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WRITING TOWARD EXPERT: THE WRITING CENTER'S ROLE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF GRADUATE WRITERS (170 PP.)

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Researchers of graduate student success have recently begun engaging in studies aimed at establishing a better understanding of what practices best assist in graduate student retention and degree completion. Simultaneously, Writing Center scholars have been making a concerted effort to undertake empirical research focused on the everyday work of the Center. This dissertation uses a mixed-methods study design to uncover intersections and disconnects between what graduate student writers report they do, what graduate student writers actually do, what advisors believe graduate student writers do, and how writing centers can develop practices and programs that best fit the multidimensional experiences of graduate student writers. Graduate writers are currently underrepresented in Writing Center and Writing Studies scholarship. This dissertation provides a glimpse into the working lives and lived experiences of graduate writers through the use of national surveys of graduate writers, graduate advisors, and writing center practitioners and through in-depth observations and individual interviews. Collected data show that graduate students and graduate advisors believe writing center spaces are designed primarily to assist undergraduate students, a belief that is supported by actual practices of writing center practitioners. This research will be beneficial for writing scholars and practitioners wishing to continue to offer innovative, intentional, research-based support for writers across the spectrum. This study will expand current understandings of the actual and perceived experiences of graduate writers, knowledge that will be foundational to future practices and research that can aid in the continual growth and development of Writing Center and Writing Studies theory and practice.

WRITING TOWARD EXPERT: THE WRITING CENTER'S ROLE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF GRADUATE WRITERS

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Chapter 1

An Argument for the Empirical Study of the Graduate Student Writer Experience

In the end, educational decisions are a "both-and" phenomenon. They are shaped both by our own personal preferences and by broader social factors, and it is important to hold both dimensions in mind. But doing that—holding both dimensions in mind—really requires that we work insistently to see the broader social dimensions of decision making.

(Lori Salem)

In her 2016 article "Decisions . . . Decisions: Who Chooses to Use the Writing Center?" Lori Salem describes a study in which she follows a cohort of incoming freshmen for four years to determine who chooses to use the writing center. Of her study she writes, "This research offers a comparison of the academic, attitudinal, and demographic characteristics of students who use the writing center and those who don't" (Salem, 2016, p. 153). She puts forth two major calls in the concluding thoughts of her piece. First, she insists writing centers need to expand their research agendas to explore "non-visits" and "non-visitors" (p.161). Second, she argues that writing centers need to examine their practices to determine if they truly do meet the needs of all students who visit (p. 162). This dissertation project is a direct response to Salem's call. The focus of this study, however, is on graduate students, a group that has received far less attention in writing center scholarship.

I began this project by reflecting on my own recent experiences as a graduate student working in the writing center at a large, Midwestern state university. In the fall of 2018, I was serving as Assistant Director, and I began working closely with an undergraduate tutor to build a more substantial relationship between the writing center and graduate students on our campus. One of our initiatives

was to offer on-site writing tutoring at each of the "just-write" dissertation boot camp (DBC) events held by Graduate Studies that academic year. A "just write" DBC is one that provides graduate writers with food, space, and time to write, but there is little structure in terms of the use of that time and space, nor are their workshops or tutorials offered to attendees. Attendees at just-write DBC events can come and go as they wish and use their time however they see fit. That semester, however, the writing center collaborated with the Graduate Studies coordinators to have writing tutors available for five hours on Saturdays and Sundays for each DBC event.

Two weeks before each of the three events, the tutor and I sent an email to the entire writing center tutoring staff, a group of approximately 40 undergraduate and graduate tutors, requesting they sign up to work at these DBC events. Because these were extra paid hours, we imagined we would get tutors scrambling to be the first to sign up. However, we received no response to our request, and I covered the shifts. For the second event, three tutors volunteered, one of which was the tutor involved with me in this outreach endeavor. The third and final time for that semester, our Director assigned two tutors to the shifts. Throughout the total 30 hours a tutor was present that semester, only two graduate students used our services, working with us for a total of 1.5 hours. My collaborator and I were confused as to why graduate students were not taking advantage of this free, easily accessible service during their dedicated writing time. Flyers had gone out prior to the event, informing attendees that on-site writing tutoring was going to be available. They could sign up in advance for one-hour sessions if they wanted to plan ahead, or they could stop by whenever they felt the need. No matter what we did, we could not seem to entice them to come to us for assistance, nor could we entice undergraduate tutors to voluntarily work with graduate writers. We were stymied.

Why would so few take advantage of a free service that provides personal attention devoted to their needs, especially when very few college experiences provide such individualized attention. What was holding them back? Why were undergraduate tutors so reluctant to work with graduate writers? To

begin to answer these questions, I reviewed registration numbers for Kent State University's campus writing center. In the fall of 2018, there were 27,143 students enrolled on the main campus. 5,570 of those were graduate students (Kent State University, 2018, n.p.). The writing center held 2,354 non-unique[1] sessions in that semester. 345 of those sessions were with graduate students – 6% of the total graduate student population on campus – split evenly between native English writers and writers whose native language is other than English. It is important to note here that outlining these numbers is not meant to suggest that the Kent State Writing Commons is not helping students in an immense way; the intention is not to argue that they are not doing enough. In fact, the truth is just the opposite. The writing center often runs at 100% capacity with little to no down time for tutors from one session to the next. There were approximately 40 tutors employed there with anywhere from 3-8 tutors on the clock at any given time. In-house survey results sent after each session show writers, even graduate writers, are typically very happy with the help they receive. If this is the case and if it is true that word of mouth is the best marketing, as writing center lore would have us believe, where were those other 94% of graduate writers? What were they experiencing in their writing lives that could account for the neglect of such a resource?

A review of the published literature showed that graduate faculty who serve as thesis or dissertation directors are a large part of the writing lives of graduate student writers. My intuition told me they likely had some connection to the decisions of graduate writers when it comes to resources chosen to assist with extended writing projects. Thus, this study was designed to uncover intersections and disconnects between what graduate student writers report they do, what others see graduate student writers do, and what graduate student writers actually do. The intention of this study is to answer the question: *What role can Writing Centers play in assisting graduate student writers with the*

[1] Non-unique" here means this count could include students who visited multiple times or brought new versions of work previously brought for assistance.

experience of the extended writing project? In order to answer this question, it was necessary to break the research into the following questions:

- How do graduate student writers describe their writing experiences?
- How do graduate advisors describe the experiences of graduate student writers?
- How do writing center practitioners describe their experiences with graduate student writers?
- What are the writing experiences of graduate student writers?
- How do graduate student writers describe their writing experiences?

What is a Writing Center?

To build an argument about how writing centers can best assist graduate student writers, it is necessary to first build a common understanding of what a writing center is. Below, I explicate foundational writing center theories and practices and establish personal writing center and tutoring philosophies. This work of outlining foundational theories and philosophy-building builds a baseline for understanding the pedagogies and practices of the field.

Though debates about what makes for writing center best practices are ongoing, there are some commonly accepted ideas about what a writing center is. Muriel Harris, one of the most enduring voices to offer a universal definition of a writing center, describes a writing center as having the following traits:

- tutorials offered in a one-to-one setting
- tutors as coaches and collaborators, not teachers
- focus on the writer's individual needs
- encouragement of experimentation and practice
- work on writing from a variety of courses
- provide services for writers at all levels of writing proficiency.

Though it was not possible to locate the original article because the publishing organization is no longer in operation, it has been republished on the websites of the National Council of Teachers of English's and the International Writing Centers Association, two of the most influential sites in the field, thereby solidifying its importance in the formation of the writing center identity. Further developing the characterization of a writing center, Lee and Golde (2013) describe them as places meant to "cultivate writing awareness with a focus on long-term writing success" (p. Lee and Golde (2013), and Inoue (2016) paints the picture of a writing center as a space that is visited often throughout a writer's development and in which a writer will likely encounter both harmony and discord. Yet, a number of practitioners are calling for further modifications of these descriptions. They see more nuance in the daily work of writing centers than they feel these descriptions allow for. For example, Salem (2016) writes, "[U]sers of the writing center are diverse, and therefore unlikely to be served by policy-pedagogies that are meant to be applied to all students" (p. 164). In her research, she discovered that students who entered her university with low SAT scores and less privileged identities were more likely to use writing center services than those with higher SAT scores and more privileged identities, those who come from well-funded schools and who have had experience using critical thinking to solve problems. Yet, the Socratic questioning practice advocated for by writing center scholars advantages the more privileged students. Therefore, if writing centers truly want to be universal, they need to develop evidence-based practices and be flexible in their approaches to writing assistance (Salem, 2016, p. 163). Adding to this stance is Powers and Nelson's 1995 argument,

> [W]e have learned when we call ourselves a full-service writing center, we must mean more than simply a willingness to serve a full population and variety of writers. . . Disciplinarity, as reflected in the varying demands of the multiple discourse communities our writing center serves, demands that we broaden our role if we are to serve the university community fully and effectively. (p. 13)

While Salem's argument is based on socio-economic proclivities, Powers's and Nelson's is based on disciplinary diversity. They argue for a broader scope of practices that can reach those with unique disciplinary needs and expectations in order to provide truly beneficial assistance for an array of student needs.

Constructing Alternative Conceptions of a Writing Center

Recognizable to just about any practitioner in the undergraduate writing center is the typical tutoring scenario. The writer either makes an appointment or drops into the Center, depending on appointment policies and/or the writer's preferences. When the writer arrives, he sits down at a table beside the tutor and shuffles around in his backpack for a moment before his essay emerges and is placed on the table in front of the tutor. The writer says something along the lines of, "I really suck at grammar" and then waits for the tutor to pull out the red pen and go to town. Instead, the tutor's hands continue to rest on the table, and she says something like, "Oh, I'm sure we can talk about that, but can you tell me, first, what your paper is about and maybe what your assignment is?" The writer then spends the next few minutes explaining the assignment as he understands it and talking about what he's written in the essay. The tutor makes the point that it's usually best to read the essay aloud and then talk about what they both see occurring in the text. She asks if he wants to read it aloud, or if he would like her to. He says he will, slides the essay back to lie in front of him, and starts reading. She takes notes on a blank piece of scratch paper while he reads. After a few minutes, mouth dry and nerves calmed, he reaches the end of the essay, lies it on the table, and looks up at her for direction. "Great, thank you," she says as she finishes writing that one last note. "How do you feel about this essay?" She asks. "I don't know. It's okay," he says, confused about what that has to do with fixing his grammar. "Well, what do you feel like you've done well," she questions. "I don't know. My thesis statement is good," he responds. "Okay, what do you like about your thesis statement?" And on it goes for the next 20 minutes or so until the session ends. She tells him their time together has come to an end but that he is more

than welcome to make another appointment for another day. He thanks her and leaves, itching to tell someone how helpful it was . . . or was not.

In this imaginary session, the tutor's goal is not to edit the student's paper, but to help him discover ways to strengthen his own work, hence not pulling out the red pen and jumping right into a conversation about his grammar. She asks him to read his essay aloud because she knows that if he does, he is more likely to catch on his own moments of confusion, awkward sentence constructions, and shifts in focus, i.e., concerns beyond incorrect grammatical constructions. The tutor's notetaking propensities are individually motivated; not all tutors take the same kinds of notes. However, some of the reasons for this practice are to help the tutor remain focused on the writer's piece, to help the tutor make sense of the essay organization, to provide a kind of reverse outline for the tutor and the reader, and to help the tutor keep track of the questions that arise for her as she listens. When the reading is done, she wants the writer to understand that he does have successes in this piece; it's not all incorrect grammar. Thus, she has him identify his own strengths by asking him what he believes he has done well. Such a move can work to set a positive tone for the rest of the session, even when the conversation veers toward discussions of improvements that could be made. The Socratic method of questioning is a tactic tutors are taught to use because it can build conversation and help the writer articulate thoughts and ideas without feeling the need to succumb to the tutor's supposed expertise.

Tutoring practices and pedagogies are methods for identifying a writing center and distancing it from subject tutoring. However, even amongst writing center practitioners there can be found a dichotomy of tutoring approaches. While any tutoring handbook can provide an outline for a generalist approach, the idea that any tutor can help any writer at any stage of the writing process, there is also the somewhat vilified perspective of the *specialist* approach. In specialist approaches, the tutor has been trained in or already has some field specialty perhaps in science writing or working with graduate student writers. The generalist approach is found in most writing centers in the United States. In this

kind of tutoring practice, tutors are trained to approach each tutoring occasion in a similar manner to the imaginary one described above, and they are taught that this works for any kind of writing in any field. Specialist tutoring approaches, on the other hand, operate under the idea that there are occasions where a specially trained, more advanced tutor with knowledge of a specific genre or discipline may be of more assistance than a tutor with a general knowledge of the writing process (Salem, 2016; Shamoon & Burns, 2001).

Writing Center scholars Shamoon and Burns (2001) often take up the mantle for the alternative, specialist tutor approach. They argue, "[D]iversity in writing-center culture is imaginable and reasonable but not talked about or available" (Shamoon and Burns, 2001, p. 67). However, Writing Centers as a field of scholarship coalesced approximately three decades ago around figures like Stephen North, Muriel Harris, Elizabeth Bouquet, and Peter Carino, figures who saw the potential of Writing Centers but also championed the generalist approach. North is still paraphrased to this day as part of what Jackie Grutsch McKinney (2013) calls the "Writing Center Grand Narrative." Most writing centers' mission statement includes some form of "we are here to make better writers, not better papers." This has been the rallying cry for Writing Center practitioners and scholars since the publication of Stephen North's 1984 article, "The Idea of the Writing Center" found in *College English*. North's "Idea" merged with Muriel Harris's "Concept" as the foundational definition of what a writing center is. These values (and the assumptions carried with them) underlie the practices of nearly all U.S. spaces that call themselves Writing Centers. What I propose, based on the Writing Center scholarship of those like Harry Denny and Jackie Grutsch McKinney, and Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) / Writing in the Disciplines (WID) scholars like Charles Bazerman, Kathleen Blake Yancey, and Chris Anson, and transfer of writing scholars like Elizabeth Wardle and Linda Adler-Kassner is that what we currently think when we think of writing centers has reached an age of what Wardle & Clement (2016) might call a "consequential transition,"

when views, individuals, and social organizations change in such a way that the institution or organization experiences becoming something new (p. 162).

The past few years have seen a surge of evidence-based research in the field of Writing Center Studies. For example, John Kneisley (2018), an undergraduate tutor at Dickinson College, investigated why students come to the writing center more often to work with a draft than to brainstorm. Wendy Pfrenger, Rachael Blasiman, and James Winter (2017), faculty members at three small regional campuses of the Kent State University system, researched the correlation between writing center usage and successful course completion. Kathryn Raign (2017), an Associate Professor at the University of North Texas, outlines some of the methods of research currently accepted as legitimate in the field and discusses her own empirical research. Andrea Scott (2017), Associate Professor and Director of the Writing Center at Pitzer College, distributed surveys to Writing Center Directors in Germany and Austria to compare the Writing Center Grand Narrative there with the Grand Narrative here in the U.S. This surge of evidence-based and RAD research is timely in that, like Chris Anson's (2016) "Pop Warner Chronicles," Writing Centers are starting to see the same kind of ossification of their beliefs and practices. When Anson uses the term ossification, he is referring to the fact that even the strongest, most well-practiced, well-published academic writers get stuck when writing in new situations, and he conjectures this is likely due to the fact that the writer has produced relatively few documents outside the genres of his field. I posit that Writing Centers, with some of their beliefs and practices, have found themselves in this same rut, and RAD (replicable, aggregable, data-driven) research can help them find their way out. This is, of course, contextually dependent on the institution in which the Center is found and on those responsible for the Center's practices. However, under the right direction, with the right support, and the right training, Writing Centers can be the heartbeat of any writing program.

My Writing Center Philosophy

To construct my own philosophical foundation, I worked from the teachings of Writing Center and Writing Studies scholars and from my own years of engaging in multiple writing center environments. In my philosophy I recognize the standing invitation to all writers-in-progress, while establishing an understanding that no two writers or writing situations will be exactly alike, that sometimes the Socratic method will accomplish the goals of a tutoring session, but sometimes it won't. When at the tutoring table, tutors must be ever vigilant about which strategies are working and which are not. Thus, my personal writing center philosophy:

> *A Writing Center is a singularly recognized institutional space with the autonomy (emotional, physical, and budgetary) to determine and foster relationships across the campus community. Writing Center practitioners understand the basic tenet that writing is a cultural construct, and it works to build this understanding with all disciplines while co-constructing writing support best-practices with faculty and students from across the disciplines through individualized tutoring sessions and collaborative learning practices. A Writing Center invites all writers-in-progress, and constantly works to understand their individual and disciplinary writing needs, while espousing the belief that there is no one perfect practice that helps all writers in all situations.*

My personal tutoring philosophy:

> *Tutoring is a dynamic interpersonal interaction between dedicated individuals. Tutors and writers are constantly engaged in a hierarchical dance, wherein sometimes the tutor takes the lead and sometimes the writer takes the lead. Tutoring is a skillful practice that can be learned and continually revised, shifting to meet the unique needs of the moment. Tutors must always be aware of the social construction of meaning, understanding that "correctness" is relative to writer, purpose, and audience.*

The goal of these philosophies is to encourage disciplinary and personal curiosity about how others use and perceive various writing situations and to foster that curiosity by establishing connections of understanding between writing center practitioners, scholars, and discipline faculty. In order to build such relationships, reflective practitioners can gather data about those who visit their centers and those who do not, determining probable causes and possible responses. If such data is not purposefully gathered, analyzed, and shared, writing centers run the risk that Murphy and Law's 2001 prediction will come to pass, that writing centers will become a relic of a bygone era while writers seek assistance from private companies such as Grammarly ©, with cookie cutter services, or from untrained individuals.

