A MACDONALD'S SENTENCE STYLE DISCIPLINARITY ANALYSIS OF HONORS THESES IN THREE GENRES

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Chapter 1: Introduction

This project addresses the honors thesis as a genre of academic discourse, with special consideration given to the examination of a linguistic notion of agency within several honors theses. It is a simplified replication study. The project owes its method to Susan Peck MacDonald’s investigation of published expert prose in her book *Professional Academic Writing in the Humanities and Social Science*, (MacDonald, 1994), which won the 1996 Outstanding Book Award. This dissertation applied MacDonald’s method, expounded, in detail, in her article “A Method for Analyzing Sentence-Level Differences in Disciplinary Knowledge Making” (MacDonald, 1992), to honors theses in the disciplines of literature, history, and anthropology to facilitate comparison between expert and novice. Comparison among disciplinary theses will be used to further characterize novice writing.

The Honors Thesis

The honors thesis is a culmination of an undergraduate’s academic career in especially challenging curriculum. It is a distinctly academic genre. It is not written outside of higher education and its academic cache is based on its presumed display of comparatively advanced scholarly reasoning that also characterizes honors programs generally. Often, an honors thesis takes the form of an extended research paper that attempts to make an individual scholarly contribution to a discipline. The students who write them are primarily seniors enrolled in a special honors program or college that
distinguishes those students from other undergraduates. Writing the senior honors thesis
is therefore undergraduate writing, but it is of a genre that is similar to graduate student
milestones such as the masters’ thesis and the doctoral dissertation. Concomitant with a
the “U” shaped writing curriculum (Haswell, 1991) that tends to focus studies of
academic discourse on either freshman or professional academics (including graduate
students), and despite the growing emphasis on the study of academic discourse in
general, the honors thesis remains largely unconsidered.

Part of the reason for this neglect is the difficulty of placing the honors thesis in
the hierarchy of scholarly discourse and, by association, the academic curriculum.
Hierarchy, of course, employs a notion of space where one concept or object is on top of
another. In the case of curriculum, I build on the popular understanding of a “curricular
geography” (Sullivan & Sullivan, 1993) and the idea of space in a curriculum employed
in such terms as “vertical curriculum” and “horizontal curriculum.” The vertical
curriculum engages the students in individual and progressively more difficult
knowledge-making endeavor as they progress “up” through a curriculum. The horizontal
curriculum refers to standardized achievement that is visible to outside authorities at
designated and shared curricular mooring points. Together, these vertical and horizontal
conceptions of curriculum create a spatial and temporal grid in which to understand
student progression through curriculum and, presumably, into scholarly discourse.

In the hierarchy of scholarly discourse, the highest horizontal standard of literate
prose is set by the experts who converse in peer-reviewed academic journals. MacDonald
(1994) analyzed these experts’ prose in literature, history, and psychology. Therefore, she did not contend with horizontal standards. These experts had arrived at the pinnacle of knowledge and were no longer progressing toward it. This is clearly not the case with undergraduate honors thesis writers or undergraduates generally. In fact, Wolfe & Haynes (2003) offered a four-year curriculum that is intended to help students progressively develop written epistemic skills. Their work developed a few vertical paths and several horizontal standards. In the case of honors students one would expect that, because of their recognized achievement, their vertical ascent happens rapidly and they glide easily past the horizontal standards set to help guide the majority of undergraduate students.

Honors students, especially by the time they are writing a thesis, have exceeded the vertical space of literacy learning available in the undergraduate curriculum, but are not yet in the graduate curriculum. Thus, by definition, honors students are beyond the horizontal difficulty standard set for most undergraduates in their awareness of knowledge-making moves, even if they prefer less complexity in the classroom (Dallas & Marwitz, 2003). However, honors thesis writers are not yet accountable to graduate student standards, neither in practice nor concept.

American universities go to great lengths to make distinctions between graduate and undergraduate education. The lack of general education is the key distinction in American graduate; it is unapologetically specialized and disciplinary. An honors thesis is not moored in the same disciplinarity that even a first semester MA student can muster,
despite it being a legitimate attempt at knowledge-making. Accordingly, an honors thesis is at the edge of disciplinarity in the vertical and horizontal curriculum. Therefore, the honors thesis is a genre that is difficult to place in the spatial hierarchy of scholarly discourse.

This confusion has led to a significant negative impact on the honors thesis in rhetoric and composition (Cozzens, 1989; Haynes, 2004, 2006). The work of Cozzens (1989) touched on how the writing center can help with a recurrent visitor who is writing an honors thesis. Haynes (2004, 2006) imagined the honors thesis or any advanced capstone undergraduate research as merely analogous to the end of a four-year writing curriculum developed to “help students move toward self-authorship, interdisciplinary inquiry, and scholarship” (Haynes, 2004, 2006 p. 65). Yet Haynes pointed out that more than 80% of honors students at her institution resigned from the honors curriculum because they feared the thesis. While this research did shed some light on the honors thesis, at best it may have indicated the problematic curricular context of the honors thesis in the hierarchy of academic discourse.

If there were an equivalent genre to the honors thesis, it would be the senior research project that is sometimes part of capstone classes, a major degree-concluding project. These types of projects are more prevalent in European education, but are growing steadily in American colleges. It is feasible that there may be some overlap between honors theses and nonhonors senior projects. Both seem to suffer from low completion rates (Haynes, 2006; Lofgren & Ohlsson, 1999), despite assigned faculties’
interest in promoting undergraduate research (Garde-Hansen, 2007; NCHC, 2010).

Literature on the supervision of honors theses (West, 2002) and senior projects (Cook, 1980; Rowley & Slack, 2004) discussed how to integrate the work of being an undergraduate advisor into regular faculties’ duties. However, despite these similarities, the unique curricular situation of the honors thesis makes the two genres not quite parallel.

Having established definitions, the next section now moves from an overview of what an honors thesis is to why it was chosen as an appropriate textual object from which to measure disciplinarity.

**Honors theses as a desirable textual object of disciplinary study.** As an object of study, the honors thesis has five overlapping reasons why it is desirable. First, it complements existing writing research into academic genres and writing as proof of learning. Second, the genre is situated at a key midpoint in the acculturation of academic writers. Third, the honors thesis, as a genre, is maintained entirely by intellectual values and, therefore, is always susceptible to quick abdication, or being dismissed as a necessary genre. Fourth, the honors thesis represents, in some ways, the conceivable best one may expect of undergraduate writing. As discussed above, it is written in a curricular space that exceeds the top of the vertical undergraduate curriculum and, therefore, conceivably represents the upper-echelon of undergraduate academic writing. Fifth, the honors thesis is representative of the intermediate point in MacDonald’s continuum and,
therefore, its study will comment on the utility of such a continuum. I will discuss these, in order, next.

Viewed autonomously, the honors thesis genre complements existing studies of academic genres and other examples of writing as proof of learning. As a genre, it is more than a little synthetic; it is an academic genre with primarily artificial circumstances, written to please, most often, an immediately present and known audience. The audience for the thesis is very select, specialized, and has to understand much concerning its role in the student’s academic advancement. This oversight, at its best, means understanding the student’s learning trajectory, his or her previous curriculum, and making the argument that such a student might receive some benefit out of writing it, and that benefit may not only be prestige, but also disciplinarity or a head start on the facility that comes with professional/expert knowledge.

The audience for this genre is defined by their expertise in the discipline. However, the honors thesis writers are not experts and are expected to mimic professional scholars of their discipline, but not so well that they overstep their role as an eager honors student. As such, what follows extends analysis out from an autonomous look at the genre to a social, contextualized, process-based explanation of why it is important to study the honors thesis.

Learning to write disciplinary genres has long been found to be a process (Carroll L. A., 2002; Carter, 2007; Emig, 1971; Perl, 1979). There has been extensive research into the generic potential of first-year composition (Petraglia, 1995) and bountiful studies
of professional writers both inside (Lea & Street, 1998) and outside of academia (Dias, Freedman, Medway, & Paré, 1999). Junior and senior level writing-in-the-disciplines research accounts for the most decisive studies of the middling areas in the overall U-shaped curriculum (Howard, Jamieson, Schwegler, & Shamoon, 2000). Part of this is because it is possible to get bogged down in in what might count as the middle or a halfway point in disciplinary writing.

Disciplinarity is necessarily determined by the experts, taught to novices, and largely dependent upon expert contexts that students do not often have access to including professional organizations, conferences, and social resources. Further, disciplinarity is not the measure used to account for the development; rather, the assumptions are cognitive, in the mind instead of on the page (Haas, 1994; Herrington & Curtis, 2000). If composition researchers want to understand academic writing development, they need a method to be able to trace it as it happens across a lifetime of academic writing experiences.

The genre is neither graduate nor undergraduate. The discourse itself has to be both aspiring yet still humble enough to not sound overconfident. The genre is situated in a liminal disciplinary space. Therefore, the study of the honors thesis will offer a more complete revelation of the possible path of at least some disciplinary writers. For this reason, it is a natural point for the study of how writers acquire disciplinarity.

Although the honors thesis is liminal disciplinarity, it is clearly not so in the undergraduate curriculum. Its place at the summit of the undergraduate curriculum
indicates that the genre of the honors thesis is the “best” an undergraduate writer may become. This is a result of the best students receiving the most advantageous educational path (the honors curriculum) with the personalized instruction of the honors thesis advisor. This ought to be recognized as an optimal or nearly optimal circumstance for the writer. There is some guarantee of “best likely possible results” from studying this sample population. They represent, in most ways, the best an undergraduate curriculum can produce at that point in space-time. This is the pinnacle of undergraduate academic writing. Also, because it is strictly academic and utterly optional, it is a clear uptake of academic ambition, a surprisingly “clean,” well-defined niche genre for the study of genre uptake, compared to other places in the curriculum where motivations may be more mixed. The study of disciplinarity in honors theses would yield insights into what is a realistic yet high standard for undergraduate writing success.

Another reason the honors thesis is a genre worthy of study is because it is always in peril of disappearing. No student has to write one to graduate. It is optional, an accessory to graduation; one does it to graduate with a certain attained level of prestige, not because it is necessary. If no one thought it was worth graduating with honors, the genre would cease to exist, and that makes the genre particularly vulnerable to changes in valuations of an honors degree. In other words, the motivation for the thesis writer may be intrinsic or extrinsic, but the student must accept the value of it from within academia and the honors system specifically. If there is no honors system in academia, there will be no thesis.
Honors thesis writers are doing their part to reify and maintain the honors system when they choose undertake the project. As a result, the genre is wholly dependent upon the belief in meritocracy that underlies the honors system as a whole, and the writer must believe that they will benefit from it, or the genre could fall into abdication, disuse, and eventual disappearance. Therefore, the study of the honors thesis also affords some knowledge about the state of honors as an academic phenomenon.

Finally, for all the circumstantiality mentioned above, the honors thesis is representative of that intermediate point in MacDonald’s continuum. MacDonald’s continuum may not be exceptionally well researched, and there are many schemes for cognitive and writer development that writing scholars have embraced; however, MacDonald’s scheme is the developmental shorthand both within and without our discipline. It is deployed as a central operational hypothesis, and the opportunity to confirm, deny, or modify it as a conceptual phenomenon is important to our discipline. And yet, MacDonald’s continuum is not data supported, instead more hypothetical in nature, complicating both the approach and results.

In the next section, I will explain MacDonald’s curricular frame, situate the honors thesis within it, and discuss the hypotheses on scholarly prose that MacDonald uses, making her frame appropriate to this inquiry.

**MacDonald’s Curricular Continuum as A Project Frame**

The book from which this project derives its frame is Susan Peck MacDonald’s *Professional Academic Writing in the Humanities and Social Sciences* (1994). It is an
award-winning discourse analysis of one scholarly discussion in the fields of psychology, literature, and history, respectively. Her intent was to study the disciplinary discourses in the humanities and social sciences and understand their expert knowledge-making practices as displayed in their scholarship (MacDonald, 1994, p. 3). She examined the highest level of academic literate practice as it appeared in conversations circulating through scholarly journals. MacDonald took knowledge-making as the essential characteristic of the practice and identified four patterns of variation in knowledge-making among her sample. I will describe all four patterns, although I will only be using the last for this inquiry.

Patterns of variation. The first pattern of variation identified (MacDonald, 1992) was how specifically a problem was posed and subsequently characterized, both of which related to how diffuse problem-posing typically became across a scholarly conversation. The second pattern was variation in explanatory versus interpretive goals, which focused on how scholarship made sense of a given object of scrutiny or, alternatively, made sense of something else from that object. This pattern could be used to identify how a given object was used in the making of knowledge about another object as well. The third pattern was variations from conceptually driven to text-driven in the relation between generalization and particular, which describes how knowledge-making is motivated either from abstracted problems toward specifics or from specific, data-grounded problems to conceptual frameworks. All of these patterns, in their full variation, are found at the level of a discourse. They are not sentence-level assessments of the practice of knowledge-making; rather, they look at the scope of the problem, the relationship between the object
being researched and the additional effects of the object, and whether the logic of analysis moves from generalities to specifics or vice versa.

MacDonald’s fundamental assumptions about knowledge-making conventions, as they arise in sentence structure, match well with the knowledge-making expected of academic writers. In particular, this fourth pattern is the one employed in my research, and, therefore, discussed more than the others. MacDonald’s fourth pattern, with its identification of agency in the subject of a sentence, coincides with ideas about academic writing taught to undergraduates in style books used across the country (Lanham, 1974; Strunk Jr & White, 2000; Trimble, 1975, 2000, 2010; Williams, 2007).

As an example, Williams, describing the importance of agent and action in the clarity of sentences, wrote, “agent/action style gives vigor, clarity, and efficiency to prose by putting—to whatever degree possible—the agent of an action into the subject of a clause and the action presented into the verb” (Williams, 2007, p. 21) (italics in original). Teachers of composition will quickly recognize this commonplace advice as the basis of strong subject-verb-object sentences that are taught to students to exemplify clear prose and academic writing. MacDonald’s finding that academic prose, (which carries the action of knowledge-making), has agents that are participating in that knowledge-making, and therefore is complementary to the prescribed sentence structure. While disciplinary conventions may eventually override this conventional sentence structure, honors theses are written by students who are not yet disciplined by graduate school. Honors student thesis writing is the epitome of undergraduate epistemic writing; as such, it is reasonable
to expect to see competent rehearsal of this sentence structure in their honors theses. In time, it will be interesting to see if most of the agents are either about how knowledge is made, called here the “epistemic,” or the observed phenomena being made knowledge about, called here the “phenomenal”.

**Agency.** The concept of agency, as it is narrowly construed in this project, also arises from this section of MacDonald’s work. The “agency” of concern is the linguistic position of the subject, sometimes alternately called the agent, as indicated in the Williams quote above. It is not the critical agency of the writer beyond the prose (Ewald & Wallace, 1994; Gorzelsky, 2009), nor the semantic agency of the discourse (Penrose & Geisler, 1994). Rather, the agency studied is limited to the syntactic and is discounted if not used in either an epistemic or phenomenological fashion because to use it another way would violate the integrity of MacDonald’s method. The assumption that agency is limited to the purely linguistic may be overly simple, as I will later discuss and revise, but it is discernable and does not prohibit complementary analyses using other definitions of agency.

As undergraduates who are not fully scholars, honors thesis writers may continue to employ forms of agency in their writing that are distinct from traditional academic configurations of knowledge-making agency in the syntax. Nevertheless, I hypothesize that it is reasonable to expect to see competent rehearsal of the expert knowledge-making syntactical structure in honors theses because the boundaries between categories of expert and novice are porous. If those boundaries are porous, then novice prose should have
Some elements of expert prose in them. MacDonald confirmed this narrowly construed knowledge-making syntax in expert prose.

**Honors Student Writing**

Few pieces of scholarship directly address the characteristics of honors student writing, which, in turn, is a reflection of the overall lack of research on honors student writers. Whether or not honors students are likely to largely employ the knowledge-making agency of experts in their prose has not been investigated. Without such research, there is no direct evidence to suggest why MacDonald’s analysis would be apt for such a population of writers. Thus, instead, I argue that the accelerated progression of learning makes honors students more likely to be epistemically sophisticated by their senior year.

Guzy (2003) recommended that freshman writing, being evaluated for entry into an honors program, should be “evaluated for organization, development, style, and grammar & mechanics because these are common standards across writing instruction” (Guzy, 2003, p. 101-102). Guzy raised the expectations for honors students by advocating that “evaluators should read for above-average to exceptional performance in each of these four areas” (Guzy, 2003, p.104). Dallas & Marwitz (2003) found that honors students in their freshman year resist complex readings of texts and taking on the agency necessary to contribute to ongoing scholarly discussion. Thelin (2003) ran an honors composition course, in which social class was the primary focus. In contrast to the findings of Dallas & Marwitz (2003), he found that his students “liked the democratic and shared-authority aspects” of his class (Thelin, 2003, p. 181). From these three
disimilar characterizations of the freshman year of honors writing students, I draw the conclusion that honors students in their freshman year are not extensively ahead of their peers in the production of quality, knowledge-making prose because if students are not self-reflexively involved in the subject matter, as in Thelin’s course, they are not going to be exceptionally invested, as was noted in Dallas and Marwitz. Yet, according to the National Collegiate Honors Council (NCHC), honors students do make the most of their curricular journey. Rinn (2005) noted that the academic self-concept of juniors and seniors in honors programs varied considerably from each other. Her characterizations of seniors, who were at the point of thesis writing, noted that they were considerably more academic than even juniors. Guralnick (2001) suggested that a senior composition class be required for gifted students, because, at that stage, students may be more ready to write scholarly texts. Thus, while honors students may not be particularly ready for epistemic prose as freshman, it seems they might develop that ability more quickly than nonhonors students throughout their curriculum. For this reason, I hypothesize that honors students’ senior theses would demonstrate at least some of the epistemic, knowledge-making maneuvers of experts, despite their undergraduate status and ill-defined place in the curriculum continua. Next, I will discuss how MacDonald establishes her curricular points with regards to knowledge-making writing.

MacDonald’s Continuum and Honors Theses

MacDonald developed a vertical continuum describing the acquisition and representation of academic literacy at four curricular points, working up to the expert
level she studied. I will discuss her continuum and attempt to explain why I place honors thesis writers at the third curricular point, thereby further justifying why I expect to see the knowledge-making syntactical structure in an honors thesis.

The four curricular points that writers move through as they progressively develop academic literacy are:

1. Nonacademic writing
2. Generalized academic writing concerned with stating claims, offering evidence, respecting others’ opinions, and learning how to write with authority
3. Novice approximations of particular disciplinary ways of making knowledge
4. Expert, insider prose (MacDonald, 1994, p. 187)

Using MacDonald’s four curricular points to create a sense of the standards of a horizontal curriculum allows me to locate the honors thesis within the curriculum. Next, I will review MacDonald’s four curricular points and determine to which of these points the honors thesis text belongs.

At the onset, it is noted that undergraduate honors student writers are academic writers and the honors thesis is an academic genre used by academic intuitions. Consequently, honors theses are definitely out of the first category. It might be possible to consider that honors thesis writers are in the second stage, except that there is nothing generalized about the honors thesis, as it is an attempt at disciplinary discourse. MacDonald’s own contention is that stages one and two are dealt with largely in first year composition. In terms of vertical curriculum, honors students are above the undergraduate curriculum, curricularly far from the level two’s focus on the research
essay in freshman composition (Sutton, 1997). Therefore, I locate honors thesis writers at
the third point because they are attempting to approximate disciplinary prose under the
guidance of a disciplinary expert in order to make new knowledge. Honors theses are not
at MacDonald’s expert prose point because the prose is not responsible for the author’s
success. To that end, MacDonald (1994) indirectly noted a pragmatic boundary between
undergraduate appropriation of the axiomatics of professional discourse, at point three on
her continuum and graduate student appropriation at point four when she wrote, “For
graduate students and young professionals, access to professional employment and
rewards will require familiarity with the axiomatic in a more exacting and elaborated
way” (MacDonald, 1994, p. 188). In other words, for those whose professional success
depends on adopting the discourse to an expert level, the motivation for appropriation is
different than those not committed to the discourse on an expert level. For this reason, I
am confident putting honors thesis writing into the third point, that of novice, and
considering the genre a legitimate subject for study, using MacDonald’s paradigm.

One consequence of establishing the honors thesis at roughly the third point along
MacDonald’s continuum is the assumption that the honors thesis shares some qualities
with texts at the second and fourth points because the continuum is numbered at the
midsections, which leaves the boundaries between as porous and only definable by socio-
political negotiations. MacDonald’s work has tended to cluster around understandings
about academic writing done near point four. Her data from point four is available for
comparison with data from point three. But to do that reasonably, it is vital to understand
her construct of academic writing at point four.
MacDonald (1994) offered her definition of academic writing:

Broadly speaking, academic prose has evolved as a vehicle for constructing knowledge claims: for wielding ideas, constructing categories and concepts, weighing competing abstractions, assessing the relation between claim and evidence, developing careful distinctions and taking us out of the ephemerality of individual instances so that we can learn something about our past and our present, while attempting to improve or control our present. (1994, p. 9)

MacDonald further argued that expert writers employ a certain type of agency in their compositions in which “epistemic tools and processes are applied to phenomenological objects, and the result is newly discovered knowledge” (MacDonald, 1994, p. 5). The idea is that when scholarly experts write a paper that gets published; they represent the knowledge-making process by writing about methods and theories verified in the past and their application to a new object. From these arguments about what is the topical focus in academic writing, MacDonald (1992) developed the claim that “whatever we find in the subject position should be taken very seriously as shaping the text's impression of agency” (MacDonald, 1992, p. 149). Essentially, in academic prose either the topic being researched or the knowledge-making practices applied to it will be the subject of expert-level academic texts, and, for this reason, the "categorizing types of nouns in the subject position is one way to analyze writers' sense of agency" (MacDonald, 1992, p.149). While honors theses are not at the fourth point on MacDonald’s continuum, we still recognize them as written texts in which “knowledge claims are constructed, negotiated, and made persuasive” (MacDonald, 1994, p.7).

Honors theses do epistemic work. Therefore, we might expect to see some similarities with expert writing. Yet, MacDonald declared that:
only at the professional level can academic writing be consistently characterized as knowledge-making; students’ texts are typically written to demonstrate knowledge or to aid students’ thinking and learning, but not to create new knowledge or negotiate knowledge claims within a group of experts. (1994, p. 17)

If expert writers are assumed to use their agency exclusively for epistemic purposes, novices will, according to MacDonald, employ agency in their texts differently because they may write for other than epistemic purposes. The honors thesis, due to its unique situation at the boundaries of these stages, makes an interesting test case.

Ultimately, I will argue that the linguistic analysis reveals elements of a genuine steppingstone in the development of a writer’s scholarly disciplinary prose, a proximate third point on MacDonald’s continuum, in particular, the conservation of ethos, uniquely for each genre, and new formulations of agency in knowledge-making.

**Overview of the Dissertation**

Chapter 2 is a literature review that focuses on how students encounter learning to write in the disciplines covered in this thesis including literature, history, and philosophy. Each discipline addresses the novice/professional debates as well as the learning situation in which students find themselves in.

Chapter 3, Methods, has many parts. First, it explains the coding scheme and its suitability for the study. Second, I discuss the location from which the theses were gathered and under what circumstances they were selected for inclusion in the study. Third, I detail the actual process including reading and coding, tallying, calculation and
analysis. Finally, I explain the secondary coding used for each discipline to further inform the findings.

Chapter 4 begins with a numerical and graphical display and discussion of results by discipline, including comparisons between experts and professionals. The results of the disciplinary specific secondary coding are also revealed. The chapter concludes with the introduction of the exceptional “Phenomenological I” code across all three disciplines.

In chapter 5, the results are expanded into a discussion of the findings in each discipline. Each discipline employs different methods for understanding their own discourse. In order to further understand the results, I do a secondary analysis employing each disciplines internal concepts. In the literature section, a secondary analysis where the corpus was recoded for literary topoi is presented to further explicate the results. Within the history results, a look at the significance of the methods class is analyzed with a re-coding of the corpus using the traditional historical dichotomy of narrative vs. analysis. Finally, in the anthropology section of the discussion, the role of the advisor is added to the analysis and the discussion of novice agency is highlighted. These secondary analyses allow for more nuanced, and discipline specific interpretation of the results from the intial coding.

Chapter 6 concludes the study by bringing together the whole study and presenting possibilities for further research, including the tentative offering of a new coding method based on the concept of abductive reasoning. The tentative and plural
nature of novice agency revealed by this study indicates a need for a new method of understanding how novice writers position themselves disciplinarily. McDonald’s coding scheme is revisioned employing Charles Sanders Peirce’s conception of abductive reasoning.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

As mentioned in the introduction, among the factors that make the honors thesis an object worthy of study is its particular tie to the honors system and the faith and value that students must have in it to pursue an honors degree and to write the attendant thesis. This section first reviews the honors thesis in honors education throughout history and then reviews the disciplinary writing in each of the three disciplines (English literature, history, and anthropology) with a particular focus on how the curriculum or the discourse is set up to help or inhibit novice writers from appropriating the disciplinary discourse. Honors thesis writers are simultaneously apprentice disciplinary writers and authors subsumed by the honors thesis discourse.

Early Higher Education to Aydelotte

Although writing always has always been a part the modern honors curriculum, the modern incarnation of the honors thesis genre has not. The current climate of honors theses culture, which prizes elaborate, thoughtful, and researched individual contribution to an area of knowledge, is not wholly endemic to the honors curriculum from which it evolved; rather, the relationship between the honors thesis and the honors curriculum is heavily influenced by the prevailing notion of elite in higher education. It is not that the thesis is unrelated, given that all honors and honors type programs have used writing in an assessment or capstone capacity, but what was valued in that writing varied historically with the curriculum and the notion of élite at the time. Therefore, in order to
understand today’s honors thesis genre as an act of novice writing it is necessary to understand how the honors thesis evolved from previous ideas of writing in honors.

**Oxford as precursor.** The Oxford honors system was the initial wedge that opened the conceptual academic space for the novice genre of honors theses as we know it in America today. Rinn (2006) argued that none of the influencing factors of honors in America are as great as Oxford University, in particular, the Oxford University Tutorial System, the Oxford Pass/Honors program, and the Rhodes scholarship for American students (Rinn, 2006, p. 64).

The first influence is the presence of an Oxford tutor, by definition, the role of more advanced students. Beginning in the 16th century, Oxford tutors acted in the place of parents by controlling the younger students’ finances and coaching them in appropriate and gentlemanly behavior. In the 17th century, the role of the tutor at Oxford began to take on the role of an educational advisor and by the 19th century, the position of the tutor was almost completely intellectual. The Oxford tutor of the late 19th century was there to help the younger students study to pass the comprehensive oral and written exams (Mallet, 1927). To this end, the students would write essays and read them to their tutor and sometimes among other students. The essays were referred to as “themes,” in that they took a great book, a biblical story, or a famous essay, and explicated its main theme as an application to a worldly circumstance of the day. No mind was paid to contravening opinions and it was not necessary to place the theme in contrast to other themes. Rather, each student, especially in their first two years before their intellectual
competency test, tried to demonstrate that they were able to grasp an already familiar phenomenon on their own and apply it in a socially appropriate, conservative, but ever so slightly novel way (Mallet, 1927, P. 33-34).

While highly restrictive by today’s standard, the emphasis on agency came not in the subject matter but in the freshness of chosen analogies and scope of topical application. These themes were typically between 700 and 1,000 words and able to be read in less than ten minutes, but they did not aggregate into a coherent whole of any sort. Each theme was a one-shot, almost sermonesque, standalone discourse. The tutor then, was not a teacher, but more of what one would imagine today as a writing center tutor, responsible for generating discussion that will help the student extend their ideas (Aydelotte, 1917). This system of tutoring was the essential component of an Oxford education because classes, lectures, and other curricular objects were optional. Students studied with their tutor through two sets of exams: a competency exam, something akin to a rising junior exam given halfway through one’s time at Oxford, and a final, comprehensive exam.

The second Oxford influence is apparent in that written and oral exams could be taken at the pass level or at the honors level. The honors level, called “extraordinary examinations,” was designated by Dr. John Eveleigh in order to allow superior students to distinguish themselves (Aydelotte, 1922). One student diary, quoted by Mallet (1927), suggests that the extraordinary examinations justified a student’s attendance at the many optional lectures and courses, rather than that attendance being seen as a weakness of
one’s self-study capability. Honors level exams required students learn much more content.

In 1807, the honor level was divided into two classes, and, by 1830, there were four classes of honors and one pass class. Both the writing-as-a-method-of-studying employed in the tutoring and the pass/honors system were new innovations that justified the modification of the standard curriculum for superior students (Aydelotte, 1925).

The tutor system and the pass/honors model opened the way for curricular innovation for superior students. Also, the Rhodes Scholarship adapted faculty to a more diversified curriculum, in which the impetus was on giving each student an equal opportunity to live up to their (white, male, heteronormative) potential. It did not create an equality of educational outcomes. The Rhodes Scholarship allowed students to finish their bachelors of arts or pursue an advanced degree. Since many of the scholars had already achieved their BA, between 1904 and 1914, more than a quarter of Rhodes Scholars chose academic careers, into which they carried the Rhodes experience (Aydelotte, 1946). Of course, it is also notable that Frank Aydelotte, who is widely credited with popularizing honors in America, was a Rhodes Scholar from 1905 to 1907. The Rhodes Scholarship created a generation of faculty prepared to disregard the traditional, rather uniform curriculum in traditional American higher education (Aydelotte, 1946). In these ways, as Rinn (2003) suggests, Oxford was an important precursor to honors. The lessons of Oxford honors eventually allowed for the novice academic writers of today’s honors programs to be recognized as an independent
category of novice authors whose works are worthy of study in their own right. However, while the Oxford model did open up the potential for honors programs and used writing as a measure of study success, it was not the kind of thesis writing that we recognize today. Rather, the honors thesis would begin in earnest and evolve in America.

**America.** There is a long history of undergraduate institutions tracking “superior” students. (Geiger, 2002). Designations like cum laude and summa cum laude were initially borrowed from the Oxford Pass/Honors system and then institutionalized in the American curriculum by Harvard in 1869. In 1880, Harvard added the magna cum laude distinction. Early attempts at honors in America occurred in eight institutions:

1. at Wesleyan College, honors were awarded at commencement in 1873;
2. at the University of Michigan, the University Honors system was established in 1882;
3. at the University of Vermont, the award of honors was given on the basis of a thesis in 1888;
4. at Princeton University, the preceptorial system was announced in 1905;
5. at Columbia University, attempts at honors programs were made in 1909, and again in 1920;
6. at the University of Missouri, Reading for honors was implemented in 1912;
7. at Smith College, an honors program was started in 1921; and
8. at Harvard University, several different programs were initiated throughout the late 19th century and early 20th century (Aydelotte, 1944; Rinn, 2003).

Danzig (1982) reported that “In 1903, Harvard Professor A. Lawrence Lowell attempted to establish an honors college” (Danzig, 1982, p. 5), but Cohen (1966) suggests it did not succeed because the students found it too formal and faculty complained that the competition for honors was too severe. At that time, Harvard culturally elite social conduct norms taught students that the wealthy and the privileged did not compete, but that good things came to them by their virtue and natural superiority.

After the demise of the elective system in 1910, Harvard tried several experimental forms for their students as a whole, and their most exceptional students in particular. Distinctions were given based on oral and written examination, departmental honors, and correlation exams, in which students wrote an essay that unified their main fields of study with their allied fields (Hindmarsh, 1932, p. 174). In addition, superior freshmen were given special advising by tutors and segregated housing (Cohen, 1966, p. 14). All of these features remain important to contemporary honors, yet Harvard was not to become the dominant model because they never resolved the fundamental problem of competition among the entitled elite faculty or students.

The Amherst system, a not-quite-honors attempt, was relevant, but as with Harvard’s programs, not enough so to become the dominant model. President Seelye initiated the radical reconfiguration of the curriculum in 1881. Seelye suggested that
because students were older and the college had morphed from a place to send wayward children to a place where men came to learn to take their place in society, that a more independent, self-controlled curriculum was justified. Seelye added elective courses and began to mandate attendance. Writing became required in the curriculum and teachers were expected to listen, if not respond directly to, student themes. In addition, he established the Amherst system of ranking saying,

instead of attempting to fix the rank of every individual student by minute divisions on a scale of a hundred as formerly, five grades of scholarship were established and degrees were conferred upon the graduating classes according to their grades. If a student was found to be in the first or lowest grade, he was not considered as a candidate for a degree, though he might receive a certificate stating the facts in regard to his standing; if he appeared in the second grade the degree of A. B. was conferred upon him by rite; if in the third, cum laude; if in the fourth, magna cum laude; while if he reached the fifth grade he received the degree summa cum laude. (Tyler, 1894, Online)

With American honors, the idea that you came in inherently at a level of superiority was slightly tempered by the evocation of a grading system based on composite performance. It was still very elitist, the American system only allowed wealthy, white males but with the grading system introduced by Seelye, honors was tied in with students’ grades. It was a system similar to what we call “contract grading” today. The socially privileged were graded against each other, not assumed successful via completion. The American gentlemen of that age competed for highest grades, something that other American system of education had not made them do within their own economic and social class. The academic competition for the most elite, among the already elite, was socially awkward intellectual sport. It was only natural that the intra-level tension couldn’t be maintained as its own end. An individual project like a thesis
would preserve the importance of collegiality among the elite by allowing each man to prove himself against a standard instead of each other.

Another early American foray into honors was begun at Yale in 1909 when then President Arthur Twinning proposed an honors plan. The plan, however, was never enacted (Danzig, 1982, p. 5) in part due to increasing prewar tensions and an unrelated, yet significant, endowment that was allocated elsewhere (Hadley, 1909). National and financial interests trumped the inauguration of a special group of the learned. In other words, separating the brightest from the elite was not yet seen as a necessary advantage to society.

That same year, 1909, Columbia College in New York developed a three-year supplemental reading and concluding oral examination for its most exceptional students. Three years later, weekly conferences and student disputations were added to the Columbia curriculum (Buchler, 1954). While neither of these initiatives were formally honors programs, they were designed to challenge the most elite students in the university. They ultimately functioned as precursors to the General honors program Columbia would establish in 1920, under the direction of English professor John Erksine.

Erskine’s General honors curriculum matched great books with history, philosophy, science, and an allied field, thereby introducing multi-disciplinarity into honors curriculum. In addition to the synthesized courses and content, each student enrolled in general honors was individually directed by an honors advisor (Buchler, 1954). The Columbia program as designed by Erksine, in effect, recaptured a synthesized
curriculum from a fractured one for the honors students. More work was not enough to earn honors; to be honors qualified was to recreate synthesis among knowledges. Unfortunately, none of the honors program was dependent upon writing, so the thesis as an honors object did not benefit from any intersubjectivity at this point.

In the 1930s, S. L. Pressly began publishing on the psychology of the superior student. Administrators, looking to institute honors programs, depended on Pressly’s research in order to justify new programs (Austin, 1986). Those involved in honors began to assign cognitive reasons to intellectual superiority as a way to resolve the remaining intra-class tensions which eventually ensured donations from all the alumni came in. Separating the elite from the brilliant was no longer less important than national interest because genuine intellectual superiority became a definable academic reality with the help of Pressley. The smartest and the entitled had an indelible line drawn between them.

The prevalence of honors education in private Eastern colleges likely happened for two reasons. First, throughout the late 19th century and early 20th century, private Eastern colleges were much smaller than public and state colleges and universities, resulting in less difficulty implementing curricular change. Second, private Eastern colleges were generally more selective in their admissions requirements than other institutions (Rinn, 2003). Consequently, the synthesis of several programs, scholarly justifications, and class markers all contributed to the culture in which American honors theses were written.
Aydelotte to 1957 and the beginning of the Inter-University Committee on the Superior Student. Cohen (1966) called Frank Aydelotte, “In every way, the originator of the honors strategy” (p. 12). As one can see from the above, honors certainly existed prior to Aydelotte, but he is almost certainly the originator of its American template. Aydelotte initiated the honors program at Swarthmore in 1922, within the first year after assuming its presidency. It was post World War One and American independence was buoyed and education was seen as an advantage maker.

