in faculty-student relationship and *reflections on pedagogy*. Instances when participants talk about the tension within the student world of regarding the teacher-vs.-scholar distinction relative to their own choices for roles are coded here, but not when the teacher-vs.-scholar canard is discussed relative to readers of different professional journals.

Embrace: Codes for instances when participants describe their engagement with foreign words or conventions in academic ways of being were initially largely inductive and idiosyncratic as I tried to capture participants' actions in specific contexts, their professed affective relation to the action, and my judgment from my perspective on the specific and situated event. Appropriating "role embracing" (Goffman, 2005/1961) as a deductive code facilitated clumping together a range of activities and orientations. Thus, role embracing applies to instances when participants describe or identify themselves as "disappear[ing] completely into

the virtual self available in the situation, to be fully seen in terms of the image, and to confirm expressively one's acceptance of it" (p. 102). That is, students' enactment of the behaviors and discourses of the good doctoral student are in harmony with their own goals. Instances of *role embracing* are co-coded with *mediated* or *negotiated goals* and the people influencing the construction of *setting* and goals.

Distance: In contrast, *role distancing* codes are applied when a participant "possibly has some measure of disaffection from, and resistance against, the role" (p. 103) yet engages the behaviors or discourses anyhow. While Goffman suggested role distancing could be a defensive maneuver, such a conclusion would be well beyond the scope of coding unless participants specifically explained their orientation as such. However, distancing codes are applied when participants describe actions as "means to an end" rather than inherently valuable or otherwise indicate that the required behaviors or discourses are for their purposeful effect on audience or addressees. *Role distancing* codes are often but not always co-coded with *divergent goals* and the *processes* or *strategies* employed to complete the *tasks*.

Task

For purposes of the analysis presented in this dissertation, all writing tasks are collapsed toward whether or not the *criteria* for a particular task have been made *explicit* for the participant. In analyses addressing individuals' writing experiences and products in depth, task codes are identify more detail and definition.

Setting

Setting is a dynamic and unique co-construction by an individual interacting with the people, discourses, institutions, and environments that contribute to the context (Smagorinsky, 2010). For purposes of this analysis, the codes within the setting category are general tags for the

participants' description or attribution of influence on their construction of setting in any particular context. That is, the affordances or constraints on the conceptual horizon of possible activity are mediated predominantly by participants' experiences and interpretation of professors, the department, self, or disciplinary community.

Professors/faculty: This code is applied when participants talk about their *goals, learning opportunities*, and construction of possible identity *roles* in terms of one or more professors. An instance would be coded *setting: professor*, meaning only to facilitate sorting and revisiting the co-codes of various instances.

The department: In the analysis presented in this dissertation, the influence of *the department* is a primary factor mediating participants' construction of settings. The necessity for this code arose from the salience of participants attributing thingness and agency to this abstraction. Indeed, the surprising degree to which participants referenced *the department* relative to such things as how they constructed the idealized good doctoral student role, evaluation of self as a writer, construction of goals, intensity of affective pressure, etc. precipitated the need to conduct and present the analysis presented herein.

Self: Again, self seems a redundant influence in individuals' unique constructions of settings based on interaction and interpretation of context through one's internal perceptions and experiences. The *self* code is useful for culling transcripts for participants' lamination of non-doctoral student selves (especially histories as teachers and writers) and how those histories or projections mediate the ways participants interpret events, values, and possibilities. The code of *setting: self* often highlights points where participants' talk could inform an analysis focusing on dialogical selves. These *setting: self* codes do appear in the analysis presented here, but are more prominent and informative for interpreting and presenting data around themes of teacher/scholar

identities and pedagogical reflection. They are also useful in looking at individuals' talk about themselves and their processes as writers.

Opportunities to learn

Codes in this category indicate an event or relationship of teaching and learning. These instances may be explicit instruction in processes or content for research and writing or could be an acute absence of opportunity. These codes are applied to specific instances or events described by the participants and to global or generalized situations or relationships described by the participants. Learning opportunity codes occur alongside codes identifying the content or knowledge engaged in these experiences, specifically knowledge of writing processes, disciplinary content, features and conventions of disciplinary texts, and other explicit or implicit knowledge of academic ways of being. The codes in this category specify the other parties involved in the learning experiences: *professors*, *peers*, and *editors or reviewers*.

Professors: instruction/feedback This code is applied when the opportunity to access, develop, and construct knowledge relevant to scholarship is in context of courses and feedback on writing that may or may not be within the bounds of a course.

Professors: collaborative activities code applies to participants had opportunities to learn through extended activities, generally but not always co-authoring articles or chapters with their professors.

Peers: This code is applied when participants share and construct knowledge with their peers, through informal conversations, collaborative projects, writing groups, etc.

Editors/reviewers: While this code does appear some within the analysis presented here, there is a wealth of data extending and developing the analysis of doctoral students' processes and outcomes for learning about and improving their disciplinary writing through engaging with

journal editors and peer reviewers. An additional dynamic not addressed here is students' opportunities to be reviewers and editors of articles and the ways these experiences inform their identities and knowledge as scholars.

Strategic moves

The category of strategic moves is central to the angle of inquiry that initiated this study—that of how students identify and navigate situations when the task at hand is not perfectly suited to students' current capacities. Yes, I thought I was looking for students engaging knowledge, skills, and confidence to complete writing tasks for which they were yet to develop particular aspects of content, genre, or disciplinary knowledge, and I thought I was trying to find out how they identified the situations requiring such strategic maneuvering and how they developed the knowledge to maneuver successfully. Instead, I needed to broaden my lens to look at writing as a component of academic ways of being, and to see the tasks of developing knowledge, confidence, and authority in those disciplinary contexts as potentially challenging experiences. Codes in the strategic moves categories are applied to instances when participants identify, employ, or develop strategies for navigating efficiently through their doctoral program of studies and into the disciplinary communities beyond.

Insider knowledge is essential for any effective strategizing. The *strategic move: insider knowledge* code is applied to instances when participants develop through experience or instruction understandings about the generally tacit conventions, rules, and exceptions of particular situations or social contexts relative to their student roles or their early academic roles. While this knowledge may be explicitly shared in some circumstances, it is not part of the standard educational program available to all students. Insider knowledge codes co-occur with the persons or entities relevant to the goals, settings, and specific content—whether processes for

composing, ways of navigating political tensions, or subtle rhetorical or disciplinary moves within written texts, among other things.

Strategic construction of setting includes tuning in to the tacit knowledge, values, and expectations, accessing tools available in order to set goals and anticipate others' moves. That is, the ability to discern the affordances and constraints within the explicit and tacit dynamics of particular contexts, and to situate oneself deliberately to maximize benefit and minimize personal costs. *Strategic construction* requires *insider knowledge* of, for example, editors' theoretical biases or how to draw on affective tools consciously to steel oneself against anticipated criticism from professors, peers, or reviewers. Strategic construction also includes such things as initiating relationships with particular professors who will likely provide desired knowledge, support, or opportunity and aligning oneself with like-minded (or not) peers for various goals.

Strategic acquiescence: Often co-coded with *role distancing*, *strategic acquiescence* codes are applied to instances when participants describe situations of *divergent goals* with *professors* or *editors*, generally, and a deliberate choice to appease the more powerful parties to bring about the outcome that will still ultimately serve the participants' needs. This strategic move is necessary in situations of power relationships, where participants may be under some obligation to adhere to the guidelines or realize the superiority of another person, group, or institution. The acquiescence entails some degree of investment in the situation, actions, and goals which the participant must weigh and work among. d

Perfunctory or efficient move: When the participant isn't particularly invested or opposed to a task but deems it necessary for part of a larger goal, the code of strategic perfunctory move is applied. Using whatever understanding they have of the criteria or

expectations for a task, participants may engage the minimal but acceptable behavior or product for the mere purpose of completing the task.

Idiosyncrasy, preference, ego of specific anticipated readers: This code is applied in specific situations, relative to individual participants and specific people that they reference as addressees for their texts. Genre functions and a host of disciplinary conventions encoded in text are not the criteria for targeted strategic action at play within this code in this analysis. Rather, it is when participants have been informed or have developed knowledge of unique tastes and dispositions of their readers—generally professors, and occasionally journal editors. For example, the *strategic moves* tending to *idiosyncrasies* include checking all documents against personalized lists of irritating words for different professors, including particular words or ideas with informed anticipation of how various professors will respond to each piece.

Bullshit

In the overall analysis of bullshit, the term is ultimately applied to other strategic moves. For coding purposes, however, I applied the bullshit code only to instances when participants identified something specifically as bullshit or the quaint ‘BS’ term.

Affect

This code was applied when the affective quality or effects of a particular situation, behavior, or event was a central component of the story. That is, it was applied to instances of evaluating oneself as a writer, interpretations of others’ feedback on writing, academic or professional futures, and other conversations that were described as affecting one’s mood, confidence, etc.

Knowledge tools: of writing processes

As the focus in my data collection was on what and how students engaged in composition tasks, there were initially far more codes and subcategories describing participants' writing processes. The attempt at synthesizing the multitudes from 22 interviews used six codes for generalized processes of writing, only one of which ended up making the final cut for the analysis in the dissertation. I will briefly summarize components within these codes but not elaborate here.

Reading as a process of writing included studying journals for styles, tones, and topics; collecting quotes; developing content knowledge in order to write; rereading journals in response to writing blocks; procrastinating or earnestly following citation trails for just one more ... ; most participants described that at some point in the writing project, it was necessary to “freewrite,” “ramble,” or just *write, write, write* to generate ideas and material to work with. I adopted the term *re-voicing* from Prior (1994) to encompass many dialogic processes in composition, including selecting and organizing quotes from the literature as a skeleton frame for first draft, weaving literature quotes and data quotes, “hearing my professor’s voice in my head” repeating critiques or strategies. Additional processes strategies include *anticipating revision*, setting *deadlines*, and *blocks/fixes*. Ultimately, the *anticipating revision* code is the process code most visible in the data selected for this dissertation.

Knowledge tools: disciplinary texts

Knowledge of disciplinary texts category groups the codes that applied when participants spoke specifically about qualities that define and distinguish different types and sub-types of academic texts. The code *text features* refers to aspects of form, including “APA stuff” (a surprisingly frequent descriptor), headings, organization, and overall structure. *Disciplinary*

textual conventions identifies instances when participants talked about register, tone, citations, and the disciplinary nuanced use of particular vocabulary. Specific talk about *disciplinary content* included details of participants' work, including which aspects serve as evidence or cause obstacles or are otherwise mentioned topically. This code was used in the comprehensive analysis but is broken down in individual analyses to clarify types of content, self-evaluations of knowledge, and other unique descriptor codes for individual cases.

Conclusion

So from a boatload of data (a small boat) and a comprehensive albeit somewhat convoluted analysis, I have selected to present an argument focused on the tacit yet powerful emphasis on visible academic achievement for students in this department. These findings serve as foundation for presenting much of the other analyses, and as such the other analyses are drawn on throughout the findings when they are relevant illustrations of the primary argument.

CHAPTER FIVE

FINDINGS

The findings reported in this chapter are culled from the larger analysis. Although the focal topics with my data collection were on students' processes as writers and the knowledge they drew on to complete various academic writing tasks, the participants in my study spoke about their writing in highly contextualized ways. The big picture is complex and layered, rich with the precise, unique details participants generously told me about their processes of writing and thinking—from multi-colored font in early drafts to ten pages of quotes pulled from books and interviews; from never having revised a paper before becoming a doctoral student to those same people struggling to finish a paper now; of peer feedback that never seems to be quite critical enough to being a peer reviewer for disciplinary journals. These data were further enriched by the texts which participants elected to share with me, many of which came in multiple drafts, with comments from peers, editors, professors, themselves. This all led me to a far more complicated study than I had anticipated.

I finally admitted I could not communicate it all well in the confines of this dissertation. The additional dynamic of having sited my study in the very department in which I am a student afforded me a deeper analysis than I would have been able to do as an outsider to the department; however, it has been the foremost obstacle in representing my analysis. I have tried to maintain participants' confidentiality and so struggled with presenting data as words of real people in context with as little context about each individual as possible, while still maintaining the contextualized meaning [I constructed] of the interview.

Overview of Chapter

Instead of extended detail on students' acts of composing, or developed case studies of a few writers, in this chapter I present data toward building the contexts in which the writing tasks and processes described to me are situated. This sizable data reduction is theoretically coherent with the larger analysis. The multidimensionality of the chronotope extends and represents the sociocultural and dialogic understandings of students' experiences of being socialized into academic writing activities and academic selves. The social context—itsself ephemeral and dynamic—anchors the constructs of the chronotope to create the spaces in which these components intersect. And so, the data selected here are not representative of the full findings in terms of sampling some of everything. It is representative of the full findings in terms of focal themes—for example, the ways people talked about the department, if they did, and the range of learning opportunities.