Most writing center practices are built on undergraduate conceptions of writing and writing processes, and many writing center spaces are constructed for the needs of undergraduates. Though graduate writing centers do exist, they are few and fairly recent, leaving a gap in the field's understanding of the struggles and needs graduate writers face. One such gap was attempted to be filled by Judith Powers (1993), who realized that graduate students working on theses and dissertations are often seen by the institution as experts in their fields and are then set adrift to write on their own. However, these same students are often writing in unfamiliar environments (outside of the classroom) and in unfamiliar genres (thesis). Thus, in order to better help this demographic, she modified the traditional dyadic practice of tutoring into what she has labeled the "trialogue" approach. In her trialogue approach, Powers makes a direct connection with the graduate writer's faculty advisor, making sure the two support systems (faculty and tutor) are working in tandem instead of potentially at odds. Powers was the assistant director of a group of 10 English faculty members serving as writing consultants as part of their contractual load. She contends that in the typical consultation, one of the pair, either the tutor or the writer, knows or has an idea of what are some of the best ways to tackle the kind of issue the writer is encountering. In a graduate consultation, she claims, this is often not the case, neither participant knows the "right" answer. Thus, her center developed an approach where they

reached out to the person who would know, i.e., the writer's advisor, before the first consultation and as needed throughout the writing process, which took place over multiple sessions. She claims great success with this approach, but she acknowledges it would likely not be beneficial in most undergraduate tutoring situations, as those typically do not spend multiple sessions on one document and do not require the same amount of independent work.

Scholars like Paula Gillespie (2007), Helen Snively, Traci Freeman, and Cheryl Prentice (2010), and Steve Simpson (2013) describe needs of graduate writers as they see them, and Talinn Phillips (2013) reveals that many writing center tutors are not adequately trained to work with graduate writers. Gillespie (2007) outlines a project that began as a collaboration between her campus writing center and the graduate studies program. They worked with each of the disciplines to compile a list of best practices for graduate writers and trained individuals from the disciplines to be a writing consultant for their classmates. Snively et al (2008) argue, "Because writing at the graduate level is highly specialized and discipline specific, graduate students often benefit from working with others who have experience writing in their disciplines. They also benefit from working with consultants who have designed and conducted research and have mastered higher levels of academic literacy in long papers" (p. 155). Thus, graduate writers would indeed benefit from centers built around their specific needs, as they differ from those of undergraduates. To identify the writing needs of graduate students, Simpson (2013) used a systems theory design to study one Brazilian writer as he worked through the process of writing a document for publication. Phillips (2013) researched 5 multilingual graduate writers, following them through their first year in a doctoral program. She chronicled their experiences and found that most of them "wanted tutors who had experience with specialized genres like grants, articles, theses, and dissertations" (p. 162). Thus, there is the start of a movement within the Writing Center field that recognizes the unique experiences of graduate student writers. The movement, however, needs more studies such as this one to build a solid foundation of replicable, aggregable, and data-driven research.

Dissertation Research Methods

In this dissertation, I add my voice to this list of respected writing center professionals by focusing on the voiced needs and experiences of graduate student writers. At this time, little research within writing center publications discusses the intersections between graduate student writers, their advisors, and the writing center, and little research outside of writing center publications focuses on the benefits of writing centers. Thus, this dissertation research involves studying how writing centers can best help graduate student writers during their dissertation writing processes, thus positively impacting their success. To do this, I designed a two-phase, mixed-methods study. My research questions are

- ***Originating***
    - *What role can Writing Centers play in assisting graduate student writers with the experience of the extended writing project?*
    - ***Specifying for Survey***
        - *How do graduate student writers describe their writing experiences?*
        - *How do graduate advisors describe the experiences of graduate student writers?*
        - *How do writing center practitioners describe their experiences with graduate student writers?*
    - ***Specifying for Observations & Interviews***
        - *What are the writing experiences of graduate student writers?*
        - *How do graduate student writers describe their writing experiences?*

This dissertation project was divided into two phases. The first involved an online survey that was sent to all Kent State University graduate students, graduate faculty advisors, and writing center tutors, was distributed at the annual conference of the Mid-Atlantic Writing Center Association (MAWCA), and was disseminated via two national list-servs. I designed three separate surveys asking related questions of three different demographics: graduate writers, faculty who advise graduate

writers, and writing center practitioners. The second phase focused specifically on dissertation writers engaged in the writing process. I observed graduate writers composing and interviewed them immediately following their composing session. The study is intended to expand the field's current knowledge of the actual and perceived experiences of writers composing at the graduate level. The value of this research lies in the detailed, in-depth understanding of the phenomenon of the extended writing project as embodied by thesis and dissertation composing. This dissertation study works to fill the gap in understanding of novice and expert writers. Researchers who study student writers typically mean undergraduate-student writers, and those who study experienced writers typically mean faculty or experienced writers. What is largely not the focus of empirical research is the tension that arises when an individual simultaneously inhabits both the student *and* experienced writer domains, i.e., the graduate student writer. Graduate student writers are increasingly expected to have publications before they begin applying for jobs but also while they are still engaged in the practice-writing processes of dissertation writing, creating a unique tension. Thus, graduate student writers exist in a liminal space between novice and expert, constantly juggling disjunct, internal and external beliefs that they are too novice to write a dissertation but too expert to ask for help.

Because of the insular nature of many educational practices, it is easy to get caught up in the values, beliefs, and assumptions of one's own field. However, Writing Center professionals must be able to move beyond those genres and communities that they know well and learn what other disciplines value in order to truly provided beneficial assistance to any writer at any stage of the process. Writing Center tutors are typically well-trained in domains of writing process and rhetorical knowledge, both valuable assets in any writing situation. However, Writing Center Directors and tutors trained in genres outside of their own fields could better assist a broader range of student writers and could engage in the discourse communities of other fields. This means that continued education and informal and formal

discussions between directors, tutors, faculty, and writers can go a long way in building bridges and inviting more graduate student writers to seek out assistance beyond their advisors.

Additionally, moving away from promoting a static one-to-one approach to tutoring in all situations is essential in a move to provide graduate student writers with writing center experiences they find to be beneficial. As mentioned by Kneisley, very few writers visit writing centers for brainstorming activities, to work in groups, or for help understanding an assignment. It may be exactly this individual, one-to-one approach that promotes such behavior. Brian Huot (1997) writes of a practice called *reflective reading* in "Beyond Accountability: Reading with Faculty as Partners Across the Disciplines." He relates his own experiences with reflective reading among faculty in a WAC (Writing Across the Curriculum) program to help them collaboratively develop ways to assess student writing in their own disciplines. Reflective reading involves reading aloud in a group and in stages, building community understanding of not only a piece of writing, but of that community's beliefs and assumptions about writing. This practice of reflective reading is not far removed from writing center practices. The biggest difference is the group dynamic. Writing centers typically engage in one-on-one read aloud sessions, but reflective reading provides space for a group of readers to read aloud and discuss their reactions to the piece. By incorporating group reading and writing activities, writing centers may be better able to reach the communal and individual needs of a range of disciplinary writers. This approach harkens back to the futurist predictions made by Murphy and Law in 1999 in "Writing Centers and WAC Programs as Infostructures: Relocating Practice within Futurist Theories of Social Change." In this article, they use the term *molecularization* to illustrate their belief that student needs would become more personalized and require more customization. Murphy and Law argue that molecularization would be the wave of the future because of advancements in technology. They saw the students of the future (our present) as requiring goods and services that fit their needs nearly exactly, and they predicted that mass marketing would become a thing of the past. This has come to pass in

many aspects of our lives, even our academic lives. Students can customize a high school degree now in ways that I would not have even thought of wanting when I graduated from high school in 1994. The practice of one-on-one tutoring does already meet the model of personalization. It does not, however, meet the need for customizability.

The research in this dissertation of graduate student writers' experiences can contribute to the fields of Writing Center Studies, Writing Studies, Writing Across the Curriculum, and Writing in the Disciplines in meaningful ways. The everyday practices and continued growth and relevance of each of these fields can be improved by systematically studying the needs of graduate students working on extended writing projects. As a case in point, in their study of graduate students in life sciences programs at The Ohio State University, Glew, Challa, and Gopalan (2014) found that 67% of the graduate students studied and 59% of the postdoctoral researchers studied felt that they did not write well, that they considered scientific writing a difficult task, and that knowing how to write well was just as important as knowing how to engage in scientific research (Glew, Challa, and Gopalan, 2014). They also found that many graduate science programs focus more on the work students do in the lab or in the field than on helping them grow as writers in their disciplines. It appears from their research that graduate writers want more writing support, support that they feel they are not getting from their faculty or the curriculum. Writing centers can help graduate student writers with this concern. However, it requires both will *and resources* to effectively serve the whole university community. Thus, in order to build such resources and persuade more to have the will, this dissertation will provide a study of graduate student writers from across the disciplines, many of whom have never sought writing support from their campus writing centers.

Chapter 2

What's Been Said Already: Discovery, Engagement, and Perseverance in the Graduate Student Writer's Experience

"An ideological model of literacy requires a fundamental renegotiation of writing center purpose. It asks us to serve students better by achieving a better understanding of how literacy works as a social practice. It suggests a discovery approach to research rather a prove-it approach."

(Nancy Grimm)

The purpose of this chapter is to outline relevant literature in the areas of graduate writers, advising graduate writers, and writing center practices for working with graduate writers in order to build a conception of graduate writers' practices and processes as socially constructed. As Nancy Grimm suggests in the quotation that opens this chapter, the best way to understand what is needed is to engage in a "discovery approach." This chapter's aim is to discover discussions in the fields of writing center studies and graduate writer support in order to determine the current climate surrounding graduate writers as they work toward the completion of one of the most complex undertakings of their lives, the advanced degree. This chapter begins by looking at scholarship published on graduate writers since the turn of the century, as it has been within these last 19 or so years that graduate education and those who pursue it have become a primary focus of research. Because the goals of this dissertation are to uncover the role the Writing Center can play in assisting graduate student writers working on extended writing projects and to locate the experiences of graduate student writers within certain social constructions, i.e., in terms of their advisors and campus writer centers, it is important to also consider the literature pertaining to those two groups as well. Thus, this chapter will also discuss scholarship published on advising graduate writers and on writing center practices with graduate writers since the

turn of the 21st century. If, however, a source important to this research was published before the year 2000, it will be included.

Novice Knowledge—Expert Status

Too often it appears that graduate faculty, graduate program administrators, writing center directors, and even graduate writers themselves have forgotten that graduate students are, in fact, still learning how to be professionals in their fields and still learning disciplinary genre conventions. By this point in their academic careers, graduate students have typically demonstrated that they are very good at being students, and they themselves may even believe that they do not need assistance. This assumption may lead to a neglect of writing support (Donnell, Petraglia-Bahri, and Gable, 1999) and a lack of help-seeking behaviors (Salem, 2016). Accordingly, writing center, writing studies, and graduate studies scholars have argued that graduate students do not receive the mentoring and support necessary to gain the disciplinary writing expertise needed to successfully complete extended, graduate-level writing projects such as the thesis or dissertation (Leverenz, 2001; Micciche and Carr, 2011; Simpson, 2013). Thus, not surprisingly, there is a constant novice-expert tension in almost every aspect of the life of a dissertation writer.

Not only must graduate students juggle with the ever-present tension of being seen as and feeling like experts while feeling like and being seen as newcomers, but they must also navigate multiple departmental, university, and disciplinary political systems. Rather than ignoring these "double binds created by contradictory objects of different systems," graduate student support can work to acknowledge and provide navigation assistance (Lundell & Beach, 2003). Writing Center, Writing Studies, and Graduate Studies scholars agree that political double-binds must be addressed in the mentorship of graduate students. This support is crucial not just for the students but also for faculty, departments, and universities. Without institutionally sanctioned and readily available writing support, it is possible, even likely, that graduate students will not complete their degrees. Research suggests that

the most common time for graduate students to drop their educational endeavors is during the extended writing stage, when they have to find the motivation, desire, and self-efficacy to endure a prolonged and often solitary writing phase (Madden, 2016). Thus, institutions of higher education and departments of graduate studies must carefully consider the types and frequency of institutionally recognized writing support offered to their graduate students. Claire Aitchison and Anthony Paré (2012), two scholars who have engaged in significant research on graduate-level writing, argue, "Writing must be in discussions about doctoral education and writing must be at the centre of the curriculum and pedagogy of doctoral education. . . it must be the practice of doctoral education" (p. 22). They also argue for more authentic writing opportunities and feedback, more frequent writing support dedicated to and focused on the kinds of writing tasks necessary for disciplinary success. Authentic writing opportunities might be a graduate-level course dedicated to helping students work through the steps of creating and submitting a publishable paper, a conference proposal for a national conference, or proposal for a dissertation project. Authenticity, of course, depends on numerous socio-cultural aspects, not the least of which are the students themselves, the faculty and staff offering writing support, and the area in which the university is located.

The Advisor's Role in the Graduate Writer's Experience

The scholarship aimed at supporting faculty advisors who oversee graduate writers working on thesis and dissertation projects has grown immensely over the last two decades. Such scholarship includes Barnes and Austin's (2009) "The Role Of Doctoral Advisors: A Look at Advising From the Advisor's Perspective," González-Ocampo and Castelló's (2018) "Writing In Doctoral Programs: Examining Supervisors' Perspectives," and Turner's (2015) "Learning To Supervise: Four Journeys." This scholarship often repeats the idea that there is no magical, one-size-fits-all approach to advising graduate writers, but that purposeful and explicit discussions often ease the natural tensions that exist in such relationships. Researchers call for advisors to attend to the emotional and affective needs of

those writers they work with and to engage in explicit conversations with writers about the needs, expectations, and abilities of both parties. Such forthright discussions can likely work to make the dissertation and advising processes run more smoothly, increase student satisfaction, decrease the amount of work done by the advisor, and increase the probability of completion. The scholarship also points to the need for advisors to focus not only on the content of the dissertation but also on the interpersonal nature and the structure of the provided feedback. Developing a professional advisor-writer relationship that can accommodate the needs and expectations of both the advisor and the student can work to lessen the inevitable tensions that arise in such relationships.

The role of the graduate advisor has recently become a topic of discussion and a field of research. Many who study higher education have begun to research and publish on aspects of this role and their implications for advisors and graduate student writers alike. For instance, González-Ocampo and Castelló (2018) conducted a survey of 61 advisors, outlining four categories of advisory approach: instrumental, epistemic, communicative, and no clear role (p. 392). Further, they uncovered that those advisors who see the role of writing to be instrumental, focusing on the product of writing, are the ones who complained about students' lack of writing ability and made requests for writing-skills workshops. Those advisors who saw writing's role as epistemic, focusing on writing as a process to promote learning, relied more on providing holistic feedback. Other advisors saw the role of writing as communicative. Like the epistemic approach, they focused on the process of writing. However, they looked at this process simply within their own disciplines and considered development of writing ability makes graduate student writers better able to communicate their knowledge within the discipline. A small percentage of González-Ocampo & Castelló's (2018) participants fell into the fourth category who believed writing is important, but they did not indicate a specific role writing "played in doctoral students' trajectory, except for noting that writing is often neglected" (p. 394). The categories developed by González-Ocampo & Castelló can be viewed through the lens of flexibility provided by

Odena and Burgess (2017). They wrote, “No particular [advisory] structure or type of feedback seemed to be favoured across respondents. Instead, different strategies worked depending on the students’ needs and backgrounds” (Odena & Burgess, 2017). They also found feedback preferences of the graduate student writer depended upon whether the writer was in early or later stages of the dissertation process and on the graduate writer’s personality characteristics (Odena & Burgess, 2017). Thus, although advisor preferences may fit into one of González-Ocampo and Castelló’s (2018) categories, they may need to also be flexible in their delivery for those students in need of a slightly different approach. Such a possible tension between advisor and writer may not be avoidable, depending on the size and structure of the department in which the two are working.

Murphy, Bain, and Conrad (2007) add to such a conceptualization of the advisor role. They discovered four thematic orientations to advising that were present in both advisors and graduate writers: “controlling and task-focused; controlling and person-focused; guiding and task-focused; guiding and person-focused” (Murphy, Bain, & Conrad, 2007, p. 216). Each advisor and each graduate student who participated in their study fell into one of these four categories. Like González-Ocampo and Castelló’s results, this finding highlights a possible disconnect in the writer-advisor relationship that may automatically put a strain on the partnership. Most participants tended toward the two poles – controlling and task-focused, and guiding and person-focused (Murphy et al., 2007). However, the tendency for advisors was toward guiding (12 of the 17), but the tendency of the writers was toward controlling (10 of the 17) (p. 225). Advisors preferred to guide their advisees toward discovering answers for themselves, but advisees preferred to be given direct instructions. Murphy et al. (2007) also found that advisors tended toward person-focused practices (11 of the 17), but the writers tended more toward the task-centered beliefs (12 of the 17) (p. 225). This points to a disconnect between the expectations and desires of advisors and their graduate student writers. It seems it is more likely than not for advisors and graduate student writers to be mismatched in their preferred styles for

communication and feedback. Murphy et al. (2007) argue, "[I]t may be better for forgo attempts to define and implement *best* practice, concentrating instead on assisting [advisors] to understand their own beliefs (and those of others) to optimize their practices" (p. 229). This study points to the need for more purposeful and explicit conversations between advisors and their graduate students in order to ensure one is not expecting something the other is unwilling or unable to provide.

Such explicit discussions may help to provide opportunities for socialization. As the framework for their research, Barnes and Austin (2009) used Socialization theory, which they define as the process by which an individual develops appropriate attitudes and ideologies that are in keeping with the culture into which they are trying to enter. They used one-on-one, open-ended, in-depth qualitative interviews of 25 exemplary advisors from among the faculty of a midwestern, land-grant, research university in the disciplines of natural sciences, social sciences, and humanities. They discovered that exemplary advising is very complex and not formulaic, and that students benefit most from explicit reasonings from their advisors regarding the writing projects they are being asked to work on and why they are being asked to work on them. For example, if an advisor is asking a graduate student writer to engage in a round or two of brainstorming using a concept map technique, the graduate student writer benefits more if they are told why they are being asked to do this and what the benefits may be. Similarly, Halse and Malfroy (2010) used a grounded theory approach to develop a theory for doctoral advising. They labeled one facet of their theory *the learning alliance* and defined it as the agreement between advisor and doctoral student to work toward the common goal of a "quality doctorate" (p. 83). The advisors in their study identified six key features of this learning alliance: mutual respect, flexibility in accommodating each other's circumstances, firm commitment, clear communication, and explicit strategies (Halse & Malfroy, 2010). The importance of explicit communication and working together to create a meaningful, give-and-take relationship appear to be keys to success for the graduate student.