Aydelotte’s personal history made this a remarkable fit. Aydelotte was an exceptionally cerebral child; by all accounts, he was every bit the gentleman scholar. Smooth in gait, adequate at sports, sociable with the appropriate females and charming, he completed secondary school by the age of 15 and began college at his local state school, Indiana University. By 19, he had completed his Bachelor’s in English at Indiana University. He followed up with his MA at Harvard, where he taught English “A”. In 1904, Aydelotte was offered a position as a Rhodes Scholar. He attended Oxford from 1905 to 1907. The long-term effects of this were that Aydelotte recognized that individual students benefitted from individual curriculum. He felt that the curriculum that favored ideas along with a matched content area was the most advantageous for students. He particularly felt that writing was best taught in combination with content like literature. After returning to Indiana in 1908 as an associate professor, Aydelotte was given a position now referred to as the “writing program administrator”. So energized and
convincing by his experience at Oxford as a Rhodes Scholar with a private tutor, he rejected the English “A” model of Harvard, which was the unequivocal standard, and developed a curriculum for freshman writing that emphasized reading, thinking, and social criticism (Moran, 1992). Aydelotte had all the social credentials of the elite class, but the liberal ideas of American writing within the curriculum.

In 1921, Aydelotte accepted the presidency of Swarthmore College, where, with his mighty charisma, he changed that school from a sleepy Quaker college that emphasized sports and social life to one of the top small liberal arts colleges in the nation. He developed the school’s famous honors program, which initiated in America many of the principles he had experienced at Oxford, and became a model for honors education across the nation. Writing remained of central importance because students worked in small seminars and presented papers on the course topic. These students did not receive grades or take written examinations, but honors were awarded based on end of the year refutations. Honors did not include the thesis of the sort initiated by University of Vermont in 1888, but it did place writing-as-a-mode of learning centrally in the curriculum so that a capstone writing project could eventually be naturalized along with the further democratization of education in post-World War Two America.

The honors program at Swarthmore officially began in 1922. Aydelotte brought writing to the center of the honors curriculum, and, for that, his name is not only associated most with honors broadly, but with the honors thesis too. Aydelotte took the best of Oxford and American honor systems and implemented them in such fullness that
the thesis that comes from within it is genuinely a genre with authentic affordances and constraints.

**Tensions in Honors Writing and the Charge of Elitism**

The genre of the honors thesis is dependent upon what is considered elite at the time. Frank Aydelotte took the Oxford Pass/Honors system as his model, having been a Rhodes Scholar and very impressed with the results of the program. However, that translation was not without its complications. Peter Elbow (1998), in “Illiteracy at Harvard and Oxford” discussed some of the challenges of the Oxford model, in particular, its elitism and difficulty of translation into a strongly egalitarian American education system. Amendments to what was considered elite had to be made, as they were in the history of honors broadly. Cummings (1986) made a distinction between positive and negative elitism, saying,

> If negative elitism is a discrimination that favors the granting of special privileges, positive elitism is the kind that emphasizes honors as an opportunity and challenge available to all those who are both willing and able to pursue excellence in the course of obtaining a college education. (p. 18)

The distinction made between negative and positive elitism is a simplistic duality for the honors thesis. If writing the honors thesis is reserved for those who are already gifted intellectually and then given better educational opportunities, the honors thesis simply compounds the privilege and that exemplifies negative elitism. However, if those who are “able to pursue excellence,” which presumably includes those who are “gifted intellectually” then that allows students who previously had less access to have more access. In that sense, it might be argued that honors programs exemplify positive elitism.
rather than negative. There is a certain *noblesse oblige* that runs concomitantly through
the modern American thesis. In America, we say “where much is given, much is
expected.” Thus, even with the most negative conception of elitism, the honors thesis is
humbled by that *noblesse*. The thesis itself then is an indebted genre, a genre written with
gratitude for all the learning that has been bestowed by modern honors programs. This
relational element helps to minimize the sense of entitlement that has traditionally
accompanied academic elitism.

The Oxford model of Swarthmore, championed by Aydelotte, was an elite model
for juniors and senior exclusively. In his model, the tutorials of the Oxford model were
replaced by optional seminars. There were no mandated courses or hours. Therefore, the
honors were given entirely on the basis of written and oral exams given by outside
examiners (Cummings, 1986). For Aydelotte, honors work was independent study; it
went outside the lockstep route of American equal academics, in which everyone took the
same curriculum. Ungraded, independent study was experimental and Swarthmore
honors curriculum pioneered it in America like no one else. However, Swarthmore was
overwhelmingly Quaker and uniform. Would-be critics could argue that this type of
experimentation would be difficult to try with a large group of heterogeneous students.
And the critics may have been correct.

It is entirely possible that the genre of the honors thesis had to find ancestry in
something homogenous, but once it did develop and the American education system later
diversified its student population, another form of homogeneity was relocated in
disciplinarity to maintain the thesis. So the experimental, independent nature of the honors thesis is native to the contained, uniform space of the honors curriculum, but as long as excellence in Academics is seen as highly disciplinary the thesis as a novice academic genre remains viable.

Honors theses only gained esteem as honors escaped the confines of the already elite. In the late 1950s, there was a rush of GI entrants into state universities. Honors programs, traditionally confined to the junior and senior year, as at Swarthmore, were begun as freshman. “Seminars and colloquia also became regular features of honors education at a time when lectures remained the preferred mode of instruction for most undergraduate courses” (Rudolph, 1962, p. 269). With this rise in the disadvantaged yet intellectually superior student, larger state colleges democratized the curriculum. As that happened, the interdisciplinary synthesis of honors was lost. Honors became primarily a departmental or disciplinary endeavor. The honors programs took a specialization approach that eventually became the dominant research model we are familiar with today. As Benezet (1961) lamented, “Most honors programs represent enrichment of standard courses in major fields. Less is being done in interdisciplinary ventures” (Benezet, 1961, p.45). The honors thesis took its current disciplinary form in this crucible, which emphasized disciplinary knowledge-making and the opportunity to write in ways that might make a difference in the larger social world.

Finally, the genre of the honors thesis is stabilized for now as the notion of the public good and the intellectual who will solve problems in the quotidian realm
overwhelms the esteem of solely academic arête achievement. The orthodoxy of honors is academic critical thinking about scholarly issues. It is internal to the university culture. The traditional thesis then is also internal to the university culture. The idea of an honors student who solves the world’s problems is newer, a peculiarity most ascribe to Joseph W. Cohen. Cohen, the founder of the Inter-University Committee on the Superior Student (ICSS), imagined honors programs making the move “from the library to the living room”; from mattering strictly academically to mattering civically. His vision for honors paralleled the social turn that many disciplines would later take; however, given the embeddedness of the honors thesis in university academic culture, thesis writers do not naturally alight from the scholarly mindset, as we shall later see.

**Being honors.** The previous section reviewed the history of the honors thesis to credential it as a situated, legitimate, academic object of study by illustrating the development of the genre and its novice positioning in academic disciplines as utterly contingent upon how honors is considered. This section reviews what is published about the disciplinary discourses of those honors theses from literature, history, and anthropology, including any existing published discourse analysis of professional and novice work. It also reviews, in each of the disciplinary sections, the available accounts of university discourse instruction in that discipline. The combination of these two elements leads to some contextualization with MacDonald’s third continuum point, with the novice experience between generalized academic writing and expert professional prose. Primarily, the discussion of existing discourses and corresponding analyses help with comprehension of the fourth point, expert professional prose. The published
accounts of university discourse instruction reveals some of the likely experiences students had with the discourse prior to writing the thesis. The aforementioned contextualization helps to establish some possible markers of point three as illustrated by the discourse analyses of the honors theses in the results section. As such, this chapter follows the pattern established by MacDonald; reviewing literature first, then history, then a social science, which, in the case of this study, is anthropology instead of psychology.

Scholarly Literature and Textual Analysis of Professional and Novice Performances

This section reviews the relevant literature in literary studies. After the unifying peaks and valleys of New Criticism and later Postmodernism, a definition of the knowledge-making work of literary studies remains elusive (Eagleton, 2004). The lingering question about the nature of professional work in literary studies has led to rich veins of reflective inquiry (Downing, Harkin, Shumway, & Sosnoski, 1987; Downing & Sosnoski, 1995; Ohmann, 1996; Sosnoski, 1994; Sosnoski, 1995; Spanos, 1993). Yet, the exact nature of the epistemic inquiry element of literary studies is still contested. Rather than rehashing that full debate here, this section reviews the scant research into disciplinarity through textual research in literary studies focusing on what honors students may encounter in their disciplinary learning and what predictions might be generated from studies about the nature of professional literary scholarship. The working, underlying warrant is that textual analysis of the actual writing done within the discipline might help clarify what values are actively employed in the writing of literary scholarship. And, subsequently, may be used to determine what the knowledge-building
practices are. This is the warrant that undergirds both MacDonald’s original study and my replication.

Beaugrande (1993) suggested that literary theory and discourse analysis might work in tandem to further the understanding of the literary object. Bernstein’s (1994) edited collection, *The Text and Beyond* took up such an initiative. However, the piece did not address the effect of bringing these divergent views together to explain what literary studies is and does. The collection brought together scholarship intended as models with little commentary on the state of literature. The collection also illustrated how linguistic analysis of literature might illuminate cultural phenomena beyond the text itself.

Beaugrande (1993) addressed literary theory and scholarship linguistically, at least attempting to blend genre considerations at both the lexico-grammatical and the discourse levels, asserting that the refractory effect on the scholarship would be “notable.” Even so, textual analysis of literary scholarship remains an uncomfortable reflection for literary scholars who often see their work as illuminating a much wider berth of knowledge than a text.

Textual analysis that is devoted to understanding the discourse of literary studies, however, has been attempted (Bazerman, 1988; Fahnestock & Secor, 1988, 1991; MacDonald, 1987, 1989, 1992, 1994; Shaw, 2009; Wilder, 2005). Warren (2006) examined the reading-to-write process of literary scholars to illuminate how they compliment the final products studied by the aforementioned scholars. These analyses of the discourse have yielded several notable insights about what the professional scholarly
literary community values in its published prose, but the representations of the profession are only as complete as the sample in each of these individual studies. I will review what was found by each of these studies to highlight the discourse features for comparison with honors thesis writing and offer some comment as to their limitations as comparable representations of the field. After that, I will review the work of Herrington, 1988; Wolfe, 2003; and Roozen, 2010, which adds to the definition of literary studies by examining what undergraduates learn about writing in literary studies classes. My research adds another facet to the definition of literary studies by examining the field from the honors student theses it produces.

Understanding the field of literature from text analysis is like approximating a person’s character from their skeleton; however, some legitimate insights are possible. In *Shaping Written Knowledge*, Bazerman (1988) reviews the history and development of the experimental article in science. In order to situate the scientific article in the “three traditional divisions of the academy” (Bazerman, 1988, p. 27), Bazerman spends chapter two, “What Written Knowledge Does,” analyzing one article each from across the sciences, social sciences, and humanities. While this spectrum of academic divisions rings familiar for many, Bazerman states that “these examples of knowledge should not be overread as typical of large divisions of knowledge” (Bazerman, 1988, p. 27). Bazerman’s warning seems all the more prescient in light of Shaw (2009), who noted that literary texts “include a great deal of straightforwardly argumentative material, which present grounds and make claims just as natural-scientific writing does” (Shaw, 1988, p. 38).
220) and, thereby, puts scholarly literary writing in a comparable argumentative frame as sciences and social science writing.

Bazerman also is careful to indicate that the literature example is not representative of all the humanities, and he goes one step further to say, “These examples are not claimed to be typical of their disciplines” (p. 24). Part of Bazerman’s hesitation to extrapolate disciplinary features may be that he took one exemplary piece, an iconic piece, as an exemplar of literary analysis. Specifically, Bazerman focused on one critic’s analysis of a Wordsworth poem. The scholarly analysis of the poem is entitled, “Blessing the Torrent: On Wordsworth’s Later Style.” It served as an exemplar for Bazerman because of its prestigious author (Geoffery Hartman), extensive citations, and traditional canonical topic.

Bazerman’s analysis of this text, alongside a similarly prestigious science text, offers some insights into the conventions used in an esteemed piece of professional literary scholarship. As Fahnestock and Secor were to later find, Bazerman indicated that complexity was immensely valued and that there was a transcendent quality expressed toward the poem that “unfixes knowledge about the poem to suggest an experience that goes beyond any claim we can make” (Bazerman, 1988, p. 41). The professional literary scholar, Bazerman argues, refrains from “taming its subject by creating a representation that will count as knowledge” and instead “seeks to reinvigorate the poem by aiding the reader to experience the imaginative life embodied in it” (Bazerman, 1988, p. 41). Bazerman’s claim is extreme. The professional literary scholar is not attempting to make knowledge in the ways traditionally recognized as epistemic. Bazerman suggests that the
professional literary scholar is instead concerned with the “aesthetic moment of the poem” and writes with the express purpose of recreating “an existential bond among poet, critic, and reader” (Bazerman, 1988, p.42). The professional literary critic is concerned, first and foremost, with mediating the reader’s experience of the literature with his or her insights. In other words, the proof, the efficacy of the critic’s contribution comes to challenge only in each individual’s reading; it is an audience concern. Bazerman identified that, therefore, the article itself never reaches traditional epistemic closure where new knowledge is resolved, saying, “The essay only prepares the reader’s sensibility to relive imaginatively the Wordsworthian sensibility (Bazerman, 1988, p. 41).

Of course, the professional literary critic must offer proof that his projected sensibility is synthetic with the wording, structure, and historical context of the poem, but all of this is only sufficient to admonish the reader to try reading the poem or piece with the critic’s proffered insights. Given Bazerman’s intense focus on changing the reading of the piece in question, it is notable that MacDonald’s analysis only turned up a four percent rate of audience as epistemic subject in her study of the professional literature. Bazerman’s analysis might predict a higher number given the inclination to read the actual literature discussed in the article by the audience for the article. Overall, we would expect that an honors thesis in the discipline of literature would have more phenomenal than epistemic sentences.

Another element examined by Bazerman in his literary sample was the role of citation. According to Bazerman (1988), the role of citing in literary analysis is fourfold:
1. The professional scholarly literature is prefatorily dismissed or diminished as a ground clearing technique for the experience of reading with the poem and the critic’s contribution in mind;
2. Contextual documents that offer evidence of factors bearing on the work at the time of its creation are used more extensively to bolster the initial push to reread with the new insights;
3. The wide world of recognized poetry is quoted throughout to offer contrast and analogy; and
4. “The testimony of Wordsworth and his intimates concerning his state of mind and poetic intentions” (Bazerman, 1988, p. 43). Noticeable about the above listed uses of citation is that it focuses on elucidating the breadth of the critic’s interpretation of literature, to justify his or her sensibility. The reader may then uptake it wholly as possible as he or she confronts the literary text. (pp. 42-44)

In this way, a critic’s ethos counts abundantly as a persuasive impetus, and it is difficult to imagine a novice garnering such confidence in his or her perspective. MacDonald found, however, that citation, or the subject category of “references,” accounted for a mere five percent of all the subjects coded in the professional literary corpus. The low percentage of overt reference indicates that the ethos of the author may be accounted for in a way other than by supporting statements with known interpretations. Students are capable of this too, so we would expect honors theses writers to show few references overall. MacDonald’s coding scheme is not sensitive enough to pick up what rhetorical work the references are being put to.

Like MacDonald (1994) and Fahnestock & Secor (1988), Bazerman’s (1988) comparison to science and social science illustrates literature to be primarily epideictic, even if Wilder (2005) did not agree. Epideictic refers to the celebratory nature of a piece of rhetoric and is here contrasted with epistemic, the knowledge-making nature of a piece of rhetoric. MacDonald (1994) suggested that citation in the writing of professional
literature is less abundant because the problems of literature are not very tight, i.e., there is less genuine epistemic need to cite. Shaw (2009) also found that professional, literary critics have “longer, more complex propositions between the [adverbial] markers and make more daring and significant claims” (p. 231). Taken together, we would expect that students would have shorter passages of texts between quotes (i.e., more frequently occurring) and less daring (i.e., more credibly supported) citations than professionals.

Fahnestock & Secor (1988, 1991) are among the most well-known scholars in discourse analysis of literary criticism. However, the style of linguistic analysis was quite different than MacDonald’s analysis. MacDonald assigned categorical meanings to the subject of individual sentences, while Fahnestock and Secor (1988) performed a stasis analysis on articles from the January 1986 issue of PMLA. Stasis, as used in this research, means the point that is at issue. Fahnestock and Secor (1988) defined each stasis point as “a component that has to be justified” Stasis is a conceptual, connotative unit and not derived from a single subject of a noun phrase. The journal *Publications of the Modern Language Association* (PMLA) “both assumes and creates an audience that shares certain values – one that has, for instance, read pretty much the same texts and recognizes what text, authors, and approaches are worth talking about” (Fahnestock and Secor, 1988, p. 435).

Of the articles analyzed, only the first three were chosen for exemplification because they were “assumed to be fairly representative of PMLA essays and contemporary literary criticism” (Fahnestock and Secor, 1988, p. 436). Fahnestock & Secor’s later work (1991) examined 20 articles from 10 different literary journals
published between 1978 and 1982 and “deduced” several qualities about the scholarly discourse of literature. In their combined scholarship, Fahnestock and Secor offered both a central and dispersed analysis of the field of literature from the late 1970s to the early 1980s.

The argument structure Fahnestock and Secor (1991) identified did not coincide with what one might imagine as classical knowledge-building argument because it did not have the “definitions, causal linkages, comparisons which derive from the stases and common topoi of classical rhetoric” (Fahnestock and Secor, 1991, p. 84). Although the articles were found to be persuasive, showing up in professional journal articles, their persuasiveness was not due to the “quantity and typicality” of the evidence (Fahnestock and Secor, 1991, p. 82). In fact, the inability of generalizing from findings was hailed as a marker of the worthiness of the study, rather than eschewed as a problem of method.

Professional literary discourse is not persuasive because its arguments are tightly logical; therefore, the scholarly writing is not characterized by rigorous, formal knowledge building, epistemic logic. For this reason, Fahnestock and Secor characterized the rhetoric of literary criticism as epideictic, meaning it “celebrates a fairly stable set of values and texts” (Warren, 2006, p. 204). Afros & Schryer (2009) also found that pathos appeals were more common in literature than in linguistics articles (p. 67). More about what these values are will be discussed later; it is sufficient, at this point, to suggest that there is a cohesive quality about the argumentative, persuasive approach of the scholarship.
The above does not suggest that literary criticism or scholarly literary writing is not persuasive to those who share its values, but merely that the form of persuasion is not of the rationalist, empirical sort. Rather, as writing in the discipline research has tended to show, its persuasiveness is situated on the peculiarities and specifics of its practitioners. To put it bluntly, the scholarly writing of professional literature has its own logic. Fahnestock and Secor explain that, “Just as political oratory, pulpit homilies, and even advertising copy exploit a limited set of rhetorical possibilities, so also does literary criticism employ a definable repertoire of persuasive tactics to achieve communication in its well-defined environment” (1991, p. 84). One characteristic may be obvious, but worth noting in a study of novice and professional writers, is that scholarly writing in literature appeals to other scholarly literature professionals, not necessarily to a more common audience.

The tactics of persuasion used by literary scholars have “invoked the shared assumptions of the community of literary scholars, and, at the same time create that community” (Fahnestock & Secor, 1991, p. 84). Therefore, understanding those persuasive moves is particularly important for issues of disciplinary enculturation. Borrowing from Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, Fahnestock and Secor deduced five special topoi that “announces ones membership in the literary community” (p. 91), including appearance/reality, ubiquity, paradox, paradigm, and *Contemptus Mundi*. I will review each of them here briefly, as they have played a central role in the development of a body of scholarship devoted to understanding the conventions of professional
scholarship in literature. These topoi are markers of expert discourse and they may or may not be discernable in novice prose.

The appearance/reality topos is a dissociation where the first term is diminished and the other increased in esteem. Dissociation serves to establish poles (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1969). Fahnestock and Secor (1991) suggest that,

this dissociation can stand for all those occasions when the literary article is structured by a dualism, the perception of two entities: one more immediate, the other latent; one on the surface, the other deep; one obvious, the other the object of search. We might even claim that the appearance/reality topos is the fundamental assumption of criticism, since without it there would be no impetus to analyze or interpret literature. (p. 85)

Due to the fundamental nature of this topos and its essential quality to the impetus for the scholarly study of literature, it is easy to imagine that novices will have some grasp of this topos. It should also be locateable in the work of honors thesis writers as either an attribute, because meaning is an attribute of a text, or as an epistemic practice of reasoning.

The next topos discussed by Fahnestock and Secor (1991) is termed “ubiquity”. To employ the ubiquity topos, the literary scholar finds throughout a literary text some feature no one else has previously seen (Lewis & Ferretti, 2011). It is an exciting unearthing of not just one feature, but of a recurring feature of the text, that, in retrospect, seems obvious and intentional. Fahnestock and Secor identify two forms of the ubiquity topos “either the critic finds many examples of the same thing, or he finds one thing in many forms, up and down a scale of grandeur and abstraction” (1991, p. 87). Employing the ubiquity topos in either form in an argument is dependent upon both close reading
and creative invention. Honors undergraduate students may well have developed these skills throughout their education, but to what extent they can see crossovers of patterns remains to be seen. A ubiquity topos might be coded as in the class of phenomenal groups or in the class of epistemic reasons, depending on the sentence construction.

The third topos evident in professional literary criticism is, additionally, a rhetorical figure, the paradox, and is made evident in the language. The paradox topos, according to Fahnestock and Secor (1991), is the “unification of apparently irreconcilable opposites in a single startling dualism (p. 87). The paradox is attractive and persuasive because it unifies surprising literary elements, seemingly unrelated, and, in doing so, reveals a kind of artfulness on the part of the critic (p. 88). Pointing out a paradox takes a certain linguistic finesse that may or may not be discernable in honors thesis prose. To make a paradox discernable the writer needs to have enough description and definition of the paradoxes to illustrate the relationship among the seemingly unlike ideas. That requires a high level of abstraction in meaning that could find may forms of expression as sentence subjects in the class of particulars, attributes, and reasons.

The fourth topos, paradigm, is “an arrangement of verbal concepts in opposition or congruence; it is, in other words, a kind of template fitted over the details of a literary text to endow them with order” (Fahnestock and Secor, 1991, p. 89). Importantly, paradigms are structures of abstract though that can be used to shape literary argument, so the paradigm plays double duty. Again, depending on the clarity of the sentence, a paradox topoi might overlap with the “isms” class. For novices, identifying the paradigm within a literary structure may not be, alone, enough to qualify as sufficient literary
critique. Professional writers of scholarly literary prose often use the paradigm to connect out to the larger world. In this connection, is the most questionable topos that Fahnestock and Secor identified and named *Contemptus Mundi* the fifth topos.

*Contemptus mundi,* according to Fahnestock and Secor (1991), “is an assumption of despair over the condition and course of modern society that is shared among critics (p. 88). But the topos is also at work when the critics reveal “unresolvable tensions and shadows in literature that at face value seems optimistic” (Fahnestock and Secor, 1991, p. 88). This topos has been connected with the perceived irrelevance of literature to the world of lived experience (Wilder, 2002). Wilder suggested that with the advancement of literary theory, this topos would be less significant. A contemptus Mundi topos could find expression in an in an epistemic class of “audience” because it is so explicitly an attempt to gain entry to the readers worldviews.

The topoi discussed above represent a learnable currency for novice literary critics. However, other elements of persuasion were also identified by Fahnestock and Secor, particularly the Aristotelian concept of logos. Fahnestock and Secor identified logos in two elements: “1) subject matter knowledge, primarily familiarity with the original work and the work of other critics on the same piece, and 2) the artistry of their language, demonstrating virtuosity with the very medium they analyze” (1991, p. 91). This means that, in addition to familiarizing themselves with the text, novices will be asked to learn to elevate their ways of writing about the text. Fahnestock and Secor have noted that this is not unlike religious enculturation by writing, “Literary criticism also
keeps alive a traditional set of texts by subjecting them to continual exegesis, and literary scholars constitute a body of believers who welcome new members into their sect” (1991, p. 94). The similarity with biblical scholarship may help those students who are familiar with that cultural item.

What Fahnestock and Secor ultimately concluded is that literary criticism depends on the assumption of complexity. Any topoi that shows the complexity of the piece of literature and assumes its intricacy will be highly valued. This high valuation of what Warren referred to as “irreducible complexity” (2006, p. 204) in literary scholarship precludes the dissection, compaction, and model building necessary for knowledge to accrete in traditional recognized epistemic ways. Most importantly, topoi “do the work of epideictic discourse: they create and reinforce communities of scholars sharing the same values” (p. 94). For all these reasons, Fahnestock and Secor identified the rhetoric of literary criticisms as primarily epideictic, but fundamentally epistemic. Consequently, if honors theses were to mimic the prose of professional literary critics, they would reveal a low level of epistemic subject sentences and a high degree of singular subjects because complexity begins with simple, singularities of the sort that are prevalent in literature studies.

The above topoi represent moves that experts make that may or may not be discernable in the writing of honors theses. The topoi are important markers of expertise for novice literary scholars to emulate, however, it seems unlikely that a lexico-grammatic analysis of the MacDonald sort is situated at the right stasis level to detect
such things. For this reason, a secondary coding for the topoi might reveal correlations between sentence subjects and topoi.

Fahnestock and Secor (1991) worked from the assumption of a discourse community, the idea that literature was more than a celebration of taste. But Wilder (2002) and Pullman (1994) expanded the idea of the professional community using discourse analysis. Pullman suggested that ethics allow mutual meaning making among literary professionals to make collective judgments of a text. Wilder suggested that concern with social justice brought the field together with a unified goal in mind. Wilder (2002) used multiple methods, including case study, survey, and ethnographic observation to examine an introductory literature survey course for the topoi identified by Fahnestock and Secor (1988, 1991). She found that the topoi appear in the teacher’s instructions and the resulting student discourse. Although Wilder did not find a direct correlation between topoi use and grades, questionnaires “reveled that students adept at recognizing literary values and discourse conventions were more successful” (p. 175). Wilder (2005), attempting to update Fahnestock and Secor, sampled 28 diverse journal articles from within differing literary journals and found that, while the majority of articles remained epideictic, there was also a shift away from a “a preference for isolated meditation on textual particulars.” (p. 84). Instead, Wilder found that professional literary scholars use the mistaken critic topos more than half of the time as a way to situate their work (Wilder, 2005). In the mistaken critic topos, authors carve out a space for their new view by espousing that previous scholars were “mistaken” or “insufficient” (i.e., “not complex enough”) and offer their view as a scholarly remediation. The mistaken critic
topos then simulates a more field-based knowledge-building pattern such as those found in the sciences, except that older knowledge is always discarded (Wolfe, 2003, p. 404). Afros & Schryer (2009) also seem to confirm the use of the mistaken critic topos. They investigated meta-promotional discourse in both language and literature journals from 2001-2006 by examination and comparison of lexico-grammatical and discourse devices. They identified two lexico-grammatical rhetorical strategies linguistic and literature professionals use “to publicize their work: (1) positive evaluation of their own study and of those investigations in which the current study is grounded; and (2) negative evaluation of dissenting views” (Afros & Schryer, 2009, p. 58). In these two humanities, the promotional discourse worked to raise and separate the esteem of the author from those he or she was conversing with. I suggest that although the mistaken critic topos does create some coherent, linear sense of knowledge development in a field, it also creates a field with a very short memory, continually discarding what it knew, thereby making it essentially stand-alone scholarship once again. The “social turn” as exemplified by the mistaken critic topos is popular, but it depends ultimately upon knowing what to reject. That knowledge is the reserve of experts, not of undergraduate thesis writers. I still predict highly individual phenomenologies as the normative tendency in honors theses, even if they attempt to use this topos.

Despite this, Wilder (2005) argued that “criticism is now portrayed as a conversation in which knowledge about literary texts and their historical contexts is socially negotiated and accumulative” (p. 76) and with a greater emphasis on literature as
a springboard towards social justice. Thus, Wilder ultimately suggested the addition of the “social justice topos” (p. 77). This is a notable difference from Fahnestock and Secor, as well as Bazerman, because both posited that the study of literature is not concerned with jurisdictional questions beyond the world within the text. Although there are implications for teaching, or the canon, or real-world applications, all of those policy implications were left unwritten and unconcerned about by the studied authors.

Therefore, Wilder presented a twist in that we might expect to find more of the social justice topos or more references to attributes of things (MacDonald’s third phenomenal category) that may be analogized to the context beyond the piece of literature. Wilder (2005), after asking, tongue in cheek, why we never see scholarly articles praising the simplicity of a literary text, explained that the high valuation of complexity makes literary criticism a more parallel perspective to the complexity found in the social world. Wolfe (2003) asserts that for scholars by “defining a work as complex, a critic indirectly asserts that it is a valuable site of study” (p. 404) and that this is true across interpretive camps. A direct study of another level of undergraduate writing for the topos of social justice might yield some idea of whether or not students have picked up this trend. For this study, MacDonald’s method of analysis is not fine enough to accomplish that task, although like the contemptuous mundi topos it might be related to the Audience code. However, a secondary coding might reveal more about the nature of the persuasive tactics used by honors thesis writers.
Warren (2006) wanted to find out if literature professionals actually thought in terms of the topos identified in the work of Fahnestock and Secor, as well as Wilder. Warren (2006) analyzed the reading of nine different English scholars using a think-aloud protocol as they read four lyric poems and attempted to propose a hypothetical conference talk about the poems. The protocols were coded into three consecutive sections: reading, interpreting, and arguing. The common topoi identified by Fahnestock and Secor, as well as Wilder’s addition of “social justice” were coded to see if the topoi were used in the production of the scholarly work the way they appeared to be in the finished prose. Aligning the analysis of the production with the analysis of the finished prose through the use of the existing topoi allowed Warren (2006) to draw connections between the thinking and the product and make some educated guesses about how the knowledge-building aspects and the celebration of community values came together in the prose of literary criticism.

Warren found that the existent special topoi accounted for only 30% of the interpretation and argument statements (p. 210). The appearance-reality topos appeared more frequently than all the other topoi, accounting for 52% of the sample. However, it appeared “more frequently in interpretation segments (58%) than argument (36%), which suggested that it was used most often during the early stages of reading” (p. 211) and “was a fundamental, exploratory reading strategy that often led nowhere” (Warren, 2006, p. 213). In other words, although all of the scholars employed this topos in their initial investigation, if the language from the text could not bear the interpretive weight, it was dismissed. This suggests that the professional literary scholars were attempting to find,
rather than purely construct, an interpretation of the text. It also suggests that the scholars were doing more than celebrating literary values but were also making sure those values found some ground in the text. Wilder (2005) seemed to indicate there was some degree of knowledge-making work going on that was functioning like an override of the community values. Ultimately, the text bore the burden of carrying the celebration. So, there is something between the text production and the published submission process that adds these topoi with greater frequency. Warren referred to these as “audience appeals” (Warren, 2006, p. 202). However, they did not match MacDonald’s “audience” category because they were not lexico-grammatical.

Interestingly, Warren identified several groupings of comments that did not quite fit into the topoi: “Remarks on aesthetic features and effects; intertextual and intratextual references; nonliterary associations, connotations, and impressions; distinctions drawn between and specifications of words and phrases; and general expanding and unpacking of tight, rich poems” (p. 224) that seemed to dovetail with MacDonald’s more knowledge-building continuum. The overlap is implicit. “Aesthetic features and effects” might well match with MacDonald’s category of “Attributes”; inter and intratextual references certainly matches up with the category of references; and the rest are matched with her category of “reasons.” It is notable that these were not accounted for in the topoi, which seemed to ignore the knowledge-making component of literary studies. Again, in honors thesis writers, we might expect to see a hypercorrect sort of argumentation where there is slightly more traditional knowledge-making, but it should not be enough to numerically overshadow the traditional focus on the phenomenal.
Finally, MacDonald’s work with the discipline of literature indicates that the scholarly writing is not problem driven, nor tightly defined around a particular problem space. Instead, MacDonald finds the scholarship to be heavily phenomenological with an emphasis on the attributes and singularities. Shaw (2009) further confirms MacDonald’s assertion that literary scholarship is epistemic because it offers numerous reasons and arguments, although those reasons rarely have such profound reference to citation.

According to MacDonald, the recourse to the scholarly community for problem definition is negligible; rather, the singular interpretation yields the publishable insights. Given the above, what textual analysis has revealed about literary writing is tentative, but it does seems to be an argument in the sense of making epistemic claims, and knowledge building in a, slow, topical, epidictic, yet purposeful way, and logically began from the textual point of the researcher’s preference. Although professionals do see these patterns in the professional discourse, it may be hard for students to discern them because “literary interpretation is often subtle, contingent, and multifaceted” (Wolfe, 2003, p. 401). According to MacDonald (1987), problem definition in literature is far less regularized than in history or the social sciences. Thus, students are not apt to identify the consistencies present across professional literary discourse.

Another aspect of discourse analysis, one not overtly tracked by MacDonald’s coding but related, is the coding of types of verbs used in epistemic prose. Hiltunen (2006) studied what Meyer (1997) termed “the use of coming-to-know verbs.” These are “lexical verbs which are used to indicate epistemic achievements in academic texts” (p. 246) in three disciplines, including law, medicine, and literary criticism. Hiltunen found
that literary scholars “present an interpretation as the result of a joint enterprise involving both the scholar and the reader” (p. 246). In other words, literary scholars are much more likely to represent knowledge as not coming from the textual artifact itself, but as made collaboratively between the reader of the textual artifact and the reader of the scholarly piece; knowledge is recognized as being made disciplinarily. Literary scholars use the grammatical subject “we” referring to both the reader and the writer and verbs such as “see, find, encounter, and learn” (Hiltunen, 2006, p. 249). Students are already conditioned to share the responsibility for the scholarly insights with insightful peers and teachers, so this shared knowledge-making may come easily to their prose, even if it is not a direct result of disciplinarity, but a condition of the academic milieu. The method chosen in this study does not specifically examine verbs; rather, it examines subjects.

The “we” Hiltunen referred to would be coded in MacDonald’s scheme as a plural subject, so we might expect to see many plural subjects. Unfortunately, this is not what MacDonald’s literary experts were found to use. Instead, MacDonald’s experts privileged the singular, the unique, the idiosyncratic in their subjects overall. However, Hiltunen (2006) only examined the grammatical subject nouns as they related to epistemic verbs. MacDonald’s subjects were divided between phenomenal and epistemic, so this apparent discontinuity is merely ostensible and not a true research-based contradiction.

The College Literature Classroom

Chick, Hassel, & Haynie (2009) suggest that literature scholars “have a responsibility to teach in ways that cultivate and clarify the values and practices of our discipline, as well as how they connect to its larger goals” (p.404). This is with the goal
to get students to at least appreciate, if not adopt, the disciplinary discourses of literature. Yet, even this responsibility is not agreed upon. Wilder & Wolfe (2009) noted that instructors who taught a writing-in-literature curriculum, which made the literary topoi explicit, felt that the curriculum encouraged early professionalization, offered an insufficient challenge to enter the discipline, negated the fun from reading, and stilted creativity. Wilder (2002) offered another, anti-disciplinary reason for this resistance with the following excerpt:

Yet, the professor indicated he disliked the idea that these tools are specific to the discipline. He, like many of the instructors of courses required of non-majors, took care to make his course relevant to the mostly non-English majors enrolled in it. Because of this care he said that ‘it would be important to me that these special topoi not be distinctive. It would be bad for me if these things were, say, highly distinctive literary critical arguments but that you do not really find this argument outside of literary criticism (p. 210).

In other words, he would not teach the special topoi in an introductory class if they were too explicitly from literary studies because he intended to prevent such specialization. Other institutional complaints and the pressing weight of homeostasis, or the pressure to leave things as they have traditionally been because other curricular elements and prestige were threatened, were also suggested as reason for literary teachers’ disinclination to teach literary writing as a series of topoi and conventions.