The primacy of context for a study using dialogic and sociocultural theory necessitates as full a picture around the data as is important to interpreting them. While I intended to study specific writing practices, the influence of context on students' perceptions of themselves and others as scholars, the tools available to them, the social support and pressure all shaped these people's settings as writer in such a thorough way, that exploring context in detail seemed the only place to begin representing the experiences of my peers' academic socialization.

Their voices, and mine, together create a multi-dimensional context of the abstract program, goals, and learning opportunities therein, representing a range of individual interpretations, experiences, and constructions of settings for their engagement as students in the doctoral journey. I decided to focus this chapter on the data that inform an analysis and interpretation of the context of students' experiences as students in their doctoral program and

novice scholars, in terms of how they learn the often tacit disciplinary conventions and strategies for navigating successfully within the academic communities.

Summary of codes

The overarching finding of the chapter frames the competitive nature of the academic game through the lens of publication. I begin by establishing that there is an ethos among the students in the program, communicated explicitly and often tacitly by faculty and students, which permeates the student culture. This ethos generates an idealized *role of* “good doctoral student” (Jazvac-Martek, 2009, p. 255) as one who is a good writer; reads voraciously; receives grants, scholarships, and awards; presents at a range of conference; and publishes, publishes, publishes. Sweitzer (2009) posits that in a program that where “the primary message and expectation communicated to students” (p. 12) emphasizes research productivity as success and the purpose of study in the program, many students adopt “performance orientation learning goals” (p. 13) and a narrow definition of success directly tied to the concrete achievement measures. Not all students do, however. Students who are oriented toward “mastery learning” (p. 14) maintain an affective distance from the intensity prioritizing publishing even while “accept[ing] the given roles of doctoral student, research assistant, and teacher” (p. 14) without internalizing them and evaluating themselves on those criteria.

The data I present show these variations of *role embracement* and *role distancing*, as students uniquely construct the *settings* “by interpreting the arena through their internal representations of the situation” (Smagorinsky, 2010), which include relationships with *professors* and *peers*, and other activities within *the department*—an abstraction that is often attributed agency in shaping individuals’ construction of setting. In addition, individuals’ own *selves*, the histories and *goals* affect their interpretation of their experience. Furthermore, *goals*

are socially mediated as well—at times commonly shared with others (e.g., *professors, peers, editors/reviewers, the department*), at times *negotiated*, and at times *divergent* from others’ in a way that may or may not be in conflict. In cases of *divergent* goals, students need to *act strategically*, which can appear as *acquiescing to the goal* of the person or institution with more power but belies a *deliberate trade off* that still ultimately meets the students’ needs.

This does still revolve around academic writing, in case you were wondering. The primary *tasks* students talk about are generally writing course papers, comps, or articles, and this analysis focuses largely on students’ *opportunities to learn* and develop *knowledge*—psychological *tools*—about *text features* such as *form* and *disciplinary conventions* in text, including *citations, structure of argument*, and what counts as *evidence*. Other *knowledge tools* are *disciplinary knowledge* of academic ways of being—networking, dealing with editors, and ability to define oneself and one’s readers/addressees in order to write in sync with disciplinary conversations and expectations. Finally, there are *knowledge tools of writing processes* which students can engage to complete the task, including *anticipating revision* [and so not worrying about making it perfect] from peers, professors, or reviewers; setting *deadlines* or specific goals to finish; and *re-envoicing*, where writers weave others’ words from professors, participants, literature, or otherwise specific recognition of dialogic moves for composition. *Opportunities to learn*—through *explicit instruction, feedback* on writing, *observation*; from *peers, professors, reviewers, disciplinary literature*; being able to *access insider knowledge* about written texts or disciplinary conventions, etc.

Role of theory

A theoretical frame, in virtue of being a frame, provides a guiding structure to articulate conceptual interpretations in the study. The extensive frame presented in Chapter 3 entailed an

array of dynamic forces at play within the chronotope as well as the construct of academic bullshitting as a sociocultural, dialogic practice with varying manifestations and motivations. While the full frame was used to conduct and interpret the whole study, the findings selected here do not necessarily illustrate the full array of forces at play in the whole chronotope.

This inquiry into the experiences of students in this particular doctoral program was conceived as a full picture—or, as full a picture as the data could provide for a complex, historically situated yet ongoing process of people becoming doctoral students, of learning to write, and of having intentions of a career, which sounds like a simple thing in those terms. When I finally figured out how the chronotope worked with writing up the study my excitement was short-lived—or, as short as it can be to write 70-something pages of findings with a spoonful of data. Pared down as the data are, the chronotope has less to offer in as a conceptual narrative tool for choreographing a host of people and their words in times. It's not irrelevant, but it seems useful in communicating relations and constructing meaning toward more, and more complex conclusions. Considering the challenge of making it contribute interpretive power, then, I am back-grounding rather than fore-grounding it as a theoretical component of interpretation, taking my lead on this one from the amazing Bazerman (2003), whose chronotope article had the term in the index words and once in the introduction before it went beneath the surface.

That said, I focus the interpretation of these data toward representing the context of the program and students' constructions of settings and setting of goals, particularly as pertaining to scholarship and role identities within the academic communities. Using sociocultural and dialogic theory, I interpret the opportunities students have to learn about the disciplinary conventions around written text and how they use this knowledge to shape and meet their goals, including possible role identities as socially constructed academic ways of being. Specifically,

I'm looking at strategic moves that students learn to make in various situations which could give the appearance to the defined addressee of the student knowing or wanting something when that is not entirely true. How do students identify the tacit values and affordances of situations in order to leverage the power and knowledge they do have to their advantage?

Yes, that could be described as bullshitting. However, the data did not present a bounty of the Vygotskian generative bullshitting-in-writing found in our earlier study (Smagorinsky, Daigle, O'Donnell-Allen, & Bynum, 2010). Strategic maneuvers, yes. Bullshit, sometimes. But participants also identified other aspects of their academic worlds which they called bullshit, or two people described a writing strategy, for example, the same way but one didn't call it bullshit. The term is ambiguous enough that multiple types of bullshit were described, identified, or confessed. Throughout the presentations of other findings, I will discuss the bullshit aspects of these instances in the findings as they appear and at length at the end of the chapter.

The findings below are coherent with the larger analysis. That is, if I had written a 400 page book, this would provide the foundation, or the chronotope, for making sense on every page. The selected quotes are illustrations of themes and explicated for codes and theory. Central to the theoretical frame is the unique experiences of individuals within the boundedness of this department's doctoral programs, while the department as the abstract place is continually reproduced and reshaped by the comings and goings of students (and faculty though generally less frequently) over time.

The presentation of data is as follows: *Culture of Scholarship* establishes that there is a powerful common message of high expectations for student regarding scholarly productivity, which powerfully influences students' goals; *Learning to Use the System* illustrates two students' learning and application of strategies to eschew the anxiety that prevents students from

submitting articles; *Teaching the Expected* illustrates the extreme range of learning opportunities available to students for them to develop knowledge of and skill with producing disciplinary texts; *Citations are Everything* illustrates different ways that students learn and exercise the disciplinary conventions of citation.

Focusing questions:

1. How do doctoral students learn the roles available for themselves as students and scholars?
2. What opportunities do they have to access strategies and insider knowledge for navigating efficiently in as they enter new territory?

Transition to findings

It is widely presumed (among participants in this study) that being a doctoral student inherently means one is “smart,” “a good writer,” and “pretty good at school.” The prominence of writing as the vehicle for participating in the academic world, however, is not a prominent reason for signing up for a doctoral program in literacy education. Indeed, for six of the eleven participants in this study it was the case that, effectively, “I didn’t realize how much writing was going to be a part of [the doctoral program],” (Sally), and “I never really thought that I would be publishing...I read stuff [in journals] and figured that’s what they do, not even knowing who ‘they’ were” (Amalia). This confusion may relate to the criteria for admission to the program, which Tobius recalled as requiring teaching experience but nothing particular about intense writing. This discrepancy between explicit criteria and expected knowledge and performance resonates in the data. Frustrated by his experiences writing for professors his first semester, he said to me about the program: “It’s just that what you ask for and then what you expect are

different.” Regardless of students’ expectations, experience, or aspirations, they quickly realize the centrality of writing to the scholarly life.

Culture of Scholarship

“It’s the air we breathe”...[if you still can]

Settings are uniquely constructed by individuals interacting with the people, institutions, structure, and space, interpreting these things through their own histories and goals. But, in this chronotope, students are all operating within and construct settings relative to the same arena of physical space and objects and intangible properties like speech genres (Lave, 1988; Smagorinsky, 2010; Wertsch, 1991). In this section, I present the analytic finding of a resonant description or indication of the implicit expectations within this department, shaping the chronotope through venerating and giving power to scholarly achievements and idealized behaviors of doctoral students. The force of this tacit imperative—a tacitly instantiated direction of scholarly aspiration, the present-future of scholarly recognition—creates the boundaries of an “informational landscape” (Bazerman, 2003) of the typical and possible actions within this chronotope. This is not to say that prolepsis forecloses other options, only that there is a centripetal pull toward valuing this academic identity role.

The data presented here are primarily coded as *role of good doctoral student*, *role embracement*, *settings* constructed relative to *the department* and *peers*, and *goals of publication* and *presentation*. As this section is more than ten pages focused on establishing that students perceive this expectation and respond with varying levels of engagement, it would be redundant and rhetorically annoying (for me anyhow) to use the same language and italicized indication of codes, but I explicate the data to emphasize the coding.

The participants' voices in this section are primarily four advanced doctoral students who articulated (sometimes at length) description, reflection, and analysis of dynamics of department culture. Their perspective and words tuned me in to this theme, which I could then see in interview with the other participants. While there are a lot of data related to submitting and reviewing articles for publication, not all those conversations addressed this expectation directly and were often more focused on the processes.

Publications

The student culture in this department is rather intense, with a surprising convergence of descriptions of the values, messages, expectations, and resources in spite of its fragmentation and dispersion. That is, even though there are two graduate student groups within the department and facilitated informal roundtables for students to share in-process work, “the new people come in and don’t see anything happening. So they just assume that that’s how it’s supposed to be,” (Sally). And yet, messages about what it means to be a student in this department are somehow passed along and reinforced and recreated, leaving people with only a vague sense of the source of these ideas. “It’s sort of like the water you swim in,” says Carmen,

so it’s sort of hard to see, but our department, they just expect that you get out there and you are presenting at conferences and that you do, you know, write for publication. And even if it’s not articulated, not in exact—they don’t tell you exactly. They still expect it.

In the fall semester of his first year as a full time student in the program, after multiple semesters of part-time enrollment, and a first year as a graduate assistant with a shared office in one of the GA halls, Barnaby remarked, “up until this point I haven’t really been thinking about publication. But I’ve noticed some of my peers have definitely been publishing.” Awareness of peers’ publications is unavoidable because “they send out these emails, oh this person got

published, oh this, oh that...It's a culture where writing is valued and academic writing is valued" (Carmen).

New students join the social world of the graduate students in the department, with part-time students somewhat estranged. Gerholm (1990) infers that the development of a culture among graduate students is influenced by "their common exposure to routines, explicit and implicit demands from their supervisors, etc., a culture based on their own interpretations and reactions to a situation that has been defined by others" (p. 270). In other words, how students construct a common culture within a department is informed by and affecting their individual constructions of settings, and those less involved get less exposure to shared experiences. The frequency of email announcements of student publications is part of the implicit message to participate in this scholarly activity, and through that and other media, new students "notice" that something is going on. Barnaby's "but" suggests a shift in his own goals, as mediated by the cultural norms he's recognizing.

Vladimir, at the beginning of his second year, was tuning in. He hadn't been a writer or in literacy education before he started this program, so everything was new to him. He jumped in, however, and worked extremely hard to figure out the field and learned to figure out what he needed to know. And he had figured out that people here publish, and he started reading journals, not quite sure what he was looking for.

I read *JAAL* and liked how it was ... it made some points, but it was also easy to read...I think, my style, how it is now, would fit there. Right? But that doesn't mean I want to limit myself to a *JAAL* audience, I want to be able to write to an *RRQ* audience, but I don't know what that means yet.

He decided, while talking to me about knowing that there's a difference but not what that difference is that "what I should do is compare, like really compare the two. What is *RRQ* doing that *JAAL* is not? ... Is it just that it's research? Is it the words they're using? Is it the style? Is it just that it's much longer?" These quotes suggest that Vladimir was becoming aware of the types of possible differences between the texts written for a *JAAL* or an *RRQ* audience.

Not all students begin a doctoral program with aspirations to publish prolifically, illustrated by the selected quotes in the introductory paragraph above. Aside from not being close to the activities of research publication before, new students are also suddenly in disciplinary waters well over their heads, to extend Carmen's simile, and generally not buoyant with confidence or grandiosity about the immediate need to publicize their ideas. Notwithstanding these initial humble or naïve aspirations, the projected future as published scholars permeates the community through announcements of student publications on the listserv and conversations in hallways or classrooms about students' submitting or revising manuscripts.