The onus of accommodation does not lie with one group more than the other. Both parties are responsible for making the writer-advisor relationship work. In fact, researchers Susan Carter and Vijay Kumar (2017) argue that advising doctoral students has a built-in tension found within its two goals, i.e., the goal of developing independent research writers and the goal of developing them in a timely manner. That tension, they argue, can be found in the *feedback* and the *feedforward* the advisor provides. *Feedback*, Carter and Kumar (2017) argue, "usually encompasses two aspects: a judgmental component and a suggestion component that directs the writer towards desired literacy goals" (p. 69). They define *feedforward* as "advice that does not pass critique on what has been submitted but directs the author forward to the next level of development" (Carter & Kumar, 2017, p. 69). Thus, one way the advisor-writer relationship manifests itself and makes itself known is through the feedback or feedforward provided and subsequently acted upon or not. These discussions about conflict and alignment help to shed light on the multiple layers of tension that exist within the context of the graduate writer's sphere of influence and point to the socio-cultural nature of writing and writing development. Furthering an understanding of such pressures, Carter and Kumar (2007) argue three main aspects of feedback that can lead to reaching both identified goals, i.e., developing independent researchers in a timely manner. These aspects are cognitive – focusing on the content of the work created; socio-affective – focusing on the interpersonal negotiations of feedback; and structural – focusing on the organization of feedback provision (Carter & Kumar, 2017, p. 70). Based on this, Carter and Kumar (2017) argue for the importance of immersion, "When students are immersed and engaged in the feedback process, they become independent self-regulated learners who will be able to manage their academic writing for timely output" (p. 71). Being engaged in the feedback process means more than just a passive absorption of notes scribbled by an advisor on a page of text and the robotic following of orders given. Immersion in feedback means being a co-producer of that feedback. In this way, advisors who meet with their graduate student writers on a regular basis to discuss the writer's

processes and productions and to provide both oral and written feedback can give a graduate student writer a stronger sense of the expectations of the genres of the field and further their footing on the road to scholar.

As noted above, Carter and Kumar (2017) outline three main levels of doctoral feedback that can lead to independent researchers in a timely fashion: cognitive, socio-affective, and structural (p. 70). They argue, “When students are immersed and engaged in the feedback process, they become independent self-regulated learners who will be able to manage their academic writing for timely output” (Carter & Kumar, 2017, p. 71). One of the ways they suggest immersing graduate student writers into the feedback process is through peer mentoring groups. They write, “Peer mentoring groups provide useful learning experiences in the doctoral journey” (Carter & Kumar, 2017, p. 71). In a peer mentoring group, graduate student writers could share their writing with each other, offer feedback on that writing, thereby helping their peers strengthen their writing, while also learning to build their own scholarly voice. However, González-Ocampo and Castelló (2018) discovered that faculty generally indicated offering three types of writing support: “telling what to do, revising and editing students’ texts, discussing students’ processes and products collaboratively” (p. 394). They found that the most frequent type of writing support provided was revising and editing, and the least used was discussing processes and products collaboratively, and only one participant encouraged participation in writing groups (González-Ocampo and Castelló, 2018). Within this conversation, there appears to be a disconnect between what researchers are suggesting as beneficial practices for graduate student writers and what advisors are practicing when working with them. Researchers are arguing for an increase in participation in graduate student peer writing groups, but advisors are not pointing their graduate student writers in this direction.

Halse and Malfroy (2010) report advisors describe three areas important to doctoral advising: knowing what technical competence is needed by the writer; knowing when it is appropriate to use this

competence; and knowing why this competence is important and being able to communicate that importance to the writer (p. 87). Thus, they are arguing that it is not enough for an advisor to possess writing competence or to know when to use this ability in their own writing. They argue the advisor must also be able to discuss the importance of attaining a similar competence and be able to communicate that to the writer. Advisors who can communicate the importance of writing ability in their own fields are more successful as advisors than those who have the ability themselves but are unable to assist others in their own development. González-Ocampo and Castelló (2018) discovered that advisors who provide writing support by telling writers what to do focus on the product and provide exemplary texts as examples of good writing. Advisors who focus on revising and editing writers' texts offer both verbal and written feedback – verbal feedback for how to improve their texts and written feedback on partial drafts. These advisors help writers improve their writing *and* their learning. It is necessary for advisors and graduate writers to be co-producers of feedback for it to be the most meaningful.

As the scholarship demonstrates, advisor behavior is closely linked to graduate student writer satisfaction. Thus, if advisor behavior and student expectations were to become more aligned, this could arguably lead to more satisfied dissertators. More satisfied dissertators could lead to more doctoral students making it to completion. As if often the case in the U.S. graduate school experience, the advisor provides an entryway for the graduate student writer into professional communities of practice. Graduate student writers need to work with individuals with whom they feel they can build meaningful connections and symbiotic relationships in order to successfully complete their extended writing projects and move on to the next levels of their careers.

Socio-cultural Construction of the Graduate Writer

Time and time again, the research points to the advisor as one of the most influential aspects of a graduate writer's experience. For example, Zhao, Golde, and McCormick, (2007) argue that a graduate

student's satisfaction with their experience is tied to their relationship with their advisor, and recent empirical studies have been working to uncover what graduate students really want, need, and expect from their graduate school experiences. Researchers have discovered that graduate writers typically seek out advisor feedback to a greater degree during the early and later stages of the dissertation writing process. Often, graduate writers feel secure in the data collection stages. The two biggest issues found for graduate writers are finding the time to engage in the rigorous and extended writing necessary at the graduate level and a lack of knowledge of the genres most often used. Discussions throughout this literature review, however, will demonstrate that universities, departments, writing centers, and faculty members are trying new ways to help graduate writers overcome these two big hurdles. The research also illustrates that graduate writers prefer feedback from similar peers, individuals familiar with the content and rhetorical nature of their fields; though, they also see the value of receiving feedback from a non-disciplinary peer in certain circumstances.

Though recent scholarship discusses the phenomenon of dissertation advising from the advisors' perspectives, some attempts to capture the students' are also available (Cotterall, 2011; McAlpine and McKinnon, 2013; Murphy, Bain, and Conrad, 2007; Zhao, Golde, McCormick, 2007). A concern focused on in these discussions is the quality, amount, and kind of supervision and feedback graduate students feel they receive from their advisors. Zhao et al. (2007) analyzed the results of the 1999 national Survey on Doctoral Education and Career Preparation and discovered that advisor behavior appears to fall into one of four categories: academic advising; personal touch; career development; and cheap labor (p. 6). They found that science students were more likely to choose advisors based on pragmatic benefits, as science advisors are more likely to develop the careers of their protégés. Whereas, humanists are more likely to choose advisors based on reputation. Zhao et al. (2007) discovered that the strongest correlation exists between advisor behavior and student satisfaction (p.10). Thus, if a graduate student writer's expectation of the advisor aligns with the advisor's behavior, the graduate student writer tends

to be more satisfied with their graduate school experience and vice versa. McAlpine and McKinnon (2013) add to this by finding that early and late dissertation stages were the times when graduate students wanted the most help from their supervisors. Those in the middle stages, which they identify as the data collection stages, indicated wanting feedback and supervision far less. They write,

> On the whole, students experienced the supervisor relationship as satisfactory or positive in supporting needs that it would be hard for others to meet. Negative affect emerged when students were frustrated by a lack of supervisory intellectual investment, the unavailability of the supervisor, and tensions amongst supervisors later in the co-supervisory relationship. (McAlpine & McKinnon, 2013, p. 278)

As part of this evidence of advisor engagement sought after by graduate student writers, Cotterall (2011) advises that advisors be more aware of the fact that doctoral learning is situated as participation in a scholarly community of practice. She outlines the role advisors are likely to play in this development. The two major conclusions she draws from her case studies are "supervisors need to embrace their pedagogical role in inducting students into their discipline's writing practices," and "effective doctoral learning depends as much on the quality of the relationship between supervisor and student as on the practices in which they engage" (Cotterall, 2011, p. 423). Thus, not only is the relationship between writer and advisor important but so is the ability of the advisor to help the graduate student writer become enculturated into the field.

Of the types of professional relationships outlined across the scholarship, Odena, Oscar, and Burgess (2017) found that no particular advising strategy or approach works across disciplines or even across individuals. The most successful partnerships were those where the advisor was flexible and adapted approaches to fit the needs of the individual. They found feedback preferences of graduate writers varied depending on whether the writer was in the dissertation process and personality characteristics of the writer (pp. 578-579). Thus, graduate student writers need not only choose their

advisors wisely but also have conversations with them about what they need and what their expectations are. Advisors, also, need to be flexible and open to engaging in different strategies with different writers because, “Throughout their doctoral journeys, interviewees reported their supervisors’ feedback as being crucial for maintaining motivation to complete” (Odena et al., 2017, p. 580). The writer-advisor relationship is crucial for graduate completion.

Though it has been repeatedly determined that the student-advisor relationship is one of the most important relationships, if not THE most important relationship, in a graduate student’s studies, graduate programs do not offer much guidance on this choice. Graduate students are often, instead, left to their own devices and gut instincts. Perhaps this is an area that requires more scholarly and programmatic attention. Writing centers could also play a role in such an environment. Perhaps the writing center can help ease advisors’ burdens of providing entryway into professional communities of practice and building successful relationships by also offering these kinds of connections. If the writing center can find a way to create a symbiotic/give-and-take relationship between writer and tutor, a win-win-win situation could be in place. The tutor could be someone who already has doctorate in hand or even an advanced graduate student, as Paula Gillespie’s suggests in her 2007 piece, “Using What We Know: Networking and Planning.” In this way, the writing center could work with advisors to keep writers motivated by providing a service for those who need more writing guidance than their advisors are willing or able to provide.

A recurring theme within the scholarship is that graduate student writers often struggle with time and lack of genre knowledge. In their survey of 30 recently- graduated graduate students, Odena et al. (2017) found personal organization in terms of time management and time spent writing to be crucial for completion. They write, “Indeed, participants consistently showed high levels of resilience. However, beyond the ‘resilience’ theme that shows how doctorates are carved out of personal and social spaces, there seems to be an unresolved issue: how can research time be carved and maintained out of already

full personal and social spaces?" (p. 582). They respond to this conundrum by arguing that personal motivation and emotional connection to the chosen research topics were often the driving factors that kept a graduate student working toward completion (p. 582). These concepts of personal motivation, dedication, and emotional investment are aspects of graduate work that are rarely spoken of within some graduate programs. Graduate student writers often consider themselves alone in the struggle of their personal extended writing project and have only the lore passed down from student to student as guidance. In these situations, especially, individual students must be internally motivated to complete, or the likelihood of leaving the project before completion increases. Holmes, Waterbury, Baltrinic, and Davis (2018) studied a focus group of 13 currently enrolled graduate students enrolled in their first graduate research course. The discussion Holmes et al. (2018) facilitated centered around these students' anxieties and fears about academic writing. Four themes emerged from their discussion:

- A lack of confidence in their own scholarly writing ability
- A lack of time to dedicate to writing tasks
- A lack of skill in identifying and utilizing scholarly resources
- A need for shared institutional responsibility for improving graduate student writing (Holmes et al, 2018, p. 68).

These graduate students seem reflective of their own shortcomings as emerging scholars, but they also expressed a need to feel better supported by their programs and institutions. They communicated feeling like they don't know "the rules of the game," and mentioned they would like more direction (Holmes et al., 2018, p. 69).

To discover how graduate students at their university felt about academic writing, Aydin and Baysan (2018) distributed a five-question survey to 100 graduate students across departments. Their first question asked participants to identify an apt metaphor for academic writing with the prompt, "Academic writing is like _____ because _____" (Aydin & Baysan, 2018, p. 215). The two most

common categories were metaphors that described academic writing as "the process of producing/discovering new things" and "a long and difficult process" (Aydin & Baysan, 2018, p. 221). A second question asked respondents to identify "challenging/difficult situations/sections faced by the postgraduate students during academic writing" (Aydin & Baysan, 2018, p. 221). The two top responses were the introduction and the literature review. Barbara Kamler and Pat Thomson's book, *Helping Doctoral Students Write, 2nd* edition, provides helpful instruction on these matters. Kamler and Thomson (2014) present strategies doctoral advisors can use to provide helpful guidance to doctoral dissertators. Though it is a text written with the dissertation advisor as the primary audience, it can also be helpful for the graduate student looking for more guidance or the writing center looking to develop programs for graduate student writers. They devote two of their nine chapters to dealing with literature reviews, which is telling for how difficult graduate writers find them to be.

Native English speakers are not the only graduate student writers to struggle. In the 2011 article, "An investigation of Taiwanese Doctoral students' academic writing at a U.S. University," Li-hua Chou discusses a research study conducted to determine how Taiwanese doctoral students studying in a U.S. institution experience academic writing. Chou (2011) had 12 participants; each provided syllabi from multiple classes, and each was interviewed two times. In total, Chou (2011) collected syllabi from 52 humanities or social science courses and 15 science or technology courses. Chou noted that in the humanities/social science fields, there were a total of 504 writing assignments of various genres and in science and technology fields, 134 writing assignments of various genres. Thus, humanities/social science students are required to write quite a bit more than science/technology students. Chou discovered that both groups feel writing is important, and both groups found grammar and language proficiency to be constant struggles. In concluding remarks, Chou (2011) mentions the cultural barriers that Taiwanese students were also facing since they had engaged in "Confucian-based education" before entering the U.S. educational system (p. 53). Because their educational experiences has been

teacher-centric up to that point, the Taiwanese graduate student writers had difficulty adjusting to the U.S. system of student-centric instruction. This suggests that those who argue for a focus on grammar instruction for ESL writers may not be wrong. However, they also need to be offered cultural "tutoring." Chou writes (2011),

> [I]t is suggested that universities with graduate programs should offer more writing courses with a focus on academic writing for international students. Even though international students are diligent and go abroad for further study not only with high TOEFL score but also rejoice at the prospect of studying abroad, their writing performance still falls short of professors' expectations. (p. 54)

Identifying such a need is a step in providing the kind of assistance all graduate writers need. A collaboration between the writer, the advisor, and the campus writing center can provide all graduate students with opportunities for academic and disciplinary enculturation. In fact, Talinn Phillips (2017) writes of such concerns in her article, "Shifting Supports for Shifting Identities: Meeting the Needs of Multilingual Graduate Writers." Phillips (2017) discusses two case studies of multilingual graduate writers (MGW) who used the writing center services on their campus. One, Chozin, only used the services twice, preferring instead to seek assistance from peers in his program. The other, Iris, used the services frequently at the beginning of her studies, but her use declined as she became more confident in her language proficiency, and she began to seek assistance from disciplinary peers. From these two case studies, Phillips (2017) articulates two suggestions writing centers can incorporate to address the shifting needs of MGWs: improve language support by prioritizing recruitment of multilingual tutors; and improve discipline support by prioritizing recruitment of tutors from disciplines across campus or give more attention to disciplinary expectations during training (p. 46). The concerns she notes, however, are present for all graduate student writers. All graduate student writers could benefit from increased language support because not all come from a background where standard academic English

was the language of choice. All graduate student writers can benefit from improved disciplinary support because there are nuances to writing that sometimes are not well-served by those unfamiliar with the field. Of her participant who preferred feedback from his disciplinary peers early on, Phillips (2017) identifies the desire to build professional relationships with peers in his field rather than visit the writing center. This points to a need for writing centers to provide tutoring and space for disciplinary writing happen.

Reaching outside of fields that are typically identified as being writing intensive might do some work to shed light on just how pervasive this graduate student discomfort is with academic writing. Peter Liljedahl (2018) and Robert Glew, Anil K. Chala, and Venkat Gopalan (2014) conducted studies on dissertation writing in a doctoral mathematics department and on advanced graduate and post-doctoral students' scientific manuscript writing. Liljedahl (2018) argues there are two research themes that constantly appear differentiated in graduate student discussion, *doing* the research and *writing up* the research. He found graduate students associate mostly positive emotions with doing the research and mostly negative emotions with writing up the research. Glew et al. (2014) discuss the results of a set of 258 surveys they collected from graduate students in their third year or beyond at one Ohio university and to postdoctoral researchers around the U.S. Between the two sets of surveys, Glew et al. (2014) discovered five recurring themes:

- The majority of graduate students and postdoctoral students felt they did not have well-developed writing skills and that they considered writing a scientific manuscript to be a difficult task.
- The majority of respondents felt writing the manuscript to be just as important as knowing how to design and conduct a research project.
- The majority of respondents felt their mentors did not devote enough time to guide them through the process of turning their research into a manuscript suitable for publication.

- Only 8% of respondents had participated in either a mandatory or optional course or workshop about writing a scientific manuscript.
- 59% of respondents believed they still lacked the necessary writing skills, no matter what kind of training they received.

Glew et al. (2014) arrive at the conclusion, "The curricula of doctoral programmes should include a multi-phase approach that is integrated into different stages of graduate training" (p. 1391). These points brought up by Liljedahl (2018) and Glew et al. (2014) further the argument for the need for increased attention to the development of writing skills for graduate writers. This discomfort with academic writing spans the university, the nation, and even the globe.

In the "Executive Summary" of their *Ph.D. Completion Project: Policies and Practices to Promote Student Success*, the Council of Graduate Schools provides what they call "Promising Practices." They write,

> Offer a writing assistance program for graduate students at all stages through trained writing coaches or writing consultants (senior-level graduate students trained in writing); offer writing assistance to groups of students from several disciplines so they can appreciate the commonality of writing difficulties. . . . offer a dissertation retreat/dissertation boot camp/dissertation house/dissertation writing institute for students who are stalled in their progress that offers uninterrupted time to focus on the dissertation, writing strategies, received feedback, and build peer support; establish a doctoral student writing room, where doctoral students could engage in project development, research and writing and collaborative with others; offer a summer dissertation residency fellowship for students who are not making progress (especially students from underrepresented groups. (Council of Graduate Schools, year, pp. 4-5).

The Council of Graduate Schools (2010) argues for the need for ongoing, cross-disciplinary, authentic writing instruction and practice. However, most studies on the anxieties and struggles of graduate student writers include little to no mention of writing centers as a viable, institutionally sanctioned, and multidisciplinary avenue for such support. A gap this dissertation could begin to fill.

Literature that highlights graduate student writers' impressions of their campus writing centers is scarce. When Writing Center scholars do discuss graduate student writers, it is most often focused on those who have used writing center spaces for their graduate-level writing. Even so, meaningful work has recently been done in this area. Phillips (2017) brings up the generalist vs specialist argument as outlined in chapter one of this dissertation. She writes,

> [W]hile a generalist reader can provide fresh insight by approaching a text as an outsider, we have certainly all experienced the benefits of a disciplinary reader. My point here is not that one kind of reader is superior to the other, but that when the stakes are so high, a graduate writer may well privilege a disciplinary reading over a generalist one and that this privileging may actually be a valuable part of their scholarly development. (Phillips, 2017, p. 45)

This point of view allows room for writers and writing center practitioners to review their current practices when it comes to helping graduate student writers. Perhaps by persistently resisting the call to provide tutors who can specialize in or are familiar with particular genres or disciplines, the unintended message is sent to graduate student writers that their preferences don't matter, that writing centers know more about what they need than they do.