There is no agreement that explicit teaching of literary conventions was owed to students, even though Wilder (2005) clearly found it advantageous to learning within the literary classroom. Herrington (1988) revealed that students learned to read and write “like an English major” through implicit instruction; overtness was not a literary value. A number of other studies note that weaving discourse together is an important strategy on
the low end of scaffolding for advanced disciplinary literary activities (Bizzell, 1999; Campbell, 1997; Kamberelis, 2001; McCrary, 2005). Taken together, it seems that overt instruction in literary discourse does have a mix of advocates and opponents, with more advocates from outside of the discipline than from within. Without overt instruction in literary discourse, honors thesis writers will have to depend on other techniques of discourse acquisition such as immersion or replication to familiarize themselves with the discourse. Professional literary scholars are skilled at close reading that can support complex, ambiguous, nuanced, discerning, theorized interpretations of texts. Novice literary students, however, are characterized as being “textually narcissistic.” The complexity of the text is lost as “students conflate what they are reading with their own lives and fail to appreciate the text, the author, the characters, and indeed everything outside of the students themselves” (Chick, Hassel, & Haynie, 2009, p. 405). They are inclined to read flatly and accept visceral interpretations without methodologically examining textual detail, which has been observed as the cornerstone of close reading (Warren, 2006). The narcissistic read is also one in which the reading is inherently pleasurable for its own sake. Literary students need to learn to appropriately mask their pleasure in reading with the veneer of analysis. They must point to the complexity of enjoying such a text, rather than the enjoyment itself. In professional literary scholarship, as Fahnestock and Secor (1991) point out, the pleasure is derived not from the text itself, but from the illumination provided by textual analysis, “While professional critics rarely regard pleasure as the sole purpose of literature, textual analysis generally enhances the reader’s ability to appreciate and thus enjoy a text” (p. 84). The eureka of insight is where
delight is found, but not in the popular, pleasurable consumptive reading of the lay reader, where one is necessarily immersed. A professional critic’s delight is not visceral pleasure but the satisfaction of discovering previously imperceptible insight. In fact, a common rhetorical move in professional discourse is to associate one’s failure to enjoy a work with an inability to give it more than a superficial reading (Wilder, 2002). “By teaching students how to discover complexity in texts, we can help them discover multiple ways of enjoying and engaging with them” (Wilder, 2002, p. 406). It is up to students to then learn to recodify those visceral pleasures as analysis and, in doing so, move away from textual narcissism to a more mature close reading that delights in the patterns. If students can manage that, it is more likely they will write disciplinarily.

However, it is unlikely that MacDonald’s scheme would catch the distinction, because those differences are values, which are not accounted for in any of the subject classes. MacDonald’s coding scheme merely accounts for if the phenomena is singular, more than one, or an attribute. Writing about one’s own visceral pleasure is as singular a phenomenon as writing about a singular, special book or an individual author. The phenomenal singular class is merely a summation of the number of individual subjects MacDonald’s coding allows the researcher to identify, but it doesn’t evaluate the reason beyond its existence.

The other class in MacDonald’s scheme that might account for it if it were more than a summation would be the epistemic class of “reasons.” Both pleasure and analysis as sentence subject could be coded as “reasons” in the coding scheme, but no differences
in definition are accounted for. A more nuanced linguistic analysis is needed to explore
two and analysis as motives for novices’ close reading skills.

A special issue of Poetics on expert and novice readers, edited by Kees van Rees,
Steen Larsen, and Reinhold Viehoff, included an original study of expert and novice
readers that furthers the insights into differences between these readers. The study,
performed by Dorfman (1996) in the UK, evaluated scholarly and advanced
undergraduates in literature on their understanding, enjoyment, and appreciation of a
variety of canonical and noncanonical texts. Dorfman discovered that the literary novices
found the noncanonical science fiction “to be more interesting, more enjoyable, better
written, and easier to understand” (p. 465). This dovetails nicely with Chick, Hassel, and
Haynie’s (2009) textual narcissism discussed above because literature that requires in
depth analysis is less egocentrically enjoyed. Her research also showed that novices were
more willing to derive a message or point for this kind of writing when asked to do so. In
accord with Wilder (2002), experts were less willing to offer it such credence,
presumably because it could not be analyzed critically enough to warrant such an
inference. Not surprisingly, then, expert readers were more likely to uphold disciplinary
motives. Also not surprisingly, Dorfman noted that “experts found the literary texts to be
more interesting and more enjoyable. Experts also showed more interest in stories they
did not particularly like, and were more willing to interpret stories they did not readily
understand” (p. 465). Finally, in comparison to novices, experts' literary and critical
judgments were more closely aligned with conventions established by the literary
community (Dorfman, p. 465). In general, Dorfman’s research indicated that novice,
undergraduate readers have not reached the same level of disciplinary saturation that the experts have, and derive much more meaning from their personal motives as readers. This seems to correlate with what else is known about novice and expert writing, as well as the Warren (2006) think-aloud. However, the connection between reading and scholarly disciplinary writing is fraught with contingencies such as retention, contextualization, existing knowledge, method of association, mode of transcription, reading and writing materials, and even psychological health that have yet to be fully articulated. What we can take away is that honors thesis students are not likely to be as acculturated readers as experts; this likely translates to not being disciplinary writers.

As discussed above, professionals read literature with a particularly open and rich set of available heuristics, even if it is guided by paradigms in the field. Professional literary scholars understand that a text can be interpreted in many ways; although they may find one interpretive strategy easy to default to, they are aware that a text exists via multiple lenses and can demonstrate this skill if called upon. The professionals who do see these patterns in the discourse may forget that it is hard for students to discern them because, as mentioned, “literary interpretation is often subtle, contingent, and multifaceted” (Wolfe, 2003, p. 401). Chick, Hassel, and Haynie (2009) noted that students’ “inclination to read with a singular lens is a common novice approach to literature” (p. 406). Literature students tend to read with a small scope for interpretation.

However, Chick, Hassel, and Haynie have found that wider interpretative skills may be taught (p. 408) if two conditions are met: 1) there is collaboration for the lesson’s
in-class component, in which students hear their classmates’ interpretations (Chick, Hassel, and Haynie, 2009); and 2) the students are asked “to identify patterns and elements in the text that match patterns brought in by other students” (p. 409). Honors classrooms tend to be highly interactive, so there is some likelihood that these conditions would be met by honors thesis writers. Chick, Hassel, and Haynie (2009) also identified that high-interpersonal tension and disparate interpretations within group work led to more mature and varied interpretations.

Honors students, while having independent thoughts, are often quick to accept and filter those answers subtly deemed correct. Literature students developed complex interpretations in interaction with their classmates’ interpretations and based on heuristic identifications of patterns within the actual text. This suggests that undergraduates are capable of learning what they need to approximate the discourse of professional literary scholars. That said, it is not known if the undergraduate honors students in this study had the opportunity for classroom interactions that develop complex interpretations, or if they availed themselves of it in the event of its presence.

An example of one discrepant value brought to reading is the valuation of complexity. Wilder (2002) found disparities between student and instructor perceptions of the value of complexity in literary analysis. Even though the professor in his study invoked the value of complexity in more than 60% of his lectures, the students rarely mentioned this term in their comments in lectures or discussion sections, and when they did, it was often to complain or to declare that a work the instructor had shown to be
complex was actually simple. Wilder attributes the disjunction between student and instructor perceptions partly to the fact that complexity, although frequently mentioned in lectures, was seldom named as a value or goal in student writing (Wolfe, 413). In the most menial sense, if it was not on the rubric, it did not seem to matter to the students. One hopes that honors students are past this phase, and research does indicate that honors students may be less incentivized by grades than their mainstream peers. If the discipline continues to accommodate this blind spot in students, there may be no indication that students are missing something otherwise evident to a more attuned observer.

Schilb observed that one tension between the disciplines of literature and composition is the tendency of composition studies to privilege (sometimes excessively) procedural knowledge, while the average literature course “spends little class time on identifying and fostering techniques of persuasion employed in the most compelling professional literary scholarship” (as cited in Wolfe, 2003, p. 401). So, while it is conceivable that literature students might be able to learn these things from listening closely to the professor in the class, it is not necessarily always taught overtly. In fact, literature courses spend little class time on teaching students to persuade like professional literary scholars. The focus of literary courses is on the discussion of the text and its possible interpretations. Literary courses differ from writing classes, according to Blau (2003), in that literary courses tend to deemphasize the process of writing in favor of reading. Wolfe (2003) suggested that “the problem of teaching literary analysis can be seen as one of teaching the methods of invention employed by the discipline” (Wolfe, 2003, p. 401). Students who focus predominately on interpretation and invention may not
be given adequate instruction in the written disciplinary conventions. That is to say, those ideas that guide discussion are generative, but not for generating print-linguistic academic texts (Warren, 2006). Wolfe (2003) complements Chick, Hassell, and Haynie’s work, confirming students may be able to learn the discourse of professional literary scholars by using the states and special topoi of literature developed by Fahnestock and Secor (Wolfe, 2003). Focusing on the special topoi does seem to be a successful method by which to convey the professional discourse, even if it is not uniformly desirable or done.

So far, I’ve briefly reviewed the research into literary classroom experiences. The next important study observed the literacy development of a single author during her college career both inside and outside the classroom (Roozen, 2010). The subject of Roozen’s study, Lindsey, would copy extensive passages out of inspirational texts, biblical and otherwise, outside of the classroom for later interpretation. Roozen concluded that “her extensive copying of passages from source texts, for example, reflects a sense that privileged literary texts are complicated and thus understanding them involves careful unraveling, translating, decoding, interpreting, and analyzing, which Fahnestock and Secor (1988; see also Warren, 2006; Wilder, 2005, 2002) identify as the fundamental assumption underlying literary criticism” (Roozen, 2010, p. 334). He claimed that Lindsey was “enhanced and enriched as a literary scholar by these practices and processes used in the production of texts” (Roozen, 2010, p. 346). In other words, the act of assuming textual complexity, valuing the text as an object to be considered and handling it as an object in need of specific, careful study, develops the skill of literary scholarship (Roozen, 2010). Chick, Hassell, and Haynie do point out that when these
consistencies are noted for the student, he or she may be more likely to adapt their discourse to the standards of the profession.

Roozen’s results are difficult to extrapolate to issues of disciplinarity because biblical exegesis is both native to and distant from literary studies. While biblical exegesis played a foundational role in the development of early literary studies, the field itself has developed enormously since then. Rather than quibble about the relevancy of biblical exegesis to today’s incarnation of literary studies, Roozen (2010) took another approach to understanding Lindsey’s efforts. “Lindsey’s writing process,” Roozen wrote, “as a literary scholar is enriched and enhanced not by the visual images she creates or the Bible verses she copies, but rather by the practices and processes used in the production of those texts” (p. 346). In other words, Roozen suggests that the practice with a writing process is what developed Lindsey’s skills as a literature student. This sidestepped the exact role of disciplinarity in Lindsey’s writing.

If the work of Lindsay is considered disciplinary, it might suggest that disciplinary learning in literature is exclusively useful in literature. However, if the behavior is considered extradisciplinary, more than just performed outside of the curriculum, but actually outside the realm of the discipline, then that may be an argument for transfer. Roozen (2010) seemed to posit that the extracurricular work of his subject was disciplinary, although complicated in how it both fed into disciplinary activity and was simultaneously the result of disciplining. Extrapolating from one student’s sample is, of course, complicated, but at least Roozen’s example suggests that student writing done
outside of the literature classroom might add to their disciplinary prowess. Honors students are more likely to participate in literate activities outside of the classroom (Geiger, 2002, p. 100), so, to the extent that can be correlated, it is encouraging for honors thesis writers as disciplinary authors.

Where Roozen’s (2010) work took my review outside the college classroom, Marshall’s (1987) study takes it back inside the classroom, but, this time, in high school. In Marshall’s six-classroom case study of high school literature, he found that literary discussion followed the IRE (initiation, response, evaluation) pattern, such that students were not often asked to develop their own individual interpretation but to “flesh out the interpretation that is embodied in her [the teacher’s] questions” (p. 37). Through oral discussion, students did not play a large part in constructing an interpretation of the text. Senior high school students are taught to go after their instructor’s interpretation. That means honors thesis writers in literature would have had only four years to overcome this training and develop their own interpretation in an honors thesis.

In both higher and lower achieving high school literary students, Marshall (1987) found that their essay “responses to literature were both supported and constrained by the discourse conventions of the classroom” even to the point that it “enabled Brian [the very successful student] to produce an analytical essay without engaging very deeply in the process of analysis (p. 39). He concluded that, without intervention, “Evidently, students were taking the line of least resistance in completing the assignment…. They were trying to ‘report’ on what they already knew, rather than break new ground or share their own
observations” (p. 40). Another of Marshall’s observations, from three different writing
tasks, supports the notion that students of literature, even in later high school, understand
what is being asked of them and vary their written approach to match teacher
expectations. For instance, in shorter, analytic writing tasks, “students created greater
analytic density than in extended writing tasks.” They also included “proportionally
fewer interpretive statements” (p. 52). When Marshall’s students’ wrote reflectively
about themselves, analyzing their own learning, they took another approach to the
material. Thus, students really do pursue different strategies for different writing tasks,
and they vary their style choices in accord with the task presented.

This ability to vary their style lends credence to the idea that students can control
their discourse and be able to appropriate a discourse as need be. Most importantly,
however, in their formal analytic writing “they wrote at length, but employed a limited
range of options, seldom breaking away from the organization and approach in which
they had been schooled” (Marshall, p. 53). In general, what relevance can be taken away
from the Marshall’s study is that the students’ understood analytic writing to require
stronger organization and greater length, both skills at play even in the honors thesis.
However, honors college students bring from high school a limited range of rhetorical
skills, so disciplinarity must still be taught if it is going to appear in a thesis. High school
students’ and thesis-writing honors students traditionally represent a four-year gap in
time; nonetheless, there is no reason to assume their existing rhetorical skill is lost and it
is hoped that time in a literary classroom might deepen this nascent genre awareness into
disciplinary writing.
Shaw (2009) found that adopting a position to an assignment or prompt in literature classes, as students are apt to do, required a different profile of linking adverbials, adverbs that link independent grammatical units, than scholars who carve out research space. Carving out a research space is a matter of citing prior work on the topic. Citation is one of the markers of disciplinarity. In Shaw’s research, we would expect undergraduates, who are skilled at responding to prompts, to have fewer citations and, therefore, less disciplinary information. However, professionals do not cite much either, so the difference is minute and not yet causally distinguishable. Shaw also argued that students have a greater number of linkers in their essay because their reasoning is abbreviated and linking adverbials substitute for elaborated reasoning. If that is true, and MacDonald’s category of “reasons” sufficiently captures this phenomenon, then we would expect to find fewer “reasons” in the honors thesis writing of undergraduates.

**History and Writing**

Several well-known guides concur that to do history is to write history (Benjamin, 2004; Marius, 1999; Gustavson, 1955). Writing is essential to history classes and the doing of professional academic history (Young & Leinhardt, 1998; Hexter, 1971; Perfetti,
Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) surveys indicate that a high volume of writing happens in history classes, especially at the more advanced levels. Berkin and Anderson (2011) say it pointedly, “The study of history sharpens your reading and your writing skills” (p. 2). Writing is important to all levels of expertise in the practices of teaching, learning, and doing history. However, what that writing is, and what it actually entails, is disputed.

In order to discuss the discourses of history, this section will briefly characterize the related field of historiography before turning to a discussion about the research into the disciplinary discourses of history. Since this inquiry is a comparison between experts and undergraduates, the following sections take up problems that students encounter as they learn historical discourse and some of the solutions scholars have identified to help resolve those confusions.

**Historiography.** The history of written history has its own recognized specialty, historiography. Historiography is “the study of changes in methods, interpretations, and conclusions of historians over time” (Benjamin, 2004, p. 7). Benjamin gives the example of how, after WWII, many historians painted Germany as the sole initiator of the war, but, in later decades, a more fully elaborated understanding established multiple causes of WWII. Hexter (1967) adds that “historiography is a rule-bound discipline by means of which historians seek to communicate their knowledge of the past” (p. 11). Historiography used to be seen as a metadiscipline of history, rather than the doing of history itself. It often saw fruit in the form of popular novels such as *Lies My Teacher*
Told Me: Everything Your American History Textbook Got Wrong (Loewen, 2008). The aim of this book and similar historiographically researched books is to show how conventional history often misreads or misrepresents historical evidence.

In historiography, one often sees critiques of epochs in which a certain interpretation of a historical event or structure is found to be specious, rather than informed by evidence. Historiography is, in some ways, a postpublication peer review of history in order to confirm that knowledge is being built with as broad a lens as possible. As an instructive analogy, think of the end of the movie Clue, in which several possible explanations fit the available evidence, so that many interpretations of the murderous events are offered before one is deemed “what really happened.” The Akira Kurosawa movie “Rashomon” might be another example. Historiography offers a similar plurality without being fully “corrective.” The question of what is the more accurate interpretation leads necessarily to some discussion on the relationship between writing and doing history.

Hexter (1967) advocates for greater attention to the writing and rhetoric of history by claiming that the relationship of writing to history is also part of historiography.

The relation of writing history, of its rhetoric, to history itself is quite other than it has traditionally been conceived. That rhetoric is ordinarily deemed icing on the cake of history; but our recent investigation indicates that it is mixed right into the batter. It affects not merely the outward appearance of history, its delight and seemliness, but its inward character, its essential function; of its capacity to convey knowledge of the past as it actually was. And if this is indeed the case, historians need to subject historiography, the way they write history, to an investigation far broader and far more intense than any that they have hitherto conducted. (p. 11)
Hexter’s opinion does not represent the majority, and historiography has traditionally taken its task as the topical assessment of past historical representation, without evaluating the prose. Hexter’s suggestion that historiography be investigated in terms of rhetoric has largely been met with silence in his own field; however, this relationship between history and writing is beginning to be pursued in WAC studies of History in terms of the rhetoric of history or the discourses of history (Beaufort, 2004; Russell & Yañez, 2003; Stockton, 1995; Wrigglesworth, 2010) or even the conventions of writing history (Thaiss & Zawacki, 2006). These studies will be discussed below. For now, I will distinguish between historiography, with its topical focus on representations of the past and discourse studies of academic history that examine conventional ways of speaking, writing, and acting with words and visuals according to socially defined networks of academic history activity.

Novice historians are uncomfortable with historiography because it seems to undermine the certainty that students assume of experts. Historiography requires an expert level of historical knowledge, in addition to the ability to create meta-commentary. For these reasons, substantial historiography is unlikely to appear in honors theses.

**Historical discourse community.** Beaufort (2004) explains the complexity of the historical discourse community as “multi-faceted and loosely connected around a set of underlying values and methodologies for asserting historical truths” (p. 142). The norms of what is or is not an acceptable text in history vary widely not only among subdisciplines but also within subdisciplines across time. Wrigglesworth & McKeever
suggest “historical texts are written in a wide range of styles. There is considerable variation, not only in the types of writing valued in different historical schools, but also in the types of writing valued by individual historians” (p. 112-113). Complementary to this assertion of a cornucopia of discursive methods is another cornucopia of explanations regarding the tensions that drive active scholarship. The discrepancies are both, to use MacDonald’s terms, phenomenal and epistemic. There is some agreement about what history covers, although not complete, and almost no agreement about its knowledge-making boundaries.

MacDonald (1994) viewed historical discourse as trying to find a balance between the what of the past and the why of potential for repetition. She characterized writing within renaissance new historicism thusly, “if the functions of academic contributions instead is to display the academic writer’s virtuosity and, in the process, celebrate the difficulty of interpretation, then the inductive movement, the profusion of anecdotes, and the general point last tendencies make sense” (p.142). MacDonald’s research further found that professional historians’ texts were less epistemic, instead often putting new information in the subject slot, thereby declaring new knowledge as past fact. But there are other ways to characterize the discourse of professional academic historians. For example, Stockton (1995) saw historical discourse as centering on the need to obscure one’s own position in history by subjecting time to interpretation. Beaufort (2004) suggested that work in history may be thought of in “specific critical thinking tasks: reconstruction, event interpretation, and generalization” (p.149). As one might imagine,
such an array of purposes, methods, and motivations leads to complications in identifying what is and is not conventional historical discourse.

In order to begin such a task, something needs to be said about “why historians write and the systems of genres that writing circulates within” (Russell & Yañez, 2006, p. 21). Marius (1999) argued that “Writing allows us [historians] to arrange events and our thoughts, study our work, weed out contradictions, get names and places right, and question interpretations—our own and those of other historians” (p. 5). In this quote, we see a very common theme in the discourse community of historians; that of rigorous research and evidence gathering to obtain the facts so that whatever history is told seems plausible. History writers, in this way, are often focused at arriving at consensus about facts through open argumentation.

Professional historians…critically examine and interpret (and reinterpret) primary documents according to the methods (rules, norms) of history. They argue and debate to persuade other experts. And when enough experts (or the enough powerful experts) arrive at consensus, that consensus is put into textbooks for high school students and generally perceived as “fact.” And, perhaps, that consensus is eventually put into popular history books, of the kind that journalists review and the rest of us Big Picture People sometimes read—to find the “facts” of history. (Russell & Yañez, 2006, p. 21)

However, it is important to remember that historical facts are what Schyer (1993) calls “stabilized for now” and it is the role of historiography to make sure that those stabilized-for-now facts are the result of evidence and not mere zeitgeist. In other words, a professional scholarly historian puts his/her reputation on the line when there is less than sufficient evidence to solidify an interpretation. For this reason, history guides for students are heavy on emphasizing that history is an argument. For example, Marius
(1999) presented 14 pieces of advice for writing history papers. Ten of the 14 pieces of advice are argument strategies. Benjamin (2004) emphasized “clear thinking is the source of clear writing (p. 58). Epistemically speaking, the academic study of history is premised on MacDonald’s category of reason.

Written Discourse in History

Nominally, studies of genres used in history indicate that professionals write monographs, journal articles, and book reviews. Studies of students genres used in history pedagogy include argumentative essay, narrative summaries, book reviews, and connection essays (Stockton, 1995). But identifying genres alone does not get at the disciplinary qualities of writing. As Marius (1999) confirmed about disciplinary discourse “Readers typically bring to your writing ideas they have formed by reading other books and articles about history” (p. 13).

Turner and Kearns (1996) found that narration was particularly common in professional historical writing, but goes on to suggest that the “discipline as a whole— disagreed vigorously” about narration’s validity in history writing. For many historians, narrative retelling is as accurate a representation of the past as might be mustered in the postmodern sensibility, but Stein (1994) suggested that the narrative story merely “tells fictions about the present” (p. 7). In support of narrative, Marius (1999) wrote, “Whatever its subject, the study of history is an unending detective story. Historians try to solve mysteries in the evidence and to tell a story that will give order to the confusion of data we inherit from the past” (p. 11). Often, a very classical notion of analysis is put
up as a counter to narrative. For example, (Greene, 1994) argues that History writing is designed “to interpret and integrate information from different sources and to define a problem, speculate about alternative actions, and reformulate information in supporting a point of view” (p. 90). Greene’s view aligns closely with the idea that historians write to explain, piece-by-logical piece, why one interpretation of events is better than another. It does not retell the probable narrative primarily, but rather focuses on justifying it.

Unfortunately, this undecided combination of narrative and analysis leads to confusion for students in history who get advice like the below from a guide book about “Clear Writing” Benjamin (2004):

1. Each clearly names its subject
2. Each sentence is clear about what the subject is doing.
3. If you have several points to make about a subject, split them up into separate sentences.
4. Each sentence adds something to the thesis of the essay.
5. Each sentence is connected logically to the sentence around it.
6. Avoid the passive voice.
7. Use the past tense when writing about past historical events. Use the present tense only when writing about documents or objects that still exist.
8. Each paragraph is clear about the point it is making.
9. When you get to a new point, start a new paragraph.
10. Prepare your reader for the transition from one paragraph to another with a phrase or sentence linking the two.
11. Each paragraph is connected logically to the paragraphs around it. (p. 63)

Three things are striking about this listed advice to history students. First, it emphasizes both analysis and narrative, but talks about structure in terms that are complementary to both. Second, it is reminiscent of writing advice offered in the 1800 and thoroughly invested in the current traditional paradigm. Third, and importantly for this study, it emphasizes the role of the sentence subject and suggests writing in direct
distinction from what MacDonald found about how professional historians write. It’s little wonder that students are confounded by what is expected of them in history writing. What follows is an examination of novice writers in the history classroom.

**The development of history writing expertise.** Steffens (1989) advocates that history teachers at the high school and college level should “be more cognizant of the methods involved in the writing-across-the-curriculum movement” (p.61) because it will lead to more independent thinking and deeper historical knowledge. Later, Greene (1994) advised postsecondary history and writing professors to “understand how students learn the discursive practices of a discipline such as history, which does not have agreed-upon methods of analysis or generalized principles for presenting evidence (p. 90). The American Historical Association (AHA), a professional history organization, listed, as one of its outcomes for student learning, that each student should have the ability to recognize and analyze change over time and space, to handle diverse forms of evidence, and to master forms of written, oral, and visual expression that facilitate communication with peoples of other regions and cultures. The goal should be to provide all students with ways of approaching the world and thinking about themselves in the dimensions of time and space. (AHA Online Statement)

Such a goal reflects the combined importance of the historical mindset and the ability to communicate it. And they all seem to characterize historical discourse by the mindset more than the method employed in the research. For this reason, I would hypothesize that there will be large discrepancies among the honors theses in the epistemology classes.
Despite accurate recognition of the importance of writing to history, the practicalities of making this happen remain daunting. WAC studies seem to indicate various difficulties that students may have learning the discourse with precious few insights how a students may overcome and acquire the discourse. Accordingly, this section will first discuss why honors students might have trouble appropriating historical discourse during the course of their undergraduate degree such that it shows in the honors thesis.

It is common knowledge that undergraduate honors students lack expertise in both domain knowledge and rhetorical knowledge of history in comparison to professional historians (Geisler, 1994). No one legitimately expects honors history students to complete their programs writing like PhD-degreed historians. But, there is a reasonable, more moderate hope that undergraduate honors history students would at least marginally acquire some of the discourse conventions and habits of mind used by professional historians. Carl G. Gustavson (1955) laid out seven characteristics in his seminal work, A Preface to History that students need to become what he termed “historically-minded” and “learn to use the past to inform the present” (p. 6). Gustavson’s seven characteristics seem to negate the tension in writing between narrative and analysis and instead, waver between MacDonald’s “what and why” tension of history, the what in numbers 1, 5, 6, and 7 and the patterns or why of history in numbers 2, 3, and 4:

1. A natural curiosity as to what underlies the surface appearances of any historical event.
2. In studying any present problem, idea, event or institution, the mind of the historian inevitably gravitates in the direction of the past, seeking origins, relationships, and comparisons.
3. The student of society must try to discern the shapes and contours of the forces which are dynamic in any society.
4. The historian stresses the continuity of society in all its forms.
5. Society is perpetually undergoing process of change.
6. The historian approaches his subject in the spirit of humility, prepared to recognize tenacious reality rather than what he wishes to find.
7. The historian knows that each situation and event is unique. (p.6-7 )

Even if these habits of mind are acquired by honors students, this does not mean they translate seamlessly to writing; “writing up” historical research asks authors to navigate evidence between analysis and narrative. These habits of mind do little to ensure that the honors students who learn them will consequently write in the same discourse as professional historians (Greene, 1994, p. 90). Penrose (1993) and Flower and Greene (1995) agree that the best predictor of what students will do with a writing assignment is the task representation that they create for themselves. Honors students tend to construct tasks that highlight their own ability to learn. It is somewhat likely then that honors students will write up a document that serves as evidence of their commitment to learning, rather than a document that adds to the posing of historical quandaries.

Additionally, a host of other factors also make appropriation of historical discourse difficult for thesis writing honors history students, not the least of which is the lack of concrete definition of discourse of history professionals but also the known difficulties with cognition and context: textbooks, prior experience, expectations, and
teachers who often create poor assignments and lack overt statements of expectation. I address each of these below, in turn.

First, there is a general lack of finely detailed research on the cognitive acquisition of historical knowledge, but two book-length cognitive analyses of history learning, Leinhardt, Beck, & Stainton (1994) and Perfetti, Britt, & Georgi (1995), and a special issue of Educational Psychology edited by Wineburg (1994) represent “a substantial amount of the research done explicitly on cognition and history learning” (Stahl, Hynd, Britton, McNish, & Bosquet, 1996, p. 430). Greene (1994) argued that the lack of research connecting the cognition of history learning to the writing of historical prose threatens our ability to “help students learn to read and write critically about historical events, then we need to know how students’ understanding of history and writing influence the character, development, and expression of their ideas in representing historical events” (p.92).

Scholars agree that university students begin to engage with history via simplified autobiography (Leinhardt, Beck, & Stainton, 1994; Perfetti, Britt, & Georgi, 1995; Wineburg, 1991, 1994), meaning that students generally made the assumption that how they would parse their own lives is how history should be parsed. History students, having an immature view of their own histories, fail to recognize and articulate patterns for their own lives and consequently for the lives of historical figures (Greene, 1994; Wineburg, 1994). Consequently, students in history often conceive of history in terms of the overarching actions, decisions, or centrality of great men and women and singular
persons to an event as the guiding lights of history. By most historical standards, this is a misunderstanding of history; a simple “who, what, where, when” understanding does not natively lead to the opening of historical problem posing. Such a misunderstanding prevents honors students from acquiring the discourse, even if it were to translate easily to prose. Turner and Kearns’s (1996) classroom research indicated that using Hexter’s whole framework about the rhetoric of history mentioned above “discouraged simple autobiography” by prompting “students to look for and to articulate patterns in the events of their particular lives” (p. 10). Presumably, if students were able to identify more of the tempos of their own life, they would be more able to identify them in history, and, with that reasoning, they may better approximate the discourse of history professionals.

Another cognitive factor in acquiring professional historical discourse may be the honors student’s reading ability. Honors students are often very able readers, but no research to my knowledge has been conducted on how honors students specifically read history materials. Turner and Kearns (1996) constructed a cross-curricular assignment “with the main goal of making students more discerning readers of history and with thought of their learning to write history more competently only as a secondary goal” (p. 6). However, students were left nonplussed by the readings. In fact, they tended to ignore the reading as much as they felt they could and still earn their desired grade (p. 19). When students were asked where their ideas were located in the text, they were unable to identify a concrete location and seemed unconcerned. Stahl et al. (1996) wanted to determine if reading multiple texts would enrich the learning of history students in high school. They “were interested in (a) whether students could develop a rich, mental model
of a historical event, (b) what they would do with the document information, (c) how the
task influenced their processing of information, (d) how students integrated information
across texts, and (e) whether students engaged in corroborating, sourcing, and
contextualizing evaluating historical materials” (Stahl et al., 1996, p. 431). I quote their
results at length below:

We found that the mental models created by these students were more internally
consistent after reading at least two documents, but did not become more
consistent after that. Whence compared to knowledgeable readers they failed to
make any growth after a first reading. Examining their notes, we found that
students tended to take literal notes, regardless of the final task, suggesting that
they were using the initial readings to garner the facts about the incident or the
resolution. If students were asked for a description, they tended to stay close to
the text. If asked for an opinion, however, they tended to ignore the information in
the texts they read, even though they may have taken copious notes. Our
observations suggest that high school students may not be able to profit from
multiple texts, especially those presenting conflicting opinions, without some
specific instruction on integrating information from different texts. (p. 431)

Stahl et al. were analyzing high school students, and much cognitive development
takes place between high-school and the time for honors thesis writing, but one would
have to assume an unrealistic J curve in reading ability between the times to imagine that
students who read as described could manage the complexities of historical content
enough to satisfactorily mimic professional discourse.

There are a stunning number of cognitive demands for the learning, reading, and
writing of history and there is little likelihood that even teachers and students will “share
the same assumptions about what it means to write reports and solve problems in history”
(Greene, 1994, p. 90). Given the problems high school and college students have with
understanding the rhetoric of history and their limited intellectual mastery of the content of history, it seems unlikely that they might fully appropriate professional historical discourse.

Second, it may be more than simple cognitive mechanisms that hinder honors history students from fluently learning professional historical discourse. Other factors that stymie casual appropriation of historical discourse by history students are the types of assignments given and the resources instructors offer to assist in those assignments.

As also noted above by Stockton (1995), professional “historians write historical texts and journal articles while students write a range of texts for pedagogical purposes” (Wrigglesworth & McKeever, 2010, p. 113). A large genre disparity exists between what professionals do in practice and the assignments professional historians use to elucidate their students about history. It is important here to remember that honors students are interested in demonstrating their teachability, so they are especially susceptible to overt opportunities to demonstrate their mastery of the material presented. The eagerness of the students to learn the tasks they are presented with, which, in the case of history learning, is not typically what professional historians actually do, limits their likelihood of fully detecting the nuances of professional historical discourse. Greene (1994) indicated that “historians appear to value the writing of reports and problem-based essays as academic tasks because they can help students acquire new knowledge and think critically about historical issues (cf. Standford, 1986; Walvord & McCarthy, 1990)” (p. 90). Yet, content knowledge and critical thinking skills do not necessarily lead to appropriation of
historical discourse—that later move takes a whole community, to which even honors students have limited access (Russell and Yañez, 2006).

Further complicating the acquisition of professional historical discourse, history essays are assigned with a variety of purposes in mind. For example, Turner & Kearns (1996) developed an assignment that “bridges the gap between research on disciplinary discourse and the curricular goals of a first-year composition course—in this case, a course linked with a section of first-year history” (p. 7). Other common assignments mentioned above resemble historiography and ask students to compare how different authors have conceptualized the recovery program and to orchestrate this discussion of issues from a unique vantage point, one that would enable him to contribute his “own ideas” to an ongoing intellectual conversation. John, however, casts his understanding of the writing task in terms that reflect his role as a student. (Greene, 1994, p. 89)

Stahl et al. (1996) recorded assignments in which students were asked to reconcile multiple accounts of an historical event and offer their own interpretation. All of these assignments were “essaying” assignments, which Wrigglesworth & McKeever (2010) indicate as the “most common assessment genre in history” and simultaneously critique as “likely to occlude not only interdisciplinary, but intradisciplinary differences” (p. 113). In sum, we see that essay assignments in history tend to imitate the inchoate subject of history itself. Historians pride themselves on the individuality of their interpretation (Stockton, 2001; MacDonald, 1994), and that is not something that can be organized into coherent structures without reifying the very thing that historians claim requires
interpretation, i.e., historical facts. Consequently, students receive a jumble of essay assignments that, evidently, do not all use a similar discourse.

Also, the proffered readings in honors history courses are central determiners of the curriculum (Stahl et al., 1996, p. 430), yet are unlikely to scaffold the novice history writer up through professional discourse. Wrigglesworth & McKeever (2010) found that “the emphasis in history guides...was on how, why and under what circumstances texts were written, and by what means historians could locate and interpret a written source...but nonspecific about the types of writing students are expected to produce” (p. 112). Greene (1994) goes as far as to suggest that textbooks used in university history classes reflect an archival tradition with “a strong faith in the objectivity of history and the belief that history is a cumulative science based on the amassing of facts (p. 92). In other words, history textbooks, like most textbook prose (McKeown, Beck, & Worthy, 1993) along with the status of the textbook (Patrick & Hawke, 1982) seem to present an easily distilled and objective view of history that runs counter to the discourse of professional historical scholarship. An example is the advice offered by Marius (2011) in A Short Guide to Writing about History. After identifying the modes of writing as central to history writing, he offers the five following pieces of advice for argument writing in history:

1. Always state your argument quickly and concisely, as early as possible in your paper.
2. When you make an assertion essential to your case, provide some examples as evidence.
3. Always give the fairest possible treatment to those against whom you may be arguing.
4. Always admit weakness in your argument and acknowledge those facts that opponents might raise against your position.
5. Stay on the subject throughout your essay so your argument is not submerged in meaningless detail. (p. 68)

Even a simple scanning of these indicates a profound disconnect between the purposes and ways of argument presented here and the professional discourse described above. Marius’s list is one of general argumentation strategies, heavily premised on the above mentioned “archival tradition” that insists history is a collection of fairly presented, carefully weighed, and portioned facts reassembled piece by piece for a perfectly fitting truthful tale. The textbooks, assuming they are like this one, now in its 5th edition, would be difficult for undergraduate students to use as stepping stones from which to adopt the professional discourse.

Greene’s (1994) exploration of the similarities and differences of task representation between three expert, professional historians and 15 history upper classman bears some further attention because it represents the only study that combines the cognitive components and classroom concerns discussed above. Thus, it may be illustrative of some of the patterns of how students encounter and represent professional historical discourse I might see in my sample.

In Greene’s study, the students were divided into two groups: those who wrote a report and those who engaged in problem-solving tasks. Each of the students did a ten-minute think-aloud protocol to capture their initial impressions of their writing task. Three historians, including the instructor of the course, also provided think-aloud
protocols as they read both the report and the problem-based tasks (Greene, 1993) for method. The instructor of the history class in this study did not directly discuss the genres of the task, similar to what we saw for textbooks, but did talk “directly about writing historical arguments, making clear the criteria historians use in judging the adequacy of an argument” (Greene, 1994, p. 92). The instructor explicitly stated that he “valued independence in thought and action” (Greene, 1994, p. 94). Despite this explicit statement, the students think that it was too much of a risk to formulate their own opinion, given the importance they placed on the evaluation. In other words, even upper-level history students were more concerned with pedagogical matters than commitment to the discourse community. It is unlikely to be different in honors students, who are a mere semester or two beyond the students sampled by Greene.