Even students caught off guard by the immediate presumption that they would soon publish something because that's what students do here. Three participants reported that they had taken a class specifically because they had heard that students were required to have a "publishable manuscript" at the end of the semester, but, Barnaby recalled, "beyond that there really weren't any other specific requirements. Well, except that it be of manuscript length, which I think...is like 6,000 to 10,000 words. I honestly have no idea. But I just follow what she said." This task, then, lacks specific criteria except manuscript length, a criterion hard to grasp for students who have not encountered a manuscript before. But the assumption that everyone knows what that means further enforces the idea that students who don't know are already behind. And Barnaby is ready to embrace that role and follow along.

Amalia speculated that her professor's tendency to refer to course papers as manuscripts was intentional: "I think she uses the term manuscript just to get you in to the mindset that this is not just a paper, you have to get it to manuscript, meaning publishable level, which is a whole different level." A student no longer writes a mere course paper—all things are directed toward ultimate publication. And, as Amalia takes up the language and speaks with her "colleagues" about her manuscripts, Barnaby and other new students may be down the hall starting to notice something.

Presentations

Emphasis on participation in the disciplinary communities includes presenting papers at conferences, which is framed as such a standard component of students' activities that it is presumed to be something everybody does. Carmen and Sally both recalled how the same professor, to each student in her first semester, asked them what they were presenting at an upcoming national conference. While Carmen spoke in terms of timing and having missed the submission deadline, "I mean, 'cause I like got here in August and the conference was in November," she got the message, recalling that her professor "was like, oh my gosh, you are not going?"—communicating the clear if not fully articulated expectation that "Here's a research conference. I'm expecting you to be there. You should be there." Sally was equally caught off guard by the assumption she'd be presenting:

I was like, what are you talking about, I have no idea what you're talking about. So from the very beginning there was this you need to participate, you need to be out there, you need to be saying things, sharing things that are important, being in front of people.

These students had a very similar story about their abrupt initiation into the program's norms for scholarly activity, including the ambiguity of what those expectations really were. Sally

embraced the role and responded to the expectation, only to be told a few years later by the same professor that “I was presenting too much.” Thus, the lack of explicit expectations, of guidelines for the type and timetable recommended toward what professional goals, leave students who embrace the role to define these relative to their peers—an ambiguity that, combined with the perceived or nascent competition, generates an ever increasing standard.

As students construct the settings of their doctoral experiences, the expectation that students are presenting and publishing comes in from many directions. Through interactions with faculty and students, new students are quickly assimilated into the process of reproducing the discourses and normalcy of this tacit defining feature of what students do. Individuals’ goals are mediated by the existing cultural values communicated among peers, reinforced by department announcements on students’ publications, and the ways faculty structure courses and relationships with students. Involvement in professional associations through attending conferences and reading disciplinary literature exposes students to general conversations of the disciplinary communities.

Local (re)production of intensity

“I think part of it is [this place]. I really do think part of it is [this school]. I don’t think it’s just the field,” said Paola to me, in discussing this emphasis on visible scholarly productivity. Contact with people outside the department provides perspective on how much “the water you swim in” affects students’ perceptions of themselves as scholars relative to the idealized role locally constructed in the department. Amalia tells how at conferences, graduate students from other universities express shock at her accomplishments: “I’m like, but I would be behind my colleagues if I weren’t. I mean, that’s what our group does. I don’t feel like I’m this over-achiever within our group, unless we’re all over-achievers, because we’ve all published

something.” Likewise, Carmen was herself surprised to learn that in other universities, the department listservs were used to publicize graduate students’ conference presentations. “I was like, damn, like our department does not do that because it’s such—it’s like the air we breathe. Of course all these students are going to be presenting at conferences. That’s not something to celebrate.”

Amalia’s identification with “our group” as a collective of people “who all do that” indexes a change in her perspective—whereas in her quotes at the beginning of the chapter she didn’t even think about who “they” were, those people publishing in journals, she is now identifying as one of them. Of course, the time lapse of this change in Amalia is not the lapse of five pages between the presentation of these quotes. And, the context of her saying these two things to me was within thirty minutes, as she was reflecting on over three years as a doctoral student. As this conversation took place over a year ago, she’s employed full-time, and—rumor has it—turning her career path away from academia. How’s that for some chronotopic narrative?

In Carmen’s quote above, I was struck by student conference presentations as “not something to celebrate.” Not only has the normalcy of presentations communicated an imperative that everyone should be doing it, but the hierarchy and devaluing is noteworthy. For some people—for everyone, at some point—having a paper accepted for a conference *is* something to celebrate. This ventriloquation (Bakhtin, 1981), the speaking of others’ words in one’s own voice, is a fascinating illustration of the dialogic processes at work. It is highly unlikely that any official voice in the department would say that conference presentations aren’t worthy of recognition and celebration, yet the tacit communication of values in the department has provided this frame for evaluating students’ achievements—words just beneath the surface, at the ready for anyone to speak.

For Paola, awareness of the situated nature of this pressure was in conversation with a former professor and mentor from her undergraduate days. She was taken aback by Paola's response to her enthusiasm about Paola being lead presenter at NCTE. Paola described the exchange:

I'm like, yeah, but I didn't got to AERA and I didn't do this and I didn't do that, I'm probably not going to get a job, and oh my God, I only have one publication. And she looked at me and said, "Are you out of your mind? ... What's happened to you? Just breathe." This place doesn't encourage breathing.

The juxtaposition of Carmen's and Paola's figurative use of breathing emphasizes both the ubiquity and intensity of the importance of active participation in the academic community. The agency attributed to "our department" and "this place" in Carmen's and Paola's statements, respectively, is intriguing and indexes the resonant attribution in the data on the powerful shaping force of local context on students' constructions of what students are supposed to be and do in this place. Amalia and Paola both entered the PhD program with an intention to work at teaching colleges after graduation, to influence public education by teaching teachers. As much as Paola described herself as trying to avoid the pressures of "this place," it is evident in her story above that she was not able to avoid altogether the messages of what counts as achievement.

I interpret this tension to not take up the values of competition and yet evaluating herself by the values through the construct of *dialogic self*, introduced in the theory chapter. It is possible for people to have these multiple voices—metaphorically, not psychiatrically, speaking—that hold competing desires, goals, and criteria for self-evaluation. In spite of telling herself, and telling me, that she holds herself distant from this intensity game in the department,

she shows also the pull of centripetal force, back toward the norms of the student culture, speaking the expectations—and the consequences of not striving to meet them: not getting a job. As it happens, at this point in time as I write this, Paola has a job awaiting her this fall, and it is precisely the kind of work she wants to do.

In talking about a friend in the program, Paola remarked on the stress she observed: “But it’s because she doesn’t feel like she can stop. If she stops, that is a kind of failure. And it only takes a few people with that kind of work ethic to infect the rest of us.” Sweitzer (2009) found that the emphasis on performance and achievement “may persuade students to adopt and ‘all or nothing’ metric of success” (p. 13), described by Paola as “if she stops, that is a kind of failure.” Through Sweitzer’s interpretation of the effect of the institutional environment on student behaviors and definitions of success, Paola’s quote reinforces my assertion that the pressure on students to publish is not an entirely self-created goal. Not without agency, however, Paola’s peer constructed the setting to feel such pressure for productivity by thoroughly and visibly embracing the role of ambitious and constantly hardworking student, and in so doing “infect[ing] the rest of us,” which ups the ante for anyone with a stake in the game. The student culture is continually reproduced within these dynamics of achievement and competition. “Our department,” then, is in mutually shaping relation to the students, affording and constraining the acknowledgement of possible actions and ways of being.

Competition

The pressure to excel individually inevitably sets up competitive dynamic beneath the surface of collegiality and community the department ostensibly fosters competition. For the most part, the competition flitters beneath the surface, showing flashes, I interpret, in students’ talk about how busy they are or how much they’re reading—display the behaviors which are

attributed to the idealized doctoral student. Sally explains that “People say, ‘Well, when I get the journals in literacy I read the abstracts and the conclusions, and I make a note of it in my spreadsheet’...Probably everybody else is doing that but me,” (Sally, 2010). First, I wonder about which students with what motivation are talking about their reading behaviors, especially considering how all participants remarked at some point during these interviews that they didn’t talk about *this* (writing processes, blocks, goals, strategies, feedback, etc.) with their peers. Secondly, this vague “probably everyone else” was often invoked as the population to which students compared themselves, and the source of information on which to base such comparisons was similarly vague. For example, Sally said, “I see other people or hear other people with that kind of discipline and I know that I don’t have it.’ All of this cultural construction about what other people are doing has many detrimental effects on students’ confidence, leading Sally—whom four other participants referenced as a knowledgeable, competent, productive scholar—to conclude: “I feel like I’m behind and out of it and a big loser. There you go, quote that. I feel like I am a big loser.”

This student culture of intensity and competition are necessary but not sufficient conditions for a space for bullshitting. The seeming high stakes seems to create a space where failures should be few and behind the curtain, leading to a well-done front stage role regardless of whether one embraces or distances oneself from the role.

Individuality

Bearing in mind that individuals uniquely construct their settings through their histories, their affective stances, their perception of the people, institutions, and activities in play, how competition manifests, or whether individuals engage it, is as complex as the whole chronotope itself. Paola speculates on it thusly:

I think students within the department can get unnecessarily paranoid and competitive. And then at same time there are only so many grants, and there's only so much funding, and there are only so many scholarships. There are only so many assistantships. I mean, all of those things, you're constantly competing for. And so it can get tough, is someone my friend or are they my competitor, and can someone be both?

There is this tension set up within the chronotope for students to be engaged by the centrifugal force of disciplinary expectation for novelty. Gerholm (1990) writes of the dynamic that “although this is not often made explicit, all research proposals within a department are ranked according to their disciplinary ‘relevance,’ ‘interest,’ or ‘originality’” (p. 266).

In providing the themes, I am “making visible points of intersection” (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 84) among these various factors that influence students' experiences—in this section, focusing on the convergence of personal and professors' goals, peer relations, communication with faculty, status as full- or part-time student as a graduate assistant, and personal constructions of setting. However, the precise nature of these intersections and other influences on experience that may be at play for anyone—including how these points of intersection change with changes in research opportunity or changing major professors or even semesters—vary greatly for and among individuals.

A rich example of the dynamic nature of intersections and tensions among these shaping forces: Some professors effectively give their advisees a suit of armor for their doctoral journey. While an earlier quote showed that Paola did, at least at one point, take up the evaluation of her achievement and so job prospects through the competitive lens of the department, she still describes a distance from the pressure:

I have been sort of protected in a bubble. If I had [either of two professors], I would have been on suicide watch by now. . . . It's nothing personal there, but the kinds of pressure that they put on their doc students, it's very different.

And yet even then individual differences manifest: "I've talked to people who feel like their major professor puts all kind of stress on them. But at the same time, other people have that same major professor and they don't respond in the same way." Paola interprets this difference of experience as both variation in how professors engage individual students and whether students are "someone who wants to please your major professor." While professors may have some standard structures for mentoring their students, in co-constructing the setting and negotiating goals with students, individual variation in relationships is inevitable. Because every participant in my study shared a professor with at least one other participant, I was able to see multiple instances of this individuality, and while unequal, these differences were not necessarily neglectful.

Paola explains that her major professor (ostensibly) precluded that same stress she observed in her peers by acknowledging her career goals and "from the time [he] met me, he's said, "You want to go to a teaching college, you don't need to worry about conferences. Just do one or two, you'll be fine." However, early in this same interview Paola explained the imperative for novelty that shaped her research topic:

[T]hey sit you down and say, "Well, everything on [your intended research topic] has been done. That's out there, you're not going to get any real momentum with that. This is what's fresh, and this is how you might -- how could you use it for the other work you're interested in?" And so you have that. Because you do have to have something to say.

This quote illustrates the tacit yet powerful expectation that students will be published researchers. If indeed her major professor fully supported her plan to go to a teaching college and so only needing one or two conference presentations on her cv, it wouldn't really be an issue whether or not she could "get any real momentum" out of the topic of interest that brought her to doctoral studies. In research, however, it is necessary to do something new in order to have a chance of publication. Furthermore, advising that this "fresh" topic usurp the purpose she came for and see if she can't "use it for the other work you're interested in" belies the ostensible support he gave to her professional goals. Paola's interest [specificity withheld for identification potential] was to better understand and explore concepts directly related to her work as a teacher educator—though she does seem to like the fresh new topic she's taken up.