Bethany Ober Mannon (2016) collected surveys from 40 graduate student writers who had visited her graduate writing center (GWC), and she conducted personal interviews with 12 of them. From this research, Mannon (2016) discovered graduate student writers employ four different strategies when deciding to use the services of the GWC. One such strategy is deciding which pieces of writing they will bring to the GWC. They are more likely to bring shorter works like grant proposals because they fit

easily into a 45- to 60-minute writing center session. However, they won't bring dissertation chapters because they feel competent enough to complete those with only the help of their advisors. Mannon (2016) discovered that some writers regard the GWC as their main source of sentence-level assistance, and they use it for this purpose. She also found that some writers use the GWC to prepare for meetings with advisors or before submitting a piece for evaluation (Mannon, 2016, p. 62). Given the discussion found in Phillips (2017) it's interesting that Mannon (2016) found that her participants used the GWC specifically for the generalist tutors who work there. These writers see the benefit of receiving feedback from readers outside of their discipline (p. 62). It is important to recall, though, that Mannon (2016) is reporting on findings of users of a graduate-level writing center staffed by other graduate student writers and Phillips is reporting on visits to a writing center that assists graduate and undergraduate student writers. Mannon did question her participants about what their comfort level would be if they had been tutored by undergraduate generalist tutors, she reports receiving hesitant positives, which she interprets to mean they would value it (Mannon, 2016, p. 63). Nevertheless, the concerns graduate writers voiced about such an arrangement may be difficult to overcome. The concerns Mannon (2016) noted were that undergraduate tutors would not be experienced enough to provide adequate assistance; that the age differences between undergraduate tutors and graduate writers would be cumbersome; that undergraduate tutors would not understand graduate culture or the high stakes of the writing they are doing; and that undergraduate tutors may not recognize the performances of professional identities and voices in graduate writing (Mannon, 2016, p. 63). These are not small concerns, and based on similar research, it may be more difficult to overcome than Mannon seems to believe.

One pervasive need identified across the published scholarship on graduate student success is the need for systemic, endurable, and flexible writing support offered across disciplines. Simpson (2016) writes,

> The stories, which have surfaced at institutions worldwide, point to a convergence of phenomena pervading graduate education in recent years. On one level, the stories bear traces of stubbornly persistent view that graduate students should have learned how to write earlier in their education, despite the fact that the genres they encounter in graduate school might be far different from any they have previously experienced. On another level, these encounters are emergent responses to deep structural changes in graduate education worldwide, changes being fueled by a range of economic and societal factors. (p. 2)

Graduate student writers need a variety of support models and resources to help them successfully reach degree completion because they must learn to write in a number of unfamiliar, high stakes genres. Thus, those who offer writing support to graduate student writers ought to be familiar with these genres and be able to instruct them on the processes of rhetorically analyzing other genres they may encounter. Kathrin Kaufhold (2017) argues, "Supporting writing development requires the collaboration among subject specialists, writing experts, and students because innovation and transformation is a networked phenomenon" (p. 81). University departments, programs, faculty, and writing centers must all work to find ways to offer such support. Graduate writing support is most often found in required writing courses, peer writing groups, workshops, dissertation boot camps, and individual tutoring, but the two most important considerations when building writing support programs for graduate student writers is the need for structure and the ability to build meaningful relationships.

One of the most common ways college and university student support services administrators choose to provide writing support to graduate students is through the implementation of voluntary dissertation boot camps (DBC). Dissertation boot camps are multi-day events, typically between 2 and 5, where space and large swaths of time are set aside specifically for working on extended writing projects. DBCs are often hosted by either a campus writing center or graduate studies department. Authors Sohui Lee and Chris Golde (2013) identify two of the most common types of DBCs as the *just write* model and

the *writing process* model. They define the *just write* model as one that "presumes students will write productively if they are given space, food, and monitored time" (Lee & Golde, 2013, p. 2). They describe the *writing process* model as introducing "students to the benefits of structured writing time, quiet space, and productivity logs. . . [They] work under the assumption that students' writing productivity and motivation are significantly enhanced by consistent and on-going conversations about writing" (Lee & Golde, 2013, p. 2). Being writing center practitioners, it is no surprise that Lee and Golde promote a preference for the writing process model. However, the just write model provides graduate writers with a solution (albeit temporary) to two hurdles they consistently identify as being their biggest challenges, i.e., time and loneliness. Though the DBC is one of the most popular approaches to graduate writing assistance, there are a number of others.

Some programs have begun designing and requiring writing courses within their graduate degree programs. Donnell, Petraglia-Bahri, & Gable (1999) describe such a course used in their engineering program at Georgia Tech. Donnell et al. (1999) say their approach is guided by two principles. First, they believe that in order for students to "learn how writing functions rhetorically," they need to receive instruction and evaluation from someone with knowledge of the discipline's conventions and standards (p. 113-114). Second, that "much of writing is not rhetorical; it is composed of scribal skills that transcend technical content," and they contend these skills can be taught apart from any specific content (p. 114). While the technical skills and drills approach they espouse is not in keeping with decades of Writing Studies research, their argument that students need to be taught conventions by someone familiar with the field strikes a chord. It is true that writing center practitioners cannot possibly be experts on every genre and discipline; however, they can partner with those who are familiar with them in order to provide the most beneficial services possible. Donnell et al. (1999) open their article by describing their instruction of graduate students with the following, "We assume that even graduate

students are novice, not expert in professional communication" (p. 115), and they outline three categories of professional rhetoric they focus their instruction on:

- "Writing about future goals and past accomplishments, including interviews, graduate fellowship proposals and other funding proposals,
- Writing about research problems and results, including thesis proposals, conference presentations, job talks and research papers, and
- Writing to explain professional issues to laypeople, including public speeches, interviews, and some types of funding proposals" (p. 116).

With each classroom or workshop on these writing approaches, they collaborate with faculty members in the discipline, individuals who are familiar with and experienced in these genres and writing processes. Developing workshops and classroom experiences that are discipline specific could be a viable alternate approach for providing writing support for graduate students.

McCarthy and Dempsey (2017) discuss another discipline-specific required series of writing seminars. Instead of requiring a full-semester course in their chemistry department, McCarthy and Dempsey (2017) describe a series of six seminars offered to their graduate students on how to craft original research proposals. McCarthy and Dempsey (2017) discuss the weekly peer reviews, which they call a "key feature" of this 6-class series and outline the structure of seminar series:

- Class 1: Introduction to Technical Writing
- Class 2: Overview of the Proposal
- Class 3: Goals and Importance
- Class 4: Experimental Approach
- Class 5: Outcomes and Impact
- Class 6: Peer Review Workshop

From their description, it appears the departmental faculty are engaging in this work on their own and are likely not considering a collaboration with writing support structures already existent on their campuses. It is perfectly feasible that a program supporting graduate writing across the curriculum could partner with the program faculty who build and teach such a seminar series in the disciplines.

Such courses are not being suggested just outside the realm of the English Department, though. In their article "Toward Graduate-Level Writing Instruction," Micciche and Carr (2011) argue for the inclusion of a required writing course for English graduate students at their university. A benefit that Micciche and Carr (2011) note is that it puts scholarship "within reach" of graduate students, and it gives them a real sense of the time and dedication necessary to create it. Micciche and Carr (2011) also argue that it "nurture(s) a relation to text production that relies on something other than individual fortitude and talent, generating a healthier affect around graduate writing practices" (p. 479). Micciche and Carr (2011) write,

> Absent direct instruction, graduate education in English assumes that students learn how to write critically through repeated exposure and an osmosis-like process. And since this lack of writing instruction is probably the norm for actively publishing tenure-line faculty, it might appear reasonable to assume that osmosis works. But the number of publishing scholars is not commensurate with the number of faculty who hold advanced degrees, indicating that this Darwinian approach fails to prepare a broad range of students for a writing life in the profession. (p. 485)

Though the issue of the ratio of scholars who publish to scholars who hold PhDs is much too complicated and nuanced to boil down into such a cause and effect phrase as to say the current approach to graduate writing support is completely to blame, the argument does have merit. It begs the question about disservices they be happening for those who spend years earning a graduate degree only to not have the rhetorical wherewithal to be able to successfully publish in the field. Though it is true

that not everyone wants to become a publishing scholar, how many did have those aspirations but left disappointed due to a laissez-faire approach? It is a question worth considering in a later research project. For now, however, the question remains regarding what programs, services, and approaches to writing support are most beneficial to graduate writers.

What this discussion of disciplinary courses for writing support illustrates is the fact that writing centers can offer workshops that are collaboratively built either with faculty or with advanced graduate students within disciplines that may not already have such a course offered or required. The writing center could, of course, also reach out to those that do have such a required course and consider what kind of collaboration they might be interested in pursuing. If writing centers used this kind of collaboration with the programs and did not attempt to take on the full onus of responsibility for supporting graduate writers, it may increase the programs' sustainability and viability.

In fact, such partnerships do exist. Writing Center Studies literature points to a number of programs where the writing center helps a disciplinary program develop peer writing groups among its graduate students (Gradin, Pauley-Grose, & Stewart, 2006; Hixson et al., 2016) or train advanced graduate writers in a discipline to tutor their disciplinary peers (Gillespie, 2007; Kumar & Aitchison, 2018; Vorhies, 2015). Gradin et al. (2006) describe two writing groups their writing center helped to build within departments outside of the humanities, one was in the Electrical Engineering and Computer Science (EECS) department and one was in the School of Telecommunications (TCOM). While the Writing Center Director facilitates conversations in these groups and helps to model the metalanguage they need to talk about their writing, there seems to be little other responsibility for the Writing Center to maintain. This seems like a good way for writing centers to build relationships across the curriculum and to not put too much strain on the Center itself. While studying what it takes to keep a peer writing group together, Hixson et al. (2016) and found three common themes among the responses of eight participants who were interviewed:

- "[S]tructure was critical for establishing a bounded mental space in which to write and for supporting students' agency with respect to participation" (p. 21). The rules of the group were created by the group itself; they were not forced upon them by any kind of outside force, and they used the writing center space for their weekly meetings, though no writing center member participated in or facilitated the group.
- "[The] communal dimension, centered on trust, …affected their writing and their sense of belonging in both the graduate student and larger academic communities" (p. 22).
- "[C]ommitment reflected the interviewees' willing interdependence with respect to accountability, support, and feedback" (p. 23).

Keeping such findings as these in mind can help a writing center when attempting to create a peer writing group within a particular discipline. If a culture such as the one described by Hixon et al. (2016) can be established, then the prospects of that group continuing without the aid of writing center facilitation is higher.

Taking the idea of facilitation one step further are those scholars who discuss the creation of programs to train advanced graduate student writers to analyze the rhetorical moves of typical genres in their disciplines and how to tutor writing. That graduate student writer is then employed within the discipline as a writing consultant for other disciplinary graduate students. Paula Gillespie was the first to mention such a program in 2007 when she worked with graduate program directors to develop a curriculum for training PhD students to tutor writing in their disciplines. Then, the graduate tutors, now armed with disciplinary knowledge and knowledge of peer collaboration, worked from their departments, tutoring their peers through their writing concerns. She argues that the collaborations and relationships that were built across disciplines with this endeavor were beneficial to the way the university community thought of the work that the writing center was doing (Gillespie, 2007, p. 2). She writes, "Writing Centers are in a unique position to make a program such as this feasible. In doing so,

the writing center positions itself differently within the university and calls attention to its solid, respectable, useful work" (Gillespie, 2007, p. 2). The graduate tutors in her program underwent training that included overlaps with the undergraduate training, such as learning to work with students for whom English was not their first language and how to observe others. However, the graduate tutors also engaged in interviews with their departmental faculty to find out what kinds of writing assignments they assign, and they developed materials that would be helpful to their peers in their disciplines. Such an approach would not only be a plus for all graduate student writers in the department, but also for those who become tutors, as they gain invaluable experience and insight into disciplinary processes, practices, and beliefs that many other students will only glance the surface of.

Scholars such as Heather Blain Vorhies, Vijay Kumar, and Claire Aitchison use a similar model but add small tweaks of their own that further develop the graduate tutor's genre acumen. Vorhies (2015), for example, focuses her argument on helping graduate writers think of themselves as moving from student to scholar and adds to Gillespie's model by requiring her graduate tutor trainees to create a WID (writing in the discipline) project for their discipline as part of their service requirement. Vorhies, however, has tutors work from within a graduate writing center (GWC), and she provides three suggestions for meeting the needs of graduate writers in such a space. First, treat graduate writers as professionals. Part of the way she does this is through the use of the space. The GWC is separate from the undergraduate center and is furnished with more professional furnishing instead of classroom or "hang space" furniture. Vorhies (2015) argues, "With this design, the GSWC's goal is to impress upon clients as they walk in the door that they are more than graduate students: they are professional scholars, and their writing needs to reflect this" (pp. 6-7). Second, tutors should have disciplinary genre expertise. The argument Vorhies (2015) makes here is that they don't need to have one graduate tutor from every discipline, but the tutor should be familiar with the field's typical genre expectations and be able to analyze those genres (p. 7). Third, graduate writers benefit from alternative tutoring models.

Vorhies's center accomplishes this by allowing graduate tutors to comment directly on the draft, and the writer gets an electronic copy of that draft with comments after the session. Typical tutoring practices promote a strict policy of not writing on student papers because it is seen as a form of appropriation. Vorhies (2015), however, argues that knowing they will receive a draft with written comments puts graduate student writers at ease and helps the tutors "more easily guide clients who fixate again and again on individual sentences into broader discussions of the document and the client's research (p. 8). They also reserve two-hour blocks for every session. The first hour is for the tutor to review and comment on the work submitted by the writer. The second hour is for the tutor and the writer to discuss the work. Writers are also permitted to schedule two back-to-back sessions, which would give them a two-hour block in which to work with the tutor. A typical undergraduate tutoring session would be no more than 60 minutes long, and they are rarely permitted to schedule two sessions in one day. Such accommodations work toward better meeting the needs of graduate student writers, who are typically working with larger bodies of work and often have complex and nuanced concerns to address.

Kumar and Aitchison (2018), on the other hand, discuss their writing support program, which starts with a 10-week doctoral writing course in which 20 doctoral candidates, those who have already passed their exams, are recommended by faculty in their departments and were enrolled. The course meets for 3 hours once a week for 10 weeks. After the completion of this course, these 20 advanced graduate students are required to facilitate writing groups within their own departments, teaching junior graduate students the lessons they had learned in the 10-week course.

One of the major discussions happening in the field right now is whether to move away from the traditional approaches to writing tutoring. In 1995, Judith Powers and Jane Nelson were arguing for the same thing. Powers and Nelson (1995) write,

> To say, as we do in our advertising, that we work with 'all kinds of writing tasks,' we must come to understand that producing a piece of academic writing involves more than using the writing

> process as its broad, generic context. The problems of brainstorming, drafting, and revising exist in the context of disciplines with complex histories, assumptions, and forms; they also exist in the context of the individual professors who interpret those disciplinary assumptions and set the specific objectives for their students. (p. 15)

Powers and Nelson (1995) argue that writers come with questions that cannot be answered with general rhetorical knowledge. An example of such a question might come from a mechanical engineering student working on a lab report that includes tables, and he wants to know how much discussion is enough. Or they may come from an ESL graduate student in geology who asks for assistance in revising a dissertation on which his advisor has written, 'Problem of language. See the writing center.' His question, 'What does my director mean?' These kinds of questions require some form of collaboration with the faculty member or knowledge of the genre. In some cases, it is enough to help the student writer phrase question(s) to take back to the professor. Sometimes, it is necessary for the writing center to reach out to the faculty member to clarify what they were looking for in order to better assist the large number of writers visiting from that class. Thus, in the case of graduate student writers, Powers and Nelson (1995) discuss a new policy in their center where they would reach out to the writer's faculty advisor after the graduate writer's first appointment to "discuss where in the thesis writing process the writer was, what the advisor believed needed to be done, and how the writing center might help both writer and director to complete the writing project" (p. 15). Some benefits Powers and Nelson (1995) note from this approach are that by helping students reframe questions for their professors, the writing center helps them get the information most needed to help them be successful. They also argue that making the professor aware that at least one student is struggling with the assignment may prompt a self-assessment and revision on the part of that faculty member. Contact from a writing center may convince professors that the writing center is truly interested in helping them and their students succeed, and it builds bridges. Powers and Nelson (1995) argue, "Bringing content

area advisors directly into the process also made conferencing more comfortable for both writing center faculty and students. The writing center could direct conferences more confidently, and graduate students could trust writing center assistance more fully because of the three-way collaboration" (p.15).

Carrie Shively Leverenz (2001), however, provides a glimpse into the resistance such an approach might face. Leverenz (2001) argues that she would never reach out to the faculty member due to the "uneasy relationship some of these students have with academic authority" (p. 57). Leverenz (2001) claims she wants to maintain a position of "student advocate, free from any direct obligation to fulfill faculty members' expectations" (p. 57). Though Leverenz's point is a sound one, this is likely the kind of thinking that keeps faculty from recommending the writing center as a viable resource for their graduate student writers. Leverenz's approach may work to perpetuate negative feelings between the writer and the faculty. A true student advocate would help the student work *with* the faculty member instead of working on the side, sly, or against them. Including the advisor in on the writing center discussion does not mean the writing center now has to be tied to the classroom, but they cannot afford to be kept completely out of it, either, if they want to be effective at the graduate level. Others in the field since this publication have taken up the call and have begun to incorporate tutor training and writing support initiatives that add to the writing process focus by utilizing a genre approach.