Greene (1994) found that “discourse knowledge, topic knowledge, and disciplinary knowledge appear to distinguish the ways in which historians and students interpret what it means to write a report or solve a problem in history” (p. 89) Greene (1994) also seemed to indicate that students did refer to a number of sources, but did not do so in a disciplinary way as a justification, but problematically as an imagined discursive partner to engage in front of a teacher (Greene, 1994). Students then are very aware of the teacher as reader, and are more likely to make explicit references to the audience than professionals, who, according to MacDonald (1994) had a three percent allusion to audiences in her sampling of Renaissance historical writing. Greene’s wider but temporally similar analysis found that “the historians did not make explicit references
to a reader or audience” (Greene, 1994, p. 95). Thus, students may make more problematic and explicit mentions of the teacher as reader.

Finally, difficulties of acquiring the discourse of professional historians may go beyond the immediate classroom, even if it manifested in individual classroom experiences. Russell and Yañez (2006) argue that “the specialist/lay contradiction in U.S. general education is embedded in historical practices in the modern university, and manifested in alienation that students often experience through the writing requirements in general education courses. This historical contradiction also makes it difficult for instructors to make writing meaningful for nonspecialists and go beyond fact-based, rote instruction to mediate higher-order learning through writing” (p. 1). Students are alienated from historical discourse because they have been characterized as lay persons by the educational system; they are not offered a vision of themselves as people who can understand history in a deep way, in an expert way, and, therefore, they reduce history to its most fragmented parts including drill and skill memorization of names and dates. Consequently, their ability to recognize, much less join any professional discourse is limited by the self-perception of their lack of expertise. It is that the institutional narratives are often so disabling it can silence students and teach them that it is more than difficult, but actually presumptuous to learn and display expert historian discourse.

History students’ previous classroom experiences affect their perceptions of what they had to write in university history. They expect it to be much like high school. They had no sense of the discourse of historians or of the new activity system (Russell and
Yañez, 2006, p. 10). Russell and Yañez write lucidly about the trouble students have moving from the rigidities of high school learning to the comparative flexibility of sophomore general education history. I project that honors students, who are given even more flexibility, might experience a similar sense of placelessness to Russell and Yañez’s students. Russell and Yañez (2006) recount the difficulties a teacher named Cory had imparting to a student, whose journalism background had taught her to value objectivity, that the “processes of interpretation, and the genre rules (and the epistemology and methods of academic history those genres mediate) require that one not treat history as if one could move past interpretation to final and absolute historical truths” (p. 16).

Because her undergraduate education had not thus far offered her it, Beth, the student, did not have a “forum, a ground, a vocabulary for articulating these different genre rules—which are also differences in the methodological tools and the objects and motives of disciplines (Russell & Yañez, 2006, p.17). Without this awareness, she could not build a very complete representation of the historical discourse community her teacher, Corey, wanted her to communicate within. She had no means of articulating the problem she was facing other than as simple conflict between two “right” moves and attributing the less preferred one to personal idiosyncrasy and preferences of the instructor.

While this is not directly the same sample, it does speak to a certain phenomenon of students who find it challenging to learn historical discourse as undergraduates. Russell and Yañez (2006) confirm that general education history is not enough to impart
the discourse of professional historians to students. It remains to be seen whether it can be appropriated by honors students two years later in their curriculum.

Given the above review of literature, it seems unlikely that honors students will have a genuine opportunity to acquire the discourse of professionals; however, history students are not entirely bereft of the chance to learn the discourse of professional historians. Greene (1994) suggested that “students need to have occasions to develop the thinking skills historians value through writing (p. 95) to develop their fluidity with professional discourse. Turner & Kearns (1996) recommended that their autobiography assignments

prompted many of them [students] to reconsider what they had made of their lives to this point, the extent to which their choices had been free or predetermined, and the relation between their opportunities, those of their contemporaries, and those of other generations. (Turner & Kearns, 1996, p. 17)

Baxter (1984) found that knowing “English composition theory in the area of prewriting and of heuristics systems (p. 1) helped her articulate clear history assignments. Students may encounter a professor who agrees with Stockton (1995) that historical discourse depends on “the establishment of an autonomous subject of meaning who is always speaking from outside history about a distant and objectified past” (p. 47). Such a clear and frank definition might be more easily incorporated into honors discourse by eager to please students. Finally, Russell and Yanez (2006) indicate that if teachers can help their students “see the textual pathways (genre systems) of specialist discourse leading to useful knowledge/skill in their activity systems beyond the course as specialists in other fields or as citizens” (p. 1), the students may have more motivation to
engage in the professional discourse of historians. Several factors could motivate honors history writers to acquire the professional discourse. Ricot (2010) makes the point that “writing is absolutely central to the formulation of argument and the expression of opinion; it lies at the heart of what historians do, both reflecting and shaping the type of histories we write” (p. 169). In other words, writing may define history, not the other way around.

Thus far, there is no measure of success that is standardized. The inquiry related in this dissertation does not begin to assess a full apprehension of historical discourse, but it does dip in its toe. The preceeding section discussed what is known about the historical state of mind and its discourses, proposed some reasons why students’ acquisition of the discourse may be fumbling and intermittent, without totally discounting the possibility that honors students may, conceivably, approach the discourse of their professional group.

**Anthropology**

There are several methods of analysis used in the study of anthropology, the most well-known of which is ethnography. Some contend that the evolution of ethnography has forced the evolution of anthropology from its theoretical infancy into its theoretical adolescence. However, not all writing in anthropology is, in fact, ethnography. Writing in cultural anthropology is done in a variety of ways. Paul (1988) has suggested that “In anthropology, the question of how scholars write about the cultures they study has become one of the central issues” (p. A4). Thus, as a disclaimer, in this section, I will use
cultural anthropology to mean a discipline that is defined by the study of people in places. This is an attempt to allow for the theoretical and concomitant methodological debates that will, I believe, eventually further mature the discipline.

The discipline itself may be further broken down into physical/biological and cultural anthropology. I will discuss cultural anthropology first, beginning with an overview of the knowledge-making in the field, so as to make the connection to MacDonald’s coding scheme assumptions about the phenomenal and epistemic. Then I will discuss the reading and writing done by students in cultural anthropology to get a sense of the potential for students to master the discourse. I will discuss physical anthropology second, with the same intent. These two branches of anthropology best contain the honors theses selected for analysis. Understanding anthropology as a discipline is particularly important to this study

Cultural anthropology. Similar to other social sciences, cultural anthropology is concerned with the primacy of the human experience; however, it is distinguished primarily by four things, according to Judith Reynolds (2010): “It is holistic, it is comparative, ‘being there’ is important, and historically, its emphasis has been on non-Western people” (p. 22). Reynolds list emphasizes what MacDonald would categorize as epistemic aspects. The quality of “being there” has intimate ties with the methodology of ethnography. E. E. Evans-Pritchard's work is held up as the kind of early canonical, leisurely ethnography that is devalued at present, but remains an imposing shadow. Of course, no field or its discourses are static, and new theoretical vistas have opened up
alongside new thematic spaces and the study of Westerners in anthropology. This change has been referred to variously as the literary turn or the postmodern turn and is often ascribed to have been due largely to the 1986 publication of Writing Culture by Clifford and Marcus (1986), which put writing correctly at the center of knowledge-making, a resounding charge against the classical notion of doing the experiment and then merely “writing up” those results objectively. Clifford and Marcus (1986) agreed with many postmodern composition scholars that it is the transaction between the writer and the reader where knowledge is shared and built, not alone in the supposedly objectivist prose of the researcher. Clifford Geertz, another notable author and anthropological critic, did a study of several established writers in anthropology and argued in The Interpretation of Cultures (Geertz, 1973) that “ethnography is not the derivation of laws that attempt to explain behavior, but the investigation of how people structure meaning in a society.” Such investigation, he wrote, is inseparable from how its results are put into words (As cited in Paul, 1988, p. A4-A5). Soliday (2004) showed “how these disciplinary debates about the ethnographer's proper perspective on traditional and modern cultures provides …readers an interpretive framework for their evaluation of an appropriate stance” (p. 79). In other words, the perspective that a professional anthropological takes on these theories is, and should be, evident in their writing.

The knowledge-making relation of anthropology should be amenable to MacDonalds coding scheme precisely because of how an anthropologists sets up his or her own written authorial stance is read as an implicit vote for the desirability of that
stance and its associated philosophical assumptions. Soliday’s perspective is noticeably different than the one Geertz critiqued two decades earlier:

Anthropologists, he [Geertz] said, when they review a new publication, tend to concentrate on the fieldwork data the author presents and on the conclusions he draws. Reviewers generally neglect the fact that the authors way with words—his ability to convey a sense of truly having experienced another culture—has much to do with how persuasive his data and conclusions are (Paul, 1988, p. A5).

The battle lines between modernism and postmodernism are well rehearsed in anthropology. In order to keep this overview short and prose-focused, I have identified three representatively canonical texts, one from each of the major schools of thought that have formed modern cultural anthropology. I will begin with *Writing Culture* by Clifford and Marcus (1986). In explaining *Writing Culture*, I will briefly sketch out the longer history it is a reaction against. After the postmodern turn in *Writing Culture*, I will address the appropriately named book *After Writing Culture* by James, Hockey, and Dawson (1997), which takes more of a network approach to anthropology and reframes the modern/postmodern debate by introducing the element of spatial time back into anthropology. Here, I will offer a brief interlude to discuss an article by Susan Peck MacDonald (1998) on writing in anthropology as she sees it. Although MacDonald’s book-length treatment of sentence subject analysis does not include her work in anthropology, this article does offer some related information, based on the same type of analysis. It also helps to soundly bring home the point that these philosophical debates about representative language rarely have any linguistic foundations. Finally, and to bring
us current, I will review the positions taken in *Anthropology off the Shelf*, a recent book that locates the central mission of cultural anthropology in activist rhetoric (Waterston & Vesperi, 2011). As I discuss each of these, I will attempt to infer some of the rhetorical strategies we might expect professionals to use with each one.

*Writing Culture*, as a watershed moment, has come to be seen as a backlash against the strict appropriation of scientific methodologies into anthropology, which were quietly sublimated into the embarrassment of race in physical anthropology. *Writing Culture* was reacting against a method of participant observation where the ethnographer came into the field, lived astride it in a big tent, studied it, and reported back “objectively” to other anthropological insiders, usually Western White males. The people studied were objects, to be subjected to empirical observation and to report on plainly, without adornment or rhetoric. A writer may have added some superficial, merely stylistic, flourishes, but the participant observer was read to be repeating faithful, accurate, and, most importantly, objective accounts of what he or she understood of “it,” the culture that was visited. Some of the founding documents that entitle and ennoble anthropology are of this ilk. So, in some sense, this was a paradigm shift, or even a regicide. But the paradigm shift was not groundless; it happened on the back of several attendant philosophical shifts in literary theory, linguistics, sociology of knowledge, and philosophy.

Overall, *Writing Culture*, signaled a shift away from the clear roles of subject/object dualism, which would have worked exceptionally well with MacDonald’s
coding scheme. It shook the confidence in the objective methodology and reportage of the participant observer and the utterly subjective nature of the culture, presumptively waiting for the West to define it. For some, this shift was profound. However, not all found such a shift desirable. James, Hockey, and Dawson (1997) identified this shift as “the inception of a reactionary postmodern-malaise” (p. 2). Regardless, the turn to Writing Culture as a rejection of classical scientific anthropology of enumeration and categorization marked an important era in cultural anthropology, if not its full birthright.

Another critical moment in understanding the writing in cultural anthropology was embodied in the turn away from the fullest embrace of postmodern cultural anthropology. Critiques from the journal Current Anthropology contended that postmodern “writing culture” promoted Western individualism (Sangren, 1988), endorsed armchair anthropology and navel gazing (Jarvie, 1988), and even hypocritically encumbered the authority it sought to eschew by conferring authoritative significance on its anthropological moment. When the formal subject/object dichotomies that had previously characterized anthropology had crumbled, the writing took on a freer, more personal tone. The phenomenal subject matter was the researcher’s perspective on the people, rather than the people themselves and the epistemology was highly scrutinized. The subject object relationship that this way of thinking was based on would be nearly incomprehensible to MacDonald’s coding scheme.

A decade later it is possible to see the ‘Writing Culture’ debate as a crystallization of uncertainties about anthropology’s subject matter (traditionally ‘the other’), its method (traditionally, participant observation), its medium (traditionally, the
monograph) and its intention (traditionally that of informing rather than practice). (James, Hockey, & Dawson, 1997, p. 2).

After Writing Culture was a sort of dizziness or vertigo in cultural anthropology; the classical ground had been distended and hard-core objectivism rejected, but postmodernism left few grounds for viable research and devalued the research that had previously been done as fruit of the poisonous tree, not to be built from again. Student honors theses written from this stance would reflect a rhetorical strategy that would bewilder MacDonald’s method because of the purposeful mixing of the phenomenal subject and the work of the anthropologist. The next major philosophical shift in anthropology brings return some semblance of the subject/object relationship that is at the heart of MacDonald’s coding scheme

The book After Writing Culture by James, Hockey, and Dawson (1997) yielded some ideas “on the inexorable relationship between epistemology, politics, and practice which the ‘Writing Culture’ debate drew attention to” (p. 2). By the time After Writing Culture was written, the sense of vertigo and disorientation had cleared, the anger has subsided, and anthropologists wanted to make new knowledge again without falling into either extreme. Hastrup (1995) contended that concrete experience, polyvocalized could serve as a functional middle ground for “The passage of anthropology” (p. 1). Cultural anthropology could reclaim some scholarly footing by taking as its phenomenology the experiences of the people living in the culture from as many perspectives as possible. The subject matter of cultural anthropology became activity around physical objects described as cultural affordances from as many perspectives as possible. In other words,
anthropologists now attempt to objectivize material experience from multiple perspectives by primarily following an activity trail. Anthropologists can displace the subjective and the objective decision with the active or the inactive decision. If something happened, if a person did a thing or a thing was modified by a force, it matters. If activity happened it, by default, is important, especially in comparison to the multitudes of things that never happened. This way of thinking leaves only the active as a practical concern and with that philosophy the sentence structure returns to something MacDonald’s coding scheme can interpret because a singular object, polyvocalized is still a phenomenon and the vocalizations are still epistemic moves. So where language matters to anthropologists is where it plays its active role; where someone or something did something specific. Anthropologists can write ethically by dispensing with the pretense of objectivity to write in an admittedly motivated way of tracing activity. It is not a return to objectivist standards but a reframing of what matters. Anthropoloigal academic writing embracing these theories does not have an object or a subject, only a motive and a next set of circumstances on which to make knowledge from.

Susan Peck MacDonald (1998) in “The Dilemmas of Narrative in Anthropology” takes up this conundrum when she reviews the debate between Schepler-Hughes and D’André about what authorial stance is ethical, appropriate, informative, and accurate, and discusses a host of other concerns for writing in anthropology. She situates herself representationally between Geertz and the radical decentralization and postmodernism of Writing Culture, but without really knowing it. Her work at the sentence level is a prelude to After Writing Culture precisely because it encounters activity. Writing Culture
and the classical period it reacted against did not deal with tracing activity well. It was banished from the gentlemanly classical anthropology as a particularly historical concern that troubled itself too much about creating coherent narrative and making stories instead of just saying what happened honestly in numerous circumstances so they may be generalized. In the postmodern *Writing Culture* conception, activity was simply unproblematically in the subjective eye of the perceiver. In this way, activity was demeaned. Neither pole dealt with activity in a nuanced way because of different philosophical commitments, but the result was the same. It was not until after *Writing Culture* that the sequence of activities became an integral part of the philosophical considerations of anthropology and it was between these two ideological debates that MacDonald planted her flag and took it down to the activity and order of the completed sentence. MacDonald (1998) wrote, “Only when sentence-level features are more clearly described will academic writers be in a position to examine their function in the disciplinary knowledge-making of anthropology (p. 194). This is an activity claim. Narrative sentences are made clearer by linking more events in time, relationship, and concrete details. I see this sentence as tying together the clarity of language with the concreteness of activity.

MacDonald developed the role of language in this assertion earlier in this article. She identified “two related, text-forming dilemmas faced in writing ethnography: (1) The relation between narrative and non-narrative within a text and (2) the balance of general and particular or objective and subjective” (p. 149). The first dilemma she argued needed language to resolve it and the second was directly taken from the method elaborated in
her 1992 piece, only in this case, she seemed to have moved beyond the dichotomies presented. She, to some extent, anticipated After Writing Culture.

MacDonald’s first dilemma is about the use of narrative. The earliest leisurely gentleman’s anthropology did not accept narrative because the ties of narrative were primarily supported by conjecture or secondary evidence, rather than by being there. In this school of thought, “being there” was done by anthropologists, and drawing linear connections with secondary narrative evidence was the work of historians. The postmodernist view represented in Writing Culture destabilized this objectivity and replaced it with an utterly subjective “I” that cannot find a coherent timeline for the constantly multiplying subjectivities. As a result, it came to rest on the only ground they could find, their own “subjective” narrative experience, which supposedly rehumanizes or brings into view the subjectivity of experience.

The latter was given strong preference in Writing Culture because it recommended giving voices to the voiceless, turning informants, who were then represented by an objective anthropologist, to voiced writers in their own right. But MacDonald saw this polyvocality as a distinction with no difference. MacDonald critiqued Shostacks overtly narrative and polyvocal piece of using narrative of others, but still creating, in comparison, the objective voice of the researcher that is sponsoring the other voices, and, therefore, remaining impersonal and generalized as an academic anthropologist. Yielding the floor to another puppeteer did not decrease but merely offset one’s marionette skills. What annoyed MacDonald was that these generalized discussions
did not get down to how they were conveyed in prose. What prose features of the classical anthropological description were so pointedly non-narrative that they are dishonest? For the writing culture group, what prose features of the narrative were so supremely reflective and liberating? Are these generalizations borne out in sentences somewhere? Does stance have some linguistic cues as everyone imagines? Herrington (1992) answered that “the language they [students] use is often a cue to fundamental issues of their perception of the role they are to project and their approach to knowledge” (p. 93). In other words, Herrington (1992) contends that if we do attend to the language, we will find those disciplinary and expert differences. This project attempts to do just that.

MacDonald’s second linguistic dilemma recast the familiar objective singularity versus the subjective generality and, rather than incorporating each of them into an instrument like she did in 1992, she problematized how each allowed for different uptake in the social world. The 1992 coding scheme has a singular phenomenon and a plural phenomenon. MacDonald realized it reified a latent divide between intellectual work and praxis work: activity work. The subjective general was affiliated with academic work and the objective singularity with praxis work. She didn’t want to leave academic work as irrelevant to the activity based experiences. She really seemed to dislike that praxis was valued as the domain of the accuracy, leaving academics to mere subjective generalities that were seen as approximations. Her thinking about academic work depends on the valuation of the epistemology. MacDonald was not the only one to notice such a divide in cultural anthropology. Others looked for ways to reconcile the new divide.
Without quite calling itself *After After Writing Culture*, the 2011 book *Anthropology off the Shelf*, edited by Alisse Waterston and Maria D. Vesperi, addressed the idea that writing in anthropology must be made popular to have the kind of social and ethical impacts that retrospectively justify writing. In that book, Karen Brodkin advocated a low-syllable diet and rejected hardball, academic, hierarchical writing as an earnest match to the radical and political commitments that motivate practicing anthropologists. This book was a call to write revolutionarily, to believe, with little evidence, that a book might change the world. At its core, *Anthropology off the Shelf* was a critical analysis of whether the models anthropologists used for framing, illustrating, and contextualizing information and ideas facilitated or hindered the well-informed general reader of nonfiction (Waterston & Vesperi, p. 2). *Anthropology off the Shelf* answered MacDonald’s new divide by emphasizing the role of a real audience. “Anthropologist writers reveal a clear pattern when they discuss the power of imaging a real audience for a particular work” (Waterston & Vesperi, p. 3). This work was a call for writing to be activism, to take praxis as the highest goal of intellectualism and put the use of the book by its audience in their contexts back into the discussion, rather than the mere textual focus of *Writing Culture*, the object focus of genteel, early anthropology, or the *After Writing Culture* concern with epistemological commitments of the author.

**Reading and writing cultural anthropology.** Having addressed the professional philosophical conundrum currently confounding the development of cultural anthropology and affecting its written discourse, I will next turn to students’ uptake of the
written cultural anthropological discourse. I will be drawing primarily from two works that approach the task in different ways to fully describe the phenomena.

The first, Herrington (1992), researches the teaching of “Foreman,” a pseudonym for an anthropology professor who attempts to teach her junior and senior anthropology majors about the complexities of situating themselves as authors. The concern with authorship has been noted in composition studies ever since Smith (1977) wrote about how anthropological perspective was a matching epistemic to composition. (By anthropological perspective, Smith meant “principally the professional habit of thought described by the words ‘cultural relativity’”) (p.254). Smith suggested that the content of anthropology, because of its relativistic, yet committed stance, made it a natural fit for the open content of a writing class. Smith (1977) argued that “By transferring the anthropological perspective to writing, the student learns distance from the writing process” (Smith, 1977, p. 254-255) and consequently approached writing more constructively. Herrington found that this commitment amidst relativism required students to feel empowered and to understand something of the murky epistemological milieu described above. She prescribed many activities in her senior class to foster awareness of the previously discussed theoretical issues in writing anthropology. It is important to note that this case study was with seniors, who were anthropological majors.

The second work is by Reynolds (2010), writing from her experience with freshman in a general education anthropology course. She suggested that these students may not reasonably be expected to understand commitments to an authorial stance, and,
therefore, a theoretical position early on. Thus, instead, she focused on organizing other intellectual spaces of anthropology that may lead to a later ability to recognize these stances and sincerely commit to a perspective in their writing. These two studies encumber a combination of pedagogical approaches to learning the discourse of anthropology, and, because of their dissimilar curricular space, their differences may be complementary rather than conflicting.

Reynolds (2010) argued that there were three primary, but not exclusive, types of intellectual spaces in anthropology: the theoretical, the thematic, and the geographical. Reynolds was not denying the importance of the theoretical in her model; rather, she saw it as being set aside for later in the development of the students as anthropologists. Reynolds work with freshman then focused on the remaining two spaces: the thematic and the geographical. The thematic space of anthropology is particularly wide but must show some relation to how a people live. Geographical space, which Reynolds (2010) claimed had traditionally separated anthropology from sociology, had to do with defining an area. In anthropology, the predefined boundaries of nation states are not privileged and anthropologists are encouraged to define a geographical space benefiting their research. Thematic and geographical choices have theoretical implications, and it is from these implications that Reynolds (2010) suggested that more advanced students may begin to appreciate the debate about what may be an agreeable authorial stance for an anthropologist.

As an academic tutor in anthropology, Reynolds devised a two-by-two spatial representation of what first-year students were asked to read and write. The horizontal
section of the grid had two spaces. The horizontal left is labeled “Geographically Broad” and the horizontal right is labeled “Geographically Narrow.” The vertical top space is labeled “Thematically Broad” and the vertical bottom space is labeled “thematically narrow.” Together the spaces form into a square with four quadrants.

### Table 1

*Anthropological Writing Divided into Four Quadrants*

Adapted from J. Reynolds (2010, p. 16), Figure 1, Anthropological writing divided into four quadrants.

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<th>Geographically Broad</th>
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<tr>
<td>Thematically Broad</td>
<td>Quadrant D</td>
<td>Quadrant A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thematically Narrow</td>
<td>Quadrant C</td>
<td>Quadrant B</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Young students in anthropology may already be familiar or at least able to work with the concept of intellectual space; what a discipline “covers.” This is, in and of itself, a beginning epistemology of knowledge-making. Thus, in this way, Reynolds is priming students for the more theoretical discussion of stance in written anthropology, even if not directly addressing those conflicting positions that Herrington records happening.

*Readings in cultural anthropology classes.* Reynolds was most concerned with identifying the readings given, assignments set, and problems students may encounter in each of the quadrants. I will proceed with that discussion now with the intent of illustrating writing in professional and pedagogical anthropology by using Reynolds’s model and examples of problems from both Reynolds’s (2010) and Herrington’s (1988) case studies.
Quadrant A, geographically narrow and thematically broad, is the quadrant where most traditional ethnographies fall. It is when an anthropologist goes to a far-off land to study the lives of a select grouping of people and reports widely back to anthropologists about what he or she observed. The authorial stance of the anthropologist can then embrace the rhetoric of ‘being there,” an essential component of the ethos of the anthropologist. The student, especially the traditional brick-and-mortar-bound student, has little opportunity or ability to pursue and replicate such a research endeavor and can never claim the ethos of “being there.” At best, they may defamiliarize the common in their immediate environment. Cultural anthropology students are very often stuck reading a genre they cannot honestly be expected to replicate, and it is this quandary that Herrington finds her students struggling to find how to relate their own experiences critically or resorting to “armchair anthropology” the anathema to “being there.”

In Reynolds’s quadrant B, geographic and thematically narrow, we find primarily journal articles of professional ethnographers who have done the work necessary to write a manuscript-length ethnography, but have decided a particular component of that ethnography deserved its own space. Often, these pieces focus on quirky differences or eerie similarities to the culture in which it is published. It is often a teaser or trailer/prelude to a larger manuscript. These pieces are samplings, and they feel that way to an anthropologically nuanced reader, but to students, they often feel profoundly overwhelmed by the significance applied to a specific ritual or event or action of a people. Like readings in quadrant A, students do not have access to the primary data, nor the finely honed observational skills of a practiced anthropologist, so they are stymied by
attempts to replicate a genre in which they know they cannot locate themselves. Quadrant B writing brings about additional challenges for anthropology students because of their perceived significance. Sally, a (pseudonymous) honors student in the class studied by Herrington, reacted to this pressure quixotically when she tried not to put what she termed an “anthropology” in her paper, precisely because “She said she saw it used in ‘every single anthropology paper I’ve ever seen’ and she did not like it” (Herrington & Cadman, 1991, p. 191). Sally saw the usually hedging of one’s research as an undesirable trait to replicate because, not recognizing its methodological implications, it seemed overcautious for the subject matter.

Students’ unwillingness to commit to a stance or an emphasis on some otherwise mundane part of life may be significant. Relativism, once learned, was difficult to escape, and to ask a students to weigh all these quotidian events and do what a professional did by identifying which ones were determinate, even if they had access to primary data, was a daunting task. Smith (1977) illustrated precisely why this might be so difficult for students of anthropology to do because “The anthropological concepts culture and worldview in themselves carry an implication of relativity. They imply that the validity of any one approach to reality is intersubjective, that alternative and equally integrated reality constructs exist” (p. 254). For Smith, then, the very topic of cultural anthropology weighs heavily in favor of relativism for students.
Reynolds’s quadrant C, thematically narrow and geographically broad, is primarily a type of survey assignment students do. Cultural anthropological writing in quadrant C is also the most like some writing that professional anthropologists do because anthropologists, like other scholars, survey other primary literature. In anthropology, these assignments often take the form of a book review, a literature review, or ethnology. In short, both students and professionals review quadrant A and B writing and make careful comparisons between like groups. Assignments like these are credited with encouraging mastery of accrued anthropological knowledge and developing students’ perceptive abilities, but they also challenge students’ ability to group in anthropologically conventional ways. Students’ inability to group and carefully compare is seen as a sign of expected anthropological immaturity in a freshman class, but professionals are not allowed such leeway.

Reynolds notes that students often run afoul of the careful conventions proscribing categorization that guides professionals; it must be the same people, the same demographic, the same vicinity, and the same milieu. Reynolds exemplified a student who encountered such difficulties and grouped data gathered separately from Mexican Americans and Mexicans into one claim about Mexicans or, similarly a student who failed to identify a geographical location for a religious sect and therefore greatly overrepresented the scope of a certain local religious practice. These things must be cautiously delimited in anthropological writing, and to not do so is to announce oneself as a novice. Assignments from quadrant C ask students to survey and generalize to a finite point, but students overshoot this point regularly. They draw from limited readings, those
presented in class or found on their own. Thus, their syntheses show ignorance of the rules for categorization and fine distinctions that are implicit to anthropology for certain privileged spaces. Often, a survey reads more like a textbook.

A textbook is quadrant D writing; it is both broad in theme and geography, yet it is combinatorial rather than comparative, an effect of its pedagogical genre. Professionals who write such anthropological textbooks have a large variety of quadrant A and B writing behind them and are almost certainly drawing quadrant C works to speed up their processes. However, students are often asked quadrant D type questions as a way to give them the most choice on how to respond. So a quadrant D essay topic might ask students to respond to a prompt such as “Using any of the cultures studied in class as our example, please define and illustrate the concept of food exchange.” The professional anthropologist views this question as a way to let the student select any grouping or geography, as long as they note the theme. Professionals implicitly know that the strongest answer will be a quadrant C answer. Yet students do not and often write a textbook or quadrant D answer to a quadrant D question. The student is mightily confused when this happens, but textbook classification is not anthropological classification, and the teacher felt that students were asked to survey quadrant A and B literature and come up with quadrant C type answer because the teacher, as Herrington did, took her students seriously as knowledge-making anthropologists, but the students see themselves as pedagogical sojourners navigating grades, textbooks, and unarticulated teacher presuppositions.
Learning to write like a cultural anthropologist. The above has answered what students may be asked to write but gives little indication of what we know about how students, particularly honors students, face the task of writing in cultural anthropology. (Herrington & Cadman, 1991). Herrington (1992) offered some idea by recounting “an ethnographic study of writing, teaching, and, learning in one classroom context, writing intensive, upper division course in anthropology” (p. 91-92). Soliday’s (2004) research examined how readers trained in cultural anthropology “respond to and evaluate student writing” (p. 73). Together, these studies form the bulk of what is known of undergraduate writing in cultural anthropology.

Herrington and Cadman’s 1991 piece on a “Writing in Anthropology” course carefully exemplified the types of writing asked for in the course and the process by which each of the writings were introduced. While the example provided may not be entirely generalizable to all such classes, it does offer a pedagogically defensible interpretation of a viable look at the professionalization of writing in anthropology students. All four of these self-directed assignments were given “multiple drafts, reviews, and delayed grading” (p. 186). The students were asked to write three papers that situated themselves as professional anthropologists: 1) book review 2) a descriptive field report, and 3) a research review article. The fourth and final paper was a popularization of a scholarly article that forced the students to consider their expertise in a new venue. The students were clearly empowered to write as professionals in the field of anthropology do. At the same time, the anthropology students were recognized as students and their process was “scaffold with detailed assignment sheets, class discussion centered on
exemplars, professorial oversight, and several types of formative critiques” (p. 186). The course presented a rich substrate to develop the writing and discourse of incipient anthropologists.

Herrington and Cadman (1991) reported that through the peer critiques and discussions, the students “assisted each other in developing their scholarly authority as writers” (p. 189). The professor’s willingness to characterize the students as contributing experts was important in the students assuming their own competence. In other words, as the teacher gave the students permission to view themselves as anthropological professionals, they students assumed those positions as well as they were able. The students were eager to be accorded the autonomy, especially with what one student called “descriptive work,” in comparison to “analytical work.” Soliday (2004) argued that students … actively resist analyzing because when we ask them to "analyze" or “interpret,” we are asking them to “evaluate or judge,” which is better or best (Soliday, 2004, p. 88). The students had to learn to trust their judgment and negotiate their own perspectives (p. 193). The class, as it is presented, would seem to offer a solid foundation for future, disciplinary-based discourse.

Herrington’s (1992) solo piece was the same classroom study of undergraduate students but focused on the student’s attempts to position themselves as incipient cultural anthropologists. Among the students highlighted was the aforementioned pseudonymous Sally. Sally is a senior honors anthropology student. As such, she is an excellent case study from which to draw insight. Herrington recounted Sally’s experience as initially
trying desperately to sound formal and overbearingly academic, and Sally explicitly confirmed that her intent was to give an expression of objectivity (Herrington, 1992, p. 95-96). Because Sally was characteristically an honors student, she was very self-critical of her own work and felt she needed “to sound impressive,” “conclusive,” and “in control”; she did not want to admit problems she had with the field of study, and she had a number of them (Herrington, 1992, p. 97). Early in the revision process, the teacher identified that Sally had been focusing on what she herself had learned, imaging the piece as a traditional teacher-student communication instead of as professional discourse. As the paper evolved, the teacher indicated that honors student “Sally had moved closer to presenting herself as a professional” (italics in original, p. 98). Here is one case study of a senior honors student writing in anthropology who had made significant strides towards adopting the discourse. Further characterizing Sally, Herrington (1992) commented that Sally seemed to adopt the anthropological style with little guidance and hypothesized that other student may require more guidance. I interpret Herrington’s comment in line with the normative honors achievement path, that honors students are particularly sensitive to paths of achievement.

Soliday’s (2004) classroom study engaged two general anthropology courses from a WAC perspective. Each of the sections of the course had about twenty students in it and primarily enrolled nonmajors, and one teacher characterized the core requirement fulfilling course as an introduction to the “four-field anthropology: archaeology, linguistics, sociocultural anthropology, and physical anthropology” (Soliday, 2004, p. 75). Soliday primarily found that the students required more than a distanced cultural
relativism promoted by Smith when he wrote, “Accustoming students to an anthropological perspective is not at all difficult. The simplest method is to use the first two or three weeks of the semester for a mini-course in intercultural communication, with reading assignments appropriate to the subject” (Smith, 1977, p. 254). Soliday recommended, instead, that “successful writers saw difference as the valid but not finally sufficient grounds for their stance” (Soliday2004, p. 82). Of particular relevance is that many of the students Soliday observed “did not as appropriately identify their relationship to either their reader or their evidence” (Soliday, 2004, p. 83). Given that this is a general education, nonspecialist class, and together with Herrington and Herrington and Cadman’s work with Senior anthropology majors, the early recognition of the difficulty of situating oneself among perspectives bodes well for the eventual development of writers in cultural anthropology such as those students in my study. Dr. Geertz, a leading advocate of innovative approaches to cultural analysis, has long argued that awareness of the act of writing goes hand in hand with anthropological analysis (as cited in Paul, 1988, p. A4). And, if it begins early, as shown by Soliday and is completed by courses like the course studied by Herrington (1992) and Herrington and Cadman (1991), the discourse of honors students is very likely to mirror the professional discipline.

The locus of all anthropological study is humans as group members. Both humans and groups are highly variable. Due to the variability discussed above, any one anthropological human subject may have none, some, or all of the qualities ascribed to their group, making the leap from researched gathered specifics to generalities fraught
with theoretical and methodological complication. Marks (2011) noted that in response to these complications anthropologists “derive some generalizations about the behavior of groups of individuals and contrast them with others” (Marks, 2011, p. 2). He added that “Standing between opposites and showing how they are connected is a fundamental part of anthropology” (Marks, 2011, p. 2). In addition to the individual versus group mediation mentioned above, anthropologists must mediate between the exotic and the mundane, the past and present, and the human and animal (Marks, 2011, p. 1). The fecund mix of topicality and methodologies was institutionalized in mid-19th-century America as “the four field approach” including physical anthropology, archeology, cultural anthropology, and linguistics (Spencer, 1982). However, this model was troubled by its history when it was used to comprehensively alienate Native Americans and served to justify their violent eradication at the hands of white Europeans (Spencer, 1982).

Anthropology has evolved beyond the four-field approach, instead, dealing with the complexity by developing several new theoretical appendages, technologies, and allied sciences. “The four-field approach remains institutionalized in some units, but it is no longer embodied in the research of any single anthropologist” (Marks, 2011, p. 5). For mere ease and clarity of future comparison, I have detailed what would have been categorized as cultural anthropology elsewhere. This section reviews what was termed physical anthropology in the four-field approach, but is now more often called “Biological” anthropology.
**Physical/biological anthropology.** Biological anthropology represents the most scientific end of the essentially human, anthropocentric field, devoted to studying the biological history, evolutionary relationships, and adaptive diversity that characterize the human species. Its place on the imaginary continuum from science to social science is difficult to identify. The field itself was originally called “physical anthropology” in the 19th century to emphasize the fact that its subject was the physical remains of people—generally their bones and brains—and to contrast with the mental aspects of human life that were becoming the domain of “cultural anthropologists.” In the 20th century, however, it gradually became clear that there were things to study that fell within the scope of physical anthropology without being strictly “physical” in the sense that bones are—notably genes and the behavior of nonhuman primates. Consequently, we commonly refer to the field as “biological” anthropology,” although “physical anthropology” remains in use” (Marks, 2011, p. 4). The evolution of the name of the discipline illustrates the disciplines proclivity for 1) learning from historical mistakes in the field, and 2) moving comprehensively to correct them. I believe this disciplinary, historical awareness represents a trend that is important in the writing of biological anthropology.