This is my construction of meaning, of course, when I juxtapose these passages which were separated by at least half an hour's conversation. And I have tuned in to look at the submerged structures that undergird much of what participants just described as "this is how it is here." It was the resonance of the status quo that got my attention. In hearing over and over (from different participants, and in the replay of the interviews) statements of the chasm between academic work and classroom work, of writing for researchers vs. for practitioners, of how one really can't do both, of how being interested in working with teachers "is not very scholarly," I became very interested in these Facts about How It Is. While this teacher-scholar divide is a canard, it nevertheless maintains an authoritative position among students and their goals. All of which is to say, Paola did not seem to feel manipulated by her major professor, and likely he didn't intend to do so. Indeed, if he didn't notice the implicature conveyed by promoting a "fresh" topic for research, I think that supports my interpretation of the existence of this departmental prolepsis. That these tacit messages pervade the sense of what's possible and

what's necessary is worthy of notice and interrogation—not to eschew the goals, but to articulate them deliberately and frame for student the expectations and opportunities to develop the skills to meet them.

Thus far, I have presented data to argue that there is a tacit and powerful emphasis on scholarly productivity for doctoral students in this department. Its facticity is continually reproduced by faculty and students, through behaviors, explicit statements, and assumptions entailed in questions such as “*What* are you presenting?” and in the absences of mere presentation accomplishments on department announcements. These expectations contribute to students’ production of setting and mediate the goals they set for themselves and have set for them.

The next few sections of this chapter address the tools necessary to meet these goals and participate in the activities of the scholarly communities and the opportunities students have to learn the explicit and implicit disciplinary conventions. The individual examples represent the data in terms of variations along a theme—instances of similar experiences and unique experiences within an area of common importance.

Learning to Use the System

In the context of such pressure to publish, students benefit greatly by working the system to their advantage. Rather than being intimidated and not submit a manuscript unless it's perfect, students can learn to appropriate the system that filters and shapes and values scholarship. The ways of gaming the system discussed below illustrate some of the nuances in meaning or perspective that can affect whether something is called bullshit.

Submitting for formative feedback

Amalia learned early on that “thinking is not enough” and publication was expected. She noticed that when she approached a professor to talk about an idea, something she was

beginning to think about and wanted some encouragement, the response was “Ooh, that sounds great, where you gonna publish it? Like I don’t know, I didn’t think that far. I just thought it was a great idea, right? I was waiting for you to say, good job, great thinking.” But she soon learned what counts as thinking:

You gotta have this paper to submit to a presentation, and then you’ll get feedback, and then within a month it needs to be sent out to the journal. And see, people—I thought everybody thought this way. My colleagues at other universities, I’m like, don’t your professors give you that much pressure to do the same thing?

As much as Amalia felt emotionally drained by the pressure, her apprenticeship into the profession was notably specific in identifying *strategic moves* to optimize the system to further her scholarship *goals*. In the quote above, she indicates the benefits of *submitting* papers as a *tool* to get *feedback*. After *co-writing* a piece with her, a project of *intense disciplinary training*, Amalia’s major professor limbed the role of first professional reader from her relationship with Amalia, who had incorporated into her writing *process* the *strategy* of *anticipating feedback* by soliciting peer reviews to develop a paper from a conference, to a journal—but not just any journal.

Amalia learned the *strategy* to identify and target journals for sending paper—*disciplinary knowledge* of the necessity and process for identifying the topics and style editors select and the ways in which they are germane to particular audiences. She pitched another article to her professor, demonstrating her awareness of the journal’s readership and editorial board, “...because I really believe in the work that they do and I, I really respect a lot of the editors and a lot of people that publish there.” Here, she projects herself into the group of

academics who publish work in that journal, identifying with the work that they do and seeing herself as a potential peer among them.

Her professor directed her to a top tier journal instead, “first.” Starting anywhere else “is not really even an option.” The process, the best way to improve her paper, her professor instructed her, is “aim for the others, if you don’t get there, well at least you get their feedback to write a better paper and then you send it to the next in line.” This *insider knowledge* of the availability and effectiveness of having journals solicit critical feedback on your behalf is a strategy not explicitly taught in courses (which, if everyone knew about it, would result in journals being flooded with papers that haven’t been through much critical revision). This is but one key *strategy* Amalia was *taught explicitly* to navigate more effectively the crowded waters of research publishing.

Gaining power through submission

Carmen’s explanation of the process of building oneself as a scholar dovetails with Amalia’s learned strategy, though Carmen doesn’t identify the role of feedback in the importance of submitting manuscripts. She emphasized that *submitting* is a crucial *tool*: “I think like, the more you have your work accepted, which means the more you submit, like, there’s a better perception of you as a writer. Because I don’t necessarily think that I am [a better writer than my peers], but I submit more.” While publication entails submitting, rejection is also part of the process. For Carmen, article reviews seem both high stakes and somewhat arbitrary, in that “even if [the reviewers] think that they’re objective or they know the field of literacy education, whatever, there’s a huge degree of subjectivity to it. I really think there is.” This *insider knowledge* of the subjectivity of reviewing came from her own *learning opportunity* of serving

as a *peer reviewer*, coupled with the great diversity in *feedback she received* on her submitted articles.

The important *tool* for academic writing that she gained in her doctoral studies, she says, is “having the strength and the tenacity to continue...to say, okay let me regroup and resend [a rejected article].” She had the *opportunity to learn* this *affective tool* from a *professor* who was “humble enough” to share with her the real processes involved in a life of scholarship, including having articles rejected. Powerful mentoring facilitates the student’s identification of herself as an academic capable of accomplishment. Leonard, Becker, and Coate (2005) found that students—often to their detriment and disappointment in not measuring up—expect of themselves the same capabilities they attributed to the idealized scholar they perceive their mentors to be. In Carmen’s case, however, internalizing standards of achievement she perceived of her mentor, whom she greatly esteemed, and he having shown her “even good research can be rejected,” *mediated goals* that Carmen set for herself to be more realistic, which included not taking rejection as personal failure and developing the tenacity to persevere.

This emotional fortitude supports her publication efforts by *anticipating revision*:

And so you need to make your manuscripts good enough, this is how I see it for writing, like good enough to get in the door, so that they’ll let you revise and resubmit, and then just give them what they want.

This quote illustrates *strategic acquiescence* in the way Carmen plays within the realm of possible moves. Her knowledge and choice for action came out of a prior *opportunity to learn* about the power dynamics and limited negotiating power she currently had in this disciplinary community. Recognizing the rules of the game—that having more and well placed published articles builds the image of an accomplished scholar, and so one worthy of more respect than a

mere doctoral student. Thus, Carmen decided to play within those definitions and within the conventional relationships between author and editor, and when given the opportunity to revise and resubmit, she did so quickly and efficiently to meet the *criteria of the task* of revision for publication laid out in the decision letter.

Carmen hits on the chord of competition, and of knowing what moves are required for her to advance her scholarship through publications. This is not to say that Carmen is not invested in the content of the article, but when her ideas conflict with those of the editors or reviewers, and meeting the *goal of publication* is contingent upon appeasing them, she strategically acquiesces—for the time being. This illustrates a situation of *divergent goals*, where the editor wanted it his way and Carmen wanted to be published. Her strategy was to appear that she accepted his ideas, and this successful move, after a prolonged and unsuccessful negotiation, created for her a strategy for action that she was ready to use immediately in similar situations—for the time being. She frames the rationale for the *strategic role distancing* above as: publications beget publications, record of scholarship accesses grants, grants fund research, and, eventually a scholar establishes enough credence to hold a firmer editorial line.

If I am somebody who is a heavy hitter, then I think I'll have more negotiating power to [argue theory or methodology]. Like, I'm not in a position where I can say that now. ... I'm still on the power spectrum, I'm still at the doctoral student end in the power spectrum. I'm still at the assistant, like, young scholar end where I don't feel like I have bargaining rights.

When I asked Carmen about whether she felt, then, that the article presented her as the scholar she was intending to be or if the acquiescence took her persona projection off track, she emphasized that she hadn't caved on anything extremely important to the integrity of the article.

The essence of her scholarship remained intact, and she was willing to have a bit of ambiguity on a theoretical frame that she could clarify in her future publications. Thus, with her eyes on a future self, Carmen made strategic choices about her action in present situations.

Bullshit or strategy?

These two examples show a few *strategies* and *opportunities to learn* when and how to use them. Amalia's apprenticeship was initially very explicit in modeling *writing processes*, *structural organization* of articles, and *research methods*, all including the sharing of knowledge gained through experience. The tool that Carmen learned from her mentor professor was also instrumental to her eventual development of a strategy of engagement for the power structures behind the pages of the journal. These particular strategies show clearly *insider knowledge*—Amalia's taught, Carmen's developed through her own experience—about the workings of the journal networks and the strategy for using it to improve papers rather than be fearful of rejection.

In both these illustrations, the student has learned how present herself different from how she perceives herself in order to benefit from the situation. For Amalia, even though she says that her work is not good enough for a top tier journal, she still submits there. This behavior is the role embraced and enacted by Amalia, however in her enthusiastic engagement she is also learning rapidly and well many skills—as shown by her getting full peer reviews from journals rather than just editors' immediate rejection. So while what Amalia describes here is role embracement, it doesn't seem to be bullshit.

Carmen also presents a slightly altered image of herself in order to satisfy the gatekeepers of publication. While she engages the role, making all of the changes requested quickly and without argument, she describes the distancing of the situation with a temporal fold—overlying

her projected future self with the self engaged in the process of revising manuscripts. She acknowledges that she is doing exactly what she is told now, but she holds on to the projection of when she will have to make fewer concessions about her work. Carmen does not explicitly identify this choice as bullshitting, however it fits with another instance where Carmen told me that bullshitting is building the identity for “how people perceive you. Because I have more publications, people think I’m a better writer.” In this section, Carmen’s awareness that the content of the *curriculum vita* counts as much as the content of the publications themselves affects the strategic knowledge she engages when performing but distancing herself from the exchanges with editors.

The next two major sections continue this thread of students’ opportunities to learn the disciplinary conventions essential to getting a foot in the door of the disciplinary conversations. However, the examples of Winston and Tobius below show students wanting to embrace the role but not knowing the criteria.

Teaching the Expected

Explicit instruction from professors on discourse and genre conventions in texts—how words work to mediate meaning, anticipating audience, crafty argument and message in appropriate channels to be effective—is a necessary component of apprenticing students in academic ways of being. Even good writers struggle with the nuances of language in a localized genre of particular disciplinary discourse (Berkenkotter, Huckin, & Ackerman, 1988). The two illustrations with Carmen and Amalia in this section address the importance of explicit criteria—of teaching the skills expected in performance. These two are notable for pedagogical moves that ought not happen in an esteemed department of literacy education. It is important that teachers communicate clearly the criteria on which they’ll be assessed, but in these cases the instruction

elided is on the more tacit conventions of disciplinary and sub-disciplinary specific texts. On the one hand, things that are so familiar to teachers are hard for them to even realize they're there.

On the other hand, literacy educators should probably be a bit more tuned in to that.

Helpful, but rather late, don't you think?—“*It's the first time he's done that.*” –Winston

Winston had the same major professor since he started his doctoral program. Suddenly, after Winston turned in a draft of the third chapter of his dissertation, his *professor* sat him down for detailed, precise *feedback* on his writing. This *explicit instruction* targeted *disciplinary text conventions* such as *sentence structure*, *word choice*, use of *citations*, and overall presentation of *argument* in Winston's writing, and he explained how these rhetorical moves were not meeting *expectations of the disciplinary audience*. Winston tells,

My first chapter three was shot down completely. [My professor] said, “This is your anchor chapter, if you fuck this one up, the rewrite of it, then we may need to talk about some other options for you as a doctoral student.” So, he raised the stake on that one.

This quote is situated in Winston's explanation of his dissertation writing and the abrupt and acute transformation in writing style effected by this meeting. The story illustrates the importance of time as a shaping factor in the chronotope, as well as the dimension of *learning opportunities* afforded by *faculty*. The salient relation here is visible by laminating years upon years of non-instruction in disciplinary writing, a stance Winston described as “*laissez-faire...very Deweyan*,” and juxtapose the imminent graduation on the other side of this writing project which has developed over the years in multiple sites, versions, and courses of study. Enter: a sudden intense opportunity to learn what had been expected for years. Winston's position as a doctoral student, closing in on graduation no less, was suddenly contingent upon the immediate application of that lesson on disciplinary texts.

After a satisfactory rewrite in which Winston followed the *process* and *structure* prescribed to him, he worked in subsequent chapters to assimilate his thoughts with the belatedly articulated criteria. He said that “in [chapter] six not only did I have my own voice, but I think I had the structure of what those chapters needed to be like according to my advisor.” Importantly, Winston did see the improved clarity, and thus effectiveness, of his arguments “and it feels more straightforward. It feels more readable. It feels--I think my advisor’s gonna like it. I think [he’s] gonna like it” (Winston).