Tutor training approaches now often use John Swales's CARS (create a research space) model, or some similar approach, to train tutors to analyze and provide assistance on genre conventions. Reineke et al. (2018) adapted the CARS model to create their genre-based approach for training tutors to work with technical or unfamiliar genres of student writing. They call their model "novelty moves" (Reineke et al., 2018). They argue, "The term 'novelty' helps us emphasize that these moves are not arbitrary but support a key value common to most, if not all, academic discourse communities: that of creating *new* knowledge" (Reineke et al., 2018, p. 165). They call the first moves "explain the significance" and "describe the status quo" (p. 165) and avoid Swales's term "niche" because many students for whom

English is not their first language struggle understanding it. Thus, they use the phrases “create a gap” and “fill the gap” (Reineke, 2018, p. 166). Part of what makes their approach innovative is that when it comes time for the trainees to start applying what they are learning, Reineke et al. (2018) have trainees use screen-capture software to record a video of themselves explaining the novelty moves to a writer. Then, they move on to “mock” tutoring, where the trainees must explain the moves to one of the directors (Reineke et al., 2018, p. 169).

Another version of the genre-based approach is discussed by Meagan Kittle Autry and Michael Carter, though their discussion does not come from a traditionally recognized writing center situation. At their university, North Carolina State University, they have created a program called the Thesis and Dissertation Support Services (TDSS) office, which is located in the Graduate Studies department. Of their situatedness, they argue,

> Being situated in the Graduate School has provided advantages for TDSS. Because the Graduate School is the administrative unit responsible for all graduate education and graduate students, it lends its authority and credibility to TDSS in its work with those students. If it were located in another unit, such as the Department of English, our campus Tutorial Center, or a particular college, the dynamic would be different, perhaps not carrying the same weight among students and faculty. (Autry & Carter, 2015, para. 6)

It is better in many ways for such support to be divorced from direct connections to only one department or program because it opens up a greater possibility for writing support across the curriculum. Autry and Carter (2015) argue for the use of genre instruction as a way to make the implicit explicit for graduate student writers, especially for those genres that are often “hidden.” They write, “In our work, we endeavor to provide students with an understanding of both the formal and informal genres of graduate study, thus emphasizing the larger genre system of graduate education at our institution” (para. 2). Of the genres that are hidden to graduate student writers, Autry and Carter (2015)

argue that the dissertation is one, if not the biggest one, because "each project is negotiated between the student and committee, giving it distinct qualities while still fitting with the typified rhetorical situation of a dissertation. A student's dissertation is defined as he or she works on it" (para. 11). The programs the TDSS office has implemented for graduate writer support include workshops and seminars on single genres, genre systems, or subgenres within the larger thesis or dissertation genre system. They also offer a Dissertation Institute, which they describe basically as a week-long dissertation boot camp event that provides writers with space to write and with beneficial workshops. They host Thesis and Dissertation Writing Days, which are three- to four-hour writing periods held every Friday in the library, providing a dedicated time and space to write but encouraging sustained engagement with that writing. The doctorate is the end of the education road for most people, and being a student is what they have likely been good at. From this point forward, graduate student writers need to develop and maintain skills with those genres and identities beyond student-hood and having guidance on ways they might approach that is invaluable.

One of the questions that is always raised when it comes to this guidance in terms of writing support is whether it is acceptable or beneficial for writing centers to offer only generalist tutoring or if they should also purposefully work to provide what Linda K. Shamoon and Deborah H. Burns (2001) call "near-expert tutors." Shamoon and Burns (2001) argue that today's U.S. university is a Fordist institution, breaking down work into its smallest parts in order to make it easily reproduced (p. 63). They see the generalist tutor as the low-paid, low-skilled worker used for cheap labor, and the writing center's continued use of this labor force is harmful to the work that a writing center could do. Shamoon and Burns (2015) argue that this approach makes writing centers vulnerable to continued low status and untenable working conditions. The near-expert tutor is exactly the kind of tutor the literature seems to be pushing for when it comes to working with graduate students and the kind of support graduate students are asking for. Thus, by not providing near-expert tutors as Shamoon and Burns (2001) suggest,

writing center may be telling writers their preferences don't count, which may be why some graduate students and graduate faculty do not want to look for writing assistance at the writing center.

Conclusion

Recently, writing center practitioners and scholars have begun to engage in empirical study of how graduate students use writing center services (Leverenz, 2001; Mannon, 2016; Phillips, 2008, 2013, 2017; Summers, 2016; Waring, 2005; Whitcomb, 2016). However, when empirical studies have been done on writing center work with graduate students, it has more often than not focused on multilingual graduate writers (MLGW) (Cirillo-McCarthy, Del Russo, & Leahy, 2016; Phillips 2008, 2013, & 2017; Waring, 2005; Whitcomb, 2016). A few focus on a broader understanding of graduate student (Grouling & Buck, 2017; Mannon, 2016; Summers, 2016), and a limited number mention disciplinary needs (Summers, 2016; Waring, 2005) – though disciplinary needs were not the focus of either study. Non-empirical writing center scholarship on working with graduate writers, on the other hand, gives little to no mention of MLGWs, but focuses on the unique needs of graduate writers as opposed to undergraduate writers, often with a focus on disciplinary writing groups (Gradin, Pauley-Grose, & Stewart, 2006; Hixson et al., 2016; Lee & Golde, 2013; Reardon et al., 2016). What both the empirical and non-empirical scholarship seem to agree on is that the needs of graduate student writers are different than those of undergraduate writers and that writing centers need to become more willing to modify their practices to meet those needs.

Understanding the needs of graduate student writers may encourage more to seek out the services writing centers offer. One such need that has been suggested in the literature is identity, specifically the tension involved in identifying between novice and expert. Even though researchers (Yancey et al., 2014) claim that a novice-stance is important for growth as a writer, writing center scholars like Summers (2016) point out that graduate students may be resistant to visiting spaces like the writing center because they see themselves as more expert than the writing center tutors and,

therefore, do not want to jeopardize that illusion of expertise. About science, technology, engineering, and mathematics writers, Carter-Veale et al (2016) argue, “Much of a STEM student's time in graduate school is spent in the lab conducting experiments . . . The underlying assumption is that . . . the student will be able to write up the results quickly and turn in a comprehensible document in the form of a publishable paper or doctoral dissertation” (p. 10). The STEM students involved in a dissertation boot camp-like program reported how important the distraction-free time was to focus on their writing and to receive targeted support for their writing endeavors (Carter-Veale et al., 2016). If graduate writers feel compelled by their programs to produce publishable pieces of writing, and they also feel that writing centers are not equipped to help them with such endeavors, this exact disconnect may manifest. Graduate writers may feel they are involved in a writing process or project that undergraduate writing tutors cannot assist them with. If it is true that graduate writers constantly exist in this liminal space between novice and expert, that they have likely internalized the expectation that they are too novice to write a dissertation but also too expert to visit a writing center tutor, it is no wonder so few of them are seen in writing centers.

This dissertation works to provide more scholarship on the beliefs, practices, and problems of graduate writers. Knowledge of what actually happens when dissertators write will be valuable to many lines of research and practice, e.g., writing centers that want to move beyond the scope of tutoring undergraduate writers, writing scholars who know quite a bit about the composing habits and processes of undergraduate writers but little about graduate student writers, and disciplines who want to get a better understanding of how they can assist their graduate student writers. Furthermore, this dissertation works to tie together the scholarship on graduate writers, advising graduate writers, and writing centers. Much of the scholarship discussed in this chapter falls into the empirical, qualitative category with data collection methods that include surveys of and interviews with advisors, graduate writers, and writing center practitioners, text collection, and archival analysis. However, none of these

scholars reported having observed in any methodical way graduate student writers actually engaged in the act of writing. Perhaps they deemed such an exercise unnecessary since there is much scholarship available on the composing processes of other groups of writers such as undergraduate university students and professional writers. Perhaps the time involved in developing a heuristic, gathering potential participants, and engaging in the process of observation was beyond the scope of the researchers' needs or abilities at the time. Whatever the reasons, not only does this dissertation work to tie together the advisor, the student, and the writing center as a triad for graduate degree completion, but it also adds the method of observing the composing processes of graduate writers to the list of data collection methods used for uncovering what writing support graduate students find the most useful.

Chapter 3

Methodology and Methods: Studying the Graduate Student Writer Experience from Multiple Angles

"There is still more to see here, turn me so you can see all my sides, let your gaze run through me, draw closer upon me, open me up, divide me up; keep on looking me over and over again, turning me to see all sides. You will get to know me like this, all that I am, all my surface qualities, all my inner sensible qualities"

(Husserl as found in Zahavi, 2019, p. 12).

The opening quotation attempts to capture the contextual and limited nature of everything humans experience. It highlights the interrelation between physical bodies and perceptions. Consider, for example, a bedside alarm clock. That alarm clock can be perceived visually. Even though the whole of the alarm clock cannot be seen at once, there is no doubt that there is more to the alarm clock than we can perceive in any given moment. This phenomenological construct can also be applied to perceptions of graduate writers. Graduate student writers exist. You may have even seen one once. However, there was more to that graduate student writer than you could have possibly perceived at one time. Fields concerned with supporting graduate student writers are still filling in knowledge gaps about those pieces that have not yet been visible. In the research that has been done thus far on graduate student writers, there have been questions asked about graduate writers' perceptions of academic writing (Aydin & Baysan, 2018; Gard [diss], 2017; Holmes et al. 2018; Odena & Burgess, 2017), of becoming independent researchers (Liljedahl, 2018), of specific interventions graduate writers have engaged in (Dowse & van Rensburg, 2015; Gardner et al., 2018; Huerta et al., 2017; Johnson, 2014; Kumar & Aitchison, 2018; Thomas et al. 2004, 2014), and what genres and questions graduate writers most often bring to the writing center (Gard [diss], 2017; Phillips, 2012; Whitcomb, 2016). An aspect missing from

this list of perspectives is how the interrelated perceptions of graduate writers, graduate faculty advisors, and writing center practitioners work to encourage or discourage participation in writing center activities. Such an understanding is central to the pragmatic application of this dissertation project.

The intent of this dissertation study is to uncover how writing center programs can best serve graduate student writers with extended writing projects by investigating the experiences of graduate student writers and those who offer them support. Necessarily, such a broad goal must be broken down into smaller, more manageable chunks. This dissertation attempts to address two such branches of inquiry located beneath the umbrella of this question. First, through three separate but related surveys, it delves into discovering perceptions of graduate student writers of the extended writing process, the perceptions of faculty members who advise graduate student writers, and the writing center practitioners who assist graduate student writers. Second, through observations and interviews, this dissertation narrows the scope further by attempting to capture a brief moment of the experience of graduate student writers during a dissertation boot camp event. This work contributes to the building of interdisciplinary writing support for graduate student writers in all fields. The potential benefits of the research conducted are plenty and include various campus entities. Engaging in the study provided graduate student writers a unique opportunity to talk explicitly about their writing process with a writing studies researcher, and research shows the value of reflection on growth as a writer and critical thinker (Boutet, Vandette, & Valiquette-Tessier, 2017; Bruffee, 1984). It also provided participants with an introduction to resources they may not have previously been aware of, and research shows that those who take advantage of resources are more likely to succeed (Council of Graduate Schools, 2010). The results of this project are intended to benefit all graduate student writers in that it will build on existing research meant to increase contentment with their writing selves, and it may result in a better understanding of the graduate student writing experiences. However, the benefits of this project are

intended to reach beyond graduate student writers. It can also provide the fields of Writing Studies and Writing Centers a better understanding of graduate student writers' processes and needs, an understanding that will assist in the continued development pedagogical theories and practices, and will help to continue the development of best practices for working with graduate student writers (fig. 1).

To attain all of these benefits, a mixed methods research design was used, employing the quantitative technique of survey distribution and the qualitative techniques of observation and interviewing. Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, and Turner (2007) define the mixed methods paradigm as "a third paradigm choice that often will provide the most informative, complete, balanced, and useful research results" (p. 129). For this project, the primary data collection method for phase 1 was the distribution of surveys to graduate student writers, graduate advisors, and writing center practitioners. Surveys were distributed and collection from February 2019 through May 2019. The questions this design aimed to answer were as follows:

- How do graduate writers describe their writing experiences?
- How do faculty advisors describe the experiences of graduate writers?
- How do writing center practitioners describe their experiences working with graduate writers?

Phase 2 of the study was conducted in June 2019 during the inaugural summer dissertation boot camp program hosted by the graduate studies department of a large, Midwestern university. It consisted of 30-minute observations of graduate students writing and 45-minute semi-structured interviews of those writers. The questions phase 2 was attempting to answer were as follows:

- What are the writing experiences of graduate writers?
- How do graduate writers describe their writing experiences?

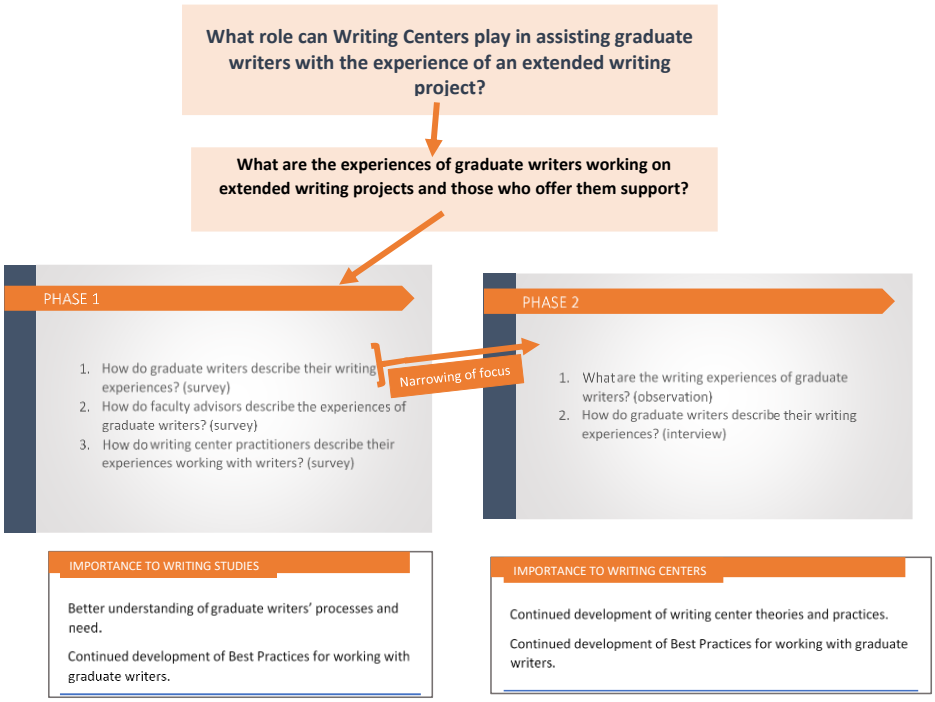

Figure 1: Research Design

Methodologies and Data Collection Methods

Phase 1 – Survey

The purpose of the survey phase of this dissertation project was to locate connections and disconnects among graduate student writers and those who provide writing support for them, i.e., their advisors and their campus writing centers. By using similar questions in the surveys for all three groups, the purpose is to bring them into a long overdue conversation that can identify areas where supportive collaboration may begin. This work can also build on the accumulated knowledge of the experiences of graduate student writers in the fields of Writing Centers, Writing Studies, and Graduate Studies. Since 2008 when the Council of Graduate Schools published the first of its four-monograph series regarding PhD completion and attrition rates, there has been a significant rise in the amount of scholarship published regarding graduate student writers. However, there are still many gaps to be filled.

The survey used non-probability, purposive sampling (Rea & Parker, 2005). Non-probability sampling occurs when the researcher does not know the probability that a particular respondent will be

selected as part of the sample. Thus, the researcher cannot generalize beyond the sample itself because there is no certainty that the probability of selection is equal (Rea & Parker, 2005, p. 172). Purposive sampling is the targeting of a particular population (Rea & Parker, 2005, p. 172). In this case, the populations targeted were graduate student writers, advisors, and writing center practitioners. the survey was distributed via email, campus newsletter, a national conference, and two national listservs. Therefore, it could not be determined how many responses would be garnered nor with what disciplines respondents would be affiliated. The possible variables in the number of kinds of individuals and the number and kinds of universities represented was impossible to determine. Furthermore, surveys were purposefully distributed amongst institutions of higher education and to individuals who study and/or work there. Survey tools typically collect three types of information: descriptive - facts about respondent; behavioral - respondent's behavior; attitudinal - respondent's attitudes and opinions (Rea & Parker, 2005, p. 6). "Scientific investigation requires that relationships be identified in terms of descriptive, behavioral, and attitudinal data so that we can fully understand the differential complexities of the population from which a sample has been drawn" (Rea and Parker, 2005, p. 6). Survey tools for this dissertation project were created in the Qualtrics® platform and were designed to collect all three types of information.

Survey distribution. The three surveys aim was to understand how three different but connected populations (writers, advisors, and writing centers) thought about the same thing, i.e., the experiences of graduate student writers. The surveys were similar but tailored to the specific population's relationship to the issue. One intent of this research was to capture a robust glimpse into the experiences of graduate student writers and those who provide them writing support. Individual surveys were designed to answer the questions: 1) How do graduate student writers describe their experiences with extended writing projects? 2) How do advisors describe the experiences of graduate

student writers? and 3) How do writing center practitioners describe their experiences working with graduate student writers on extended writing projects? (See figure 1.)

Surveys were designed to collect descriptive, behavioral, and attitudinal types of information, and were individualized for each group to determine their perceptions and practices, i.e., graduate writer perceptions of academic writing and support; faculty advisor perceptions of graduate writing and writing support needed, and writing center tutors and administrators' perceptions of graduate writing and writing support needed. A Google Pages® webpage was created, inviting participants to respond to the survey they deemed appropriate. Links to the Qualtrics® surveys were provided on that webpage. Surveys were completed and approved by my institution's IRB in mid-February 2019, allowing distribution to begin on February 21, 2019, and May 7, 2019 was the cut-off date for distribution and completion. A total of 405 responses across all three surveys were collected.

Survey distribution methods were varied and intended to procure as many and various responses as possible. Invitations to participate occurred in the following ways:

- Emails sent to the academic departments at my home university in an attempt to reach graduate student writers and faculty advisors.
    - Department administrators then chose whether to distribute the survey to their faculty and students.
- Emails sent to the Writing Center tutors and staff at my home university.
- Invitations published in the graduate student newsletter, which is sent out every month by Graduate Studies to all graduate students on my home campus.
- Invitations extended at a work-in-progress presentation delivered during the Spring 2019 Mid-Atlantic Writing Centers Association conference.
- Emails sent to the WCenter and the WPA listservs.

Responding to the survey in all cases was voluntary, and all participants self-selected by choosing to complete the survey. All surveys were distributed using Qualtrics® and were collected anonymously within the system. Thus, no identifying information was collected.