The early history of the field of biological anthropology represents essentially a move to distinguish itself from cultural anthropology. How adjacent biological anthropology writing is to cultural anthropology writing and biological writing is a matter of some import. Whatever scholarly physical anthropology is, it is clearly distinct from scholarly cultural anthropology in its topics and approaches and somewhat similar to
traditional evolutionary biology (Smocovitis, 2012). Frank Boas, an early anthropologist and purveyor of the four-field approach to anthropology, foreshadowed the eventual shedding of biological anthropology from the ranks of general anthropology, which took the cultural turn without biological anthropology:

The biological, linguistics and ethnographic, archeological methods are so distinct that on the whole, the same man will not be equally proficient in all of them. The time is rapidly drawing near when the biological branch will finally be separated from the rest, and become a part of biology. (Boaz, 1904, p. 523)

Boaz’s prediction that biological anthropology would eventually mainline with traditional biology still rings as a real possibility. Yet, as Smocovitis (2012) indicated, biological anthropology maintains separation from general evolutionary biology, “in some measure still preserves the special or ‘unique’ status given to humans despite the fact that humans are animals” (p.12). It is human ego that keeps them apart. These disciplinary tensions are quite real and should show up in the writing of experts. Because of this separate stance we might expect to see more individual boundaries and in-groupings are important in separating biological anthropology. Thus, biological anthropology fits in ideologically with science in terms of knowledge construction in three ways, according to Marks (2011),

Ontology, epistemology, and semiotics are all a part of how knowledge is constructed. First, there is some relationship between what is really out there and what science says about it, but it is never obvious or straightforward…Second, there are ways of discerning aspects of the world, which are bound by the available instruments and conceptual models…Third, we make sense of the world scientifically through the introduction and use of key metaphors …each of these helps us see the world in constructive scientific ways and to frame new questions about how it works (p. 6).
Recognizing the complexity of knowledge-making in biological anthropology does not fully open it to simple fact/opinion dichotomies; nor does it invoke a naive discourse of absolute truth or reversion to a simpleminded scientism. Even with this less humanistic side of anthropology, science is understood as a “cultural system in which individuals with common ideas and their own special language interact with one another in complex ways (Marks, 2011, p.12). Marks’s definition of the science of biological anthropology mirrors closely the work of prominent rhetors of science (Bazerman, 1989; Ceccarelli, 2001; Fahnestock, 2002; Gross & Keith, 1997; Harris, 1997; Myers 1990) in their recognition of science as a discourse. Without taking a wholly postmodern approach, Marks (2011) recognized physical anthropology faces a “fundamental a problem of how we communicate it to one another: how we talk, write and think about it” (p. 6). In other words, scholars in physical and biological anthropology are heavily cognizant of the impact of their discourses. Consequently, lessons learned from early disciplinary work in “race” and other complicated issues in the philosophical limitations of science impact the discourses of physical anthropology. To maintain its status as a science, those in biological anthropology need to appear to adhere strictly to the recognized delimiters of scientific reasoning. Additionally, historical problems of the field’s interpretation of data around the concept of “race” and “human origins” have taught the field to carefully interpret.

I intend to paint a picture of a discursively cautious field, a field that has to struggle to maintain its scientific identity and that has learned from its past. It is these two features that predominately create the elaborated reasoning of biological anthropology,
the careful and extensive citation, the tight problem definition, and relatively strong research arc.

**Science and the delimiting of inferences in physical/biological anthropology.**

Unlike other cultural systems, science appears to advance universally, because it was designed to do so through “rhetoric of demarcation” (Taylor, 1996). According to Marks (2011) scientific explanations have several properties that biological anthropology scholarly writers are recalcitrant to violate:

- First, they are concerned with proximate cause, rather than ultimate cause. Proximate cause is a mechanism, a “how” question. Ultimate cause is a “why” question, a reason for something (Marks, 2011, p. 8).

- Modern science deals exclusively with the natural world, explaining it in terms of itself, without recourse to a supernatural or spiritual world. This is a methodological assumption of science, which tried to understand the natural world, assuming that it is knowable, if it is acted upon by the occult, capricious forces, then these are by their nature unpredictable and unknowable, and they defeat the purpose of science (Marks, 2011, p. 9). Colloquially, this is the referred to as the naturalistic assumption.

- A third characteristic of scientific explanation is that they strive to be parsimonious, by which we mean they try not to be unnecessarily complicated (Marks, 2011, p. 10).
• A fourth characteristic of scientific explanations is that they are probabilistic, not deterministic—that is they can generally rank outcomes as more or less likely given certain boundary conditions, but cannot tell you the future” (Marks, 2011, p. 10).
• The last signature of a good scientific explanation is logical rigor (Marks, 2011, p. 11).

Marks here has characterized the acceptable constraints on inferencing within biological anthropological scholarship as a condition of science. There marks an intentionally created appearance. The field is intent on creating the seemingness of biological science atop what is an essentially social and human science. A facile investigation might simply call this determination duplicitous, but, as I explain next, this intent to belong in science via narrow inferences is a hallmark of discourse and is historically motivated.

*The history of physical anthropology as a delimiter of interpretation.* Experts in biological anthropology learned to apply these delimiters of interpretations by appropriating the field’s historical embarrassment around the issue of race and, to a lesser extent, the issue of human origins. In the mid-1800s, the field was largely devoted to the justification of slavery (Little & Kennedy, 2010). Several histories of the field have been published that refer ruefully to these as the “bad old days” of racist physical anthropology. Part of professionalizing in biological anthropology is internalizing this historical embarrassment and embracing the lessons that come with it.
These are lessons in extreme modesty of interpretation that run deep and wide, not only operating against cultural anthropology and its wider latitude of interpretation, but also carefully operating within the epistemic boundaries of science itself. What follows is a brief history of academic biological anthropology and its historical discomfitures.

**Expert professional discourse in biological anthropology.** Professional topics in physical anthropology are what MacDonald characterized as “compact” problems, meaning that the topics were narrow and specialized, defined carefully. Biological anthropologists have declared their own field to be three-part division, including primatology, paleoanthropology, and human variation (Marks, 2011, p. 16; see also Lovejoy, 1982). Stojanowski & Buikstra (2005) identified pathology, forensic anthropology, and biodistance modeling as highly visible topics along with new topics in bone chemistry and molecular anthropology, although dentition studies seem to have fallen out of favor. The topics vary and there is a centripetal force that pulls biological anthropologists away from their realm into allied fields. However, there is also an academic centrifugal force, as social concepts such as examining power, gender, and difference are manifested in bones (Marks, 2011, p. 17). Thus, professionals are free to move about topics in their area, as long as they treat each individually as subjects unto themselves. Students learn this as a matter of subject expertise and position themselves wherever would be advantageous topically.

There is a tension between whether the field has fully embraced its potential as a science and Washburn’s vision of a human biological science. In fact, in 2010 there was
much discussion about the word science in AAPA’s definition of the field (Cowgill, 2011; Fuentes, 2010):

Physical anthropology is a biological science that deals with the adaptations, variability, and evolution of human beings and their living and fossil relatives. Because it studies human biology in the context of human culture and behavior, physical anthropology is also a social science (as quoted in Fuentes, 2010, p. 12).

Several scholars have done content analysis of the field’s primary journals to determine whether biological anthropology has embraced a vision that is more than busy data collection using binaries such as the difference between descriptive articles. This is tacitly coded as latent science or analytical articles, a more glorified form of science where statistical data are collected and analyzed, hypotheses are tested, and implications are drawn to a broader theory. As seen above, the field has historically derived some very poor (in hindsight) implications for broader theory and went through a time when most anthropologists did not draw inferences, just collected data, and left them uninterpreted.

There has since clearly been a learned emphasis on description. Lovejoy, Mensforth, and Armelagos (1982) performed a content analysis of the American Journal of Physical Anthropology (AJPA) examining what methodologies and topics characterized as skeletal biology in their field’s flagship journal from 1930—1980.

Besides dividing reports between human and nonhuman, Lovejoy, Mensforth, and Armelagos (1982) also divided analytical and descriptive reports. Analytical here means those reports that propose and test specific hypotheses (p. 330) and descriptive means “reports that present simple description, sorting procedures, identification method or pure data.” They found that “essentially,” the most occurring of the subfields, “skeletal biology has remained primarily a descriptive science during the fifty year history
documented here” (p. 335). They concluded that physical anthropology lacked a “strong inference” tendency earlier identified by Platt (1965). In speaking about the future opportunities for their field, Lovejoy, Mensforth, and Armelagos (1982) suggested that physical anthropology had need of “the organizational and motivational influences of general theory, something the field seems to have failed to generate” (p. 336).

The division between descriptive and analytical reports represents another fundamental tension that professional physical anthropologists must mediate: how to delimit an appropriate, scientific interpretation to develop a “general theory.” Armelagos and Van Gerven (2003) used counts of bioarchaeological articles published in the AJPA to document a resurgence of non-theory-driven research during the 1990’s, the distinction being drawn between theoretical articles (which propose and test hypotheses within an anthropological framework) and descriptive articles (everything else). Stojanowski and Buikstra (2005) did not do content analysis, rather impact analysis via citation indices. They examined the primary subfield of human osteology, based on articles published in the AJPA during two 5-year intervals: 1980–1984 and 1996–2000 and found that “analytical articles are cited more frequently than descriptive articles and thus have higher impact, reflecting the discipline’s continued commitment to problem-oriented research.” Stojanowski and Buikstra (2005) also found that early stage academics, within two years of their PhD were more frequently descriptive than analytical and late stage scholars, who, more than six years past their PhD, wrote more analytically—reinforcing the idea that novices measure and collect data but experts interpret data. This is a trend we might expect to see in honors theses too. In a follow-up to the Lovejoy, Mensforth,
and Armelagos (1982) piece, Hens and Godde (2008) performed a content analysis on the American Journal of Physical Anthropology from 1980 to 2004. Finding similar numbers to the 1982 study, a mere 32% of the pieces in AJPA were defined as analytical using the same three criteria: statistical analysis, hypothesis testing, and broader explanatory context. However, Hens and Godde scored papers individually and found that for at least one of the three characteristics “nearly 80% of papers attempted a broader theoretical explanation, 44% tested hypotheses, and 67% used advanced statistics, suggesting that the skeletal biology papers in the journal have an analytical emphasis” (p. 234). However, in 2003, Armelagos and Van Gerven found that human osteologists were reverting to “safe, yet descriptive, research.” The cautiousness learned from history remained strong in biological anthropology.

The historical reasons for narrow interpretations are alone compelling, yet another, more concrete incentive also served to encourage this narrow interpretation. This incentive was fiscal. Since life scientists had decoded the human genome, discrete biological information had become increasingly valuable data. Unlike in the past, biological anthropologists understood that their data could be used in dozens of new applications in genomic research. Narrow interpretations allowed for the greatest use by geneticists, i.e., the less preexisting interpretation a geneticist had to get through, the more potential applications seemed viable. Consequently, in addition to the reasons discussed above, professional physical anthropologists learn through professional social discourse that there is some financial incentive to restraining interpretation into its tightest delimiters. Property rights, economics, politics, and ethics are now part of the
discourse of professional anthropology (Marks, 2011). Students learn tacitly from mentorships with faculty that prematurely defining what research need their data could fill limits it is salability.

Overall, professional discourse in biological anthropology is circumspect, tight, conservative, and richly numerically descriptive, likely because of the historical lessons learned, the encompassing discourses of science, and the potential marketability of any research data. The next section discusses how students might learn this discourse.

**Pedagogy and discourse for novices.** The circumspect qualities of biological anthropology extend to pedagogy as well. Several reasons have been offered for the apparent quietude on the matter of novice discourse appropriation in biological anthropology. The first is that Western university schooling is a White, American, middle-class cultural norm and, therefore nearly, invisible to most anthropologists. Levinson (1999) pointed out that “Even as formal schooling became regularized and bureaucratized in the West, anthropologists continued to study a range of educational practices outside the school, including ritual and apprenticeship” (Levinson, 1999, p. 597). How Westerners learn is not anthropologically an interesting topic to study. The second reason given is that even with ethnography, anthropologists do not have the tools to understand something as nuanced as pedagogy and education, or that the topic is more strictly cognitive than biological. Whatever the reason, physical anthropology has not greatly taken up pedagogy. The reflective consideration of how biological anthropology students become biological anthropologists and how they best learn the discourse is not a subject matter that comports with the overall identity of their scholarship.
The hesitancy to discuss pedagogy is not to illustrate that professionals do not care about the students’ comprehension of their field and its discourses. First, there was some concern for students’ awareness and interest in the field. Precollegiate study of physical anthropology in education has identified that students learn only a modicum of the hominid fossil record and little about the significance of human biological diversity (Ashmore, 2005). The high school students just were not aware of the significance of the knowledge and its possible implications. Ashmore (2005) also confirmed that secondary students can learn appropriately scaled scientific information about human origins and variations. So it is not that they could not learn it; they were simply unaware of most of it. Other potential future biological anthropologists were aware of the field but disinterested.

In the late 1970s and 1980s, biological anthropology, and anthropology in general, were not popular. Upham, Trevathan, and Wilk (1988) argued that anthropology courses became popular in the 1960s and early 1970s as a result of a very politically active student body and that “enrollment in undergraduate and graduate anthropology programs peaked in the early 1970s” (p. 204), but say that “today [1988], the social activism of the 1960s has given way to growing concerns about very different national socioeconomic issues” (p. 204). The authors framed this as the relevance dilemma by saying that students did not enroll in anthropology anymore because they were afraid that they could not get a job with the degree (p. 207). However, the late 1990s, biomedical developments in genomics and personal, designer biology have made these concerns less relevant and no further articles have been published on enrollment difficulties. Biology, as a discipline, has also exploded and now there is less need for territorial fights, as each
enclave is so specialized. Biological anthropology can claim its intellectual territory as its scholarship calls for, which, presumably, serves sufficiently to attract interested students.

There are also competing ideologies for how and what to teach students, what discourse to appropriate them into. Upham, Trevathan, and Wilk (1988) advocated “[involving] students in research in their own communities (p. 213) whereas (Lightfoot, 2009) “advocate[d] that field courses are critical for the teaching and development of anthropological archaeology in the 21st century (p. 2). Upham, Trevathan, and Wilk (1988) suggested that “the ability to handle quantitative data in an effective manner is the hallmark of anthropological technique” (p. 212). But anthropology used a surprising array of methods including the ethnographic interview (Spradley, 1979), collecting personal histories, oral histories, folklore and kinship information (Schulsky, 1965), participant observation, various kinds of formal and informal survey and sampling techniques, photographic documentation, filming and videotaping, mapping, and air photo interpretation. Thus, while the specific methods to teach undergraduates are left to the discretion of each individual professor, an overall emphasis on research continues to predominate. The discourse is always tightly methodological. Scholars do recognize that overt education may be helpful: “many of us had to learn these skills ourselves without formal instruction, but it makes little sense to require undergraduates to do the same” (Upham, Trevathan, and Wilk, 1988, p. 212). Scholars recognized intuitively that this tendency to be quiet on matters of pedagogy may not be the best method. However, the tradition of not interpreting without data keeps much from being made of the unofficial recognition.
There is also concern about the type of students who choose to pursue biological anthropology. It may be trite to admit that self-reflexivity is difficult under the best of circumstances and avoidance is often a desirable strategy. Biological anthropology may permit this indulgence better than other branches. Coleman and Simpson (1999) make this proclivity appreciable in biological anthropology, suggesting that a strategy adopted by some students who appear to dislike the potentially reflexive orientation of anthropology is to concentrate their studies on biological rather than social anthropology, since the former is seen as 'more straight-forward' and gives 'more definite answers' (p. 4).

Coleman and Simpson’s claim that students may choose physical anthropology in order to avoid self-reflection seems to contradict Marks’s (2011) view of the science of biological anthropology where he states,

Science is not so much about “reality” or what there “is” but about what we can know…Science is fundamentally about the kinds of questions one can meaningfully ask, the kinds of data one can collect, and the kinds of answers one can generate. In other words, it’s about epistemology,” not ontology (p. 6).

Marks here is arguing that physical anthropology is reflexive at the level of epistemology, as revealed in its many methods, rather than at the data-interpretation level as it is in cultural anthropology. Therefore, students who engage in biological anthropology are merely delaying their incipient reflexivity, not avoiding it. By delaying it, however, it is easy to not talk about their own learning experiences.

For these reasons, there seems to be a dearth of scholarly discourse on the pedagogy of the discourse of anthropology that is not apologist in nature. I’ve found only two comments:
We need to be as aware as possible of our histories because they are so critical to who we are and what we do (e.g., Little & Kennedy, 2010). There is an alarming trend among many students and practitioners in our discipline to ignore historical contexts for our questions, perspectives, and theoretical orientations today. I even wonder how many of today’s undergraduate students will hear Sherwood Washburn’s name, read anything he wrote, or understand the impact of his ideas (Fuentes, 2010, p. 2)

This first comment, written in the text of an AAPA annual luncheon lecture, alludes to the importance of novices learning history. The next quote alludes to the marketable future of biological anthropology and the subordination of its academic values to student learning.

Added to these data acquisition skills are others important in the practical analysis and interpretation of data. Many anthropologists could be teaching undergraduates about how to do literature reviews and searches, computerized or manual analysis of textual and quantitative data, proposal writing, technical report writing, editing and cooperative writing (group authoring). These skills are salable and marketable and could give anthropology undergraduates access to careers from which they are now excluded (Upham, Trevathan, and Wilk, 1988, pp. 212-213).

By putting this history together with MacDonald, we would expect to see an emphasis on reasons and research with a notable rejection of isms and audience in the novice discourse of biological anthropology. As far as subject matter, we’ve seen that biological anthropology focuses on groups and is hesitant to make inferences to individuals. Attributes may be derived from groups of data, but grouping subject matters is consistent with the conservative nature of biological anthropology.
Chapter 3: Methods

The method explained in the following pages replicates that used in MacDonald’s Professional Academic Writing in the Humanities and Social Sciences (1994), but it was employed on a different genre of writing and in a different academic discipline. While MacDonald studied the writing of professional academics in the humanities and social sciences, this inquiry examined the writing of honors students at the end of their undergraduate careers in the humanities and social sciences.

The method replicated in this study is one of four originally identified by MacDonald. Three of the four methods involved rhetorical analysis of pattern above the sentence level to identify patterns of variations in each of three academic discourse communities. The fourth pattern of variation involved identifying alignments among sentence subjects. Some background on the first three is helpful in order to understand the fourth method, which, as stated, is employed in this study.

MacDonald identified the following four patterns of variation in textual knowledge-making: The first pattern is variations from compactness to diffuseness, which has to do with how diffuse problem posing typically became across a scholarly conversation, how broad the subjects can be, but still be considered on topic. The second pattern is variation in explanatory versus interpretive goals, which has to do with how scholarship proceeded to make sense of a given object of scrutiny or, conversely, to make sense of something else from that object; what are the warrants that scaffold the
reasoning? The third pattern is variations from concept driven to text-driven in the relation between generalization and particular, which has to do with how knowledge-making is motivated either from deviations between specifics or, conversely, by the desire to posit a new concept. The fourth and final pattern, from which this study is derived, is variations in the degrees of epistemic self-consciousness, which has to do with the degrees of epistemic accounting found within each text (1994, p. 19). More specifically, this fourth analysis examines how the work of knowledge-making is divided among linguistic subjects.

Whereas the previous three patterns dealt with ideas beyond the sentence level, this final pattern, which identifies agency within the subject of sentences, brings together the conceptual conventions of academic prose with the linguistic patterns that facilitate knowledge-making. To speak simply, the pattern assumes that what will be in the subject slot of the sentence is either the phenomena being discussed or the people and intellectual tools necessary to make knowledge. This is because academic prose is primarily concerned with knowledge-making, and the division of disciplines usually focuses around what knowledge is being made about.

Importing a methodology into a new genre, even a methodology with as much to recommend it as MacDonald’s, should not be done indiscriminately. With any methodology come supporting assertions about the nature of the phenomenon being studied, in this case, novice written knowledge-making, and how the phenomenon is situated among related phenomena, in this case, expert written knowledge-making. In
particular, honors theses are not embedded in professional disciplinary discourse and so are not part of knowledge-making. In order to verify the suitability of an imported methodology for a given inquiry, a thorough inspection of these grounding assumptions is a prudent and necessary precaution. In this case, the grounding assumptions are built into MacDonald’s continuum and coding.

**Coding**

The coding scheme, though seemingly simple, was derived from considerations of the purpose of academic writing. Rather than imagining writing as a direct transmission of thoughts from the brain to the page, MacDonald recognized that academic writers configured writing as knowledge-making. “Academic writing,” according to MacDonald, “is distinguished from other kinds of writing by its knowledge-making function” (1994, p. 9). She contended that academic prose evolved as a vehicle for constructing knowledge claims; for wielding ideas, constructing categories and concepts, weighing competing abstractions, assessing the relation between claim and evidence, developing careful distinctions, and taking us out of the ephemerality of individual instances so that we can learn something about our past and our present, while attempting to control or improve our present (MacDonald, 1994, p. 9).

The honors thesis brings no challenge to this definition of academic writing as primarily knowledge-making.

The central elements in Western, academic knowledge-making, and, therefore, academic writing, are epistemological and phenomenological. The epistemological, of course, represents the mechanisms of inquiry, while the phenomenological represents the object of study. Consequently, MacDonald theorized that the subjects of academic
sentences would primarily reflect those two categories, and they became the divisions for her coding classes.

The further distinctions within the coding scheme are shown below:

**Table 2: Coding Scheme**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Phenomenological</strong></th>
<th><strong>Epistemological</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Particulars - Obama, the gardener, etc. (P)</td>
<td>Reasons - decision, changes, tensions (RS)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Groups - Cabinets, practitioners, etc. (G)</td>
<td>Research - X's account, scholars, assocs. (RH)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attributes - dependency, edges, measurements, etc. (AT)</td>
<td>Isms - Cartesianism, reader-response, cold war thought (I)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Audience--we, one, you, dear reader (AU)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The classes and codes will be discussed in a later section of this chapter. The agenda here is to explain the theoretical consistency, affordances, and constraints of the borrowed method. Language here is posited as a set of representations, not as an unbiased description of reality. When one is coding for phenomenology, the social constructedness of a subject is not a consideration. For example, a sentence subject such as “the tension
between competing Cuban business initiatives” contains a potentially arguable premise that there were competing business initiatives in socialist Cuba. However, since the subject (the tension) was written phenomenologically, as a shared attribute between two companies, it is coded as a phenomenological subject in the third class of attributes (AT). The coding system disregards objections as to whether its constructedness excludes it or not. If the author has written the sentence subject as an attribute and it stands exemplary as an attribute.

This coding scheme does not assess the truth value of the prose because it recognizes and accounts for the constructedness of written texts. MacDonald (1992) defends this position by arguing that “we need a way of canceling out differences in content in order to explore whether there are differences in representation or differences in methodology that show up as differences in representation” (p. 539). In this way, the coding is exceptionally inclusive of a variety of academic concepts, from a host of disciplines, while still centering tightly on the core components of academic work.

Because the coding scheme does not attempt to account for the motivations of the writer or the reader, but instead derives its analytical power directly from the sentence structure of textual analysis the implications of the findings are constrained to the words as representations of knowledge-making. The implications cannot extend to the agency or cognition of the theses writer or the faculty reader. The methodology allows only for a very limited legitimate interpretation, thereby leaving great room for a variety of social theories to explain the other social elements of the honors theses. However, the limited
room available for the interpretation of the textual representations found within the prose of the theses allows that prose to be meaningful in its own right. The coding scheme does this by locating agency in the subject position of the sentence. The coding methods works on the assumption that what is in the subject of the sentence and what the sentence is about is one and the same thing. For example, a standard complete sentence in English has a subject and a predicate. The subject is what or whom the sentence is about, and the predicate usually has a verb, but not always, and tells something about the subject. “The subject has the grammatical function in a sentence of relating its constituent (a noun phrase) by means of the verb to any other elements present in the sentence, i.e., objects, complements, and adverbials” (MacDonald, 1992, p.541).

Another way to explain the rule of the subject in a sentence is to suggest that it is the position in the sentence that must use the verb, or do some action. In this way, the subject is the primary actor in conventional English. Because this form of grammatical agency can be located in the subject position, the text gains the ability of being an actor, or, at least, an intermediary in its own right. Furthermore, the inclusiveness of the primary classification between epistemological and phenomenological in academic writing is maintained by this sentence structure because it heavily demarcates the topic and its study. The sentence subject will allow an academic writer to comfortably and easily discuss one or the other, but to do both requires a much more complex structure. As mentioned above, this syntactical purpose of the subject makes it likely that the purpose of academic prose in honors theses will be revealed by examination of sentence subjects.
Another significant aspect of the epistemic and phenomenal classification is that some distinctions among disciplines are annulled in the coding scheme. While close reading, political analysis, and needs assessments are very dissimilar, they all use some type of epistemological tools that can be classified. To use the rhetorical shorthand of stasis theory, rather than linguistic debates around definitions of epistemology that forces disciplines at wide variance from each other to come to some mutually dissatisfying definitions for the sake of comparison, the classification structure and tallying mechanisms of the methodology allows for the stasis to be moved down to the question of existence. In other words, does the epistemic or phenomenal subject exist as an actor? If yes, how often and what are the patterns in which they show up in a text? Lowering the stasis to the question of mere existence of a given knowledge-making subject allows for the myriad of definitions among differing disciplines, while at the same time accounting for differences among those disciplines.

**Continua**

The word continuum means any unit that indicates a gradual transition from one condition to a different condition, without any abrupt changes. MacDonald identified the following continuum as one that showed the stages a learner must go through as he or she acquired academic literacy. As with any continuum, there are no sudden clearly demarcated points of transition.

- Nonacademic writing
- Generalized academic writing concerned with stating claims, offering evidence, respecting others opinions, and learning how to write with authority
• Novice approximations of disciplinary ways of making knowledge
• Expert, insider prose (1994, p. 187)

In expert, insider prose, it is feasible to imagine that almost all the sentence subjects are epistemological or phenomenological. The majority of academic writing is intended to operate on epistemological or phenomenological grounds. The assumption then, left implicit in MacDonald’s work, but clearly displayed in the continuum, is that writing at lower points on the continuum will have progressively fewer epistemic and phenomenological subjects; that fewer of the sentences will be invested in the academic work of knowledge-making. In other words, in nonacademic prose, one should find epistemic and phenomenological sentence subjects occurring no more frequently than chance would have it. Given this aspect of MacDonald’s continuum, it is reasonable to hypothesize that as pieces of writing descend the continuum, there should be fewer and fewer epistemic or phenomenological sentence subjects, i.e. less academic work being accomplished. An additional interpretation of the continuum may suggest that all the sentences are knowledge-making at all points along the continuum and that the relevant difference will appear in the proportion of phenomenal and epistemic sentence subjects. The difference might not be one of total occurrence, but one of percentages.

What follows will be a discussion of the consequences for this project.

MacDonald suggested that only at the professional level can academic writing be consistently characterized as knowledge-making; students’ texts are typically written to
demonstrate knowledge or to aid students’ thinking and learning, but not to create new knowledge or negotiate knowledge claims within a group of other experts (1992, p. 16).

By stating this, MacDonald implied that students’ texts are not consistently knowledge-making, but knowledge-making to some degree other than consistence. There is a difference between the existence of a knowledge-making sentence with a phenomenal or epistemic subject which can be seen as a percentage of a total piece of writing and a piece of writing where the majority of sentences are not knowledge-making so the percentages are not representative. From this, it could be argued that student writing such as honors theses are poor fits for a continuum that promises to be most descriptive at its highest level and less descriptive beneath that. However, that logic simply negates the benefit of a continuum at all by assuming rigid boundaries where there are none, since, by definition, a continuum is a gradual movement. Furthermore, with that outlook, there would be no ability to understand development at all. Ignoring the potential for development is untenable for a discipline that desires to push the boundaries of knowledge about writing. Rather, this continuum and the associated coding can be descriptive to the degree that an honors theses is knowledge-making. Finally, as a matter of practice, an honors thesis is both knowledge-making and pedagogical, and, with the knowledge-making aspect emphasized by the pedagogues, the coding scheme is well-suited.

The continuum from novice to expert allows researchers to abandon unhelpful binaries like academic or nonacademic, conventional or self-expressive, and
accommodation or resistance (MacDonald, 1994, p. 187). Additionally, because the
continuum is not pegged tightly to curriculum, rather curriculum loosely represents
interim points on a rough developmental scale of academic writing, it can ably account
for the unusual academic position of the honors student writer in the spatial curriculum,
the real and imagined audiences for the thesis, and its context as a novice attempt at
academic inquiry.

Despite the reasons itemized above explaining why the coding scheme is suitable
for use at levels other than the professional level, it is important to be aware that some
features of novice genre writing will need to be accounted for differently than the genre
writing of professionals. Most notable is the absence of a genuine discourse community
for thesis-writing honor students to enter. MacDonald carefully explained “it is only
among professional academics that we can locate actual disciplinary communities of
people who influence and are influenced by each other” (1992, p. 16). Accepting that
honors theses do not join a discourse community does not necessitate avoiding studying
them. The absence of actual disciplinary communities only means that researchers must
be particular in the kinds of discourse analysis applied to honors theses. In other words,
because of the lack of a disciplinary speech community that these theses writer join, the
kinds of analysis that attempt to establish or describe a discourse community would be
unwarranted from a genre perspective. A study of honors theses that would look at the
discourse community they come out of would be a study of honors programs and their
discourses. A study such as that would ultimately deemphasize or neglect the writing.
Since this coding scheme is not attempting to describe a discourse community, but instead, to describe a piece of writing only, the above concern is easily ameliorated. The coding scheme must be ever so slightly attenuated to the third tier. Specifically, attenuating means that as the pieces are coded, the coders must be alert for subjects of sentences that are neither epistemological nor phenomenological. Again, just because a piece is not consistently knowledge-making, does not mean it is not at all knowledge-making. Accounting for this problem is simply a matter of degree and guaranteeing that the coders are open to recognizing sentence subjects that do not conform to the two classes. MacDonald recognizes that novice writing may require attenuation to coding when she states on initiating students into discourse communities that “such initiation will necessarily involve something other than the kind of disciplinary community professionals may share” (1994, p. 15). Even though MacDonald does not speak of this at length, her third point on the continuum is explicit recognition that academic writing may be done by other than professional writers.

Little is known about the third point on the continuum, especially in conjunction with honors theses. MacDonald recognized that “the move into postgraduate work almost certainly will involve learning new textual practices in some fields” (1994, p. 151). Thus, students have much to learn. This learning will have consequences. MacDonald wrote, “Decisions about agency have important consequences for novices entering a field because certain kinds of agency are probably easier for novices to create” (1994, p. 151). Further, citing the work of Witte and Cherry (1986), MacDonald stated that epistemic subject sentences are not part of the ordinary repertoire of writers even well into the
undergraduate years. Categorically, honors theses are not professional texts, but they are academic. Georgia Southern University, for example, describes the honors thesis thusly,

“The culmination of the University Honors Program experience is the Honors Thesis or Capstone Project which involves students engaging in undergraduate research projects under the supervision of faculty mentors. Students who complete the entire course of study and the Honors Thesis are well prepared for law school, medical school, graduate school, a career, or whatever path they seek to follow” (Honors/about, para 2).

Among the requirements for completing the honors program is “Completion of Honors Thesis/Capstone Project and public presentation at Honors Research Symposium” (Honors/about, para 3). Given this characterization of honors theses, it is reasonable to expect that the prose will demonstrate typically academic sentence subjects. Consequently, the fitness between the continuum and the coding with the purpose of the thesis is tight. Next, the discussion will turn to why it is desirable, rather than simply suitable, to use MacDonald’s methodology.

**Beyond Suitability**

Beyond the fact that it is legitimate to employ MacDonald’s methodology on honors theses, doing so also offers several outstanding advantages. First, the method includes a novice category that encompasses the genre of the honors thesis, which has accrued little research, in part, because categorizing the genre for comparison proved difficult with other methods that were less hierarchical. The genre itself is largely unstudied and worthy of study for the reasons other academic genres are studied: to
anatomize and operationalize them for teachers (Greenbank & Penketh, 2009; Todd, Bannister, & Clegg, 2004; Todd, Smith, & Bannister, 2006) who want to convey with ease what are often otherwise stactic structures. Second, MacDonald’s book won the CCCC Outstanding Book Award in 1996 and the model proffered in it has wide esteem in rhetoric and composition (Carroll, 2002; Hyland & Bondi, 2006; Murray, 2009). Adding more data to develop the continuum will compound the model’s utility and popularity. Third, and most importantly, the types of agency written into knowledge-making efforts of honors theses will be further understood and possibly allow for better alignment of scholarly writing instruction with a writer’s experience of the curriculum. Understanding the knowledge-making efforts of the undergraduate honors theses allows for greater appreciation of the rhetorical ability of students at that same and similar curricular geography. Next, I will discuss the methodological processes and complete the discussion of the coding scheme used.

Location

Nine honors theses, written as the capstone project of the honors curriculum at middle-sized compass-point institution in southeast Georgia, were studied. The university is open access, but acceptance into the University Honors Program depends on SAT/ACT score, grades in high school, previous honors experience, community involvement, personal interview, and teacher recommendation. The University Honors Program rests on four pillars, which are: critical sense of inquiry, spirit of creativity, civic responsibility, and global perspective. The mission of the program is to provide “a small college atmosphere in the context of a large comprehensive university.... A hallmark of
the program is the emphasis on bringing ideas to life through undergraduate research, experiential learning and service-learning opportunities” (honors/about, Para 2). It presently solicits endowment funds in order to become a full-fledged and independently organized college with the Georgia Southern University structure. Despite predictions of 1,500 enrolled students by 2020, the University Honors Program is comparably small, most years not exceeding a total of 300 total enrolled students, and graduating roughly 40 students per academic year. Like most honors programs, this one suffers from problems with retention—as students are asked to write a thesis, participation within the program drops. In order to combat this tendency, the University Honors Program awards research funding and sponsors an annual research symposium in which all honors thesis writers are invited to share their work.

Findings from single location case-studies of a genre often fail to be generalizable to similarly constructed, but differently situated circumstances. Rather, as explained above, this method recognizes the diversity of academic institutions that have honors thesis writing. Thus, it is replicable and aggregable so that other researchers at other campuses can collect the same type of data for aggregation. With a large enough and representative sample, a generalization may then be drawn. Since this genre has never been studied in this way, this inquiry is foundational and would be most appropriately construed as inviting replication for expressly this reason.
**Theses Selection**

The University Honors Program neglected to keep copies of honors theses from many prior years. The oldest available dated from the 2006-2007 school year. Therefore, honors theses that had been finished within the 2011-2012 academic year were selected. There were several practical reasons for such a selection. First, they were most consistently accessible. These honors theses had been kept in a visible box in the honors program, waiting for library binding. Second, data analysis of recent work could supplement the University Honors Program argument to become a fully-fledged college. Third, it allowed for the widest variety of non-STEM disciplinary genre examples. The next paragraph describes the criteria and methodological decision making involved in culling out the appropriate theses.

The theses were noticeably brief in comparison to the standard 40-page honor thesis reported by Guzy (2003). They were more or less similar in presentation; the honors sign off sheet on the front and stapled or clipped together. The theses available were limited. I performed two major sorts. The first sort was to make sure that the selected theses would be amenable to MacDonald’s sentence analysis method. This means that the theses had to be primarily print linguistic instead of visual, because a sentence based method wouldn’t work well on visual data; they had to be written in English for the linguistic assumptions within the method to be applicable; and they had to be finished and approved to be considered viable, representative examples. The second sort was to match honors disciplines with MacDonald’s professional disciplines as well as possible.
The theses were, by and large, very print-linguistic text heavy, although there were two exceptions. The first exception was a construction management thesis that was thick with CAD designs. The second was an information science thesis with a title page, a bit of a literature review, a summary and discussion, taking no more than a few pages, and an accompanying CD. Otherwise, the pile of theses was remarkable for its ubiquitous markers of academic textuality. In order to select among these theses, they were skimmed, and the two mentioned above were eliminated. Three written in foreign languages were also eliminated. The final general elimination was of an unsigned thesis with a post-it-note indicating need for revisions. It was not completed and, therefore, unsuitable for inclusion in the study.