I asked Winston to read this section and tell me whether to add, change, or cut the whole thing. He told me this representation gets at what happened, but he wanted to emphasize that he didn’t think that his advisor actually “doubted my scholarly potential, but I certainly wasn’t working within a frame he found acceptable, a format that he never expressly articulated to me until this event. He had even said my scholarly voice was developing” in a recently published article. Winston told me to stick with this because it did happen and it does matter.

Definitely not helpful—“*I just don’t like the way it was written*”

Winston’s (former) writing style of buried arguments—deeply embedded in complex sentences, a style borrowed from his discipline of origin and laminated with the disciplinary texts of educational research—did not fit the genre, thereby leaving his professor doubtful of his scholarly potential. Not communicating what one knows in the bounds of disciplinary conventions can have the effect of communicating that one does not know anything inside the discipline. Tobius, from a science background, carried his textual experiences into the new context of doctoral studies in literacy education, and his prior knowledge of text form and function proved as much an obstacle as Winston’s literary history.

Tobius had the mixed fortune to have the mismatch of his writing to the genre pointed out to him in the first semester of his program. The *criteria* for the *writing assignment* were vague, under the teacher's assumption, later unveiled, that everyone was working with a common understanding of the *genre conventions* to engage in the paper.

And the paper that I submitted I got, I think it was a C+, which I was very upset about. I was like, seriously, what's wrong? She goes, well, it's awkwardly worded. She just said it was hard for her to read. And then she asked what my background was. [I told her] and she was like, oh, let me read it again. And so she reread it and I think she gave it to somebody else to read. And she was like, okay, everything that I wanted is there, [...] I just don't like the way it was written. But, she goes, based on what you told me there's a reason that you write that way. So in the future be cognizant of that and take that into account so that when you submit something next time, you know it's not that that's how I want you to write, but that in this field most people would read that and wouldn't not like it.

Beyond the suggestion to "be cognizant" of people not liking the way he writes, the professor gave Tobius little instruction on how to improve his writing for the next paper. She did not provide specific feedback on what he did write, "and she didn't have me change it, she just reevaluated it and so I got an A at that point." This episode illustrates the tremendous influence of disciplinary specific genre conventions, such that the professor didn't even recognize that Tobius met the explicit criteria of the assignment.

The professor had useful knowledge of the disciplinary variations of writing, evinced by her telling Tobius that his science background reframed her reading of his assignment, once she knew "there's a reason [he] writes that way." She was able then, to effectively translate his paper

so she could find that “everything [she] wanted is there.” The misfortune, then, is that this missed *opportunity for learning* made Tobius aware of a significant obstacle for him as a writer-scholar, but not clear on what that issue is. As such, this interaction compounds the affective experience of his first year, in which the jargon and genre made most readings doubling challenging.

Tobius expressed particular annoyance that the admission criteria to the program did not specify strong writing skills or otherwise indicate that a particular type or quantity of writing would be required once he matriculated. This oversight (since remedied, Tobius informed me, so as to require a writing sample of applicants) perhaps contributed to his professor’s assumption that the writing criteria were commonly established and thus needed no explication. Considering the consequence of this misunderstanding, it seems a worthy complaint of the program when Tobius says, “It’s just what you ask for and then what you expect are different.”

Explicit Instruction Through Feedback

While Winston and Tobius were not the only students to feel frustrated by the lack of writing instruction they received, some students had very positive and constructive opportunities to learn processes for composing and genre conventions.

You get what you ask for

An experienced teacher of writing, Barnaby frequently referenced his own pedagogy as a component in how he constructed the settings of his experiences as a student. One influential idea was in how he framed the revision process.

First, it very much was a process to him, and a social one at that. He turned in papers anticipating revision, ready to improve texts with the contributions of others to the thinking and writing he had done on his own. Secondly, he appropriated from his own classroom the practice

of anticipating and shaping feedback by specifically asking and asking specifically for the kinds of critiques he felt the paper needed or he needed as a writer. In this situation, his experience as a teacher mediated his construction of setting and the kinds of teacher-student relationships and opportunities for learning he perceived possible. Barnaby actively co-constructed the role he embraced in dialog with his teachers, peers, and his past/future selves. While some participants spoke of the student role as predetermined, Barnaby noted the expectations and mediated deliberately the ways he would engage the role.

In this way, Barnaby's lamination of teacher and student roles, his histories of school writing, and his investment in pushing himself intellectually and so grappling with ideas that he could not yet fluently articulate or felicitously apply contributed to his construction of writing tasks as initial steps in an continual process. *Anticipating revision* served as both an *affective* and *procedural strategy*, in that it mediated the anxiety of performance experienced by many of his peers (myself included) and facilitated his composing by attending to which parts of the text he was unsure of and being able to focus his learning opportunity where he was ready to build on nascent understanding.

Key to gaining instructive feedback is accessing capable and willing instructors. Barnaby initiated and sustained relationships with professors on specific writing projects, realizing that they seemed more invested when he framed the project as aimed for submitting a publication, whereas in typical course paper experiences he found feedback to be minimal, global, and "generally saved for the final draft." He enrolled in a course which he knew expected a paper ready or on track for submitting at semester's end, and this course was a turning point for him as scholar, reshaping his own perspective and investment regarding school writing from a demonstration of learning. Establishing a *goal of publication* also affected his perception of

professors, seeking ones who would meet his needs as a scholar, and established relationships with “these few professors who are willing to take the time to give feedback beyond their courses are the ones that I’m relying on to help me learn the discipline writing for journals.”

Specific feedback on students’ texts is important. Barnaby benefited from the time these two professors would spend with him and the detail of critique. He said,

I remember [both professors] at some point said, you don’t want to use these words like this because this means something completely different. This has all sorts of understandings that you don’t want to deal with in your paper. And it was, at this point, knowledge of the field that I didn’t have.

The *disciplinary knowledge* of the dialogic histories of specific words is information that is difficult to derive simply from extensive reading. While over time it is plausible students could pick up on these trends and construct this awareness of word choice, it is quite helpful for students to be told early in their studies if they are writing imprecisely or inaccurately for their audience. Even without a list of flagged words, students who have been made aware of the types of contested ideas and the use of language to situate the text, students who have been introduced to the disciplinary conventions, can use that tool of awareness of disciplinary knowledge to recognize its manifestation in other texts.

Explicit instruction regarding word choice, however, is not always a disciplinary convention. After a few rounds of feedback on a paper, Barnaby weighed suggestions for changes against his growing knowledge of the discipline and language, and “I started thinking about, well, some of these are just like wordsmithing comments, and those were the ones that got me thinking about, who am I satisfying here?” Thus, as Barnaby became familiar with the discourses, he was able to discern which precise changes were of meaningful consequence—and

so important for him to make—and which were personal, stylistic ones. This growing sense of authority on disciplinary writing gave Barnaby the confidence to selectively reject suggestions from his professors.

Overall, Barnaby was afforded and created positive learning opportunities. In addition to requesting and receiving repeated feedback on revisions, he benefited from a course experience in which the professor—one whom he engaged as a reviewer and committee member—shared with her class the process she used in writing and revising manuscripts. In addition, she annotated the paper, explicating what and why she wrote, highlighting the organizational structure and such rhetorical moves, Barnaby recalls as, “here’s how I took that quote and then I kind of came back to it.” Two other participants also spoke of this professor’s instruction on text features and functions and effective writing processes. Indeed, six participants told of the positive influence on their understanding of scholarly writing and writers of professors who effectively exposed their writing selves, dispelling the tacit but common perception that these accomplished scholars have somehow mastered the art and science of academic writing.

Barnaby demonstrates awareness of the central role of locally situated, goal oriented instruction in disciplinary learning, which of course depends on professors who are versed in disciplinary knowledge and able to explicate it effectively. Sustained relationships facilitate the unearthing of tacit conventions by providing multiple opportunities for repeated, similar tasks to make visible the relevant conventional knowledge the student needs to access and learn to apply.

Students’ awareness of the need to work with professors, however, is generally not sufficient to generate conditions that facilitate those relationships. Towanda expressed frustration with her efforts to improve her writing because “I don’t know what the expectation was because they never told me, and they never gave me any feedback.” While she felt relatively confident

with the content and could get some useful feedback from peers, Towanda wanted more direct guidance from her professors on whether the structure within the paper was as effective as it could be for the purpose. She wasn't sure exactly what she was accomplishing or how to improve because

Well, from professors you're going, I mean, I don't know, you just don't get a lot of feedback. You know, you get some smiley faces,....They gave you some feedback on the content of the paper in general, but it wasn't like okay, this part, it wasn't something very specific that would help you with writing, with your writing.

This quote illustrates again the frustration students have when the criteria are not explicit. Furthermore, where Towanda indicates that what little feedback she did get was on the *content*, not the disciplinary skills of communicating those ideas. Relating to Tobias above, where once the professor was satisfied that her needs had been met and her student had demonstrated understanding of the content in the domain of her course, she did not engage him further.

While Towanda mentioned the smiley face empty feedback a few times, other participants brought up the vague, useless comments like "good" and "ok" and "yes"—"What does 'yes' mean?" (Ruby). Towanda's disappointment that her *opportunities to learn* were limited in her doctoral program by a lack of connection with any *professor* to get close instruction and mentoring was emphasized by observing the positive effects of mentoring on her peers and their own reports of effective instruction. That is, because she was a member in the student culture, she had access to that *insider knowledge* about what *opportunities* are available to some student in the department. She said to me, "I think that's supposed to happen when you work closely with a professor and you just help them with them with something. It happened for you, but it didn't for me."

Sally also experienced frustration with vague or global *feedback* on her writing and made the observation that in the cases where she was *co-author* on a text with her major professor, the quantity and specificity of feedback was distinctly different.

I was really surprised when [she] sent me back my prospectus—It had so little stuff to fix on it. Because generally it's not -- I mean, it's a lot to fix when I send her something. But I think also it's because it will never probably go past these four people. And she'll never be associated with it on a public level. Which when we wrote articles together, I mean, I always knew that it had her name on it and that I needed to be aware of that. And not that that's a bad thing—she's cultivated a reputation very carefully. And I admire that.

The history on the part of Sally's professor to give substantive feedback only on public texts with her name on it leaves open much space for speculation about motivation or other investments of time and of self in students' instruction. Sally indicates the importance of *audience* in the *shaping* and *revising* of texts, and said that she too found it difficult to justify writing for such a small audience and *limited purpose*, such as the *prospectus* and the *comprehensive exam papers*. But such a difference in instructional engagement from her professor even on pieces that Sally was working to publish—not as a co-authored piece with her professor—was frustrating for Sally on multiple occasions.

As yet another illustration of a highly effective mentoring relationship, Amalia's professor told her that after the first article she expected Amalia to be able to write on her own, but she continued to provide feedback and reminders about structures and processes to support Amalia's developing knowledge and confidence. For Sally, since an explicit message hadn't been communicated she was left to interpret the implicit ones. Overall, Sally did emphasize that she

felt she received good mentoring and was “quite fortunate because I know that other people in the department don’t necessarily get the same opportunities.” As I construct meaning from these data, however, this behavior on giving feedback is compelling. Even if this is a subconscious trend in prioritizing a very heavy workload, it should be questioned. And if this is a somewhat deliberate, established dynamic in professional training, it should be questioned. It may indeed be a rational pedagogical choice that gets lost in the translation, but it seems, to me, imperative that the students be provided with a clear explanation of the roles and changes over time in mentoring engagement, including the priority of time students’ writing will receive.

It is important to emphasize here that all three participants above—Barnaby, Sally, and Towanda—indexed shared knowledge in the student culture that some students benefit from working with particular professors, that some professors provide training that is more explicit, or more extended, or more directed toward students’ individual interests and goals. And, in acknowledging that some students benefit, this cultural knowledge also emphasizes the absence of these rich learning experiences for the students who don’t have these relationships. Personal dynamics certainly contribute to how these mentoring relationships come about, and different students will not necessarily have similar experiences with the same professor. The substance and configuration of these training experiences for student-scholars can also vary greatly across. Indeed, while Amalia’s experience illustrates the tremendous potential for such relationships, another advisee (not in the study) of the same professor had an extremely different experience. Nevertheless, not only was Amalia articulate and detailed about the many, specific, important lessons from her mentoring—and thus providing a compelling set of data to draw from—but, relative to many other people’s experiences, Amalia’s story is important.

Insider school

Words carry tremendous power in mediating meaning between the writer and the readers. They can index ideological or political stances specific to the context of use, as Barnaby learned. They also shape interpretation of meaning, and so can be used as precise tools. Amalia had a unique opportunity to learn when her professor tweaked Amalia's manuscript, a write up of Amalia's research, in which she made a small methodological misstep.