Respondents. 162 graduate student writers completed the survey by the May 7, 2019 deadline. 29 respondents were working toward a master's degree, and 130 were working toward a doctoral degree. 109 respondents indicated they were in the process of writing a thesis or a dissertation. 113 respondents indicated they had been in their programs for 1 – 4 years, 36 for 5 – 6 years, and 10 for 7 – 10 years.

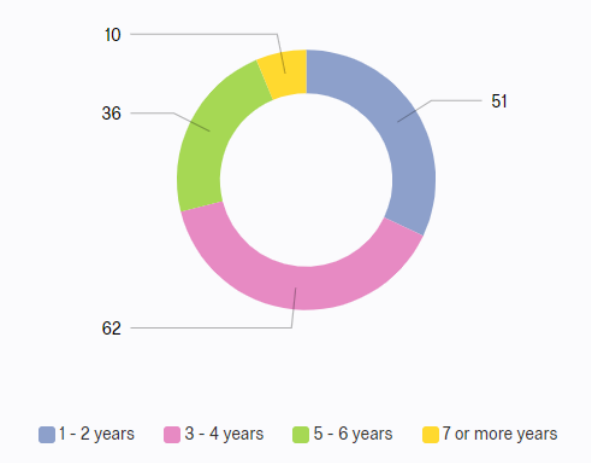

Figure 2: Number of years graduate students in their respective programs

143 respondents indicated English as their first language and 120 indicated they were studying at an R1 or R2 Doctoral University, as defined by the Carnegie system. 126 respondents identified as female and 133 as being between the ages of 20 and 39. 100 respondents were from the Humanities fields, 26 from Natural Sciences, 16 from Social Sciences, 14 from Education, 4 from Health Sciences, and 3 from Business.

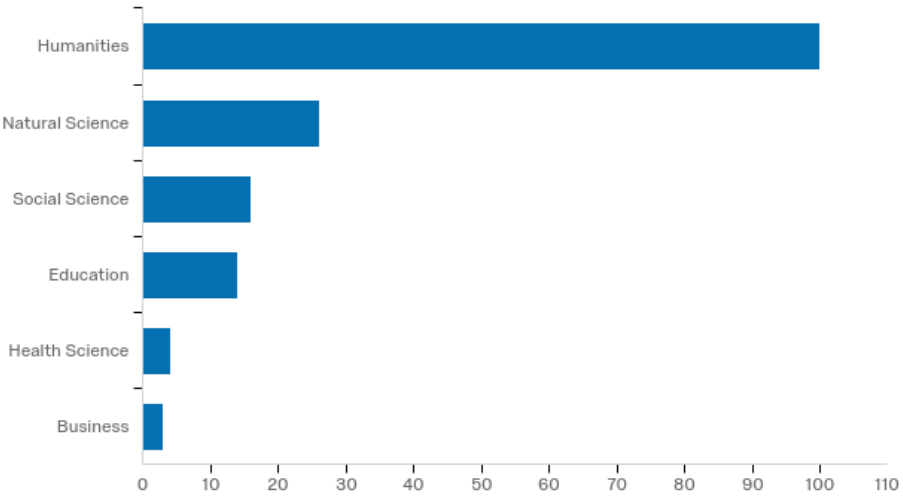

Figure 3: Fields represented by graduate student respondents

84 graduate faculty completed the survey by the May 7, 2019 deadline. 64 respondents indicated working at either an R1 or R2 Doctoral University, as defined by the Carnegie system, with 73 indicating English as their first language. 65 respondents identified as being between the ages of 30 and 59-years-old, and 44 identified as female. As with graduate student respondents, the majority of graduate faculty respondents identified their field of study as falling in the realm of the humanities. 52 respondents for the humanities, 18 for natural sciences, 5 for education, 2 for health sciences, 1 from law, and 1 from social sciences.

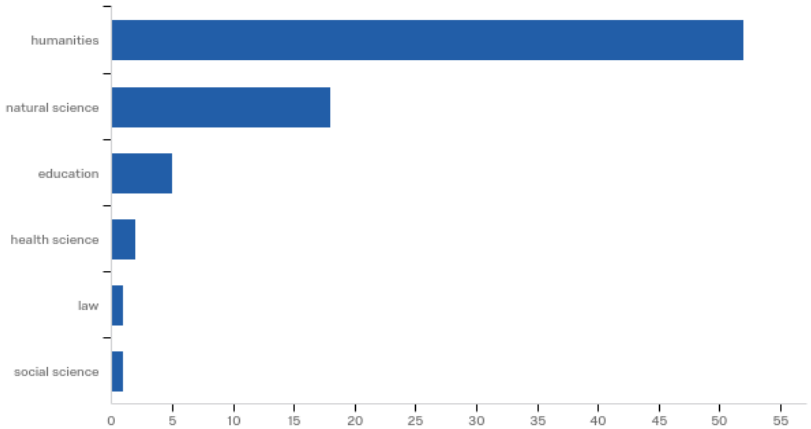

Figure 4: Fields represented by advisor respondents

51 respondents indicated having worked with between 0 and 10 graduate student writers, while 18 indicated having worked with 20 or more.

107 writing center practitioners completed the survey before the May 7, 2019 deadline. 99 indicated English as their first language, and 57 respondents indicated working in an R1 or R2 Doctoral University, as defined by the Carnegie system. 49 respondents indicated having either completed a doctoral program or being currently enrolled in one, 35 indicated having either completed a master's degree or being currently enrolled in one, and 18 indicated having either completed a bachelor's degree or being currently enrolled in one.

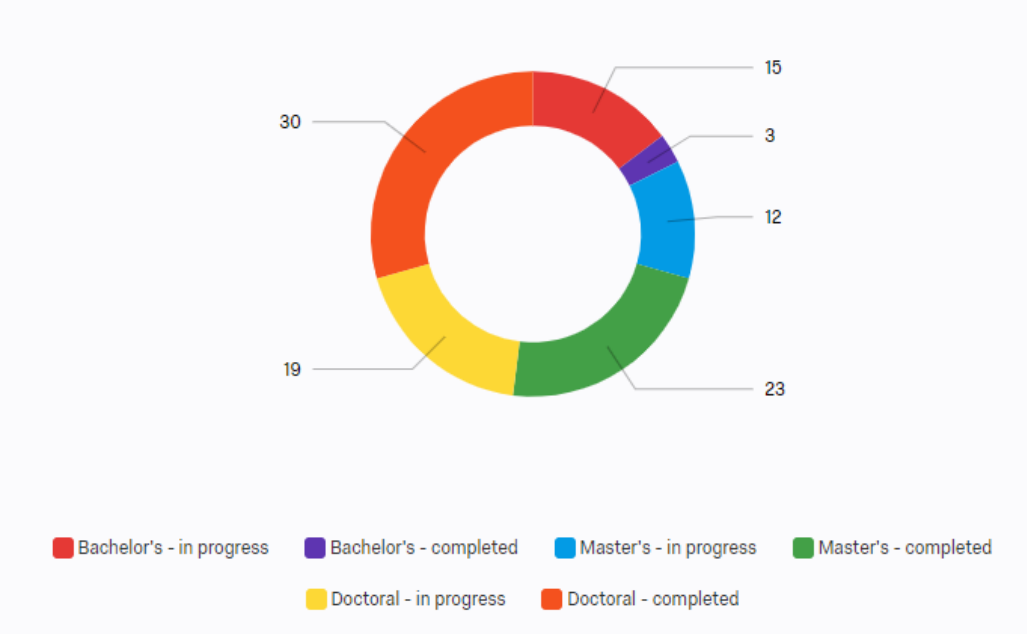

Figure 5: Level of education of writing center respondents

As with the graduate student writer respondents and graduate faculty respondents, the majority of writing center affiliated respondents indicated being in a humanities-related field of study with 72 respondents. There were also 13 from education, 8 from social sciences, 7 from natural sciences, and 2 from business.

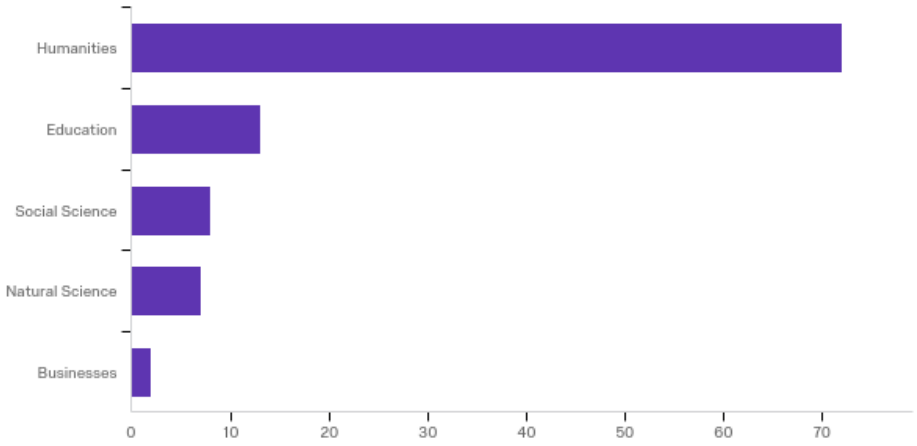

Figure 6: Fields represented by writing center respondents

Importance of research phase. Survey data provided a broad understanding of the issues faced by the graduate student population. Because an electronic survey distributed via the internet has the potential to garner far more respondents with various backgrounds and experiences than a more localized case study approach, it was an integral first step of the process. Distributing the survey as the first phase of the study allowed collection of a significant amount of information from the three different populations, which, after analysis, provided recurring themes.

Phase 2 – Observations and Interviews

During the month of June, 2019, the qualitative and interpretive phenomenological approach of observing graduate student writers as they composed during an inaugural Summer Dissertation Boot Camp event. The data collection methods used with all participants were 30 minutes of observations during composing and 45-minutes of post-observation, semi-structured interviews. The purpose of this phase of the project was to answer the questions**:** 1) What are the writing experiences of graduate student writers? and 2) How do graduate student writers describe their dissertation writing experiences? (See figure 1.)

The observation and interview portion of this research is phenomenological in nature. Phenomenologist Dan Zahavi (2019) explains, “By insisting on the fact that mind and world must be explored simultaneously, phenomenology offers a perspective that straddles or undermines a traditional distinction between epistemology and ontology” (p. 27). Ontology, the study of the nature of being, and epistemology, theory of knowledge creation, are inextricably connected for the phenomenologist. The conception of the mind / world dyad led to a qualitative research design that paired observations of graduate student writers as they composed with post-observation interviews. The *world* as it is conceived of in this research included the space in which graduate students were writing, the technology used during that writing, others occupying the surrounding spaces, and the perceptions of writing held by the graduate student participants.

According to Creswell et al (2007), the type of research questions for which a phenomenological approach best aligns are “essence questions: questions about what is at the essence that all persons experience about a phenomenon?” (p. 239). Another way to consider the research of this phase is to consider what writing means to graduate student writers and how they enact that meaning during the dedicated writing time and space of a Summer Dissertation Boot Camp event. Interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) was used for this project because it recognizes individuals as cognitive, linguistic, affective, and physical beings for whom all of these states of being are connected (Creswell et al, 2007; Noon, 2018; Smith & Osborn, 2003). Smith & Osborn (2004) contend, “IPA is a suitable approach when one is trying to find out how individuals are perceiving the particular situations they are facing, how they are making sense of their personal and social world. . . There is no attempt to test a predetermined hypothesis of the researcher; rather, the aim is to explore, flexibly and in detail, an area of concern” (p. 55). When considering the experiences of graduate student writers, this kind of flexible, individualized methodology was a sound approach.

Overview of dissertation boot camp events. The inaugural Summer Dissertation Boot Camp (SDBC) was chosen as the research site for this project because it provided a congregation of graduate students from multiple programs who had chosen to dedicate time to working on their dissertation projects and who were at various stages in the dissertation process. The summer of 2019 was the first year the Graduate Studies department held an SDBC event. All previous dissertation boot camp (DBC) events were held over the weekend, once a month in the fall and spring semesters, resulting in three, three-day events each semester. Both the semester and the summer boot camp events used the *just write* dissertation boot camp model. A just write DBC is one that provides graduate writers with food, space, and time to write, but there is little structure and no workshops or tutorials required of attendees (Lee & Golde, 2013). DBC attendees at these events could come and go as they wished and use their time however they saw fit. For this inaugural SDBC event, Graduate Studies had 40 spots available over four separate, week-long events in the month of June. Graduate students could sign up for as many of the weeks as they wanted, but priority would be given to any graduate student who had not signed up for another week. A grant had been awarded to the Graduate Studies department for this event, which enabled them to offer this SDBC free of charge. Even so, graduate students were required to register for their chosen week(s) and were offered on-campus housing if they desired it. The SDBC event lasted from 9:00 am on Monday morning until 5:00 pm on Friday evening. When attendees signed in on Monday morning, they were given a campus meal card to be used at any time during the week. This card was accepted on campus and at some local vendors, a list of which attendees were provided when they signed in. Each day, Graduate Studies also provided attendees with one catered lunch, served in a large conference room located in the Graduate Studies building., On Mondays however, attendees were also provided a breakfast from 9:00 am until 10:30 am to coincide with the check-in times.

Attendees were provided access to multiple spaces in the Graduate Studies building: two conference rooms and six tables in a large breezeway area. Attendees were also offered the option of

working anywhere they chose, be that on or off campus. Some choices made by attendees who participated were the spaces in the Graduate Studies building, an assigned campus office, the campus library, the city library, and even their own home. Wherever they chose to work, most attendees would return to the Graduate Studies building to gather for the daily catered lunch. Though attendees could technically stay and work as long as they desired, most left campus or returned to their residential housing around 6:00 PM and returned to campus the next morning around 9:00 AM. Attendees were also provided free printing from a computer located in the Graduate Studies office.

Participants. Over the course of the four-weeks of the SDBC events, observations and post-observation interviews were conducted with 16 attendees who volunteered to participate. Originally, 26 attendees volunteered to participate. However, due to scheduling conflicts and life events, only 16 were able to participate in both the observation and post-observation interview. A total of 75 minutes was spent with each participant: 30 minutes silently observing and taking notes during their writing time, and 45 minutes post-observation interview. Each interview consisted of at least 12 questions, with more being added as needed, depending on questions that arose during the observation time. All 16 participants were in the process of earning a doctoral degree; 9 were working on an aspect of their dissertation project; 4 were working on an aspect of their proposal for their dissertation project; and 3 were working on a project related to a future dissertation, i.e., an article on which to be first author and to use when applying for a grant, a project-in-lieu because the participant had not done a master's thesis, and an f31 grant to fund one year of dissertation work. Among the 16 participants, fields of study were divided relatively evenly, with 5 from a humanities field, 5 from education, 5 from a natural science field, and 1 from a social science field.

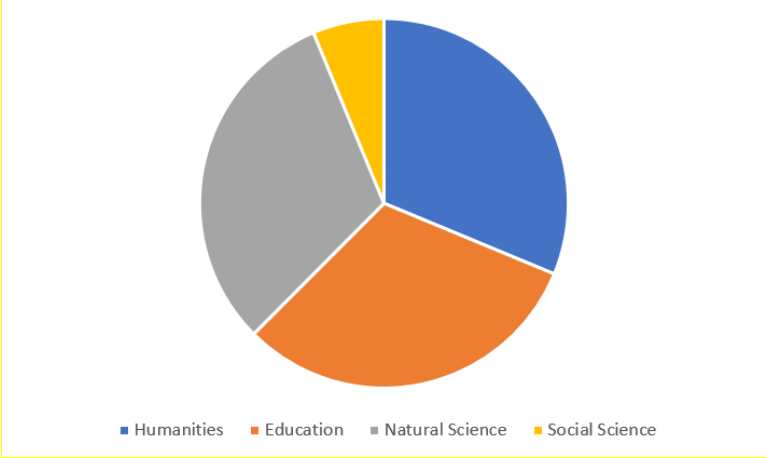

Figure 7: Fields represented by interview respondents

It is typical for sample sizes of phenomenological research to remain small due to the in-depth research and analysis being conducted (Noon, 2018; Saunders et al, 2018; Smith & Osborn, 2003). Thus, the small size of the participant sample is expected with such a methodology. Saunders et al (2018) define *data saturation* as when a researcher intuitively knows when they have reached a point in data collection when no new evidence is being gathered. After 16 observations and post-observation interviews, though individual practices of the graduate student writers varied and each was working on different portions of their dissertation projects, data saturation was reached.

Participant recruitment. At the start of each of the four weeks of the SDBC, each attendee received a welcome packet from the Graduate Studies department. These packets included a two-pocket folder with information about the SDBC, the daily schedule, a written invitation to work wherever they felt most comfortable, a small drawstring backpack, a coffee mug, a water bottle, a charging cable, and information describing this dissertation study and an explanation that participation was voluntary. The week before the start of the SDBC, the researcher met with the Director of Graduate Student Services and provided him with 40 small packets of information regarding the study to be included in the two-pocket folders. Each packet included one of the researcher's business cards; a blue cardstock paper with a brief explanation of the project, and an invitation and link to the online survey;

and a yellow cardstock paper with a short list of writing resources that included contact information for the campus writing center, the campus libguide resource for international students; campus mental health resources; and two other online writing resources: the UCLA Graduate Writing Center and the Purdue Online Writing Lab. This small packet of information was intended to serve as a quick introduction to the researcher and the dissertation project. (See figure 8).