Susan Peck MacDonald’s work had been in three expert discourse communities engaged in scholarly conversation. She had studied professional, journal-based discussions in literature, psychology, and history. MacDonald’s selection of tightly interwoven disciplinary conversations could not be mirrored at this tier; for three reasons. First, honors these are not in conversation with each other; or necessarily even the same sub-speciality. Second, scholarly journal publications often reflect the view of the editors as well as the writers, but honors theses do not have the same shared responsibility, even when written closely with an advisor. Third, MacDonald studies pieces that were published sequentially, honors theses were approved concurrently. Fourth, the Southern Compass point institution does not offer psychology students the opportunity to write theses therefore I would need to replace it with another social science as long as each discipline had three of more theses available. The selected theses could be generally in
the same area/school; Literature, History, and Social Science. The social science theses were all written in anthropology. The last sort was dividing the remaining into those three large categories. The final nine, in Table 3 below, were selected. Each of the theses have been renamed to emphasize the general method and the subject matter.

Table 3: List of Renamed Theses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Literature</th>
<th>History</th>
<th>Anthropology</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Discourse Analysis in Jane Austen’s Novels</td>
<td>An Ethnography of the Fight for the Basque Language and Eskudi Speakers</td>
<td>An Anthropological Linguistic Analysis of Language and Gender in Folktales</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Close Reading of Margaret Atwood’s The Handmaid’s Tale</td>
<td>The Millennium Development Goals as Indicators of Success in Chad and Gabon: A Comparative Analysis</td>
<td>Interpretations of the Quantitative Data on the Size in the KH-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comparison of violence in Robert Cormier’s The Chocolate War and Meg Rosoff’s How I Live Now</td>
<td>Political Analysis of Cold War Influenced United States Policy Towards Chile, 1964-1974</td>
<td>A Qualitative Needs Assessment of Mexican American Adolescents in Rural South Georgia</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The nine chosen theses were bound for convenient coding. Copies were distributed to a second reader and coder whose purpose is to act as a check on my own coding.

Reading and Coding

Above, the discussion of the coding was limited to its theoretical underpinnings. This section will discuss the classes themselves and the procedures used to code the text.
There are seven classes; three are phenomenological and four are epistemic. MacDonald also enumerates nine special cases.

In the phenomenological category, the classes include Particulars (P), Groups (G), and Attributes (AT). To be coded as a particular, the subject in question must be a noun or noun phrase that refers to a specific person or place or a singular object. Pronouns referring to such a person, place, or thing are also coded as particulars. To be coded as a group, the subject must be a person place or thing in plurality such as groups, categories, or classifications of the subject. Collections of material phenomena like “guns” come under the group’s code. Finally, the attribute code is slightly more complex. “Items in this category are likely to be properties, attributes, actions, or even motivations and strategies of the actors in the particulars and groups classes” (MacDonald, 1992, p. 560). The identifying distinction of an attribute is that it belongs to a phenomenon as a characteristic, quality, or feature. For example, “The depth of the carving in the evergreen indicates a history of the local weather.” The depth is the attribute of the carving.

The four epistemic classes are Reasons (RS), Research (RH), Isms (I), and Audience (AU). The defining feature of subjects in the epistemic class is that they are rhetorical tools chosen by the researcher for knowledge-making and the researcher uses them for knowledge-making. Reasons tended to be all purpose abstractions such as reason, hypothesis, factor, argument, paradigm, or method words like ANOVA, historiography, and analysis. The class of research “consists of references to scholars in the field, to studies, and to the writer or writers of the article being coded” (MacDonald,
1992, p. 562). The class of Isms included theories or schools of thought, rightly powerful as ideologies without reference to a particular scholar. It includes words like postmodernism, evidentialism, and New Criticism. Incidences of the last class, the audience class, are places where the authors are referring to the reader as either an individual reader of the text, or as a class of people likely to be engaged by the text.

There were several alternative sentence structures that made identifying and classifying the subject particularly difficult. These special cases included the existential there, pseudo-cleft sentence, full cleft sentences, and extrapositions. The effect of several of these constructions is often ambiguity or, at the least, unclear referents. “There are more than a dozen measurements of each skull taken” (Ant 2). Other special cases had less to do with obscuring the subject and more to do with accounting for the functions of some grammatical constructions, including questions, quotations, fragments, compound sentences, and compound subjects. For example, a rhetorical question such as “What is the effect of this addition and does it undermine Offred’s story” (Lit 2). MacDonald’s coding scheme included instruction for dealing with each of the special cases. For my study, some of these special cases may still be classified.

Each piece was read three times. The first reading was for general understanding of the inquiry. The second reading was for identifying subjects of the sentence and underling them. The third and final reading was used for identifying the category and class the subject fell into by putting a one or two letter code next to it. These processes
were recursive and cumulative, but, even with practice, it was crucial to maintain the third pass as a helpful corrective.

Tallying

A small, eight-cell table was drawn at the bottom of each page to record the codes for that page. The diagram below represents the table. The tallies for each page were put in the appropriate box, by the following code: P for particular, G for Group, AT for attributes, RS for reasons, RH for research, I for Isms, AU for audience, and T for total. Originally, the eighth block was reserved for the circumstance when a subject was not covered by the epistemic or phenomenal categories, which is conceivable given the novice status of honors thesis. However, it was not necessary because those sentences are omitted from the tally to match MacDonald’s tallying method to facilitate comparison. The eighth block became a “total” category included for ease of adding.

Table 4: Coding Tally Box

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>P</th>
<th>G</th>
<th>AT</th>
<th>RS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RH</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>AU</td>
<td>T</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The first page of the bibliography or appendix, whichever immediately followed the body text, contained a table with a tally for the whole thesis.
Calculations

Three stages of calculations were performed. First, distributions of sentence subjects were tabulated both within and among each discipline. Second, comparisons between the interrater reliability coder’s findings and my original finding were compared, and the percentage of difference identified. Third, using percentages, the findings of the original coder were compared to MacDonald’s finding of expert, professional prose. It is hoped that these calculations are simple enough for wide replication to enable further data collection using this method.

Analysis

Using theories that are in harmony with MacDonald of how writing becomes disciplinary (Bartholomae, 1985; Bazerman & Prior, 2005), I attempt to put the numerical results into meaningful conceptual frames that address my first two research questions.

The results of this inquiry, compared with MacDonald’s data, allowed for some analysis of how successfully honors theses are mimicking the professional knowledge-making patterns. Further, from the comparison within and among each discipline, some measures of disciplinary integrity were hypothesized.

Quantitative results may be used in myriad ways in knowledge-making. Methodological constraints necessitate careful interpretation between disciplines as shown in prose (North, 2005). The moves from data to theory and interpretation of empirical data, are tentative and perpetually subject to finer and more nuanced
interpretations. For example, discretion must be used when placing words in opposition to numbers, seeing them as alternative means for the symbolic mediation of claims, because to do so is not a logical necessity (Geisler, 2003, p. xiv). MacDonald, too, was careful to make this point and assured her readers of three things this classification system is not: 1. It is not intended be evaluative, rather it is heuristic and descriptive. 2. The classifications are not intended to be ends in themselves or to be self-explanatory. They serve as a departure point for identifying and then interpreting patterns that would otherwise be obscured by differences in content or similarities in syntax. 3. The categories do not correspond to degrees of truth or loftiness of theory; instead, they are intended to highlight textual or representational choices (p. 156). Given these conditions for interpretation and the gist of MacDonald’s theoretical work, I will share the results of my inquiry in the next chapter.

Secondary Coding

In order to further elucidate the findings, a secondary coding was devised to see if disciplinarity was evident in another fashion, if the results were cohesive enough to be descriptive of the discipline. The literature theses were coded by topoi; the history theses were coded by whether each sentence was “narrative” or “analysis” because that is the guiding distinction in the discipline; I used MacDonald’s coding strategy on the advisors’ work in anthropology to compare the students with their advisor. The literary and historical results were cross tallied with the results from MacDonald’s coding scheme, identifying overlap. The anthropological results were compared only to themselves since MacDonald studied psychology as her social science.
Conclusion

This chapter has briefly rehearsed MacDonald’s theoretical explanations for her coding scheme and its associated continuum of developing disciplinary prose. The honors theses were established as suitable for the continuum. Further justification was given not only for the methodology’s suitability, but also its desirability. Once understood theoretically, the pragmatic procedures were explained. The next chapter will present the findings.
Chapter 4: Results

In the previous chapter, I explained the suitability of the method for this study. In this chapter, I display my results and their relationships to other findings, particularly those of a second coder and Susan Peck MacDonald’s experts. The results from my coding will be discussed first, followed by their confirmation by a second coder to establish consistency. The third section will see the comparison of data with MacDonald’s work with additional discussion about honors thesis data helping to characterize the third point on MacDonald’s continuum. The fourth and final section identifies an exceptional code that further illuminates the novice disciplinary writing phenomenon.

Results of Coding

The first three tables offer the raw data from my coding of the nine honors theses divided by discipline. As a reminder, each category represents the number of subjects coded, which are close but not necessarily equal to the number of sentences in each thesis. Some sentences in all of the theses are uncodeable, have no subject, and some sentences may have multiple subjects. There is one table each for anthropology, history, and literature. Each of the tables contain the raw data from each class of codes across each individual thesis, the raw totals across the discipline, and the percentage of each class. The raw numbers are included to invite replication and comparison. The percentages are given because that is how MacDonald represented her findings and that
allows for comparison. MacDonald’s omission of raw data from her published work prohibits greater statistical analysis. For example, with raw data, I could determine how uniform the results are within each discipline (history, literature, and psychology); with raw data I could tell if the professional articles were significantly similar in terms of their subject sentence profile. MacDonad’s fundamental assertion that disciplines can be understood and compared against each other with this subject sentence analysis is dependent upon accepting that the writing within each discipline trends toward uniformity, and is significantly different among disciplines. Without raw data form comparison, the results must be compared in their percentile form as below.

Table 5: Honors Anthropology Raw Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class of Sentence Subjects</th>
<th>Ant 1</th>
<th>Ant 2</th>
<th>Ant 3</th>
<th>Sum of Ant</th>
<th>Percentages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Phenomenal Classes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class 1: Particulars</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class 2: Groups</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>218</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class 3: Attributes</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Epistemic Classes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class 4: Reasons</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class 5: Research</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class 6: Isms</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A chi-square test of independence was performed to examine the relation among the three theses across classes. Among all the phenomenal classes the relationship was insignificant with a $p < .05$. Even extrapolating using a higher $n$ at these same rates no greater coherency was identified. Each thesis has results that are entirely different from each other; when compared statistically they were found to not be significantly alike in any way that the method could account for. The phenomenal subjects of honors theses in anthropology at the Southern institution appear no more coherent than random. The honors anthropology students are not disciplined unto themselves. The curriculum these superior students experienced did not yield writers who wrote like each other. The results cannot be legitimately grouped to make a comprehensive statement about how their work exemplifies a discipline. Consequently, we can safely extrapolate that this body of honors students did not coherently write like a profession because their results stymied characterization. The honors theses in Anthropology were similar in no significant way. I cannot compare these to MacDonald because she did not report the diversity of her results within each discipline. However, her cross disciplinary comparison rests on the assumption that each disciplinary writing profile is internally coherent. If that is indeed the case, a disciplinary comparison between honors and experts would inevitably fail, so the question is answered nonetheless.

That the phenomenon studied appears random may be due to a couple of factors. First, these are novice writers; they are not joining an actual conversation as it appears in

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class 7: Audience</th>
<th>0</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>0</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>0%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>203</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>361</td>
<td>681</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
scholarly journal. The students are asked to imagine that they are, surely, but they are not, in fact, going to be published in those pages. The honors students are not vulnerable and sensitive to the criticisms one imagines receiving in such a circumstance. Yet, the novice writers must see themselves as contributing to even simulate the task. So, if we take this as a legitimate example of a novice attempting to join a conversation, and I see no reason why we should not, then we are at our second reason: anthropology is about everything humans do and are, which is most of what we have words for in this world. The expectation of coherence in a scholarly area that covers “everything humans do and are” seems unlikely to have a sufficiently narrow problem definition, even within a cited conversation, much less novice work.

The epistemic classes of reasons and research in anthropological honors theses reflect the same incoherence and insignificance. A chi-square test of independence was performed to examine the relation among the anthropological theses. Within the class of isms at $p$ of .05, they were similar at .816. A chi square of the audience class in anthropology revealed a .857 similarity with a .05 alpha. Given these results, it is supportable to say that low references to isms and the audience is characteristic of honors theses writing in anthropology. Both physical anthropology and cultural anthropology are disciplines in which the practice of writing for characterization is extremely complicated notions because the topic is people and their groupings. These are extremely difficult to characterize depending on who one is trying to communicate with, so it makes sense that audience references are low in novice writers. But this is an indicator of consistency, even if it is consistently not there. The honors students in anthropology are uniformly at a
point where they do not refer to an audience. One of the very few examples of the audience code comes from the following sentence in a physical anthropology honor thesis methods section: “Therefore, based on the proportion between modes in the older sample, we can estimate that the minimum mean of mandibular corpus height at M1 of the KH-2 sample could be expected to fall around 36mm” (Anderson, 9-10, 2010). The subject of the sentence “we” is included in the audience code because it refers both to the author and the readers, presumably disciplinary readers who would make the same estimate. The rarity of such code may speak to the novices’ hesitancy to align their ideas with their disciplinary luminaries, but in this case, the method behind it is so unequivocal that the author determined that such a statement could bear the burden of disciplinary.

The other consistency was in the number of isms used. Isms, while important in anthropology, represent an imprecise ideological concept within modernism, specifically, categorizing trends of motivated human behavior. Novice students in physical anthropology are reticent to generalize and characterize behavior. Cultural anthropologists are equally worried about social grouping, so labeling those phenomena with isms is a skill that takes a knowing maturity and confidence that novice writers may not have. One of the few examples in the anthropological honors thesis was the following definition of the concept of “the bicultural struggle.” “The bicultural struggle is illustrated where ethnic peers use derogatory terms to describe youth that are acting white (Oetting and Beauvais, 1990-1991; LaFromboise et al., 1993)” (Ant 1, p. 7). In anthropology, “The biracial struggle” is a whole set of prereasoned associations and assumptions about a certain demographic people employed as a short hand to explain the
experience of a certain demographic. It is relevant to note that this ism is employed as a
definition and then not used as the subject, but as the object of the next sentence. In other
words, once the ism is identified, it is immediately relegated to object status. The honors
theses in Anthropology did not do much discussion of pre-existing concepts; rather they
were treated as non-negotiable facts. The anthropology students did not try to amend
established lines of thought.

The next table offers the results from the history theses.

Table 6: Honors History Raw Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class of Sentence Subjects</th>
<th>Hist 1</th>
<th>Hist 2</th>
<th>Hist 3</th>
<th>Sum of Hist</th>
<th>Percentages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Phenomenal Classes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class 1: Particulars</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>302</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class 2: Groups</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>247</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class 3: Attributes</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>255</td>
<td>497</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Epistemic Classes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class 4: Reasons</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class 5: Research</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class 6: Isms</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class 7: Audience</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>377</td>
<td>469</td>
<td>527</td>
<td>1373</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The phenomenal sentence subjects among the honors history theses are consistent enough to be a pattern only among the category of groups, which match at 0.85. This is a high degree of significance and is unlikely to be unintentional; the other phenomenal classes showed no such consistency. For example, “These instances clearly show that the US and the Republic of Chile had fostered a fairly congenial relationship, even during the cold war era” (Booth, 2009, p. 10). In this example, it is groups of instances that are the phenomenal subject. The grouping of “these instances” is a type of historical event that is repeated enough to become a grouping and historically relevant. History students know uniformly and singularly that they are writing about groups of people; that historical discourse is not primarily about individual movers and shakers, but about large groups of people in a place who create demographic waves. Another example, substantiating that novices in history recognize groups as the movers and shakers of history is the following sentence: “However, a large portion of the population in Gabon who are employed in the agrarian sector and do not see the benefits of the oil, thus great income inequalities are present” (Pennington, 2010, p. 37). This ungrammatical, compound sentence has two subjects that are both groups. The first is “a large portion of the population” and the second is “income inequalities.” The large portion of the population is literally a group of people and income inequalities (the inequalities are not an attribute of the income) represent a recurring phenomenon that has great potency to shape lives. The honors students have together identified the importance of groups in history. Their knowledge makes sense in the development of the history discourse, which tends to move beginners through the great men theory to the emphasis on overlapping physical evidences. That
these novices have characteristically moved to that stage represents a real success of the honors curriculum. The epistemic classes of honors theses in history demonstrated statistically no more predictive than chance would permit.

Table 7 contains the results from the comparison among the honors literary theses.

**Table 7: Honors Literature Raw Data**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class of Sentence Subjects</th>
<th>Lit 1</th>
<th>Lit 2</th>
<th>Lit 3</th>
<th>Sum of Lit</th>
<th>Percentages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Phenomenal Classes</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class 1:Particulars</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>371</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class 2: Groups</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class 3:Attributes</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>174</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Epistemic Classes</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class 4:Reasons</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class 5:Research</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class 6: Isms</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.04%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class 7: Audience</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>238</td>
<td>362</td>
<td>223</td>
<td>823</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although the phenomenal subjects in literature are not significantly alike, transform test indicates that a central tendency might develop if the N were higher. This means that rather than being random, where an increase in number of theses would only
add to the confusion, in literature theses, there is a pattern and we’d likely see it be stronger in a sample with a larger number of theses. In the numbers, two of three in each category tend to be alike. For example, literature sample one and literature sample two are similar in terms of particulars, both accounting for nearly 50% of the total; but literature sample two and literature sample three are alike in terms of groups, counting for nine and eleven percent respectively. It may also indicate that there are certain distinct trends even within literature. Answering what this central tendency among honors students in literature might necessitate a larger research initiative. It might also be noted that just under 75% of the sentence subjects coded were phenomenal. There is a macro-level indicator showing that literary honors students are writing about the subject of literature much more than explaining how one makes knowledge about it.

Table eight represents the results found by the second coder. She coded two of the three theses in each category so a total of six theses. The comparison yielded a greater than 85% match on the lowest match, which was, of course, the first anthropology dissertation. The literature matched at a whopping 94% and the history at 90%. The coding scheme seemed to be easily learned.
Table 8: 2nd Coder’s Raw Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Ant 1</th>
<th>Ant 2</th>
<th>Ant 3</th>
<th>Hist 1</th>
<th>Hist 2</th>
<th>Hist 3</th>
<th>Lit 1</th>
<th>Lit 2</th>
<th>Lit 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Class of Sentence</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Subjects</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Phenomenal Classes</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class 1:Particulars</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>76</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class 2:Groups</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>26</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class 3:Attributes</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>273</td>
<td>270</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>66</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Epistemic Classes</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class 4:Reasons</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>30</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class 5:Research</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>21</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class 6:Isms</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class 7:Audience</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>210</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>451</td>
<td>547</td>
<td>248</td>
<td>227</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To summarize the data from my coding, the data points generally lean towards great dissimilarity within each discipline with a few notable exceptions. These exceptions included marked similarities in the following classes: the absences of ism and audience classes of the anthropology theses and the lack of groups in history. Overall, assuming the sufficiency of MacDonald’s method, the data does not support a claim that the writing within each discipline of honors thesis can be said to constitute a discernible disciplinary consistency. Next, I will compare my finding to MacDonald’s (where applicable).

**Comparison to MacDonald**

Having established that my own coding was reliable (See Appendix A), the honors theses data were compared to MacDonald’s data. One caveat is necessary.
MacDonald did not include her raw numbers and proffered only percentages. For this reason the comparative results are less tight and offered in percentages instead of both descriptive statistics and percentages as done above. The first two figures below, Figures 1 and 2, show a comparison between MacDonald’s professional writing and my honors theses results divided up by class. The two pie charts (Figures 3 and 4) further below are not intended to be comparative. Due to limitation in the sample, honors theses in psychology were unavailable. Instead, the social science of Anthropology was selected. This mismatch of disciplines prohibits a direct comparison because psychology is likely to be discussed quite differently than anthropology, despite both being social sciences. The representation of MacDonald’s data is presented first and my data second.

**Figure 1: History - professional history vs. honors theses by class**

The history comparison reveals no significant correlation in the phenomenological classes. In fact, the amount of particulars as the subject in the prose of honors theses was more than three times that in the professional sample. And professional
historians referenced groups as their sentence subject more than twice as often. This is especially notable in light of the consistency among honors theses in the group’s code. Although students consistently know that groups are important to history, they still do not use them in near the same percentages as experts. The attributes were the most similar, but according to MacDonald, they are the least relevant aspect of history, which is primarily about the actions of large groups of people. This variance of the phenomenological classes is itself a marker of novice status. The incoherence means that honors students have more to learn about how to situate their topics before they become experts. Since we’ve seen that the vast majority of the emphasis in undergraduate material is not topical, but epistemic, it makes sense that the honors students would do a better job of matching the epistemic operation of the discourse. Also, since history is the study of stories that changed the timeline, and those stories involve any number of subjects, literally anything in all of time, that is a wide expanse. The problem definition is fairly loose around the phenomenal object. History asks what the most likely interpretation of what happened is, and part of maturing into the discipline is the recognition of multiple causes or complex, layered causes for events. Students are at very different places in understanding how these varying contributions should be valued and articulated. This, to me, most explains the great variances we see here between the students and professionals.

However, all of the epistemic classes are significantly similar. It is striking that the writing in history theses used reasons and research as the subject of their sentences in the exact same percentage as professionals. Given the variety within the history theses
themselves, this specific finding is curious and requires further study. Some interesting implications are possible though: first the structure of courses including the methods course and the capstone course that all history majors go through within the institution that these theses were culled from have a uniform impact. Second, the textbooks reviewed in the literature review were explicitly focused on discussions of the difference between narrative story telling as history and analysis as history. This study does not distinguish between those two, but it does bring both of those possible explanations together in the category of reasons. So it seems that the students know exactly how important reasons are. The epistemic is strongly replicated.

Next, Figure 2 compares the literature findings.

![Figure 2: Literature - professional literature vs. honors theses by class]

The literature charts shows several notable findings among the epistemic and phenomenological classes. Two of the three phenomenal classes showed wide discrepancies: The quantity of particulars as the subject in the prose of literary honors
theses was 1.5 times more than that of the professionals. The honors students wrote often about a single character, a solitary literary feature, an author, or a singular word.

The honors students used attributes as the subject of their sentences half as often as professionals did. The professionals’ greater use of attributes suggests a richer interpretation, a greater nuance of insight and a sustained topical focus. To talk about a singular subject is to mostly blush over the important attributes and details that facilitate more than an encyclopedic surface understanding. Yet, that is what honors students did at 1.5 times the rate of their professional literary counterparts. Greater uses of attributes by professionals suggest that honors students have not yet learned the depth of interpretive finesse that scholarly literary writers have. While this does not answer exactly the question of whether a knowledge base is built, these data do confirm that there is a discourse and an expertise to be garnered through further familiarity. It also confirms the importance of developing an interpretation that ultimately comes back to the words on the page, the centrality of interpreting the text and not proffering unrelated mental musings.

It seems that in the phenomenal subject of groups, we see a statistically significant similarity. This likely is because there is little temptation in the development of the professional discourse to group. It is the lowest percentage of phenomenal subjects overall, which seems to indicate that the discourses of literary professionalism are not about grouping or categorizing and that honors students understand this about their discourse. Taken together, this does seem to suggest to me that it is not knowledge
building, not traditionally epistemic, not about building topical knowledge of literature, but about building and demonstrating expertise.

A comparison of the epistemic classes revealed greater similarities. The classes of audience and isms were used as much in the professional as in the novice literature sample. The reasons class was similar, with a variance of only three percent. A notable epistemic difference, however, is the result that literature students were more than twice as likely to reference professional literature as their professional counterparts.

Figures 3 and 4 represent incomparable disciplines and levels within the social sciences. Comparing psychology to anthropology in a bar chart illustrates a false comparison. Therefore, the two social sciences are represented below in separate pie charts. These charts are included as an invitation for replication and expansion since they cannot be directly compared.
Secondary Coding Results

The tables below represent the results from the secondary coding. The first set, (Tables 9-11), from literature, coded by the topoi they displayed, all indicate a very heavy dependence on the appearance/reality topoi. Context/Intention came in second overall, occupying the second position in two of the theses with the paradigm and ubiquity topoi being the outstanding secondary of the third literary thesis. The literature results clearly
indicate that the third thesis is much more aligned with professional literature than its peers, but even so, it is still distinctly novice in its profile. The second set of tables, (Tables 12-14) show a coding of the theses by the central tension in history, particularly the narrative/analysis binary. They are overall very similar with an extreme emphasis (approximately 3:1) on analysis. All of the theses cross-coded heavily with the reasons and research code. The history group continues to display a uniformity that is very impressive from a teaching standpoint, although, even then, clearly novitiate. The two anthropology tables (Tables 15 and 16) show the mentor’s work coded by MacDonald’s scheme. I compared them to the honors theses and it was entirely dissimilar with only the third thesis having a partially similar hierarchy of codes.

Table 9: Secondary Coding Results for Lit 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Particulars</th>
<th>Groups</th>
<th>Attributes</th>
<th>Reasons</th>
<th>Research</th>
<th>Isms</th>
<th>Audience</th>
<th>Percent Tally</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Appearance Reality</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paradigm</td>
<td>2/1.67%</td>
<td>8/61.54%</td>
<td>9/14.75%</td>
<td>1/9.09%</td>
<td>6/50%</td>
<td>0/0%</td>
<td>10.92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ubiquity</td>
<td>2/1.67%</td>
<td>0/0%</td>
<td>2/3.28%</td>
<td>1/9.09%</td>
<td>0/0%</td>
<td>0/0%</td>
<td>2.10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contemptus Mundi</td>
<td>0/0%</td>
<td>0/0%</td>
<td>0/0%</td>
<td>0/0%</td>
<td>0/0%</td>
<td>0/0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paradox</td>
<td>1/0.83%</td>
<td>0/0%</td>
<td>0/0%</td>
<td>0/0%</td>
<td>0/0%</td>
<td>0/0%</td>
<td>0.84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Justice</td>
<td>0/0%</td>
<td>0/0%</td>
<td>0/0%</td>
<td>0/0%</td>
<td>0/0%</td>
<td>0/0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mistaken critic</td>
<td>0/0%</td>
<td>0/0%</td>
<td>0/0%</td>
<td>0/0%</td>
<td>0/0%</td>
<td>0/0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Context/Intention</td>
<td>0/0%</td>
<td>17/7.69%</td>
<td>9/14.75%</td>
<td>1/9.09%</td>
<td>0/0%</td>
<td>17/80.95%</td>
<td>11.76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent Tally</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 10: Secondary Coding results for Lit 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Particulars</th>
<th>Groups</th>
<th>Attributes</th>
<th>Reasons</th>
<th>Research</th>
<th>Isms</th>
<th>Audience</th>
<th>Percent Tally</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Appearance Reality</td>
<td>124/68.13%</td>
<td>16/48.48%</td>
<td>19/37.25%</td>
<td>9/23.68%</td>
<td>14/29.78%</td>
<td>0/0%</td>
<td>0/0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paradigm</td>
<td>5/2.75%</td>
<td>0/0%</td>
<td>8/15.68%</td>
<td>6/15.78%</td>
<td>20/42.55%</td>
<td>0/0%</td>
<td>1/11.11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ubiquity</td>
<td>17/5.34%</td>
<td>13/39.39%</td>
<td>4/7.84%</td>
<td>10/23.31%</td>
<td>1/11.11%</td>
<td>1/11.11%</td>
<td>12.98%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lit 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Particulars</td>
<td>Groups</td>
<td>Attributes</td>
<td>Reasons</td>
<td>Research</td>
<td>Isms</td>
<td>Audience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>69</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Appearanc e Reality</strong></td>
<td>48/69.57%</td>
<td>13/52%</td>
<td>39/62.90%</td>
<td>22/73.33%</td>
<td>14/48.28%</td>
<td>0/0%</td>
<td>1/16.67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Paradigm</strong></td>
<td>5/7.25%</td>
<td>1/4%</td>
<td>1/1.61%</td>
<td>0/0%</td>
<td>15/51.72%</td>
<td>0/0%</td>
<td>0/0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ubiquity</strong></td>
<td>3/4.35%</td>
<td>8/32%</td>
<td>8/12.90%</td>
<td>1/3.33%</td>
<td>0/0%</td>
<td>1/50%</td>
<td>0/0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Contemptus Mundi</strong></td>
<td>0/0%</td>
<td>0/0%</td>
<td>0/0%</td>
<td>0/0%</td>
<td>0/0%</td>
<td>0/0%</td>
<td>0/0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Paradox</strong></td>
<td>5/7.25%</td>
<td>1/4%</td>
<td>9/14.52%</td>
<td>1/3.33%</td>
<td>0/0%</td>
<td>1/50%</td>
<td>0/0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social Justice</strong></td>
<td>0/0%</td>
<td>0/0%</td>
<td>0/0%</td>
<td>0/0%</td>
<td>0/0%</td>
<td>0/0%</td>
<td>0/0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mistaken Critic</strong></td>
<td>7/10.14%</td>
<td>1/4%</td>
<td>2/3.23%</td>
<td>4/13.33%</td>
<td>0/0%</td>
<td>0/0%</td>
<td>2/33.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Context/Intention</strong></td>
<td>1/1.45%</td>
<td>1/4%</td>
<td>3/4.94%</td>
<td>2/6.67%</td>
<td>0/0%</td>
<td>0/0%</td>
<td>3/50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Percent Tally</strong></td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 11: Secondary Coding Results for Lit 3**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Hist 1</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Particulars</td>
<td>Groups</td>
<td>Attributes</td>
<td>Reasons</td>
<td>Research</td>
<td>Isms</td>
<td>Audience</td>
<td>Percent Tally</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>68</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Narrative</strong></td>
<td>2080%</td>
<td>5885.29%</td>
<td>17491.57%</td>
<td>89.04%</td>
<td>6146.34%</td>
<td>16432.24%</td>
<td>2/28.57%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>28.72%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Analysis</strong></td>
<td>520%</td>
<td>1014.70%</td>
<td>168.42%</td>
<td>10.95%</td>
<td>3585.36%</td>
<td>2156.75%</td>
<td>5/71.42%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>71.27%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 13: Secondary Coding Results for Hist 2**
Table 14: Secondary Coding Results for Hist 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Particulars</th>
<th>Groups</th>
<th>Attributes</th>
<th>Tally</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Narrative</td>
<td>144/92.90%</td>
<td>66/92.14%</td>
<td>36/92.23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis</td>
<td>11/17.10%</td>
<td>15/17.85%</td>
<td>16/90.76%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 15: Secondary Coding Results for Ant 1 & 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Particulars</th>
<th>Groups</th>
<th>Attributes</th>
<th>Reasons</th>
<th>Research</th>
<th>Isms</th>
<th>Aud</th>
<th>Tally</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Table 16: Secondary Coding Results for Ant 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Particulars</th>
<th>Groups</th>
<th>Attributes</th>
<th>Reasons</th>
<th>Research</th>
<th>Isms</th>
<th>Aud</th>
<th>Tally</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
Exceptions

Although all of the independent clauses were coded under this coding scheme, there were several aberrances obscured by the broadness of the categories. There seemed to be two types of aberrances. The first, noted by MacDonald were alternative syntactical constructions that obscured a phenomenological or epistemic subject. In coding, one accounts for exceptions or non-standard subjects such as the existential *there*, cleft and pseudocleft sentences, and extraposition with a clausal subject. These exceptions in language are standard in academic writing (Huckin & Pesante, 1988; Delahunty, 1991).

While they make coding slightly more difficult, they genuinely do not upset the validity of the coding scheme because the awkward constructions still make knowledge rhetorically. Rather, the second kind of aberrance, which is also successfully absorbed by the broadness of the seven classes, rests upon the assumption that all the sentence subjects are related to knowledge-making. I can see how, when coding professional scholars’ writing, this is likely true, but it was noticeable in honors theses writing how many sentences were not knowledge-making in the public sense, but rather self-facing, writer-based reflective knowledge.

My own coding revealed this self-making knowledge in clauses where the subjects were the phenomenological, individual “I” and not the epistemic “researcher.” Although honors theses across the board demonstrated this feature, it was particularly noticeable in the history theses, and while only slightly less prevalent in the literature honors theses, they did not read quite as jarringly. The anthropology honors theses had few of these reflective “I” individual phenomenological subjects. This finding is
consistent with the more empirical types of problem posing done in social science research, although, more study is needed to confirm that this is a trend.

Table 17 below represents the amount of what I would consider to be these reflective phenomenonological clauses out of the total amount of class 1 particulars in each discipline.

Table 17: Phenomenal, Particular, Reflective Codes by Discipline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Literature</th>
<th>History</th>
<th>Anthropology</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of writer as phenomenological focus out of class 1 particulars</td>
<td>22/371</td>
<td>59/302</td>
<td>4/108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>03%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The second coder was not asked to code for these features so the above tallies reflect only my coding. The findings, however reasonable they seem, would need further inquiry to confirm.
Chapter 5: Discussion

Overall Similarities among the Three

Honors students occupy an interesting place in the development of academia, situated as they are in a community of practice setting that is intended to give them a simulacrum of actual academic practice, making them the most privileged group of students. In addition, seniors who write theses are at the end of their undergraduate careers. This combination of most privileged access to academia and nearly completed curriculum makes these students a particularly relevant population for demarking student ability. They ideally serve as some measure of the best possible outcome for undergraduate disciplinary education. Honors students are genuinely novices, in the apprentice sense of that term, in that they enrolled in an optional program that attempted to treat their education as less like students and more like working academics. Honors students are therefore a viable exemplar population of a novice category. One of the advantages of a replication study performed on another population is that it adds to the definitions of what honors students are as a category of writers. My research indicated that they were not disciplinary writers. Honors students were not writing their theses in ways that indicated disciplinary maturity or full ownership of informed, scholarly opinions. The findings indicated that many of the sentences neglected the middle ground between unfounded assertions and ethos-conserving caution. Very few sentences took carefully proportioned informed scholarly risk.
The retreat to conventionalism, as opposed to professional risk-taking, could be seen in the history corpus. The emphasis on narrative, on the stories of history, led novice writers to a kind of pedantic recounting, a droll, unconnected, and irrelevantly detailed narrative that tells facts but does not argue. Retelling the narrative of history instead of connecting casual relationships has been found in novice writing by other researchers (Greene, 1994; Halldén, 1994; Wineburg 1994, 2001). The largest of the history theses (Hist #3) was extremely indicative of this pattern with its excessive number of attributes, but all of them represented this pattern. History #1 and #2 kept repeating the groups’ responsibility for the succession of events. The overreliance on groups in one of the theses and the overreliance on attributes in the other two had the same effect of retelling uncontested facts.

Concomitant with honors students generally, literary honors students also seemed inclined toward safe claims; unoffending interpretations; and readings done without reference to other readings. The safe discourse presented no academic target to be argued with, and this might be seen as a sufficient stance by honors students only wanting to do well in their classes. First, let’s consider the biggest numbers together. Honors students employed particulars in 45% of the sentence subjects, and 53% of the topoi used are of the appearance/reality kind. Taken together, we see a significant number of sentences that translate a singular appearance into a singular reality. It read as this-idea-really-means-that arguments, which, while being arguments, were not particularly risky, given the wide variety of acceptable interpretations and methods. The picture generated from the literary
honors theses data was not one of mature writing that uses the literary topoi, but one that characterizes novices as “interpreting” in the most literal ways.

The secondary coding of topoi in the honors literature thesis corpus indicated another sort of authorial shielding from audience criticism. It can be seen first with the contemptus mundi/social justice topoi and its noncorrelation with audience along with the correlation between the audience code and the content/intention topoi. To restate, the honors thesis writers do not use the contemptus mundi/social justice codes to make political commentary to an audience. Professional scholars seldom risk talking to the audience from their own perspective because the audience code is generally not very large, but when they do, it is largely because they have something to say that the audience needs to read. Honors theses do not seem to have that ethos in argument. Honors students use the audience code almost exclusively when they are “revealing” the author’s context or intention. In other words, they do so when they are speaking for someone else, when they can posit themselves as a conduit, rather than as an authoritative speaker. The circumstances in which honors theses students are willing and unwilling to speak to the audience indicate a reluctance to generate illocutionary force from their own ideas.

The correlative coding indicating the timidity of honors students is found in the correlation between the paradigm topos and the research code. Rather than rehearsing long strings of prefabricated arguments that characterize the given paradigm, honors students tended to reference a scholar, who explained the whole paradigm, instead of establishing each component of the paradigm with its individual contributors and elaborated arguments. Judging predominately by the use of isms, the students simply
declared that the paradigm was so and attributed it to someone. In abridging the logic of the paradigm, they closed off avenues for disagreement and personal insight, and, thereby, conserved ethos. Discussing paradigms for professionals involves attributes and elaborated reasoning, warranted with personal insights. Neither honors theses nor scholarly literary authors used isms much, but professionals used the attribute code more than twice as much as honors students. It is conceivable that some of those class three sentences might be how paradigms are elaborated upon, retaining personal credibility risk. What follows is an attempt to parse and interpret the complex anthropology results.