And this one word covered my tracks. In my eagerness to get teachers for my first study I didn't go through a school IRB because I was going to reach them independently. And I didn't quite know like how serious that was. Or I think honestly, I was just kinda like desperate. Because I wasn't getting teachers. Or maybe I've forgotten, it wasn't anything that I did purposely. [My professor] called me out on it. But she wasn't worried because she knew how to fix it. She's like, so you actually found them at school? ...Okay, so we're going to say that you found their numbers in the phone book and that's how you got their information....And I think the word that we added was "privately contacted," or "contacted them" -- we threw the word in "privately." And she's like, that's it. I'm like, interesting. So those are little things that you learn with experience.

As Amalia concluded, this kind of knowledge arises from authentic writing tasks, when there is something specific that needs to be addressed because "...it's like a big research no-no that nobody would ever tell you in class or writing a book." Deliberate word choice can elide a potential interpretation, and these discourse moves are legitimate; "You just aren't as specific about some things as you are about other things," her professor explained.

This *insider knowledge* became relevant to impart in this specific context, yet not all students are privy to these tools gained by "...people with experience, [who have] messed up

enough that they know how to cover their tracks kinda thing.” And, adhering to the code of competition, Amalia wasn’t about to broadcast to her peers how she fixed her error. A peer reader, however, asked her about the use of “privately,” inviting a quick session of “insider school” where it was germane for Amalia to disclose what she’d learned. In this instance, the writing *process* of getting *feedback* from a *peer* facilitated a *learning opportunity* for the *peer* reader, in which Amalia now had the *insider knowledge* gained from her *professor* and could quietly bring her friends and colleagues into the loop.

Amalia’s transformation as a writer in her doctoral program was substantial. She did not anticipate the amount and intensity of writing required in this academic track. At the beginning of her fourth year, she explained that “the reality hadn’t hit, that a professor was a teacher and a researcher, and a researcher meant writer. I came in wanting to be a teacher, a teacher of teachers.” In the context of this department where students published prolifically, it seemed to her, “I was insecure at letting people read my work because, I mean, I’m in a doc program of language educators who, in my opinion, were really good writers, and I felt that was my weakness.”

Amalia was mentored by her major professor on all aspects of academic writing (including the language tweaking above). “She realized I was insecure in my writing...She said ‘I will help you this once, but you’ll be ready to do it on your own.’” Her professor walked Amalia through a whole manuscript—since published—during Amalia’s first year in the program, beginning with a course paper, which her professor “molded” and returned as the next move in an extended volleying of revising the working draft.

The scaffolding her professor provided included explicitly modeling thinking, drafting, and revising processes.

I think part of why she did it was to show me that even somebody with her experience, she has parts where she writes notes to herself, like in a different color, to cite this person here, or come back to this.

As Amalia spoke about her texts, her work, and herself as a writer and scholar after her fourth year, she pointed out to me places in her texts where she had appropriated many of the strategies her professor showed her to set up her manuscripts, organize, and write the parts you know first.

Her professor also explicated strategies for Amalia to develop her scholarship and be able to stake out the space for her work—an important distinguishing strategy between a person who can research and write well and a person who can research and write well and “claim knowledge” in the disciplinary landscape, not only finding the niche imperative in publishing at all, but making the niche really big and writing your name all over before anyone else does.

The process for staking her claim, her professor instructed her, was to first publish the big general paper. And then for each section within it, expand to another more detailed paper. “So I took one piece and my job was to make this one pager a twenty page paper...and that’s where I learned how to do a lit review targeted to a specific journal.” This process entails a tremendous amount of tacit knowledge. Not only does a scholar find a novel research area, but then she scrutinizes how the complex pieces that figured in to the big paper could be snipped off, placed in water, and sent off as a separate conference proposals, one by one. Moreover, publications must be dispersed; a journal won’t publish too many repeated articles in a short time from the same author, and a new branch of disciplinary sub-topic connects to another community of scholars.

Knowing more people and linking one's scholarship with theirs builds relationships over time. Amalia saw a role of networking in publications when her advisor said that she'd called the editor of a top tier journal and asked about the potential for an article on a topic of Amalia's study, to which the editor had responded favorably. This opportunity and the expectation that she would produce such a manuscript in a timely manner contributed to Amalia's construction of her doctoral studies as a setting of intense pressure. Nevertheless, the effects of this mentoring were profound for Amalia's scholarly self: "I think in three years I've been able to catch up to some people. And that makes me feel good."

In a recent follow-up email, Amalia explained that she'd undervalued the skills she developed in her program, which in her current professional setting are at least on par with her colleagues. She attributed this to the pervasive pressure and the bullshit posturing students do about knowing so much and needing to know so much more. The tension between the intense professional training and the emotional intensity of doubt and pressure is a tension that exists throughout the chronotope. Some students feel they got a disproportionate degree of the emotional toil and were underserved in the instructional realm (e.g., Carmen, Zorko), and others portrayed their experiences as challenging and supportive (e.g., Barnaby, Winston— notwithstanding the little dissertation meeting). Not one other participant described such scope and detail of learning opportunities afforded by professors as those experienced by Amalia.

Citations are Everything

The act of citing disciplinary literature appeared in the interviews with such prominence as to be a suitable synecdoche for the challenge of doctoral studies. A competent scholar is a competent citer. Students' successful completion of the doctoral program means they know how to cite. Appropriate, effective citations in written texts index a host of knowledge about

academic ways of being: selecting literature that is relevant to the topic and to the addressees; acknowledging and leveraging relations among that literature; determining the necessary explication of terms and concepts; evaluating evidentiary weight and merit of specific citations at specific times; distinguishing when the novelty or uniqueness of a phrase warrants direct quotation and when the ideas are recurrent throughout the literature and so best paraphrased; ability to discern a felicitous lacuna in the research for oneself. Most importantly, the facile and confident citer has comfortably situated his or her work within the disciplinary communities and has assimilated purposefully the conventions of language as contextualized, social action.

As a complex act within the dynamic disciplinary communities, citation practices make visible the ways that knowledge is (re)created and confirmed. The depths and histories and power of these practices are not immediately visible and not always made visible by peers or professors. Students do learn quickly that citing is important, but the submerged conventions are often elusive and so challenging to develop without clear explication. “Citational authority” (Zorko; Vladimir) indicated students’ awareness of the need to develop and demonstrate disciplinary knowledge (Carmen; Paola; Sally; Winston), but more importantly, it indicated the discomfort or cynicism about having to find an external source to validate one’s own knowledge, experience, and ideas (Tobius; Ruby; Towanda; Amalia; Vladimir). The following sections present illustrations of these various challenges.

A gap in content knowledge: “*So many people know so many things*” --Vladimir

Early in his second year, Vladimir was struggling with the message that his own experiences were not adequate basis for his ideas and he had “to look for somebody that said that, or go back—now we’re talking about BS.” In part, he resisted having to validate his own thoughts by combing the literature:

...but when does my authority—I don't have any authority—but why do they have more than me, just cause I think this way. Just because they published this article doesn't mean I can't say it if I feel that way.

A peer a few years ahead of him in the program became a regular reader of Vladimir's papers and would provide him with the disciplinary literature backing to substantiate the ideas in his papers. It became an expedient way to fulfill that conventional expectation while familiarizing himself with the general ideas for which various scholars were cited.

Like he'll say, perhaps a Vygotsky cite here, because it sounds like, not necessarily, but it sounds like something that would be from Vygotsky or Heath or whatever, you know? Whatever citation, he'll say that. And so, that's pretty convenient because then I can google-book it, you know, I can read a little bit of that book and I'll plug it right in. I mean, I read it. ...I read some of it, I didn't read it cover to cover, but who does? I read it, I'll plop it right in.

This strategy, and the benefit of the peer sharing his disciplinary and conventional knowledge, allowed Vladimir to develop a sketch of understanding about who, when, and why citations were needed. While Vladimir recognized the perfunctory and superficial nature of his reading the suggested sources, and identified that behavior and the need for it as bullshit, he was genuinely struggling to gain his bearings in new territory.

At the end of his second year, Vladimir had developed the nuanced understanding of anticipating how the readers' content knowledge and expectations would affect their evaluation of the text and its author.

I think it also depends on your audience. So if you're writing for a journal and there's going to be a lot of people who are like in graduate school or professors, and they know

some of the things that you're going to say, then you certainly have to show your citational authority because they know it anyway. And they know if you're saying this or that, that's attributed to such and such. So that's important to keep in mind. In that instance that shows that you know what you're talking about.

In this way, Vladimir knew that demonstrating his knowledge of the disciplinary literature was an academic move that indexed him as a member of the community, one who could nod to the conventional citation "from Vygotsky or Heath or whatever." This knowledge shows a transformation in that Vladimir understood citation as an expected behavior of everyone—that particular ideas are "attributed to such and such" even when they may have arisen elsewhere. Because of the dialogic nature of disciplinary research, ideas can appear in contexts without necessarily showing their traces, particularly to newcomers; disciplinary conventions of attribution acknowledge the underlying theories as well about the social and dialogic histories of ideas. In understanding the conventional purpose of citations, Vladimir was able to leverage this knowledge to project membership, showing that he knows what he's talking about, rather than seeing the practice as acquiescing the right to his own ideas.

Vladimir had become aware of how much he didn't know. "Everything I've ever read in the last two years, every person, every paper, every theory, every journal is totally new to me. I mean, completely. This is a new field to me." His experience in the department led him to conclude that "the most basic things that everybody knows, I didn't know anything. So I feel sort of behind...so many people know so many things." He was determined to learn and, in the meantime, to use his writing to appear more knowledgeable:

Just because I feel like I don't know what I should know now doesn't mean other people need to know that about me. So that pushes me to try to have good writing and know my

stuff and whatever. Maybe it's to cover my insecurities. To do a good job because I don't want people to know that I don't know this, I don't know that, so it motivates me to want to do a good job, and to know things.

While Vladimir was certainly not the only student to feel like he knew less than his peers, not everyone articulated writing as a tool to ameliorate that difference.

Judicious citing: “...trying to find balance of what I can say” –Ruby

The authority of citations extends beyond perfunctory demonstrations of general disciplinary awareness. As all participants had some kind of experience with the topics on which they wrote, the task of situating that knowledge within established disciplinary literature required a change in how they defined knowledge. Amalia indexed the submerged, folkloric culture of student knowledge by attributing vaguely a frequently mentioned maxim: “And I think, and [this professor] didn't tell me, but I heard [him] say, you know, it can be—how was it? It can be under review, and that's great, but it doesn't count until it's published.” Everyone conveyed the understanding that peer reviewed publications and data were the valued evidence in writing, or as Towanda said, “if you want to be taken seriously you have to be—you have to learn how to make a good argument” (Towanda). Thus, citing disciplinary literature demonstrates that you know what counts as an argument in the field and the kinds of information that index that competence.

Citations serve a purpose of clarifying and supporting the writer's own ideas. Ruby was “getting confidence in trying to find balance of what I can say and not back up and what I need to say and back up, like what claims I can make.” Towanda was learning the need to specifically define terms based on the readership of a journal. “That's one big thing, educational journal, everything is so explicit. You have to explain everything, what is a stereotype? You

know, everybody kind of knows what a stereotype is but you have to explain it.” The editors of the journal to which she had submitted this particular article told Towanda that “they needed a citation [for stereotype] so then I went back to [some journal] and there was a definition there. You can find that definition....So I just, yeah, I used that citation.” In these ways, citations lend credence to the ideas that the writers wanted to communicate anyway.

Tobius was especially cognizant of the need to attribute ideas for a different reason. In a course paper his second semester, he felt compelled to “base [the analysis] off somebody else’s ‘research’” and use published analytic categories.

I could have come up with new classifications and quite frankly I probably would have come up with something similar but not called them the same thing. But since if I had never read this person’s work, would I have come up with the same thing? And if I did come up with the same thing, how could I verify that I independently came up with the same thing and it not be considered that I plagiarized their ideas? So I said, ok, you’re going to eliminate that and I’m just going to take this ethnographic study and I’m going to use what he did beforehand and just make a comparison.

He misinterpreted the expectations for this assignment, however, and was critiqued by his professor for not generating his own ideas for the analysis.

Overwhelmed by citations: “...to give evidence that I’ve read a bunch of stuff” ~ Zorko

In a different way, Zorko was unclear on his professors’ expectations for the role of citations. His frustration was palpable when we met for the second interview. The deadline for turning in his comprehensive exam papers was a week or so in the future, and he still felt as if he had no understanding of what the papers were supposed to be. He was quite dissatisfied with the quality of the writing, which he partially attributed to the genre and task. Zorko explained that

the task was “to demonstrate citational authority with regard to what the areas of research that those questions are addressing. That’s the most I can tell you. That’s all I know.” He had no other *criteria for the task* except 20 pages or fewer per question, “no genre precedent, nothing” to orient him to the task. This interpretation of the task is evident in the content of the paper and distractingly heavy use of citations. “It’s like it’s merely there to illustrate or to give evidence that I’ve read a bunch of stuff and thought about how what I’ve read might connect to research I would do.”