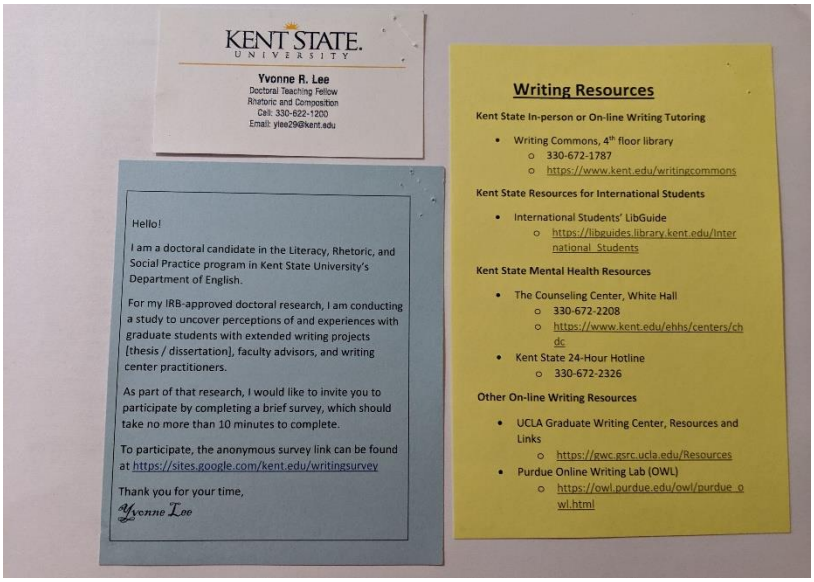

Figure 8: Information provided to Graduate Studies for SDBC folders

Each of the four Monday mornings, the researcher arrived at the Graduate Studies building around 8:45 AM to meet SDBC attendees as they arrived. The researcher would wait in the conference room where breakfast was being served and ask to speak with attendees as they settled around the table. Though the researcher did attempt to deliver the invitation to as many attendees as possible at one time, due to the staggered nature of their arrival, it was often repeated over the course of the hour and a half check-in period. A version of the invitation script was used to invite each attendee. The invitation script was as follows:

> "My name is Yvonne Lee, and I am a doctoral candidate in the Literacy, Rhetoric, and Social Practice program in Kent State University's Department of English. For my doctoral research, I am conducting a study to uncover perceptions of and experiences of graduate students with

extended writing projects (thesis / dissertation), faculty advisors, and writing center practitioners. As a graduate writer and attendee of the Summer Dissertation Boot Camp, I am inviting you to participate in this study. Currently, there is little empirical research on the writing practices of graduate writers, and I would like to begin to fill this gap with my research, ultimately working toward writing center best practices for working with graduate writers. Your voluntary participation in this study is an important contribution to the building of interdisciplinary writing support for graduate writers in all fields. Taking part is entirely up to you, and you may choose not to participate, or you may discontinue your participation at any time without penalty. If you would like to participate, please sign up for an observation & interview time on the provided schedule."

As the invitation script was delivered, attendees received a copy of the Phase Two Consent form. Those who agreed to participate signed and dated the consent form, provided an email at which they could be contacted, and chose from a schedule of 21, 75-minute time blocks. They were informed that they could contact the researcher at any time using the email or mobile phone number provided on the business card found in their two-pocket folder. Each participant received an email reminder the evening before their scheduled observation and interview time to confirm and determine a meeting place..

Observations. Because the manner of this project left little time for technical or involved preparations such as installing and using screen capture tools on each participant's computer or setting up video cameras in each participant space and because the researcher believed think aloud protocols to be disruptive for a writer and those around them, observations were conducted in person and without the aid of any electronic recording devices. Thus, an observation heuristic was developed using Teston's (2012) "Considering Confidentiality in Research Design" as a model. Though it appears to be a simple document, the observation heuristic was a difficult document to build, moving through a few iterations before arriving at the version used for the study. The first iteration looked like figure 9. Before

employing this heuristic in the field, the researcher tested it on a graduate student working on her dissertation. She was observed for 30 minutes while she composed, and she engaged in a 15-minute post-observation interview to determine what it felt like to be observed while writing. This pilot test was beneficial in identifying the limitations of the design. The original heuristic was relatively complicated, making it difficult to use during a writing session, and it problematically narrowed the observational focus to very specific behaviors. The second iteration of the heuristic, and the one used in this study, is found in figure 10. The new heuristic was streamlined, easy to use in the fast-paced activity of observing a writer at work, and flexible. It did not focus the observer's attention on any one kind of activity, and it did not direct the researcher's attention to any preconceived notions about what activities, goals, or behaviors a writer would be engaging in, as the original version did.

<table>
<tr><th colspan="5">Number & Kind of Resources Used</th><th>Time Spent Actually Composing</th><th>Kinds of Difficulties Encountered</th><th>How Difficulties Dealt w/</th></tr>
<tr><td>Paper Documents – rubrics/heuristics/etc.</td><td>Read</td><td>Copy & Paste</td><td>Annotate</td><td>Other</td><td rowspan="4"></td><td rowspan="4"></td><td rowspan="4"></td></tr>
<tr><td>Books/Articles</td><td>Read</td><td>Copy & Paste</td><td>Annotate</td><td>Other</td></tr>
<tr><td>Websites</td><td>Read</td><td>Copy & Paste</td><td>Annotate</td><td>Other</td></tr>
<tr><td>Other - Describe</td><td>Read</td><td>Copy & Paste</td><td>Annotate</td><td>Other</td><td colspan="3" rowspan="2">Verbalizations (what/when)</td></tr>
<tr><td>Work Space</td><td>What is present</td><td>Organization</td><td>Place</td><td>Tools Used</td></tr>
</table>

Figure 9: Original heuristic for observation field notes

Work Space

Place	*What is present*	*Tools Used*

Use of Time - **D**istractions; **R**ecursions (go back through own text); **C**omposing; Re**S**ources; **B**linking cursor

Time Stamp	Activity

Figure 10: Revised heuristic for observation field notes

For participant observations, each participant was met in the space in which they had set to work during that day or time. Some participants used the available spaces in the Graduate Studies breezeway all week. Some liked to work in one area, such as the public library, during the morning hours and then move to a different area, like the campus library, for the afternoon hours. Meeting the writers in a space of their choosing was an integral aspect of the study design for a couple of reasons. First, it allowed the observer to be as unobtrusive as possible and demonstrated a respect for their dedicated writing time. Second, it allowed for an authentic experience. The presence of an observer already made the situation less authentic, and meeting them where they chose worked to descrease the amount of inauthenticity. The spaces in which writers chose to write during observations were as follows:

- Cartwright Hall (Graduate Studies Building)
    - Foyer (a large hall between two rows of offices) – 8 participants
    - Conference Room – 1 participant
    - Empty Office – 1 participant
- Campus Library
    - Fourth Floor – 2 participants
    - First Floor Garden Room – 1 participant

- Campus Office
    - Satterfield Hall – 1 participant
    - Franklin Hall – 1 participant
- Own Home
    - 1 participant

When each participant was approached during their scheduled time, they were asked not to explain what they were working on. That would be discussed during the interview. This was done to reduce the amount of bias the researcher brought to the observation. It was suspected that if the observation was entered into with the writers' immediate concerns at the forefront of the researcher's thoughts, aspects of their composing processes might be missed. Though it can be argued that knowing the writer's thoughts pre-observation may have helped identify different aspects of the process, the researcher decided to observe without such information because topics regarding what was being written and how the writer was feeling about it were topics that would come up for discussion during the post-observation interviews.

At the start of each observation, with the participant's permission, the researcher would sit close to the participant, so their facial expressions, their computer screen, and their surrounding workspace was within view. The stopwatch was set and placed within glancing distance, so the time could be noted with each observation notation. A clipboard with multiple copies of the observation heuristic was situated on the researcher's lap, out of view of the writer. On the clipboard, were also copies of the audio/visual consent form the participant would sign prior to the post-observation interviews and copies of the pre-determined, post-observation interview questions. As soon as both the researcher and the participant were ready, the stopwatch was started, and the writer returned to work.

Each participant was observed for a full 30 minutes. As they engaged in their writing practices, which ranged from reading and highlighting paper transcripts to composing portions of a dissertation

chapter on a laptop, they were observed closely. The researcher noted their facial expressions, listened to words they whispered to themselves, watched how and where they took written notes, watched their computer screen as they composed, noted when they referred to sources and when they seemed to be writing from their own memories or experiences, etc. On the observation heuristic each of these moments were noted with a time stamp. If a question came up during the observation, a circled question mark was placed next to the notation. The writer was not stopped or interrupted by the researcher during their 30-minute writing session. All questions were saved for the post-observation interview. An example of observation notes can be found in figure 11. The notations of the writer's process are in black. The pink text are explanations added later that same day, so the researcher would not forget what the in-the-moment-shorthand meant.

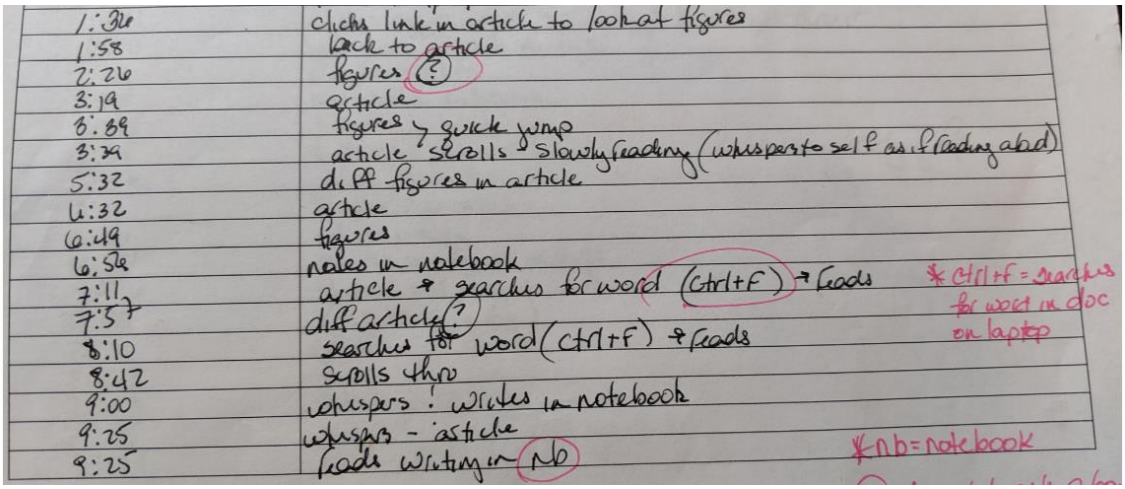

Figure 11: Example of observation field notes

Post-observation interviews. Immediately following each 30-minute observation, the participant and researcher engaged in a 45-minute interview. Most of these interviews occurred in the same space the observation occurred. However, it was sometimes more considerate to other writers, such as for those participants who were working in the open breezeway area of the Graduate Studies building, if the conversation moved to a more private area, like an unused conference room. After the observation, each participant was provided a copy of the audio/video consent form and an explanation

that the interview would be audio recorded and later transcribed by the researcher. It was also explained that the participant had the right to choose to review the audio recording before it was used. Once the audio/visual consent form was signed and dated, the audio recorder was turned on, and the interview began. Each participant was asked 11 of the same questions

1. What is your first language?
2. What degree are you pursuing?
3. What is the piece you are working on?
4. Where in the process of creating this document are you?
5. How do you feel this writing session went?
6. Would you say this is representative of how you normally compose?
7. What are your beliefs about writing in general?
8. What are your beliefs about your personal writing ability?
9. What kind of writing assistance have you receive from the University, i.e. from your advisor, program, etc.?
10. What University writing support programs are you aware of but have not taken advantage of?
11. Why have you not used these services?

The twelfth question was reserved for questions that arose based on the observation of that writer. The number of questions asked during this part of the interview depended on the processes observed and the conversation that ensued regarding those processes. For example:

12. During your writing session, I noticed . . . Can you please explain that/these moments to me a bit?
    a. What were you thinking?
    b. Why did you make the choices you did?

For one participant, this portion of the interview also consisted of the following questions:

- How many documents were you working on and what is the relationship between them? What were you doing in each?
- What were you listening to in your earbuds as you worked?
- I noticed you were using the EndNote ® program. Can you tell me a little bit about how you use that?
- You have an interesting saving scheme. Can you walk me through that?
- I saw quite a bit of struggling with format early on in the session. Can you talk to me a bit about what was happening there?

As is plain to see, such questions could only have been arrived at from observing this individual's writing processes and would likely not be suitable for another writer in another situation. Thus, the number and type of questions varied depending on the participant. Also dependent on the participant was the actual order in which the questions were discussed. For some, the conversation naturally veered straight into discussions about the practices or behaviors that were witnessed during the 30-minute session. For others, it was more natural to go down the list question by question. In these ways, the interview process falls into the semi-structured approach.

As a show of appreciation for their time and participation, each participant received a $20 gift card for various businesses that could be found in the areas near campus, e.g., coffee shops, restaurants, and shops that specialize in lotions and fragrances. Funding for this project was provided by The International Writing Centers Association Ben Rafoth Graduate Research Grant.

Field research memos. Each evening after an observation and interview session occurred, approximately one hour per session was spent producing memos about the researcher's own experiences and initial thoughts on what was witnessed during the observations. The hand-written observation notes and any hand-written notes from the audio recorded interview session were used to

construct these memos. The date, time, and place of each observation, the paraphernalia present in the participant's workspace, and the tools the participant used during their 30-minute writing session were noted in these memos. The following is an example:

> "When I arrived, p1 was sitting at a large round table with a large round bench surrounding half of it and two chairs providing seating on the other half. (This particular work area serves almost as a secluded nook. There are three such "nook" areas in the Cartwright lounge area. There was a graduate student in each. I should take a picture of one of these areas because p2 also sat in one the next day for her observation and interview session.) P1 had her laptop set up on the table and plugged in to the wall. Also on the table were
>
> - the folder of information provided for the SDBC attendees that morning,
> - a water bottle also provided that morning,
> - a pen provided that morning,
> - hard copy articles piled neatly to her right
> - her cell phone and cord
> - a small notebook in which she wrote notes from her reading
> - a pen she used to write her notes."

From a session a few weeks later, the following memo was written:

> "The observation occurring in the participant's home and the use of the television screen as a monitor were not the only things that made this observation unique. P4B also used the navigation panes available in Word to help her navigate her way more easily through the documents. The use of these navigation panes is akin to my thought after my last interview that nobody has yet used the split-screen feature to make moving back and forth between documents easier. Using the navigation panes does make the initial set-up of the document

more tedious because it also requires the use of the heading styles settings, which I did not witness any participants using."

These memos attempted to capture the spirit, feeling, and setting of the interactions with each of the participants. The purpose of these memos was not just to assist in recall of each session at a later date, though they do serve that purpose; they also assisted in identifying emerging themes and consistent practices or behaviors among the participants.

Transcription & coding processes. After each of the 16 observations and interviews were completed, the researcher transcribed each interview using the platform oTranscribe®. For each interview, a copy of the audio file was uploaded and transcribed, which was then saved into the researcher's university Google Drive® account. Because they were not necessary to the research, pauses, laughs, and the like were not noted in the transcriptions. As the interviews were transcribed, handwritten notes were kept in a research journal about moments that seemed important, unusual, or recurrent. From these notes, a list of first round codes with rough definitions was compiled. Those codes included

- awareness of writing as a process
- distractions
- awareness of the benefits of collaboration or camaraderie
- thoughts on what the WC does and who it serves
- displaying "student" behavior or attitude
- narrowly define "writing"
- perceive stats and data as a significant hurdle
- thoughts on advisor
- discussion of difference between daily writing tasks and academic writing tasks
- quote mining as a writing practice

- science writers' reliance on figures

Once these codes were created and briefly defined, a copy of each transcript was uploaded into the NVivo® platform, which was then used to engage in further coding and fracturing of the data.

Importance of research design. This study design is important in the grander scheme of research on graduate student writing in that the more that is known about dissertation writers, the better able writing centers will be to address the needs they have. While research has been done on a number of collaborative interventions or course interventions for graduate writers (Dowse & van Rensburg, 2015; Gardner et al., 2018; Huerta et al., 2017; Johnson, 2014; Kumar & Aitchison, 2018; Thomas et al., 2004, 2014), and conversations about graduate writers' perceptions of academic writing have been circulating in the scholarship (Aydin & Baysan, 2018; Gard [diss], 2017; Holmes et al., 2018; Odena & Burgess, 2017), a phenomenological study observing the experiential writing practices of dissertation writers will be beneficial in illustrating the perceptual acts of dissertation writers as they engage in the multifaceted writing process. Focusing on dissertators will help provide deeper understanding of disciplinary, university, and program support for dissertation writers; it could highlight strengths and weaknesses of support for dissertation writers at this university. Graduate students' perceptions of academic writing have been researched by a number of scholars in the recent past. However, the focus of these perceptions often come from humanities disciplines. Thus, examining writing practices of graduate students who attended an SDBC could broaden the field and add to this existing scholarship by including more voices from various disciplines, which could provide writing center practitioners, writing scholars, and discipline faculty further information on which to base their curricular decisions regarding developing dissertation writers.

From the methods outlined here, quite a collection of data was amassed. From the surveys alone, there are 250 pages of graphs, charts, and textual comments. From the observations and interviews, there are 83 pages of hand-written notes, 33 pages of typed post-interview memos, 720

minutes of audio-recorded interviews, and 133 pages of typed transcripts. Chapter four of this dissertation provides a detailed report of the results of the surveys of graduate student writers, advisors, and writing center practitioners. Chapter five of this dissertation provides a detailed report of the results of the observations and interviews.

Chapter 4

Disconnections, Distortions, & Disruptions: Ameliorating the Graduate Student Writer Experience

"Some aspects of academic writing have been assumed by my graduate program but were not explicitly taught in my undergraduate coursework. There seems to be a disconnect between what I am expected to know as a graduate student and what I was actually taught as an undergraduate."

(2019 Graduate Student Survey Respondent)

Graduate students necessarily occupy the liminal space between novice and expert. They are at once the student and the professional, existing in the intersection between where they have come from and where they are going. Support for the writing projects of those who occupy such a space can be a complicated endeavor that involves three key groups: the students themselves, their graduate advisors, and university writing support – often found in the form of a campus writing center. This project aims to answer three questions: How do graduate writers describe their writing experiences? How do faculty advisors describe the experiences of graduate writers? and How do writing center practitioners describe their experiences working with graduate writers? The purpose for delving into these three questions was to develop an understanding of places where disconnects may be occurring across and among the three groups. Thus, three parallel surveys were created and distributed to members of each group during the spring of 2019. Individually, the findings from these surveys are not surprising. The data indicate that graduate student writers identify a persistent struggle with the act of invention; they find it most difficult to sit down and begin the task of writing. Graduate advisors, on the other hand, indicate the graduate writer's most pervasive struggle to be with the acts of design and arrangement; they find graduate student writers have the most difficulty organizing their writing and designing their research

projects. Results also show that graduate students and graduate advisors tend to harbor the assumption that writing center spaces are designed primarily to assist undergraduate students, an assumption that many writing center practitioners take issue with but that is corroborated by the practices they often engage in. The value of this project is not derived from its mundane findings alone but from its goal of simultaneously analyzing the beliefs and experiences of all three groups. This approach has brought to the fore meaningful disconnects between and among the groups, disconnects that once addressed could make for promising contributions for the fields of writing studies and graduate studies. As a more comprehensive understanding of graduate student writers' experiences is developed, more meaningful and beneficial writing support structures can become mainstays of universities across the nation. The data found herein reveal that the two most important first steps toward building sustainable and meaningful writing support for graduate student writers is to breach the gap of distorted understandings between graduate advisors and writing center practitioners, and to address the needs of graduate student writers as they see them. Opening lines of communication between these three groups can begin with conversations about their shared understandings of the struggles of graduate student writers.