In anthropology, we see a shifting of responsibility for even the students’ own insights. The results in anthropology were not consistent among themselves except to indicate that none of them referred to the audience or isms very much. Rather we see stances where novice anthropologists simply evaded ownership of their own findings. For example, in an anthropology thesis, one student wrote “In her book, Honor and the American Dream, Ruth Horowitz (1985) studied a Mexican-American community in Chicago. She describes the relationship between the school and Mexican-American students in terms of authority. A similar circumstance was found in S. E Georgia” (Ant 1 p. 3). Notable here is how the credibility for the students recognizing of a certain set of circumstances is granted by the recognition that a more established author encountered similar circumstances. The student is not resting the case on his own acumen. The final similarity amongst the three disciplines of honors theses studied here takes the issue of the “I” expression one step further.
When honors students express the “I,” they characteristically do so immaturity
and narcissistically. If they dare not to conserve their ethos, their personal investment
tends to burst forth in simple self-identification. It is as if overcoming the tendency to not
risk self-expression requires unconstrained personal opinion. Professional academics, in
all disciplines, do express personal investments, but do so with warrants for why those
personal investments matter to the academic issue. One of the findings across all honors
students was the narcissistic, personal “I.” Unfortunately, the coding scheme provided by
MacDonald and built solely around professional work does not include this personal
investment.

The established literary topoi also disregard the narcissism that characterizes
honors work as seen in the personal “I.” The weakest literary thesis had several sentences
I had to label as “personal investment.” The following excerpt is exemplary of such
moves, in which the arguments seems to be “I care for this work; therefore, you should
too.” “Following a teacher recommendation, I read my very first Jane Austen novel while
in the 9th grade. I quickly read Pride and Prejudice and declared it to be the greatest novel
I had ever read; after four years of high school and three years of university education,
my opinion has not wavered” (Lit 1, p. 2). Not surprisingly, this argument from personal
investment overlapped with the code I created for the phenomenal “I” of the reader who
learned something from personal experience.

Thus, in terms of agency, all three honors disciplinary samples reveal discernable
elements of novice agency, either by stating unwarranted personal positions or by
preemptively protecting their ethos from being exposed. Students may be capable of
expert agency, but genuinely find that omitting tentativeness and writing confidently has brought them censure in the past. Next, I will discuss the individual inferences that may be made from the results in each of the three disciplines, beginning with literature.

**Literature Discussion**

In this section, I review the findings that are specific to literature. First, I discuss how honors literature theses are marked by the preponderance of phenomenal sentences, the relative neglect of epistemic sentences, and the emphasis on individuality as identified by the singular phenomenon and the overall disuse of isms. Although isms were discussed briefly above, their specific disciplinary explanation makes them another type of finding. Next, I share a discussion on how the findings of the topoi in honors literature theses seemed to comport or not with the professionals. Last, I offer some explanations for the differences between the professional and novice use of the topoi before moving on to the discipline of history.

Epistemic sentence subjects accounted for less than 25% of the total subjects, which showed that literary honors theses writers did not put much emphasis on epistemic considerations. Low–epistemic sentence tallies indicated that the method by which one came to make new knowledge was obscured in the text. Texts that obscured knowledge-making have ill-defined problems. As MacDonald has already noted, literary critique has ill-defined problems in comparison to other more scientific or social scientific problems. An ill-defined problem is generally left to the author to create, or, at least, the literary critic, as author, is not necessarily supposed to take his or her cue from the extant
scholarly literature. Honors thesis writers, then, are well within the disciplinary norms to have ill-defined problems, indicated by a low proportion of epistemic sentence subjects.

Knowledge is slow to accrue in projects that have a low number of epistemic sentences. Therefore, we would expect knowledge to accrue slowly in research arcs that employ honors theses, which are few, and which is why they are a not-often-cited genre. This does not make them the exception; however, in the scholarly study of literature, knowledge is unlikely to accrete overall, i.e., most works are not studied enough to garner accrual, or they are not studied in such a way that knowledge would assemble together coherently. A known exception are the details of canonical texts such as the meanings of flowers and gardening in Shakespeare’s works.

The majority of noncanonical literary texts do not receive the amount of attention, development, and alternative readings that literary texts by Shakespeare do. With highly canonical works of literature, the critical scholarship is so abundant that epistemic considerations multiply as one reads the extant criticism and get tighter problem definition; however, with lesser known works, preexisting scholarship has not been so methodologically rigorous and overlapping in topic that the problem definition must be tight. Consequently, knowledge is slow to accrue in literary critic conversations of the non-cannonical type that honors theses aspire to enter. Honors students may be wise to avail themselves of this scholarly on-ramp.

Literary critics are encouraged to find new areas of interpretation. If those new areas confirm existing interpretation, that is fine; if not, that is fine too. The dominance of phenomenal subjects emphasizes the separation between literary work and the criticisms
that literary scholars compose. Criticizing a literary piece necessitates a focus on the piece of literature being criticized, which is here represented by the phenomenal subjects. Discussing the creation or development of literature, or even being reflective about the nature of literary criticism, is often secondary to the production of criticism itself. The relatively low percentage of epistemic sentence subjects compared to phenomenal ones confirms the ascendance of criticism over creation or reflective work done in the scholarly study of literature.

Taking the average, 45% of the subjects in literary honors theses represent a particular or singular phenomenal subject. The emphasis on the particular subject represents the singular nature of literary elements; with some exceptions, such as serials or franchises, the substantive, narrative component of a piece of literature that receives criticism is often unique. For example, in the honors thesis exploring Margaret Atwood’s “Handmaiden’s Tale,” Offred, as a subject, appears often and her attributes are subsumed in a kind of synecdoche that is possible only if the uniqueness of Offred is assumed. Offred, as a singular object, can then be easily compared, analyzed, or extrapolated from, since peculiarity prevents the application of prior knowledge to the phenomenon. It also cumulatively prevents the epistemic knowledge-building seen across scholarly conversations in many traditionally knowledge-making disciplines. An enormous preponderance of particulars ensures that each piece of literary criticism is resistant to added interpretation. The abundance of particulars acts as a defense against scholarly accretion into answers or tight epistemic-based problem definitions.
The final notable statistic from the literary tallies is the lack of “isms.” Isms indicate the recourse to already conceptualized schools of thought as subjects that do intellectual work in criticism and in the disciplinary formation. Common isms in the academic study of literature are things like formalism, Marxism, psychoanalytic, reader-response, postcolonialism, etc. Unlike references, which cite individual pieces of scholarship, isms indicate a braid of scholarship that have several scholars contributing theoretical strands that have been grouped together and are used methodologically to interpret or explain a shorthand. The general lack of isms in honors theses might be explained as a disciplinary preference for individuation that we see elsewhere. Isms require several researchers to assemble a more or less cogent theory under one umbrella, usually with a cohesive epistemology. Literary recalcitrance towards such cohesion may go some way towards explaining the very low use of isms in literary honors theses. Students are taught theoretical categories of criticism, but expected to use them as guides, not hard and fast divisions.

Although literary theses are the most like each other among the disciplines studied overall, the set of theses still demonstrate wide dissimilarities. The only significant similarity among the theses are that they are all primarily phenomenal and do not use isms. Striking as these similarities are, taken together, honors theses in literature from this situation do not evince disciplinarity.

**About literature as a discipline as constructed by this pattern.** MacDonald’s method emphasized how a scholar makes knowledge and outlined that knowledge-making process. However, professional literary scholarship is also argument and this is
not widely taken into account by MacDonald. Argument, or persuasion, figures largely into the writing of professional literary scholarship. Some contend that it is all argument, that the knowledge-making aspect is so minimal that it is merely asserting opinions with force. More scholars find a middle ground and admit that, while some of the knowledge-making happening is from personal opinion and experience with language, some is from carefully reasoned inferencing and textual evidence. The degree to which professional literary writing is both epistemic and persuasive remains highly contested. But it is clear that, to understand professional scholarly writing in literature, as well as honors students uptake of the genre, both must be considered. The balance of these considerations may be found in the utility of the special literary topoi. For this reason, the next paragraphs review the topoi for literary studies in conjunction with my epistemic findings for a more complete view of honors theses uptake of literary disciplinarity.

To review, Fahnestock & Secor (1991) established that professional literature is a genre with its own distinctive sources of argument and special topos that they employ when constructing literary arguments and applaud when reading them. These five special topos are another, although differently constructed, potential measure of disciplinarity. Wilder expanded the repertoire of topoi in 2002. I recoded the three literary theses for these topoi to see if there may be a relationship between the topoi coding and the sentence subject coding if knowledge-making and persuasion are working together.

I will relate these topoi to the coding scheme used in this research to facilitate some discussion about how the honors theses construct literary disciplinarity. In order to
do so, I will first identify and define each topoi and then explain how it seems to relate or not to the original sentence coding.

The first topos is appearance/reality topos, in which the writer points out a perception of two entities: one more immediate, the other latent; one surface, the other deep; one obvious, the other the object of a search. These topos might be expected to yield an emphasis on individual elements of the text and result in a high count of singular objects. And this is what we largely see in honors theses. The students seem to consider most of their work to be to uncover, dig out, and reveal a deeper reading; this is the essence of the appearance/reality topos. Although, for many scholars, this is not enough and is problematic because it lends itself to simple summary, and multiple interpretations may be equally valid. However, it is obviously both important to the discipline and accessible to honors students. The honors students used this topos the most. It was the majority of the topoi across all three theses and it did not overlap significantly with any epistemic or phenomenal coding. Because of this, the appearance/reality topos seem to be a basal, good-for-all-purposes-scholarly-argument move in literature, not particular to any one part of knowledge-making. My informant, a former literature professor from the Southern institution from which these theses were drawn bemoaned the lack of emphasis on close reading, evidenced, he felt, by the dominance of the appearance/reality topos. His sentiment seemed to indicate that the dominance of the appearance/reality topos indicated a tendency toward facile summary and interpretation, rather than nuanced argument. His stance seems to complement the notion that excessive deployment of this topos does not demonstrate a particularly high degree of skill in literary epistemology.
The next topos that characterizes literary studies is the paradigm. Within the paradigm topos, the writer fits a kind of template over the details of a literary text to endow it with order, elucidate a structure (Fahnestock & Secor, 1991). Much to my surprise, the paradigm template overlapped significantly with the research code. In other words, instead of talking about the paradigm in terms of itself as an “ism” or in its constituent parts as “attributes,” the paradigm topos predominantly co-occurred with the sentence subject of research. The paradigm was discussed in reference to the author. The author was given credit for establishing the paradigm and the student quickly applied it to the text using appearance/reality, but the paradigm itself was rarely elaborated on. In other words, paradigm was positioned as an argument from authority. A more mature scholar might be expected to illustrate the development of the conceptual paradigm across several pieces of scholarship and as its own trajectory, sometimes independent of the author with a life all its own. The paired occurrences of research and paradigm illustrates that the honors students have an ownership understanding of ideas and that they saw themselves as responsible stewards of attributed ideas. This seems in keeping with the overall values of the scholarly discipline of literature; even if the execution is immature, the argument may still be persuasive.

Within the ubiquity topos, the writer points out a form (a device, an image, a linguistic feature, or a pattern) repeated throughout a work. With ubiquity as a guiding topos “either many examples of the same thing are pointed out or one thing is noted in many forms” (Fahnestock & Secor, 1988, p. 77). These persuasive moves require that
phenomenon be grouped so we would expect to find a high number of phenomenological groups used in conjunction with the ubiquity topos. The effect of grouping should be to give validity to wide characterizations, and this does seem to be how it is used most often in the honors theses. The honors students seem to use groups, or the ubiquity topos, moderately, often as a premise for the importance of a given interpretation in support of the appearance/reality topos. For example, “room layout, floor type and chairs are described each time the reader is taken to a new room to emphasize how much the disabled think about their disability.” My findings, compared with MacDonald’s, indicate that honors students use groups 8% of the time and professionals use them 10% of the time. In other words, in comparison, professionals and honors students tend to have roughly the same amount of groups. The discrepancy seems to be in the value of the groupings. My informant, a literary scholar from the department these theses were taken, suggests that ubiquity topos is merely a measure of occurrence and that it does not follow that high occurrence is a signature of intent or importance. Given the emphasis on the singular phenomenology and the emphasis on the singular and idiosyncratic generally, it follows that this mere grouping is not sufficiently mature analysis to be central to professional literary discourse. Further compounding this hypothesis, the ubiquity topos occurred most in the weakest of the theses and not at all in the strongest. It seems that simply evincing that there is a significant number of something is limited reasoning, more characterization than interpretation. Further studies would need to be done to test this hypothesis as the terms strongest and weakest are based on the aggregate opinions of the two coders, both writing instructors, of the theses and the informants in each discipline.
When employing the *contemptus mundi* topos, “the writer exhibits an assumption of despair over the conditions of society…the writer attempts to point out the unresolvable tensions and shadows in literature that at face value seem optimistic” (Fahnestock & Secor, 1991). The *contemptus mundi* topos might lend itself to the audience code, as the mundi is the state of the world “out there” shared by the presumed readers of the scholarly work and would require an appeal to that population segmented as an audience to the work under discussion. Wilder (2002) added the social justice topos as an extension of the *contemptus mundi* topos. The *contemptus mundi* goes only so far as to condemn the sorry state of the world; the social justice topos makes some attempt to fix it and certainly has to go beyond the reader’s mind into the audience’s life world, thereby compounding the impetus for the writer to reach out into the life world of the literary audience. Only one honors student used the *contemptus mundi*/social justice topos very much at all and she used it in its slightly more retractile *contemptus mundi* form. Further, it did not overlap with the epistemic audience code. In other words, the social concern never was intended as a gift of insight for the reader.

Given both the abbreviated and minimal use of the topoi, it’s reasonable to assert that honors students are not appealing to the audience addressed by their text but the pedagogical reader they invoked in their text instead. In making this distinction I am confirming not only Ede and Lunsford (1984), but also Park’s (1982) category of “external readers as they are involved in the rhetorical situation” in particular the teacher (p.250). There might be any number of reasons for this recalcitrance: they may simply not be concerned with social justice, they may see it as too demanding for a scholarly
writer to make the appeal so overtly, or they may simply assume from interactions with others that this is one of those things that need not be said but that everyone knows. Honors students are very good at studenting, but less good at orienting themselves in the world. The students were unwilling to be exclusively persuasive and neglected episteme. It was clear that what was happening was a conservative economy of ethos. Speaking to the audience about the world outside the book is a risk that honors thesis writers did not seem to think would pay off; readers, particularly their teacher, would not be persuaded. Now, professional literary scholars do not use the audience code much either, but I would be curious to know what topos, if any, corresponded with its minimal, professional use.

Whereas the *contemptus mundi/social justice* topos makes a comment about the state of the world as illuminated by the book, the context/intention topos makes a comment about the world at the time of the book’s creation. The context/intention topos uses authorial intent or social context as an explanation for why the text is what it is. In this way, it is historical, seemingly less falsifiable, and brings together several elements of interpretation. This topos co-occurred with the audience code, which means that when the honors students chose to address the audience directly, which they did not with the *contemptus mundi/social justice* topos, they did so about past facts. For some reason, the honors students did not feel comfortable telling the audience how to react to the book or books they were analyzing in the *contemptus mundi/social justice* topos, but they did feel comfortable relaying the author’s intent and circumstance to readers. The context/intention topos allows students to relay seemingly neutral past facts to the reader. Again, there is an essential sort of conservative economy of ethos happening in the
argument. Perhaps it feels objective to them. More research would need to be done to understand why honors students feel so persuasive giving readers historical and authorial intent as evidence, since it conceivably existed before their learned literary expertise.

When using the paradox topos, “the writer points out the unification of apparently irreconcilable options in a single, startling dualism” (Fahnestock and Secor, 1988, p.60). This epistemic approach requires extensive reasoning to illustrate the unity that would remain otherwise unapparent. The most sophisticated thesis used the paradox topos the most. The thesis itself compared two YA books along a theme against a prevalent interpretation of the genre. The paradox topos was therefore a precursor to the main argument of the piece, which itself required several logical moves. The honors students did seem to use extensive reasoning, but more research is needed to confirm that that reasoning serves the paradox topos better than another. The paradox topos necessitated the reason epistemic code. This correspondence between the paradox topos and the reason code, more than any other, seems to be the most felicitous overlap between knowledge-making and persuasive topoi, and it was not used much. It seems, however, that the honors thesis student who did use it used it in the way a professional might. It is important to note here that conservation of authority is maintained classically, using logic, in this intersection between reasoning and paradox. In other words, a low risk means of establishing reputation allows for more mature use by the skilled honors student.

Finally, Wilder (2002) also introduced the mistaken critic topos, which makes the move of “correcting” an interpretation of a previously published scholar. Only one of the
three theses used this topos, and it was the most developed thesis. Rather than take on any particular critic, however, this mistaken critic argument was aimed at a whole set of generic assumptions, in particular, the assumption that young-adult novels are hopeless and teach teens that the adult world should be expected to be unfair and ugly with little to no room for hope. The author contested this assumption by finding hope in two popular dystopian young-adult works. This topos did not overlap with any particular code, where it existed at all; it was parallel with the normal distribution of sentence subjects. Although contesting or comparing other interpretations is a well-respected persuasive tactic, it is a confrontational, high-risk tactic that does not conserve the ethos or authority of the author very well. As a knowledge-making endeavor, correcting someone else is fundamentally empty. It is expected that scholar will offer reasons for their disagreement, but the actual enacting of the mistaken critic topos is not knowledge-making and, therefore, must be used carefully because it is all ethos. For this reason, I am not surprised it was only lightly used, and only in the strongest of the literature theses.

Several possible explanations exist for the disparity among the literature honors theses. First, the writers simply may not have been exposed to the conventions of literature that MacDonald and Wilder found, either through poor teaching or learning. The teaching of literature is particularly conflicted. The whole study of literature has had difficulty finding a unified vision. It faces growing competition from the study of other creative multimedia. The study of literature changes as the technologies for narrative multiply, and possibly, the author was confused. The honors student may be pulled between disciplinary allegiances and other outside allegiances. The students seem to be
using disciplinarity as the edge of a map and attempting to stay discursively centralized rather than replicating its full shapes.

One of the first things a student of literature learns is to recognize the narrative as a world unto its own, a concern of itself, whole and integral (Leonard, 1917). Literary students are taught first to accept the text of the literary work unto itself. Formally, methodologically, this is called New Criticism. The premise of New Criticism is that everything needed to understand the text is within the text. But the effect New Criticism had on the study of writing in the middle of the 20th century was to change it from a kind of privileged orality, mental-furnishing-based familiarity with literature to the study of literature as a democratic scientific object which anyone could decode, provided they could learn the primary tool of close reading. It was out of this that expert readers developed.

Close reading is a method by which readers approached a text, annotated it, and looked for patterns and the relevance of those patterns. It necessitated a particular focus on the text itself, minute attention to each detail and nuance, mental precision and awareness of several textual and intertextual features. A close reading of the text demands a focus on the specifics of a text. The phenomenon of the text is all that there is, and, given its many aspects and features otherwise identified in close reading, the method reasonably left writers with much to say about the text and little to say about the epistemology of close reading in scholarship. For these reasons, close reading emphasizes the phenomenal aspects of a text, and, more specifically, close reading leads literary scholars to see what they are reading as unique because no other text might bear the same
patterns at such a tight level. The independent elements that come together to form a piece of literature are so tightly scrutinized, they can only be understood as one-of-a-kind discreet objects. This early learning matches up to the consistency identified in the research, namely the primacy of the phenomenal, the low import on the epistemic, and, within the phenomenal, the universal significance of the individual subject matter and secondarily its attributes. To read closely is to circumvent the epistemic considerations of the reader, accounting for the dominance of phenomenology or subject matter over the invisibility of the method and the near complete rejection of “isms” or theory words that do not yet come into practice with this kind of reading.

However, the next great move in literary theory is one that is enamored with the individual reader as the co-constructor, or even primary constructor of the text (Edmundson, 1995). Close reading had been thoroughly criticized for ignoring what associations the reader brings to a piece of fiction and through which their own thinking or the cultural tropes circulate. With this reader-centric understanding of literary criticism one would expect to see several references to one’s own experience of the book and this is just what my coding of exceptional cases indicated. Rather than the “I” of the researcher, the “I” as the experiencer of the literary text was evidenced in a strong percentage. I view this as concomitant with the scholastic experience of these students. In addition to the exceptional coding, this emphasis on the reader experience comes through with small but consistent references to the audiences, who may have similar insights to the honors students.
Another reason for the discrepancy among the students and the discipline as portrayed by other scholars may be found in the process of the interaction with the primary audiences. Perhaps the advisor was not interested in asking the honors students to write disciplinary prose and settled for a disciplinarity that is evident more in the content than in the conventions of expression. Honors students also are likely to acquire several readers from several diverse backgrounds to inform them; therefore, they may have had an inchoate audience that their work appealed to.

History

A discussion of the history results using MacDonald’s phenomenological and epistemic categories will help illuminate the findings of novice history writers. It is important to remember that MacDonald derived her phenomenal and epistemic categories from the grounding assumption that all knowledge is made by disciplinary actors, using disciplinary tools, on a topic constructed by disciplinary knowledge. From this assumption, the phenomenal and epistemic categories were generated. Phenomenology is the object under scrutiny and epistemology is the scholarly means of how it is investigated. These two categories guide the history discussion, because they find deep parallel in the discipline of history.

Honors students are discernibly novice historians who often make identifiable gaffes in their writing. Professional historians agree that young historians begin to write egocentrically, that they parse the stories of history as they would want themselves parsed—heroically (Berkin & Anderson, 2011). This insight complements my findings that honors thesis writers use the phenomenological particular 3.5 times more than the
professionals. In other words, they put individual persons and places as the lone actor. This notable difference illustrates a novice attitude about the role of the one “great man” among the many. History is complex; there is more than one cause for any given historical event or movement, and usually, more than one effect is generated by the overlapping of several causes or constituent causes. The great man theory of history was espoused by Carlyle originally in 1888; however, Spencer in 1896 suggested that the hero, the great man, is not comprehensible without the contextualizing clues of his culture and environment. The great man theory of history aligns with a very traditional and not much valued historical tradition because it is not critical. It accounts only for the dominant perspective, in the common language, from the perspective of the winners. Building from Collingwood and Myres (1936), the repertoire of historiography has expanded the notion of what history is far beyond the memorization of significant dates, places, and the biographies of “great men” to include not only the context, but women, the working class, the marginalized and othered, and noncentrist perspectives. Still “great man” theories of history have also been seen heavily in history student writing (Halldén, 1994). So, the immature narrative produced by the novice honors thesis writers is emergent in a way that easily parallels the development of the discipline of history. Their awkward appropriation is comprehensible in light of the field. Novice historian honors thesis writers write in ways that reflect the earliest novice constructions of the field itself.

Although novice students were significantly like each other in the groups’ category, professional historians are 7.5 times more interested in groups than particulars. The emphasis on groups tends to preclude professionals from falling victim to the “great
man of history” theory in the way novices do. The data reflect that gap in maturity. The professional historians refer to groups at more than double the rate honors thesis in the field do. For professionals, it is the contestation and tension among groups of people who create the warp and woof of history. The honors theses writers did not look to sort the influences of various groups.

The honors theses writers seemed to supplement their “great man” stories with attributes, rather than groups; they added excessive attributes and details. All honors thesis writers used the attribute code 10% more than professional historians. The writing of honors students relegates a large amount of subjectivity to forces that are not groups, but attributes such as “The traditions of the silver industry in Gabon...” (Hist 2, p.15). A more advanced historical scholar has fewer ascriptions to abstract, unpeopled forces and, instead, relies more heavily on the explanatory force of groups. It is enough to take away that the phenomenological progression of historians capitulates the phenomenological progression of the discipline of history. Next, I discuss the epistemic results.

My results indicate that epistemically, the honors students were significantly like their professional counterparts in all four categories; the reasons and research codes were a perfect match. This is a startling finding. If the method is valid, that means that honors history students have a strong grasp of how knowledge is made in their field. Or, at the very least, they are capable of replicating the tenor of knowledge-making in professional history. The primary knowledge-making tools in the scholarly study of history are qualitative reasoning based on primary research. Therefore, the reasons and research categories comprise the vast majority of the epistemic work performed by historians. If
history is “cause and effect” then it makes sense that the reasons code was dominant in all the students’ work. The isms and audience codes were one and two percent apart respectively. This is also a significant finding. Honors students kept the specialized terms of the field that very often crop up in isms at a professional or low level. Honors students also addressed the audience with the same moderation that professionals do. Scholarly historians often takes pride in “plain” or “clear” writing because it reflects a plebian ethos generated by the idea that history is for everybody to learn from. However, when scholarly history becomes too plain, it becomes popular historiography. Novice history students, like all honors students, are concerned with creating and protecting their scholarly ethos and stay away from becoming too casual or popular. The nearly perfect replication of the professional’s epistemic tallies indicates how well students have honed their sense of the relationship between the scholarship of history and popular history.

Given this sort of uniformity, it seems likely that there was an outside intervening force; perhaps it might be attributed to the methods/capstone classes all honors history students took as they began their thesis at the Southern institution. The course emphasized several outcomes including “clear historical reasoning.” The educational intervention of the capstone course happened across all the years from which the sample was taken. However, just because the theses balanced out to resemble professional historians does not mean that there was not high variation among them.

The strongest of these theses, Hist # 2, followed the most closely to the professional pattern of subject use by class. The weakest of these, also the largest, Hist #3 was noticeably weaker on the analysis, but all taken together, the results of the coding of
the history theses were remarkably similar to the results of the coding of the articles of professional Historians. The teachers of these history students are clearly doing a very good job instructing novices in disciplinary discourse.

Additionally, the coding is only a numerical coding of the existence of these sentence subjects; it does not identify how well or how maturely honors students employed these subjects. In the case of source use or the “research” code, students used that sentence structure a similar amount to their professional counterparts; however, according to Young and Leinhardt (1998), more advanced history professionals use multiple sources to support a single point and use “citation language” to contextualize sources. Additionally, Greene (2001) found that professionals used the same source in multiple ways. My coding does not account for these mature meaning decisions and am therefore quite reserved in what I can extrapolate. Having noted how the epistemic and phenomenal work are illustrated by honors theses, I move on to propose why there may be such a good fit for MacDonald’s coding scheme.

**History as a tension between narrative and analysis.** History is often characterized as a tension between narrative and analysis (i.e., recounting what happened and analyzing what happened). Those two, narrative and analysis, may be seen as an interesting parallel with MacDonald’s phenomenological and epistemic categories. In other words, it seems likely that MacDonald’s phenomenal category would overlap with what historians refer to as narrative and MacDonald’s epistemic category would overlap with what historians mean when they refer to analysis. In other words, was the writer telling history (phenomenologically talking about it as an artifact) or epistemically
making sense of some part of history? I expected that epistemic codes would correspond to analysis and phenomenal codes would correspond to narrative. The correspondence was strong.

The thesis with the lowest correspondence had a 62% overlap and the thesis with strongest correspondence had an 82% overlap between phenomenology and narrative and epistemology and analysis. In other words, the strongest thesis, the one that read the most like professional history, had the highest correspondence between the categories of the coding scheme and the fundamental tension (narrative/analysis) in history. These results indicate that MacDonald’s method appears to be a good fit for the discipline of history because history’s fundamental tension between narrative and analysis parallels the conventional academic knowledge-making paradigm from which MacDonald designed her method.

If the question here is one of disciplinary appreciations and comprehension the tendency in history seems to mirror my findings. The uptake of the phenomenal topics of history does follow the theoretical development of the discipline, and the epistemic findings indicate that history students are well situated in the tension between scholarly and popular history because overcoming this tension in favor of a scholarly history is what makes them choose the discipline in the first place. History students are enculturated first into the epistemic because it accrues their ethos and confirms their knowledge of serious (as opposed to popular) history and, throughout grad school and later development, they learn to handle the subject matter with theoretical maturity. The
next section focuses on how history students develop as writers in conjunction with this bifurcated view of their development.

**Learning and writing in history.** Beaufort (2004) suggested that expert writers draw from five knowledge domains: writing process, subject matter knowledge, rhetorical knowledge, genre knowledge, and the encompassing category: discourse community knowledge. In her exploration of the discourse community knowledge of the discipline of history, Beaufort (2004) followed a student named Tim from freshman to junior year via interviews, analysis of papers, teacher discussion, and source materials. Beaufort found that writing for the classroom was the overwhelming social setting affecting writing performance although there were minor dips into writing for the discourse community. Her subject, Tim, felt tension between the classroom motives and his personal motives. Tim did acquire some subject matter expertise, but did not interpret disciplinarily or exemplify critical thinking skills. He was somewhat successful in gaining genre knowledge and syntactical complexity. The story of Tim demonstrates how powerful the classroom experience is for students and, by extension, why that capstone class might leave such an impact.

Russell and Yañez (2003) explained student feelings of alienation from history genres as caused by “the constraints under which they carried on their activity, the deep dialectical contradiction in U.S. general education between specialist and nonspecialist activity and discourse, as manifest in capitalist schooling” (Para. 13). Honors history students have clearly taken a stand in that deep dialectical contradiction. By being honors history students, they have made a conscious step toward the specialist activity, and, by
seeking to maximize the benefits of capitalist schooling, they demonstrate themselves as not conflicted. The nearly exact epistemic uptake indicates that honors history students have, consciously or not, found themselves in the powerful flow of specialized scholarship. They are making some attempt to clear that conflict by aligning themselves as fully as possible with the motives of academia. Thus, it may be that the difficulties we see with honors history students adopting the discourse have less to do with feelings of alienation and more to do with the difficulty of the actual phenomenon of history. Honors history students are not conflicted by the ideological contradiction, and we can see that the intervention of the methods and capstone course had a stunning effect overall. The intervention worked because the student had already chosen to acclimate. The system had given these students professional access. They had chosen to excel in the professional arena in line with the disproportionate benefits of academia, especially other entry points into middle-classness.

According to Russell and Yañez (2003), “Professional historians…critically examine and interpret (and reinterpret) primary documents according to the methods (rules, norms) of history. They argue and debate to persuade other experts” (p. 21). The honors students did not spend most of their discursive time critically examining and interpreting documents as much as they attempted to supplement or fill in topics with sources in a misaligned attempt to persuade other experts. Honors history students, recognizing their own lack of subject matter expertise worked hard to fill it in with phenomenological details, not knowing what a wrong way it was to accommodate their growing professional esteem. Their self-concern is normal for their discipline. Greene
(1994) found that even upper level undergraduate history students were more concerned with teacher pleasing than with genre conventions.

As with MacDonald’s sample, “None of the articles might be called narrative…the articles are all arranged topically rather than chronologically; several of them however explicitly discuss change over time” (MacDonald, 1989, p. 102). My samples had elements of narration but they were not predominantly narrative, nor did the idea of filling in missing narrative elements in history seem to structure most of them. They filled in with topical details of known historical elements. The organization was topical; even the one that covered a span of years chronologically did so on the premise that those chronological chunks related to big conceptual moves. For example, the long excerpt below from the Hist 2 thesis:

**Chad** is a member of the International Confederation of Free Trade Union and the World Trade Organization. They began exporting oil in 2004 and there are an estimated 1.5 billion barrels in oil reserves. Though oil is an important industry to Chad, it is a relatively new industry that has had several roadblocks in development including delays in construction and extraction due to rebel groups blocking progress. Thus, **Chad** remains a highly agrarian society, with over 80 percent of its workers employed in the agrarian sector and the other 20 percent in industry and service. Its main agricultural products are cotton, gum arabic, and livestock. In 2008, over 90 percent of Chad’s exports are sent to the United States. Other export partners are mostly neighboring states with which Chad trades livestock.
Imports consist mostly of machinery equipment, textiles, and food products. Chad’s main import partner is France. Chad has an estimated trade surplus of 1.049 billion USD for 2009 (Hist 2, 2010).

The underlined words indicate the subject or subjects in each sentence. It is a topical paragraph about Chad’s exports and imports, beginning with trade organizations, moving to a specific product and then moving to discussions about the particulars of import and exports generally. The excerpt is not narrative, even though it does attempt some chronological ordering.

Here, the honors theses deviated in the main from the professional data, seeming to be excessively particularized, extensively using the singular phenomenon in support of a claim. The students may, in their immaturity, have relied on too many singular details instead. Their sense of history is infected by their textbook experience, but not so completely that the methods class intervention could not overcome. MacDonald’s (1989) sample varied “in the degree to which they incorporate specific detail in support of major claims” (p.8). My sample tended to offer extensive detail, so much so, it felt amateurish. Thus, in that distinction between phenomenology and epistemology, we are actually seeing the positive effects of classroom intervention; but because of the nature of the history classroom, the epistemic was made strong while the phenomenological was left to be tacitly absorbed from the textbook.

Novice historians have a difficult time finding a stance that is integral to their phenomenon. There are many possible stances to take in relationship to history (Stockton,
The development of novice history writer’s phenomenology savvy mirrors the development stances in the discipline of history. Therefore, autobiography was not absent from honors history theses, but it was particularly muted. The honors students did not write their own history; instead, they wrote their own take on history buried beneath misshapen sentence constructs and passive sentences without actors that assume an “I” actor without mentioning them. Some are the scholarly I, epistemic I, but more are the phenomenal I of the learner suggesting that “the awareness of this situation was unsettling.” It was about the effects the knowledge had on the learner. Honors history students seem to be parsing their own learning through the gauging of the events, as if the weights and effects of the events were the thing that was causing the learning. Honors history students had the most references to their own experiences of learning, even if they were buried beneath complex constructions or hidden in passive sentences where the assumed actor is I. The novice writing of honors history students is tremendously self-reflective.

What these honors students seemed to construct of their episteme was exactly what the professionals did, but the task apparent in the phenomenology represented an appreciation of history, a love of the topic, even if they mishandled it with the genre. You can see they were embedding their own reactions to their own learning within the text. Whether this was intentional or not is not known, but it is clear that students did not accomplish Stockton’s (1995) “establishment of an autonomous subject of meaning who is always speaking from outside history about a distant and objectified past” (p. 47).
These students really were not distant, even if they tried (at varying degrees of genre success) to perform distance.

To conclude, novice historians often learn to write in ways that mimic the development of the discipline. They tend towards emphasizing the singular great man theory of history and bogging it down with particulars. The results indicated that the students were benefitted by their capstone course and by the constructive central duality of their discipline; narrative and analysis complement MacDonald’s coding scheme. They often talked about their own learning. Overall, the students were only quantitatively like each other in their use of groups. Next, I will move on to the discipline of anthropology.

**Anthropology**

The anthropology discussion will follow a slightly different tack because I have no direct data with which to make comparisons. First, I describe the category of social science and make some accommodations for the blended nature of anthropology as a discipline. Next, I discuss how agency may be used differently from other disciplines in anthropology because of the nature of the field itself. Next, I speculate how that different take on agency flouted MacDonald’s coding scheme and returned chaos. Finally, I reference another paper by MacDonald that discussed the nature of agency in anthropology and apply it to the chaotic and disperate findings in anthropology.

Anthropology is both biological and cultural, both science and humanities, a central instantiation of social science. The nature of social science is revealed when both the psychology sample MacDonald offers and the anthropology results have groups and reasons as the two predominant categories. If social science is to be defined as on some
conceptual scale between the sciences and humanities that deal with the investigation of
groups of people then it makes sense that both groups and reasons dominate their
sentences as it does in the anthropological sample; together, they account for 55% of
sentence subjects. Groups of humans are the predominant agents and higher-order
reasoning is what makes humans special among hominids. Anthropology seems to be the
crystallization of the centrality of what is a social science. The study of what humans do
is the humanities; but to study what humans were and are is anthropology, and that has
comparative empiricism to it because it approaches humans as a collective grouping.
With that in mind, the incomprehensible jumble of novice results from within the
discipline makes sense from outside of the discipline. The incoherent findings from the
novice anthropology sample may say more about how the discipline of anthropology as a
whole is received by students than the individual writer’s grasp of disciplinarity.

Therefore, analysis that catches the characteristic incoherence is one valid mirror
of the discipline. This is not to characterize the discourse of anthropology as without a
grounding cohesiveness that novices may emulate. It is simply that it may be
characterized as mature in ways other than replication of knowledge-making as we see in
the sciences or the celebration of applicable existing knowledge as we do in literature.
Perhaps anthropological discourse shows its maturity in breadth of application or quality
of inferences, neither of which are accounted for in MacDonald’s sentence coding
system.