Rather than drawing on relevant disciplinary literature to craft an argument, Zorko’s list of sourced information indexed the lack of *opportunity to learn genre-specific text conventions* from *professors* which he had reported to me during our first interview. In reading academic texts in courses, “we’d talk about the substance, but not the style or the, not the techniques the writers were using to convey the information.” As writer and teacher of writing, Zorko understood that there were conventions for such things as *text features* in how to *structure arguments* and even sentences, for specific language use and epistemological underpinnings in how these texts communicate *disciplinary knowledge*. Perhaps it is assumed that students who have strong writing skills of any kind can transfer them to the criteria of the new genre without explicit instruction; however, Berkenkotter, Huckin, and Ackerman, (1988) found that most new PhD students, regardless of disciplinary background, struggle with new reading and writing demands of the local conventions of scholarly writing at the doctoral level.

While he was able to glean some of it from reading, he knew he was not accessing the insider knowledge that would help him compose texts that worked fluently to contribute his ideas to the disciplinary conversations. Blakeslee (1997) argued that the indirect support “often seems insufficient to newcomers who have no previous experiences engaging in the tasks they are

asked to perform” (p. 145), and Zorko felt he was being assessed on skillfully demonstrating what he hadn’t been taught to do.

Furthermore, Zorko’s sense that he was supposed to show he’s “read a bunch of stuff” made it difficult to delimit the scope of the paper to what was relevant to his own work. He was including tangential topics, which he had described in his first interview as an attempt he made in his academic writing “to make the professor aware that I’m aware of those things [topics the professor addresses in his/her own work], even if I don’t want to deal with it.”

It was during the second interview with Zorko—while he was working on his comps—that I first saw the ironic negligence of a literacy education program that did not provide all students the *opportunity to learn the conventions of disciplinary writing* and did not provide explicit *criteria* for a high stakes performance assessment. Through the dialogic laminating of his identities as teacher and student, Zorko’s *construction of setting* for this *task* framed his pedagogical critique:

I wish there were some way to get some feedback from those who will be assessing it as to whether it’s even remotely achieving what it’s supposed to achieve. But that’s not allowed. And that’s really what I think you need. I mean, maybe it’s not directly related, but as a teacher it’s unfair to my students for me to expect something from them and assess them based on it if they don’t have a clear sense of what the expectations are. It’s not fair to do that to them. And it would make me upset if I were them and they turned in some paper without any clarification on what it was other than, yeah, write a paper that I like. You know what I mean?

Zorko struggled with the nuanced conventions of academic texts and expressed a lack of confidence in himself as a scholar because of his struggle with writing in this field. Jazva-Martek

(2009) found that in self-evaluation of their developing scholarly identity, students' confusion or inability to solve a problem "could easily be perceived as an enormous failure and threaten notions of intellectual ability" (p. 261). Indeed, Zorko indicated in a recent email that the disappointments related to his *opportunities to learn* what was expected of him, confusion about the *assessment criteria*, and stress from a lack of communication and support from the *professors* made him think "as of this point [the PhD] hasn't been worth it." In response to my query to participants about advice they would give to those considering undertaking the doctoral journey, Zorko wrote, "If they are the type to hold themselves to a very high standard or to desire the acceptance and admiration of others, it's probably a bad idea."

It is interesting here to juxtapose Zorko's understanding the purpose of the comp papers and how they're structured with the explanation Sally had for why students were suddenly cut off from their teachers when they engaged in the most challenging intellectual task of their doctoral programs so far. She'd heard from someone who said someone was told in her comps defense that the task was to determine if students could be "trusted as independent scholars," and that was more or less what Sally knew. I asked if she could elaborate any more on that term, considering it was being passed around as insider knowledge.

I have no idea. I have, I don't have any idea. It's like, I mean, I know, but is it, can you pull it off, can you fake it well enough, can you defend yourself when people take you to task on things that you do. Yeah, I'm like wow! So you distrusted me till this point? And now, we might see if you can, you know, if we can let you walk around the neighborhood by yourself? You know? If we can let you out unsupervised.

Through the chronotope, these two experiences differ on a number of axes and yet sound the same note (down to Zorko's response when I asked him what aspects of the papers were

working: “I have no idea. ----- I have no idea”). Sally was a full-time student, she’d co-authored with her major professor here and there, her peers referenced her when they were talking about a strong student scholar, and for the most part she felt pretty comfortable (though not at all confident) writing in the varying academic journals with their nuanced but existent demands. Zorko, was not. And they were equally flummoxed by what the hell they were supposed to be doing for comps. A slice of Sally’s defense is discussed in the next section.

Strategic citations: “It’s part of the game.” ~ Amalia

Citations also serve tacit political moves. As Zorko indicated, citations can efficiently communicate to readers that they are being specifically addressed by the writer. Amalia said she was told “that an editor likes it when they think that you’ve actually read their journal before. It’s part of the game.” The absence of expected citations has the potential to unveil one’s nascent disciplinary knowledge, as in Vladimir’s case above. However, not citing can have a complex, tacit political consequence. For the lit review in her comprehensive exams, Sally tried to meet her professor’s explicit expectations [from a course] for developing an argument in her literature review. She was still critiqued because she hadn’t “shown any awareness” of a background topic that, lo and behold, her professor had just published a piece on. Meanwhile, while drafting her dissertation, Paola had a note on her table reminding her to track down an article her major professor published and she’d read at some point but couldn’t remember it and knew “it needs to be there.” Political citations are but one type of academic bullshit.

Bullshit

As shown in illustrations above, authoritative definitions of academic bullshit and academic bullshitting continue to be somewhat evasive. In the following section, I will review

others' definitions of bullshit provided in Chapter 2 and indicate data that illustrate those definitions.

Truth

Fuller (2006) writes that ““the accomplished bullshitter must be a keen student of what people tend to regard as true, if only to cater to those tendencies as to serve her own ends” (p. 243). Paola’s confession that she intended to bullshit parts of her research proposal illustrates this notion of debatable truth. In terms of methodology, the knowledge about what her committee member *regarded* as true—the necessity to code data—allowed her to create a method section that satisfied his positivist demands. It was necessary for Paola to appease her professor on the ritual of the prospectus approval so that she could move forward with her research.

I can tell you that I think I’m going to have to bullshit aspects of my prospectus.

Because wherever you start talking about post structural data collection and analysis, it’s such a fuzzy field and [...] “What do you mean you’re not coding?” my major professor asked me. “What do you mean? I’m not sure about this.” So it’s that idea that I’m not sure if it’s going to be absolute bullshit, but I’m going to have to spin. And I’m going to have to sell part of what I’m doing.

It’s not the case that Paola bullshit her prospectus if the term means hiding a lack of knowledge. Instead, Paola’s knowledge of methodology—including hers and her professor’s preference—she was confident that her research design was thorough and appropriate. Her *prospectus* needed bullshitting in order to pass through the hoop; her planned research methods were evaluated and approved by the professor whose work is in the same epistemological vein.

Ego

In a different way, Carmen came to recognize that she needed to revise her manuscript to appease what she saw as the editors' and reviewers' personal interpretations of article content about which she felt confident. Carmen did not identify this strategy as bullshit. Towanda, however, said that she revised precisely as requested, and that making those changes often amounts to bullshit because they were unusually inconsequential or a nuance of disciplinary conventions. In the former case, she appreciated the explication of the convention of citation or definition, for example. Another case heretofore not discussed in detail is of Ruby. Similar to Barnaby's revelation about the stylistic suggestions on his manuscripts, Ruby described word-level revisions she made with neither enthusiasm nor resistance, at the behest of her professor. Ruby had a number of strategies to complete the work she was increasingly seeing as perfunctory insofar as they were imbued with inchoate by inflexible idiosyncratic evaluative criteria. "A means to an end," Ruby said, reflecting on choices she made in the style of her writing. "Just tell me what I need to do to get out of here, and then I can do it the way I want to."

Situating one's work strategically speaks to De Waal's (2006) statement that "bullshitting can flourish only in an environment that is secured by people who do more than just bullshit" (p. 103). Strategically connecting one's work with existing literature is a requirement of scholarship at all, so that in itself cannot be sufficient for bullshit. Citation practices of targeting the ego of an editor, however, can fall within this range, albeit in a philosophical and speculative way. By citing the specific persons to whom an author is sending a manuscript to read, the author banks on at least getting a read because the editor should presume it to be good, worthwhile research if it is connected to their own. There were few data that fit well this definition, even though personal and anecdotal evidence suggests it is a frequently apt descriptor in academic circles.

The American way (*bootstraps and bullshit*)

Perhaps the most contested area of my bullshit research relates to what Frankfurt (2005/1986) explains as occurring when a person is faced with “obligations or opportunities to speak about some topic [that] exceed[s] his knowledge of the facts that are relevant to that topic” (p. 63). In many respects, learning itself presents such opportunities. And, as Perla and Carifio (2006) argue, that kind of exploratory bullshitting ought to be recognized in school as a creative tool. “But,” I was told repeatedly over the last few years, “trying to do well something you don’t know and do everything you can to minimize showing the idiot part of yourself doesn’t inherently constitute bullshitting.” And I agree. From this perspective, any doctoral student *not* trying to work beyond current competencies isn’t really engaged in the project that a PhD is assumed to entail. And so, jumping earnestly into an unknown territory and trying to get by with all available tools, however limited they may be, certainly resonates with Goffman’s role embracing, without necessarily qualifying as bullshit.

That said, all that occurs in the space between performance and competence is not granted a free pass, a standard doctoral A for effort. Kimbrough (2006) argues that in competitive circumstances “to forgo the use of bullshit is thus to settle for being a loser” (p. 6), a proposition that reinforces the critical lens on these schooling and learning contexts. In Vladimir’s case, he didn’t want peers to know the limited background knowledge he had upon entering the program, so he used the strategy to “plop in” any citation the veteran peer suggests and figure out when those names are invoked regardless of the extent of reading of those scholars.

An “expedient behavior” of presenting carefully selected information for a particular purpose falls into Levin and Zickar’s (2002) definition of bullshitting in professional interviews. While the bullshitting of citation-as-foil-for-knowledge is also targeted to build a specific

persona, Levin and Zickar's bullshit focuses on emphasizing or exaggerating existing qualities. Paola was one who told me stories about writing things on a "wing and prayer" and bullshitting course papers early on in the doc program when she felt absolutely overwhelmed and intimidated by the peers who, she sees now, were largely posturing. An additional retrospective view regarded an instance of bullshitting she told me about during our first interview, where she laughed when she picked up her paper because the professor had responded so positively to what she knew was bullshit at the time and why didn't he see it as bullshit too? However, during the second interview she said, "You know, I don't think I was as dumb as I thought I was. Maybe I did know a little something about [that theory] for that paper." What seemed to Paola as the epitome of a bullshit paper when she turned it in appears as generative bullshit in hindsight.

Investment

In high school and college, in the conventional obligatory schooling, students have to put up with a lot of requirements that may not hold any other value for them than to punch the card and move on to the next year of the same system. As far as I know, nobody is in the doctoral program under duress. Indeed, Paola emphasized "the luxury of being able to spend four years reading; not everybody has that privilege, or that desire to go into so much debt." Immediately upon entering, the stakes are high and do not much wane or waver, and admission is voluntary. Thus, to bullshit, as in getting by without knowing something but making it sound good enough, doesn't seem a logical response to the challenges of graduate school, Vladimir mused.

I don't think, I mean, I'm not saying that people don't do it when they try and publish in journals and stuff like that, but I don't really think that they intentionally do it like, I don't think with your writing, at this point, I don't think you would intentionally BS something just for the sake of doing it, because it just doesn't make sense. It's like why

would you, well usually you're BSing, cause I did it, you know, college and high school and college, **cause you're trying to fulfill requirements.**

While there are specific tasks along that way that have dubious meanings and values, the purpose is not merely to fulfill requirements. The investment is in learning, personal satisfaction, and professional opportunities. Barnaby said, "I've chosen to learn from these professors, so even when I can't quite see the reason for doing something, I trust their judgment and assume it'll make sense to me soon." This perspective frames students earnestly engaged in all of the challenges presented to them in honor and purpose of their own quests for Knowledge. Idyllic.

As discussed in the literature review chapter, Sweitzer's (2009) described the high pressure university environment in which students respond adopted "performance orientation learning goals"

which occur[s] when individuals are motivated by the desire to demonstrate adequate mastery while simultaneously displaying tendencies to conceal low levels of ability.

Socialization efforts that encourage students' activation of performance orientation as the primary goal may persuade students to adopt and 'all or nothing' metric of success.

(p. 13)

This definition of bullshit, without calling it bullshit, is recognizable situations and interpretations of strategic maneuvering. But is that bullshitting?