In fact, anthropology is typified by author choice in the configuration of an agent
and the meaning of their behaviors. The incoherence found using MacDonald’s method,
and the nature of the field itself, suggests the necessity of understanding agency in the professional anthropological discourse differently. In other words, because the study of anthropology itself is dependent on fluid definitions of agency as a warrant, a coding system that preemptively separates agents (phenomena) and actions (epistemology) from study necessarily misses the nature of knowledge-making in the discipline of anthropology. Alternately, and by necessity, what the coding system does reveal is a portion of the available agented stances to take.

MacDonald’s chapter “Narrative in Anthropology” focused on narrative style because, presumably, she found this element to be its grounding coherence. However, if we look at what MacDonald’s coding system revealed, it is a portion of the available agented stances to take. In other words, attention to narrative is tenable if we revisit the narrative using the categories of self-reflexive and relational agents.

Upon analyzing Scheper-Hughes’s anthropological writing, which is heavily ethnographic, MacDonald (1998) identifies four ways in which the phenomenological “I” is employed:

1. To express her feelings
2. To convey the length and depth of her lived experience... Including details about her practical activities
3. To describe the evolution of her perceptions or thoughts on a subject—not just her current perceptions
4. To narrate events in which she participates. (p. 206-207)
I would describe one and three as self-reflexive and two and four as relational. One and three are self-reflexive because they demonstrate an internal reality, as does the above example. Thoughts and feelings stay inside until they are animated with actors and actions and as such become the demonstrations we see the student making. Self-reflexive gives us assent into the author’s world of internal reasoning where feelings and thoughts, await heteroglossically, waiting to be stabilized for now in an instantiation that others may read as a demonstration. Two and four are relational because the self is expressed in relation to objects and actions in history. The relational may be construed in two ways. First, as the post-modern subject, indistinguishable as an agent from its cultural and historical circumstances. Second, the self is still expressed relationally, i.e. in action with objects and history, but the agency employed is only recognizable via public negotiation.

MacDonald identified the uses of the phenomenal “I” in anthropology. From those, I have made an effort to define the relational and the self-reflexive. However, the relational and self-reflexive are not dependent upon the simple agent configuration of the “I.” These categories can be used with the agents found in the honors theses as well.

By “self-reflexive,” I mean to say that the students commented back on their own learning, their reading, or their classroom experience. For example, “this powerful language is a boast of independence in which the obeah woman claims her ‘Voice’” (Lit 2, P. 4). In this sentence, the student is applying something she learned in the classroom, namely that claiming voice is a form of “independence,” and that voice is a “powerful language.” From this, we can see her own value judgment that powerful language “boasts.” The author exposes her beliefs to the reader. It is a moment of visibility for the
agency of the author. We, the readers, know something about the author’s characterization of language—a big deal in linguistic anthropology—and we see the author’s ascription of action to language as “boasting.” The author’s assemblage of object and agency is revealed. And we also, importantly as educators, note how she applied the concept she learned as a knowledge object “claiming voice is a form of independence” that, in her mind, anyway, can be operationalized in the ways mentioned above. By self-reflexive, I mean something like showing how a learned concept is objectified and employed.

By relational, I mean a sort of object-orientedness, a place in the text where the student posits her agency in relation to the identity of another scholar or important concept. For example, “So it follows that when a simian and a hominoid have the same mandible, the hominoid will have a larger body size. If we (italics added) assume that the established morphologic ratio holds” (Ant 2, p. 2). This novice scholar associated himself or herself with the discipline via shared assumptions. The individual author considers himself or herself a viable part of the “we” that determines “established morphological ratios.” The “I” is in there, but self-written into the “we” of disciplinarity authority over ideas. This is one way agency may be configured. The categorical move of the relational, however, can happen with any configuration of agency. In this case, the author acts with a knowledge object that other people can perceive and react to. He uses the established morphological ratios to make a hypothesis. That is a very public action that invites conformation or disagreement from epistemology. Rhetorical moves of the relational sort appear notably sophisticated in comparison to the self-involved opinions of the literature
student or the outsider-looking-in “I” of the history student. They suggest to me a kind of
novice/abutted ethnography.

Caught up in how the self is singularly configured as “I,” it seems that the two
sets of the agency could not be more different; however, when viewed through the above
lenses, the primary difference is how the agency is configured, not the types of action
demonstrated. The self-reflexive and relational are still not the standalone phenomenal
“I.” They are also the “I” found demonstrated in action or the “I” found in relationship.
And those versions of “I” may be found in many constructions of agency, particularly in
narrative, and, as we now know, in novice work.

Another possibility for the difference among honors students discourse is that
professionalization comes through replication or mimicry. This is standard in the sciences
where projects that are funded by large grants offer opportunities for novices to take part
in. It is conceivable, therefore, that the advisors of the theses are more responsible for the
discourse development than the actual disciplinarity. In order to test out this hypothesis, I
looked at the writing of the advisors for the three anthropology honors theses.

The results were not particularly clarifying. Two of the three theses were advised
by the same person and those two were remarkably different from each other. One was
the biological measurement and one was from anthropological literature. Neither of these
was similar to the advisor’s professional writing. Clearly, this professor is
methodologically eclectic. The third theses was done in a more traditional science
circumstance as part of an ongoing, grant-funded project being worked on by at least two
members of the anthropology department, and the writing is topically and
phenomenologically similar to the direct advisor of the project. So, there is some reason
to hypothesize that it is the relationship between the advisor and the novice that has some
effect on the knowledge-making structure of the prose.

The anthropology results, incomparable as they are, push the method farther than
the other results because stance is remarkably foregrounded in the content, if not always
visible in the structure of the sentence. The novice anthropological sample highlights the
particular array of stances available to social science disciplines because knowledge-
making may not be so polarized. Finally, I used MacDonald’s work in anthropology to
develop the concept of the reflexive and relational “I.” The next discussion will attempt
to extrapolate overall differences among the three disciplines.

**Overall Differences among the Three**

Although the data I have is incomplete, some unique traits emerge from each
discipline. This section will illustrate how, even though all of the honors students were
engaged in ethos generating or ethos saving maneuvers, even at the novice level the
rhetorical moves made in knowledge-making were dissimilar. In particular, literature
allows for conventional individualism with phenomenal similarity; History has the unique
feature of overtly declaring that “X event caused Y consequences,” usually an unstated
assumption in other disciplines; and anthropology has the distinction of being the one
discipline that entirely broke the conventions of knowledge-making. History nearly
perfectly replicates the subject object distinction and literature respected it.

Knowledge-making in novice literature allows for great individualism without
contradicting its own conventionalism. It seems as long as the students were writing
about something they found unique and worthy of esteem about a piece of literature, any justification for its esteem was as viable as any other justification. What seems to be missing, and this too is consistent with the development of literary theory, is a consistent pattern of justification. The epistemic classes are very small and emergent, except the consistency of nonexistent isms. Reasons, Research, and Audience are particularly confounding among these honors theses, I suspect this is because honors students have not learned what is the last decided trend in literature, they turn towards the social, towards recognizing theory. Topoi that would indicate a concern with the larger social world like social justice were virtually ignored. Novice honors literature writers were much more eager to provide less controversial justifications in the topoi such as context/intention or appearance/reality, both of which take few flights away from factual historicity or the text itself. Novice literature theses then have the oxymoronic quality of venerating uniqueness found in their texts without deviating from the socially established order. This quality is unique to the literary honors students. The next paragraph touches on what is unique about novice historian writers.

Unique to the study of history is the apparent need to overtly state that “x event had y consequences.” One such sentence from a thesis read “Today, many Basques accept the dominance of Spanish as the standard language, but as Fairclough states this does not suggest an acceptance in the full sense for the term” (Hist 1, p. 28). This verbal movement of time seemed to be a common transition from narrative to analysis and points to an important disciplinary element: “purity.” An informant, a lower-level history teacher, spoke to me about what makes history different from anthropology, sociology, or
even political science. For the purist, she noted that the academic study of history is never fully removed from the arrow of time. There is always the assumption that there was a time where things were different than they were at a previous point and are now. With history, there is no resting in lush descriptions of the present. History is the assigning of causes to effects, so the critical move of saying that verbally is evidence of that need for “purity.” An ideal, yet fictive and impossible, completely “pure” history would not be one in which the absolute truth was told, but one in which there were no loose ends to reconcile, where the weave of events was so tightly recounted that other explanations would simply fail to carry the burden of being a cause for the next effect. The honors theses students had that value and it stands out as neither fully epistemic of fully narrative, but as an essential, disciplinary movement. Bohan and Davis Jr. (1998) found that history students tended to write one-sided, binary thinking as sufficient cause for historical events. It is possible that the honors students had overcome the tendency toward binary thinking as a sufficient cause for events because I did not see it in my sample. When there was a cause, they pointed out that it was narrow and not exclusionary. X caused Y, but not all alone. The novice students recognized they were making a potentially contentious claim and very adroitly backed them up. The episteme of honors history thesis writers is magnificently clear. Part of this clarity comes from recognizing and stating the relationship between time and events. In keeping, the most essential element of novice historians is the overt statements about temporal causation. The next paragraph addresses what is essentially novice about anthropological writing.
Of course, this is hard to determine because the data are so incoherent, but that is exactly what is unique. Anthropology honors thesis writers, unlike other honors thesis writers, are most distinguished by their willingness to stand as agents. It is the essential move of disciplinarity in anthropology to choose the stance from which you relate your data and the wide variation among the theses, the prevalence of the relational and reflexive forms of the “I,” which go further than the “phenomenal I” as a mere viewer, but assert themselves as part of the whole knowledge-making experience. Whether they do that well or not will require a whole new system for analysis, which I will present a sketch of at the end of this project.

**Overall Differences between Honors and MacDonald**

I will argue here that the differences found between the professional and novice samples in the fields of literature and history yield enough insight to justify the development of a new methodology for comparison, which I sketch out in the conclusion. The full justification includes the reflexive and relational “I’s” found in anthropology; however, when considering the differences between MacDonald and the novice honors students, I can only consider literature and history because there was no numerical anthropological sample to compare to. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the novice writers in both disciplines worked to conserve the academic ethos they had generated in the honors program.

In literature, the half use of attributes (21% for honors students vs. 44% for professionals) is a striking dissimilarity. For a discipline that celebrates singularity and uniqueness, the use of attributes would seem an important opportunity for novices to
make distinctions that further solidify the uniqueness of their text, yet professionals still use only 2/3rds of the particulars that novices do. Literary novices also use research as the sentence subject more than twice as much as professionals. This is a distinctly amateur move, a way to stay in what is quintessentially academic discourse and to conserve the ethos of honors students. Referencing what others have said is a way to signal inclusion and belongingness, either by making a show of establishing one’s familiarity with extant literature or by buffering one’s stances with the stances of others. MacDonald’s method does not allow us to distinguish which, but both moves are justifiable as novice authors reach and grasp for authority.

Taken together, the data possibly point out that literary students develop as the discipline itself developed and as a professional developed. At the end of that extensive mimicry is freedom from that obligation to mimic. Instead, professionals position their phenomenon as an object of study worthy for its own sake, independent of the conventional, traditional boosts of institutionalized literature. The end game of professional phenomenon in literary analysis is the worth of the literature independent of the social mechanisms of the academy that so bolster the honors students. The turn not yet made is literature as a celebration of a life event that someone might be able to have. In other words, novices are not celebrating the greatness of literature yet; they are acknowledging its academic capital.

History students also fight to preserve their academic ethos rather than slide into popular historiography. The sentences occurred primarily in two types. The first type of subject was the exception code, indicating the “I” of the learner (in the case of the history
genre the actual “I” is not used) and the second type of subject was the repeated need to draw attention to the historical event having effects.

History theses had the highest (29%) of the exception codes of the “I” of the learner and many of them were worded in awkward constructions. There was also a tremendous amount of self-experience talk, although awkwardly phased to avoid the “I.” For example, “It must be stated that it is believed by some that the US government through the CIA helped assist in the coup and were advisors (History 3, p. 49). Now, all of the history students studiously avoided the “I” as the direct subject, but these sorts of convoluted constructions made it evident that the grouping of “some” was a way to cover the “I.”

And a few “I’s” did creep in. For example, “I found Chad and Gabon’s progress toward the Developmental goals” Hist 2, p. 23). It seems that the conservative nature of honors writing is not only its commonality amongst novice writers, but what also distinguishes it from expert writers.

Conclusion of Discussion

This discussion has noted how all of the honors students write in a way to conserve ethos. In history, that comes off as a dull recounting; in literature, as a recourse to conventional interpretations and reluctance to make the social turn; and in anthropology, as the tendency to stand banally in the role of neutral observer. All three were discernibly narcissistic. Literature theses were extremely phenomenal and singular. The literary theses tended to use few of the social topoi and depended most heavily on the appearance/reality topos. Honors history thesis writers were profoundly affected both by
their classroom interventions and the developmental history of their discipline. History students also used the phenomenal “I” of the learner more than any other set. The history students had the most exact replication of the professionals in their epistemic work, presumably because the guiding divisions in history writing between narrative and analysis so closely mirrors MacDonald’s phenomenal and epistemic categories.

Anthropology students were not typically following the conventional knowledge-making divisions of phenomenal and epistemic objects in their writing; therefore the results of the analysis were largely incoherent; and attempts to elucidate the results by looking to advisor influence were not clarifying. Instead, I turned to Macdonald’s other analysis in anthropology to identify the relational and reflexive “I” stances taken by these anthropology students. Finally, I covered the differing ways in which ethos is conserved in each discipline. These discussions have lead me to the conclusion that MacDonald’s coding scheme works particularly well in disciplines where the knowledge-making matches the fundamental assumptions of the classical subject/object dichotomy, but that additional types of analysis would be needed to illuminate other uses of agency, other stances, and other arrangements of the subject object dichotomy which exist in novice writing. This will be discussed in the concluding chapter.
Chapter 6: Conclusion

Results Restatement

This project found that the honors thesis writers at this Southern institution are largely not disciplinary writers in comparison to MacDonald’s existing scheme and that they were only somewhat alike each other, and, even then, not to a great degree of statistical significance, except in the literature corpus. The literature students were, not surprisingly, more phenomenologically like their professional group than the history students, who were epistemically more like their professional counterparts. The anthropology sample was not consistent even with a constant emphasis on either the epistemic or the phenomenological, but rather each thesis had its own hierarchy of emphasis. Honors anthropological students represent their discipline the most divergently. The most unifying and distinctive feature of the honors thesis disciplinary writing was the conservation of ethos and the self-reflexive subject. The self-reflective subject was not included in MacDonald’s categories but I suggest it as a marker of the novice category on the continuum.

The literary sample selected, flawed though it may be, revealed an agreement with Bazerman, Fahnestock and Secor (1988) and MacDonald (1994) but not Wilder (2005), that literature is primarily epideictic. All three theses were heavily weighted in favor of phenomenal discussion. Shaw (2009) proposed that students or novices would cite more than professional’s because their reasoning would be less elaborate. That was not the case, the honors theses writer’s has the same percentage of research as subjects that
MacDonald’s professionals did. Unlike Hiltunen’s (2006) work would suggest, the honors theses writers did not present interpretations using the “we” of the combined reader and author very often.

**Limitations**

My project, while illustrative, is not definitive because it is hampered by a number of factors, including the small sample size, the possibility of human error, and the limitations inherent in method. First, the sample size was a mere nine theses: three in each discipline, selected from a single institution housing a single honors program, from within a three-year period. For these reasons, the sample itself is not something to be generalized widely from. The sample was also, in some ways, a complement rather than a match to MacDonald’s work, given the inclusion of anthropology over psychology. Second, although all coders had read and familiarized themselves with MacDonald’s methods and existing analysis, human replication coding can be imperfect. Readers maintained the intent and method of the coding scheme at all points within the project. However, discrepant views and naturally occurring alternative readings were bound to occur when the sample size is small and the readers were not thoroughly trained on the coding scheme. More confidence than due may be drawn from the uniformity of the replication coding.

Most importantly, this project has taken MacDonald’s method into the domain of novice writing. Using the sentence analysis method at this new point on the continuum has illustrated several strengths and weaknesses of the method itself. The strengths of MacDonald’s sentence coding method are well known. While she does not provide raw
numbers, that data may be aggregated across studies at different points on the continuum. Her sentence analysis method allows knowledge to be built not only within the disciplines, across the humanities, but if used well, across time as well, so disciplinary change may be accounted for across time. The method is lithe because it is not dependent on anything beyond the prose on the page. Because of the coding scheme’s elegance, the method is amenable to many styles of theory building.

However, when the method was used on novice work, several problems arose. First, when the prose is not explicitly knowledge-making, the coding scheme, appropriately, is less useful. Some of the prose of novice writers is neither epistemic nor phenomenal, that is, not knowledge-making. Novice prose written by honors students in my sample is occasionally self-referential or personal. By self-referential I am referring to the honors students’ own learning process or their own response to their own learning. By personal, I mean to say that some honors theses prose are expressive of the relationship between the writer and the institution or adviser. An example of the latter is the following from one of the theses: “I was grateful to learn from Dr. X that…” or “As demonstrated in History 4980…” These sentence subjects are not really knowledge-making. The demonstration might be coded as “epistemic” but that would not be in line with the intent of the coding scheme. Novice prose is sometimes not knowledge-making. The coding scheme proposed by MacDonald does not adequately account for these sentences. MacDonald’s categories are clearly derived from expert usage, and so neglect the “I” of the learner, the “I” of the novice who ultimately refers to himself or herself as an individual, not as a researcher. In other words, the coding scheme does what it does
well *because* it makes a valid assumption about the nature of professional epistemology, but is also highlights in absentia, in novice work, an epistemology problem that novices have. It shows where students failed to discipline their own thoughts. If students were able to make social science and humanities knowledge as well as experts, the coding scheme may have elicited more comparable data. In this study, novices in literature and history especially failed to configure their phenomenon in disciplinary ways, so the coding scheme had to be modified. I added the “phenomenal I” code to account for it; however, the more added categories, the more ambiguous the possible interpretations become because the distinctions among the categories become more porous and circumstantial. At some point, the coding categories might become so muddied that another categorization system might be necessary.

I mentioned above that one of the benefits of MacDonald’s coding scheme was that it invited other data and interpretation. This invitation was possible because the method accounted for the stasis of existence only. It counted categories of subject. Then the meaning of those aggregate numbers is left open. It invited conjecture and speculation as much as it does the addition of other data. In the case of novices who are not fully ensconced in the discourse community, and especially with genres that do not join a conversation on its own ground, such as the honors thesis, this leaves an almost paralyzing openness of interpretation.

MacDonald’s method is lithe and easy to use, but it does not yield any assessment of the quality of the rhetorical moves it identifies. For example, the epistemic of the history section was a fine match between novice and expert, but reading the theses made
clear that the honors students were not making knowledge at the same level of sophistication. The honors students were able to employ some of the same knowledge-making tools as the professionals in their discipline, even in the same proportion as the professionals, but the quality of their knowledge-making was not in proportion to the professionals. MacDonald did another, more conceptual genre analysis to complement her textual analysis. While that additional analysis may do much to define what professionals are doing within the genre, it is the grounding assumption that their writing is the yardstick to be measure against. The honors thesis genre is too nascent to be a yardstick.

The most significant problem that arises in applying the sentence coding system to novice disciplinary scholarship is that the novices’ conception of intellectual agency is not equivalent to the professionals. MacDonald recognized that “certain kinds of agency were probably easier for novices to create” (MacDonald, 1994, p. 151). My research process highlighted this discrepancy. The novices difficulty with intellectual agency is demonstrated when they fail to distinguish between intellectual, discursive objects (singular) and reasons or isms. This was particularly evident in the literature category. Although the reliability coding ultimately went well, some of the honors students prose confounded the coders. The honors thesis writers’ novice agency made it difficult to tell if they were proposing a new, singular, discursive, phenomenal concept or reasoning from extant knowledge. Often, group discursive objects were in disguise as isms. Our linguistic knowledge can somewhat answer the latter, but intellectual, discursive objects shaped to fit a particular project are, in fact, particular (singular) to that project. This
distinction was by far the most difficult in honors theses whereas MacDonald suggested that the difference between the attributes code and the reason code was the most ambiguous in her coding. We found that to be less of a conundrum than the phenomenal discursive object and the reasoning. This brings us to agency, which is at the core of this methodology, what writers are doing with their words. MacDonald is correct that “Categorizing types of nouns in the subject position is one way to analyze writers’ sense of agency and possible discrepancies between epistemological assumption and written practice” (MacDonald, 1994, p. 149). However, the written practice of novice writers seems to indicate a need to grapple with the ontological as well. This is where MacDonald’s scheme shows its elevated origins—in the purity of its ontological assumptions. As MacDonald writes, “My classification scheme is not concerned with the ontological status of the phenomenon under scrutiny. That is, whatever one might say about how academics construct phenomena or whether the phenomena are “really” out there, much can be said about how academic writers choose to represent their objects of study” (MacDonald, 1994, p. 155). The problem is that novice writers are representing themselves as much as their phenomenon in their writing so ontological concerns become evident.

The first methodological contribution of this study is the recognition that the phenomenological “I” code needs to be used when coding novice writing. MacDonald established the phenomenological “I” in The dilemmas of narrative in anthropology (1998). When discussing narrative, she distinguished between the objective researcher of classical anthropology and the involved, postmodern subject of one’s own research.
MacDonald employed the phenomenological “I” to accommodate a newer, post-modern subjectivity. This additional code does remain within the dualistic bifurcated subject-object logic. Employing this phenomenological code allows each agent in the honors thesis to be coded as either a phenomenon or as an episteme. I found that the honors thesis writers employed themselves as post-modern subjects of their own research and studies, thereby necessitating this additional code be available for novices also.

The second methodological contribution to MacDonald’s method from this study is more radical. It revises the founding scholarly assumption of the subject/object dichotomy. MacDonald posits a classical model of expertise where a disinterested epistemically situated researcher studies a non-agented, non-human object. In fact, MacDonald’s two categories phenomenological and epistemological are exactly dependent on being able to purely differentiate what is being made knowledge about from how it is being made. Whichever occurs in the grammatical subject position, automatically takes on the autonomous status. With novice writers, this bifurcation is ambiguous as to what is subject seems to vacillate. There is the “I,” not of the researcher, but the “I” as an intellectual reflection on learning. I propose that to fully understand novice prose, as exemplified in the honors theses, a methodological modification that would de-nativize the classical subject-object dichotomy that novice scholars are demonstrating. I propose a suspension of the subject-object relation itself; that the knowledge-maker and the thing being made knowledge about directly modify each other and that each is only stabilized-for-now in their various roles.
Suggestions for Further Research

This research found a few interesting trends in each of the disciplines studied. In literary studies, the honors students wrote often about a single character, a solitary literary feature, an author, or a singular word, while the professionals spent more time explicating attributive nuances. Both novices and experts referred to groups at a similar, albeit comparably low, rate. These data go some way to confirm that there is a discourse and an expertise to be garnered through further familiarity. It also confirms the importance of developing an interpretation that ultimately comes back to the words on the page, the centrality of being seen to interpret the text and not proffer unrelated mental musings. In literature, the epistemic classes were notably similar. Relevant further research might look at how the celebration of texts is passed on to novices. By what activities? A particularly rich setting might study the writing of students in college literary journals as representative of MacDonald’s third level of the continuum.

The history comparison revealed no significant correlation in the phenomenological classes. However, all of the epistemic classes were significantly similar. History also had the most occurrences of the phenomenological “I,” where students made the issue their own learning. This combination of findings led to a particular view of novices in history, namely, that they were understanding the epistemology of their discipline very well but seemed to particularly struggle with problem posing and their role in that endeavor. Further research might examine if the
history methods course, which seemed to align epistemically might do more to further enfranchise their students. Lancaster (2014) seemed to indicate the same finding when he wrote the following:

The engagement analysis reveals that the high performers in Econ 400 more consistently construct what I refer to as a novice academic stance, one marked by high commitment, critical distance, and efforts to build a critically discerning reader in the text. The low performers, in contrast, more consistently construct a “student” stance, which is less committed and critically distant and makes moves to construct a reader who is more authoritative than the writer. (p. 51)

Finally, the work in anthropology led us to question the role of the relationship between the novice thesis writer, the advisor, and the disciplinariness of the text. Just how much is the advisor obligated to represent the discipline? The anthropology results revealed a very mixed finding. One of the theses was in the bailiwick of their advisor, via a traditional shared, sponsored, researched project; the others were the students’ personal interests.

In sum, this study encouraged us to explore how novice writers use agency differently than experts. However, the most compelling questions arise from applying MacDonald’s method to novices. First, is the recognition that novices use agency differently as demonstrated by the necessity of the phenomenological “I” code. MacDonald noted the phenomenological “I” in her anthropology analysis of professionals, but it is no doubt different in the body of novice writers. The phenomenological “I” was found particularly in the history and literature theses. MacDonald’s method needs to be expanded to encompass the self-referential or relational agencies of anthropology, the learning “I” of the history student, and the opinionated “I”
of the literature student joining in the celebration of literary values. This represents an expansion to accommodate the novel agencies of novice writers. It would be interesting to see the use of this phenomenological “I” in professional and novice writing across other disciplines. Of course, a greater sample, as discussed above, would help answer these questions with more certainty.

Another vein for further exploration is to question the assumption that disciplinary discourse is the motivating factor for the enculturation of novices. It seems conceivable that it is not necessarily wholly disciplinarity. Both the specific results from anthropology and the intervention seen in history, the methods class, routinely taught the same way may be seen as further questioning the role of the mentor in disciplinary acculturation. Overall, MacDonald’s assumption that the acquisition of professionalism is accomplished or driven primarily by replication of the professional discourse seems questionable in light of the novice findings related here. Further research into the relationship between the advisors discourse and the discourse of the student may yield some suggestive results.

Since MacDonald’s method has been shown to be unable to fully account for the agency of novice writers, increasing the sample size is unlikely to yield any better results. Instead, to more fully understand novice prose, further research would focus on applying the method I illuminate below to another corpus of novices and professionals.

The most important finding, and the one most ripe for further exploration, is that the configurations of agency used by novices stymied the simple count and part/whole classifications offered by MacDonald’s coding scheme. The method as it stands, even
with the phenomenological “I” added to it, is insufficient to account for the varying uses of agency by novices, particularly the relational and self-referential.

These uses of agency in knowledge-making underscore the importance of how the concept of agency is linguistically deployed. In MacDonald’s method, the author is in command of knowledge-making, a fully realized scholar, who recognizes that “representations of agency are important, and variations in agency are created through variations in sentence subjects” (MacDonald, 1994, p. 149). Professionals are aware of the concept of agency and its careful use in writing; they perceive the repertoire of choices. Novices are unlikely to perceive those same choices. MacDonald cites Witte and Cherry’s 1995 study to suggest that “epistemic subjects are not a part of the ordinary repertoire of writers even well into the undergraduate years” (as cited in MacDonald, 1994, p. 151). In some ways, to compare the use of agency between novices and experts is to assume some parity of potential when this is recognized as not the case.

Novice relation to knowledge is less domineering or ownership-based toward knowledge-making, but more, as I have said, relational and self-referential. One solution is to add the phenomenological “I,” discussed above and see if that accounts for the knowledge-making of novices sufficiently. My sense is that the phenomenological I alone will not suffice because several sentences are more than self-referential, they are relational. Novices are relating to, rather than being in command of knowledge. The more nuanced novice relationship with knowledge-making requires a more nuanced linguistic concept of agency be incorporated into the method. MacDonald noted that “The move into postgraduate work almost certainly will involve learning new textual practices in
some fields” (MacDonald, 1994, p.151). Perhaps further research might illuminate how postgraduates accrue professional competence with agency.

MacDonald’s coding scheme has the *a priori* assumption that sentences should be knowledge-making with autonomous subjects or their discrete parts using autonomous or discrete intellectual tools. MacDonald’s phenomenal agents are, in some sense, all atomistic. There are individual agents, groups of individual agents, or “attributes” that are wholly separable from a previously addressed or implied agent. This scheme does not allow any room for agents that are both subject and object. More modern sociohistorical tools, broadly grouped here, represent another way to understand the subject object relation such that these classical dichotomies get functionally fused. We can use any number of sociohistorical semiotics. I am particularly inclined to a pragmatic semiotic as generated by Johnson’s (2010) dissertation, which “brings together pragmatism of Dewey and the Semiotics of Peirce” (p. iii). Along with a sochiohistoric notion of Deleuze and Guattari (1972), we can become aware of and learn to read student work as accounting for assemblages and abduct what it took to become that.

Peirce (1955) has famously given the following three illustrations of inference making: deduction, induction, and abduction.

*Deduction*

Rule: All the beans from this bag are white

Case: These beans are from this bag

Result: These beans are white
This amounts to inferring a result, given a general rule and a given case 2.

Now consider induction:

*Induction*

Case: These beans are from this bag

Result: These beans are white

Rule: All the beans from this bag are white

Induction consists in the inference of a rule, given a specific case (a precondition) and a result (an observation). This inference involves generalization, that is, reasoning from particular instances to a general law, rule or pattern. In deduction the conclusion follows from the premises with necessity, whereas in induction it does not. We might find out that only the beans at the top of the bag were white, whereas those at the bottom were brown.

Finally, this is an example of abduction:

*Abduction*

Rule: All the beans from this bag are white

Result: These beans are white

Case: These beans are from this bag

Abduction is thus inferring a case from a rule and a result. Like induction, this inference is also more or less probable, and not sure. The beans could in fact have come from the bag of mixed beans or from a bag that is no longer there. It could entirely be wrong. Abduction is generative, more heuristic, but because of this, it is possible that the
conclusion is false. Peirce phrased it this way, ”The surprising fact, C, is observed; But if A were true, C would be a matter of course, Hence, there is reason to suspect that A is true.” (Peirce 1955, p. 151). It may take several abductions to get to a point where the inference is testable by purely inductive or deductive logic.

Although all things are possible, it is not guessing. It is a matter of limiting inferences into assemblages that are actionable. Pierce mentions that the inference should be economical, should explain all the facts and not too much more, and be testable against other cases and the material assemblages of reality. These rules for inferences reign in the inscrutability of reference in trade for a pragmatic interpretation that answers a specific reality-based query such as, in my case, is this sentence reflecting disciplinary values?

Here, economical means that it is a valid transaction. A transaction here harkens back to Dewey’s notion of a transaction as beyond subject/object dualism. It is the relationship I believe Witte & Hass (2005) were discussing when they proposed cognition as a mediational means (p. 132) and an answer to Pais’s plea to return to the primacy of economy” (p. 18). I mean to imply here that the inference should be one of understanding what benefits whom and how. Because of this, it is important to set up the relationships clearly before you proceed with abduction.

Dewey and Bentley (1949) proposed three forms of action:

*Self-action:* where things are viewed as acting under their own powers.
*Inter-action:* where a thing is balanced against a thing in causal interconnection.
*Trans-action:* where systems of description and naming are employed to deal with aspects and phases of action, without attribution to “elements” or other presumptively detachable or independent “entities,” “essences,” or “realities,” and
without isolation of presumptively detachable “relations” from such detachable “elements” (as cited in Garrison, 2001, p. 285).

Transaction here is economic. We get from Dewey then, our assemblages, later described by Deleuze and Guttari. The concept of assemblages refers to “the multiple elements that individuals interact with in complex ecologies. Effects are dependent on, but not reducible to, the assemblage components ‘properties’” (DeLanda, p. 6) that can either increase or diminish individual capacities. This is a becoming. Unlike interactions between predetermined entities, becomings are characteristically unpredictable and unfold along rhizome-like trajectories.

Pierce’s next criterion is that it should explain all the facts and not more. I am struck here by simplicity, elegance, and the law of parsimony. In other words, do not stray too far from the words on the page or the most minimal explanation for the proposed case.

Finally, the third criterion is that the hypothesis should be as grounded as it can be and, eventually, if reprised enough times, it will get to a point where it can be tested inductively or deductively. One grinds down into the material, the real, and the describable until more objective inferencing methods might be useful. Svennevig’s (2001) own conclusion: A pragmatic, abductive theory of science involves functional rather than causal explanations, such that behavior is accounted for rather than predicted. This study corroborates the claim that this sort of scientific approach is crucial to the humanities and the social sciences, where the data are constituted by behavior which in itself is meaningful and context-dependent (italics in original, p. 13).
Abduction as a method to understand the novice writer. Therefore, is mostly reading to make abductive inferences and constraining those inferences with the most parsimonious explanation. We read each sentence for activity, asking, as educators, “what action is this sentence doing and what activity enabled the student to write it?” And, in answering that, we cannot look to a discrete actor, but to the whole social milieu and co-established assemblages.

Before identifying any of these things, you have to learn to read less inferentially, which means to recognize Quine's (1971) “inscrutability of reference.” You have to read in such a way that you learn to recognize the meaning you are bringing to the world, then, in recognizing it, being able to let it go. In that way, you begin to read for action, not art. The narratives flow, not its artistry, is revealed in this reading as tracing.

Because we are reading a text, we are not going from nothing to something, we are going from the widest possibilities of interpretation to the most functional interpretation. Abduction is just right for this intellectual move. “Abduction is the process by which useful explanations are developed and is therefore an essential concept within pragmatism. This process of finding useful explanations is essentially ‘an inference’ from observed facts” (Richardson & Kramer, 2006, p. 500).

One obvious example of a relational sentence is one in which the sentence obscures that it is the thought of the author. The author ignores himself or herself while writing; there is a missing authorial voice, the passive or missing agent. In these cases, these are possible relational sentences. It is obvious that they are relational because the relationship is missing. For example, in history thesis 3, we find the following sentence
on page 10: “Claims of lost autonomy continued to be the platform for secessionist justifications.” There is an assumed set of human agents, whatever group is making the claim on the platform. So in MacDonald’s coding scheme, you would think this would be a group, but it is really the claims, which would fall into the category of reasons. This is what happens when we take the subject as is. We have to imagine claims as the thing being made knowledge about here, but it is clearly not true. The actual action of the sentence which shows the relationship is that the “secessionists claims that they had lost their autonomy provided the justification for seceding. ”Now, having that sentence, we can move to abduction.

Abduction:

• The novice writer finds that lost autonomy is a justification for succession.

• But if the writer values autonomy, this would not be surprising.

• Hence, we can infer that the novice writer places a high value on autonomy of cultural groups.

Why is “Hence, we can infer that the novice writer places a high value on autonomy of cultural groups” likely inference? It is parsimonious, it is verifiable, and it covers the data included in the sentence almost word by word. The tracing matches. In this sentence, the novice has the disciplinary values.

So the first step in the method is ordering the chains of human-non-human actors. The second step is performing the abduction. Then generate the inference by testing the assemblage against what we know of reality constrained by the question we are asking.
So, let’s go to another example sentence, in which the set of human and nonhuman actors is already aligned. This time from literature: “Austen pauses multiple occasions throughout the novel and removes herself as a third person omniscient narrator; instead, she speaks directly to the readers” (Lit 1, p.7).

Let’s do abduction again. It is like finding the missing warrant.

- The novice thinks a change in narrative style is important or indicative of something.
- It would not be surprising if her relationship to Austen’s text is reader-based.
- She is a novice and reads as a reader, not as a critic.

Again, in abduction the conclusion does not necessarily follow from the premise; it is just congruent, testable, parsimonious, and, therefore, likely. But does it help us understand this writer’s relationship to disciplinarity? Yes, it does.

But will this work with both novices and experts? Further research is needed to answer that question, of course, but, hypothetically, it should, for the following reasons.

This understanding of relational identify does not preclude the more traditional command of knowledge sort of agency, it merely precedes it.

We, students and educators alike, are still working with text that is written on the page. We are still operating at the states of fact and definition. This type of agency occurs or it does not. Like MacDonald’s method, it does not delve into the issue of quality, but it interrogates disciplinary phenomenon even more clearly.
As a result, not only might this proposed method work, but it would allow for greater meaning to be made between the phenomenal and epistemic classes because their interweaving would be more complete across the whole text. To have a phenomenon that is both personally and disciplinary configured, adds to the richness of the interpretation.

In addition to complementing MacDonald’s sentence method with the insights from novices, this method may do more to illuminate the discipline of literature with its particularly affiliatory practices. It will certainly clarify anthropology novices’ difficult relationship with disciplinarity, and historians’ use of the self-reflective “I.” All of these illuminations will help build a better understanding of how novices employ or learn disciplinary discourse across the social sciences and humanities.
References