The question is, indeed, about investment. The professors on my committee helped articulate a question for the second interview, when participants were talking through their texts and composing processes, their addressees and purpose, evaluative criteria, strategic use of tools. *How invested were you in the final product?* "How invested was I? What do you mean?" was the first response in all the interviews. The question became more interesting to me for this initial

response. And for months it for months it was like a mosquito in a tent, annoying me each time I listened to the interviews. Tobius, at the end of his first year, had been frustrated by the epistemological difference between his science-writing background and the things he's asked to write. When he wrote in a way that was meaningful to him, his professor didn't even see his thinking beneath. He resented having to adopt a different discourse just to be heard and wonders about the hypocrisy beneath disciplinary platitudes of openness and tolerance. Nevertheless, when he has to write he's now aware of what he's expected to produce, "So there's this battle between, okay, this is what I wrote because that's what's asked of me, but I think it's total crap."

This quote came to my mind in context of replaying the interviews through the lens of Vladimir's consideration about why people don't bullshit in doctoral programs. I asked Tobius to expand on his battle between writing and not writing crap:

I guess if I'm trying to accomplish it because somebody tells me I should write something for this, or if it's something that I feel impassioned enough to write about on my own. Which I guess I haven't really come to a topic that I feel impassioned enough to write something on my own about it.

And this makes sense along the investment question. In the early program *requirements* without something personally compelling to write about, there's definitely some room for producing crap. In fact, the early course requirements of doing things like "a fake IRB" were identified as being tasks not entirely purposeful unless the student took initiative. Vladimir's friend who cued him in to "Vygotsky or Heath or whatever" also gave him the insider knowledge: "If you've got to do a fake IRB, why not just do a real one and see if you can get something useful out of this class." In this way, he was able to appropriate the class goals to practice filling out a form in order to meet his own needs, making the class assignment that much

more worthwhile. Likewise, Carmen was willing to strategically acquiesce to get her articles published.

Considering investment—and investment in what—seems to offer possibility to the conundrum of “one man’s bullshit is another man’s catechism” (Postman, 1969, p. 3). If the onlooker does not see or does not agree with what the actor is invested in, a strategic move may appear to be bullshit. For example, when Ruby confesses that she makes every lame change her professor wants, that role distancing could appear as bullshit, but Ruby always called such strategies “means to an end.” If, for example, the onlooker thought that on principle Ruby should resist his tedium and use her own words, *the onlooker* is invested in that, and Ruby remains invested in finishing with as little hassle as possible. Likewise, Paola wants to be granted the authority to conduct her research, not to convince her whole committee that post-structuralism is the only true way. In talking about her goals for her prospectus, Paola said,

Making everyone happy enough that I can do what I need to do. Happy enough that I can ask these participants what I want to ask in a way that will be less intimidating to them as teenagers, without really trying to usurp their experiences or trying to say that I can completely understand them. So that’s sort of the tactic I’m taking is, I’m really, and I am, trying to do this for my subjects as well as the fact that it matches my own way of thinking in analysis. Just enough, I’m not trying to proselytize so that every member of my committee thinks that these are the ways to go about data collection research, but just enough, just enough to bring me up.

Bullshitting here isn’t much about trying to get by without having to do the thinking. In the cases where students do find themselves over their heads—or perceive themselves to be much behind their peers—the strategies and resources they use to complete the tasks are engaged for the

purpose of facilitating their learning and their quest through the hoops of the program requirements.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to investigate how doctoral students learn to compose effectively the multiplicity of academic texts required of them in and beyond their school experience. This dissertation focused on these specific questions:

1. How do doctoral students learn the roles available for themselves as students and scholars?
2. What opportunities do they have to access strategies and insider knowledge for navigating efficiently as they enter new territory?

Developing Identities as Scholars

Bazerman (1997) emphasizes that “it is by [the work of the disciplines] that most discipline members define themselves, commit their energies, and evaluate the participation of others” (p. 306). Students realize that the texts they produce and publish will contribute to how colleagues in the field perceive them—how they articulate the social problems worthy of investigation, the theories they apply to interrogating and interpreting the world, the conclusions and contributions of their scholarship to the complex landscape of education and education research. As such, they recognize the importance of composing texts as part of the professional process of composing their scholar selves. In addition to assimilating the words of the disciplinary dialog and structure of argument with their own thoughts and values in order to deliberately compose texts toward co-constructing meaning with their addressees, students learn to situate themselves among topical, theoretical, and methodological peers in dynamic and

overlapping disciplinary communities. A central component of their learning in graduate school, then, is learning to negotiate in (and into) those public spaces of publication with an eye on the consequences of publishing particular pieces or making particular concessions as part of the bargaining process.

Doctoral students need to navigate the complex contexts of their journeys—learning to deal strategically, efficiently, and for their own benefit, or someone’s else’s behalf—as they encounter challenges bureaucratic, conventional, professional, and personal. Because of the tacit nature of knowledge, conventions, values, and expectations, it is difficult for students to develop these strategies through any traditional, systematic method, and students who are successful benefit from engagement with peers and faculty on projects of research and writing that brings this tacit knowledge to the foreground in the process of doing the real work.

The target is to be able to perceive more than the conventional affordances attributed to typical situations and to know what types of knowledge and values are in play to determine how to engage, how to act, when to smile and nod and when to hold your line. These are things people who’ve been around longer have more knowledge about. Knowing when, why, and how to precisely choose ambiguous language to redirect an inference a reader would otherwise make.

Consequences of Unequal Opportunities to Learn

In this dissertation I have tried to establish that, beyond the view from the faculty side, there is tremendous pressure of expectation for students to be engaged in productive (visible) scholarly work. That in itself wouldn’t necessarily be all that compelling. What makes this finding important, what made it essential to develop first and select for focus in this dissertation, is that everything else students do is within this frame for achievement. Furthermore, all participants noted in some way that “everyone else” was meeting those high standards, a shared

cultural understanding that generates pressure for everyone else to appear like they are “one of them.” While some participants identified retrospectively that most of their peers were posturing and, quite effectively, intimidating new students, other students with years behind them still felt just as certain that they must continue to work as intensely as “everybody else” or “it’s some kind of failure.”

I recognize that I am predisposed to critiquing the institution, whatever the institution, and I don’t want this to come off as an attack or a rant. Because I know there are professors here who do care deeply about the work of teaching graduate students—and all but the first year student in my study gave a nod to the professors on my committee as being known for their work with their students. Had I not done these interviews, I still wouldn’t know how uneven the opportunities are for students here. Two distinct experiences:

I don’t know if there’s been a lot of guidance on academic writing. I don’t feel like I’ve been schooled in how they want some things. You know, they just expect you to know how. ~ *Ruby*

I can just hear her telling me don’t do this, do this, you know. If you’re going to say this, I mean, her big thing is, what’s the critique of that? So, I’m constantly, okay, what’s the critique of that, why can’t you say that, why, who would argue with that and how would you answer them. So I feel like I’ve been given real insight into how some very esteemed writing is done in our field, because of who I’ve had the opportunity to study with. ~ *Sally*

Is it the case that the department collectively is teaching people how to be successful scholars? Or, as Carmen points out, that the more submit the better your chances, and so encouraging people to submit has a generative effect overall. Of course, she also recognizes that

“crappy research won’t get published.” Perhaps it is the disciplinary presumption of that maxim that emphasizes the necessity to cite publications as validated knowledge. In this way, the amount of publications authored by students in the department pre-graduation serves as a public indicator about the knowledge and not-crappy research of those students.

But even the “social facticity” (Bazerman, 2003) of students in the department as published scholars frames a consideration of the pedagogic principles behind the imperative to publish. Indeed, students recognized that their own publications were generating their identities as scholars, based on the articles they were sent to peer review for journals (Amalia, Carmen, Sally), and so there is that outcome of launching their careers. But the emotional strain of the expectation—as I saw it across multiple people, in a way that each person thought was fairly unique to them—was impressive to me, and I can’t help but wonder if those ends can’t be met without such anguish. Furthermore, if the established definition is that people who are students in this department have published articles, then what does that say of students who haven’t published—and haven’t been given the opportunity to learn how, and, importantly, know that others have? And what does it say of the department that perpetuates this definition and yet doesn’t provide equal opportunities to learn?

I had a hard time putting these data together in a way that made sense in a small piece—and even now, there’s much I thought would fit here that is staying in another file. As much as I learned many interesting things from people as writers and about them as writers, a cleanly bound little manuscript about peer feedback, or submitting to journals—which, as I type those examples I realize wouldn’t be clearly bounded either—picking a simple and defined piece ultimately didn’t seem ethical. I am still angry and sad for my friend Zorko. I’m still shocked and awed at the audacity of Winston’s major professor to pull that move on his third chapter. And I’m

sad that Paola and Ruby feel belittled and somehow apologetic for aspiring to work with teachers. I find it odd that students eager to learn and to be taught how to do better what they're already doing as scholars are left wanting.

Revisiting the Chronotope

Way back in the theory chapter, I proposed a construct of a chronotope comprised of dynamic, unique, recursive intersections and tensions among forces that influence the experiences within the ephemeral space and unbounded time of the doctoral journey. As students construct their unique settings, interacting with the people, discourses, institutions, and environments that contribute to the context, they bring their histories and presents and futures into the chronotope of their journey. Setting mediates the meanings of all that happens inter- and intra-personally, and so this primary factor is unique to each individual. And yet, there is much commonality among the culture they enter as students, which gives shape to how they engage and understand their experiences.

Dialogic factors were also quite evident in the findings presented here. Students join and recreate The Department, hearing and sharing the folklore of some professor said something or which students are privileged by relationships with certain professors. Of particular emphasis here was the heteroglossic hum that shape students' sense of expectation and achievement—a pressure that (it seems though I did not study specifically) the faculty are not intending to present with such malignant intensity. There are tensions in identifying and defining the roles and goals of studenting and professoring, the centrifugal pull to stand out among the crowd with “fresh” research against centripetal demands to appropriate the language, epistemologies, values, and systems which define the disciplinary communities of which students seek to become members. Tensions to be academics while they still try to live their lives outside of school, trying to sort

out how they can synthesize their goals and selves with the people they are becoming through the course of this journey. Students struggle to find their voices somehow, to be able to speak confidently and authoritatively without feeling like a total imposter about to be revealed. And so these roles and the role of dialogic selves are in constant motion and tension, sometimes more harmonious, sometimes not so much.

Affect is of course inherent in the components discussed above. As a chronotopic factor, attending to affect recognizes the intensely personal nature of this experience—emotionally trying, exhilarating, exhausting, disillusioning, rewarding, fulfilling are among many descriptors participants gave to their doctoral journeys in interviews and in follow-up emails. The influence of relationships has already been well established in research literature; it obtains in this study. Professors have tremendous potential to shape students' experiences, and this can have negative and positive effects, but they are generally prominent whatever they are. Students relationships with peers are also extremely important, and the dearth of activity and resources targeted to build community is acute, if not negligent. It's such a blatant oversight that its absence is profound—there is space and power reserved for representing how the department shapes students' experiences, how it affords and constrains relationships, how even part-time students can make powerful connections that are key to successful and sane completion of this intense journey. And that part of the story isn't much there to be told.

The chronotope served me as a tool for analysis and representation of the whole study in all its complexities. As a narrative abstraction, it facilitated my ability to relate myself to the study, to coordinate my own dialogic selves within my analysis while tracing those paths alongside the people-as-data I was trying to understand. I don't think its full sense and usefulness

was apparent in this dissertation because of the limited story I was able to tell in these pages. But I couldn't have written them without it in my head.

Bullshit

Finally, the query that started this study is ongoing. I better understand the range of bullshit at play in this academic context. The chronotope does indeed work for this quest, and having addressed the glaring issue that most affected me in doing this study, or if I were to write a whole new dissertation at this point, I can see better how to use the chronotope to hone my analysis of the multiplicity of bullshit happenings. But, yes, Virginia, there's bullshit in academia.

Coda

Zorko: I would see the confidence with which he did it and I would see how, the results he would get from it. And I read some of his work too. I mean, I've helped him proofread and stuff. And he just knew what to say. It was one of these things – and he would help me, when he was still here, when I would write something, he would sit there and he would literally say, say this, say that like this. Don't say it that way, say it this way. Like what's the difference? He's like, just trust me, say it this way. So he clearly knew the expectations.

Me: But he didn't explain it to you?

Z: No. He didn't feel the need to do that.

Me: He just said these are the words, use them.

Z: This is how it works. This is how the game is played basically, is how he would put it.

Me: Precisely that?

Z: Yeah. So, that told me something. It's like, shit, I'm not going to be able to, I don't have that level of confidence with this and I don't know, I'd have to talk to him more to get a sense of where he got that. But I think he was much more confident than I've ever been in this place.

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