This chapter will provide a reminder of who the survey respondents were, the number of respondents that completed each survey, and the fields from which respondents hailed. It will then provide evidence from each of the three surveys that demonstrate a disconnect amongst each of the three groups regarding what stages of the extended writing project cause graduate student writers the greatest amount of struggle. The related discussion will then be entered on the distortions in understanding amongst the three groups regarding the usefulness and benefits possible for graduate student writers in a writing center space. From there, data from the surveys will be used to support the argument that engaging in the extended writing project is not a solo endeavor, and universities must provide multiple avenues of relationship building for graduate student writers if they are to be

successful. Finally, the chapter will conclude with a discussion of two strategies for an initial foray into healing the breaches discussed amongst the three groups.

Summary of Survey Respondents

162 graduate student writers completed the survey. 29 respondents were working toward a master's degree and 130 toward a doctoral degree. 109 respondents indicated they were in the process of writing a thesis or a dissertation. 100 respondents were from the Humanities fields, 26 from Natural Sciences, 16 from Social Sciences, 14 from Education, 4 from Health Sciences, and 3 from Business. (See figure 12.)

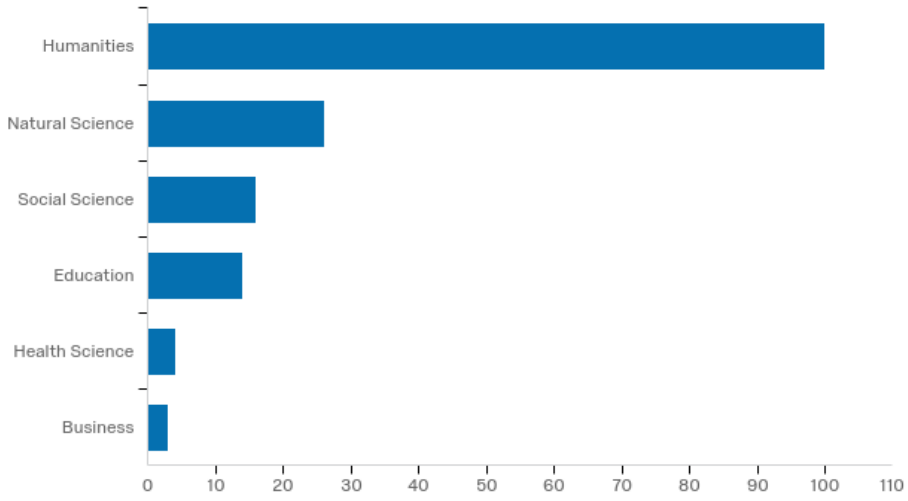

Figure 12: Fields represented by graduate student survey

50% of respondents indicated having only been working on their extended writing project for 1-2 years, with another 33% reporting having only been working on their extended writing projects for less than 1 year. Of the 119 respondents who indicated being in the process of an extended writing project, 99 indicated having completed the development of their research questions prior to proposal creation, and 29 indicated having a complete draft of all chapters of the extended writing project. As was mentioned in chapter 3, this survey was crafted to quantitatively capture how graduate writers identify their writing experiences with extended writing projects.

84 graduate advisors completed the survey. As with graduate student respondents, the majority of graduate advisor respondents identified their field of study as falling in the realm of the humanities, with 52 respondents, 18 in natural sciences, 5 in education, 2 in health sciences, 1 in law, and 1 in social sciences. (See figure 13.) 51 respondents indicated having worked with between 0 and 10 graduate student writers, while 18 indicated having worked with 20 or more. 36 advisors are currently advising 1-2 graduate students on extended writing projects, 23 are advising 3-4, and 21 are advising 7 or more graduate student writers.

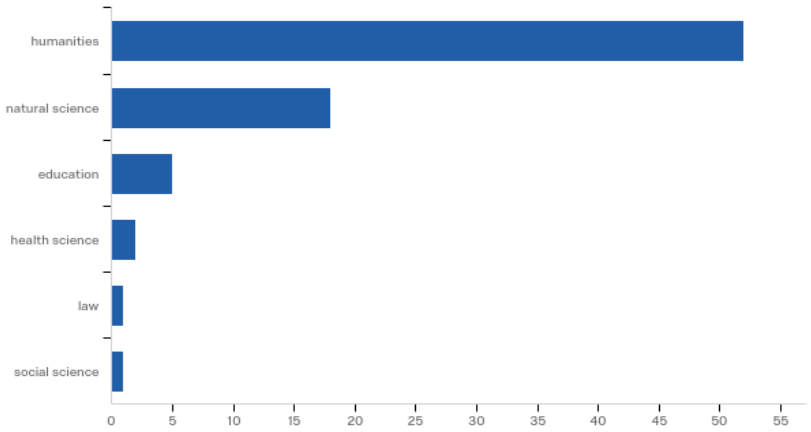

Figure 13: Fields represented by advisor surveys

107 writing center practitioners completed the survey. 49 writing center respondents indicated having either completed a doctoral program or being currently enrolled in one, 35 indicated having either completed a master's degree or being currently enrolled in one, and 18 indicated having either completed a bachelor's degree or being currently enrolled in one. (See figure 14.) As with the graduate student writer respondents and graduate faculty respondents, the majority of writing center affiliated respondents indicated being in a humanities-related field of study with 72 respondents. However, there were also 13 from education, 8 from social sciences, 7 from natural sciences, and 2 from business. (See figure 15.)

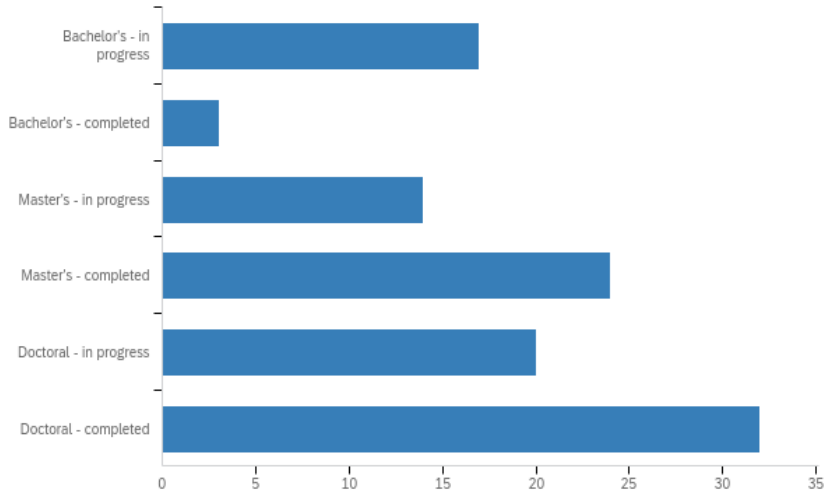

Figure 14: Level of education of writing center respondents

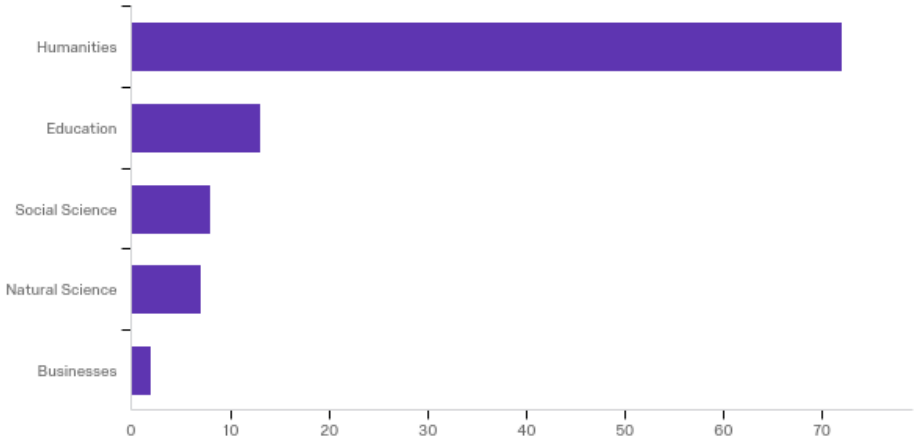

Figure 15: Fields represented by writing center respondents

Invention vs Arrangement: Disconnects Regarding Graduate Student Writer Struggles

Survey results indicate that graduate student respondents feel they struggle the most with the act of invention and the least with acts of design and arrangement. Graduate student respondents indicated finding time to write, making themselves write, staying focused when writing, and getting started writing as the top four most difficult aspects for them. (See figure 16.) They chose conducting the research, designing the research, organizing their written work, and applying feedback as the least of their struggles. (See figure 17.) For the two survey questions aimed at this concern, questions 11 & 12, respondents were provided the same 14 choices, anticipating that those choices selected the least

when asked about struggles and the most when asked about their strengths would align and vice versa, providing a clear indication of where their feelings of strengths and concerns truly lie. Two did align for their strengths: applying feedback and conducting the research, and all four aligned for their struggles. Thus, it can be argued that graduate student writers generally feel the most confident about applying feedback and conducting the research, acts of design and arrangement, and least confident about finding the time to write and making themselves write acts of invention.

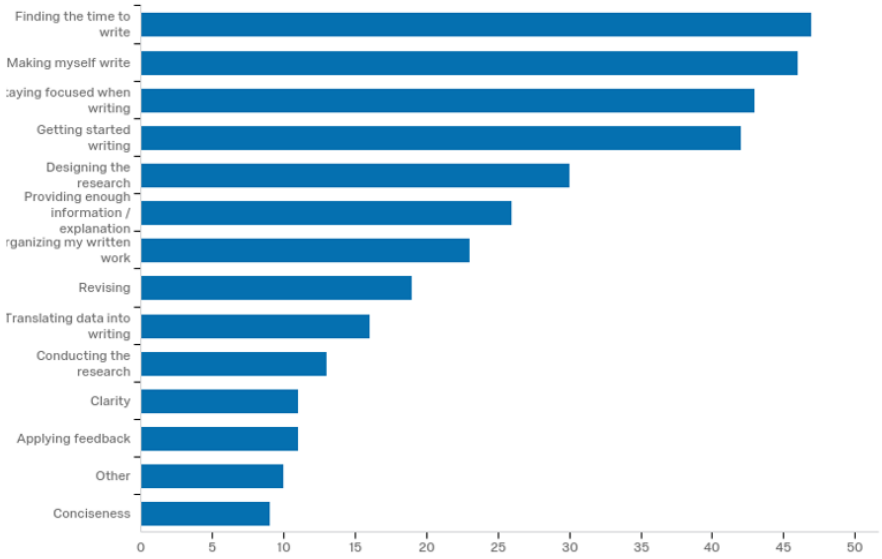

Figure 16: Responses to writer survey question 11, graduate writer struggles

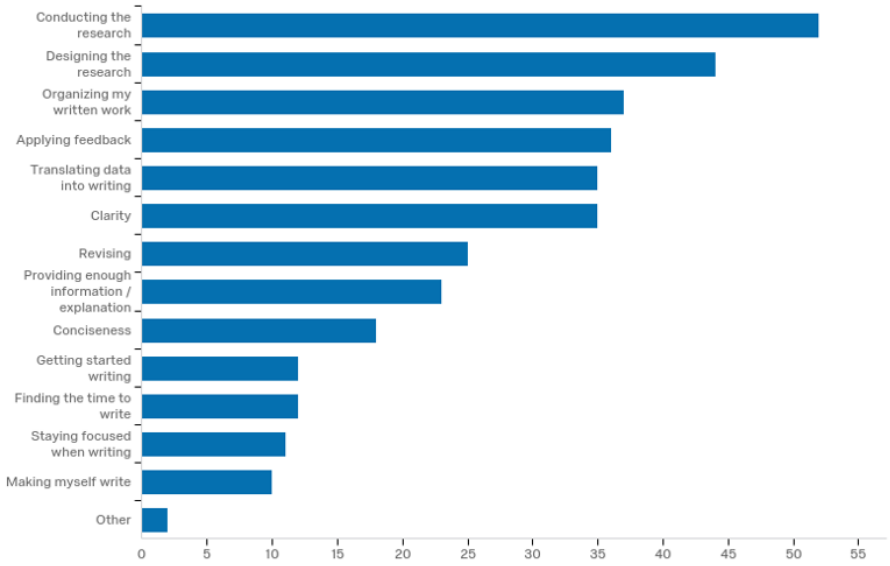

Figure 17: Responses to writer survey question 12, graduate writer confidence

Survey results for graduate advisors, on the other hand, paint a different picture. Advisor respondents indicated a belief that graduate student writers actually do struggle with acts of design and arrangement. Advisor respondents indicated a belief that graduate student writers struggle the most with organizing their written work, translating data into writing, and designing the research. (See figure 18.) Both organization and research design were chosen by graduate students as aspects of the extended writing projects about which they felt the most confident, yet advisors indicate seeing graduate writers struggle with these aspects the most. This disconnect demonstrates a misalignment between graduate student writer and advisor experiences of the extended writing process. However, the three selections chosen the fewest number of times by advisors regarding graduate student writers' struggles were meeting deadlines, conducting research, and applying feedback. (See figure 18.) This low number of selections suggests the advisors' belief that these aspects are those that graduate student writers struggle with the least. Thus, survey results indicate an alignment between advisors and graduate student writers with two of the selections for strengths: applying feedback and conducting research. Thus, it can be confidently argued that graduate student writers and their advisors both notice

these two areas as areas of the least concern for most graduate student writers, identifying one point of agreement between the two groups.

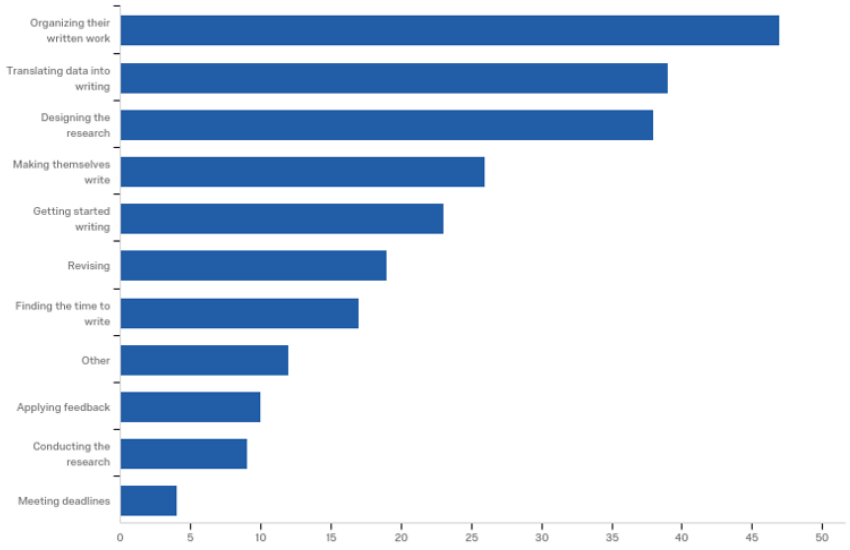

Figure 18: Responses to advisor survey question 7, graduate writer struggles

Survey results for writing center practitioners indicate their most common experiences with graduate student writers' struggles fall into the realms of clarity, organizing written work, and revising. (See figure 19.) What is striking about these results is of these three struggles, two were not mentioned by either graduate student respondents or advisors as areas of concern: clarity and revising, but one, organization, was mentioned by advisors as an area of concern for graduate student writers. Graduate student writers themselves, however, indicate organization as an issue of little concern for them. This third survey now points to a disconnect between what concerns graduate writers take to writing centers (organization) and those they feel they struggle with the most (invention), but it also shows an alignment between what advisors and writing center practitioners see as struggles for graduate student writers (organization).

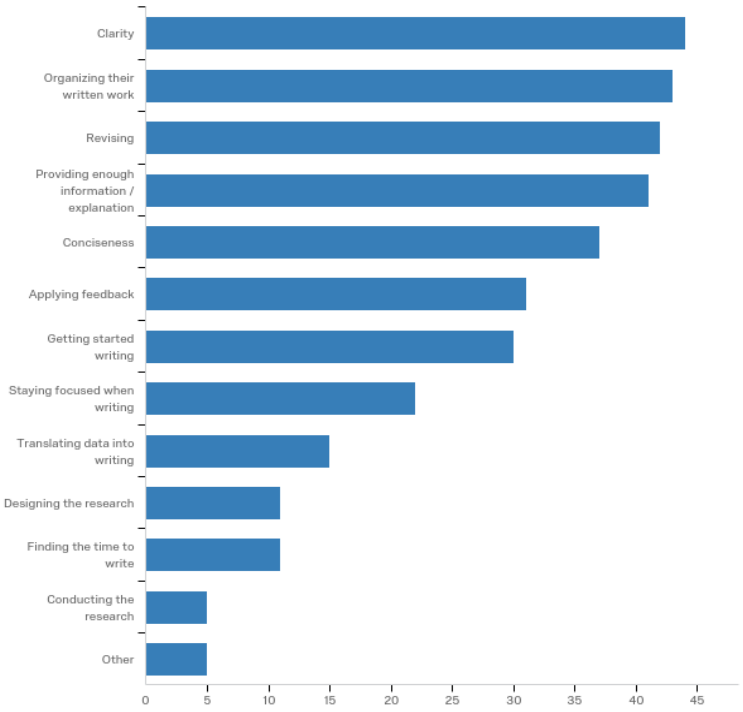

Figure 19: Responses to writing center practitioners' survey question 11, graduate writer struggles

It is possible that graduate student writers believe they should feel more comfortable than they do with the design and arrangement aspects of a writing project, so when they are asked outright, as they were in this survey, they indicate these as areas of the least concern. However, when they are asked to discuss the kind of feedback they prefer, graduate student writers overwhelmingly indicated a preference for feedback that addresses issues of content and detail, and feedback that provides explanations and suggestions, which fall more closely in line with concerns with arrangement than with invention. Of 99 graduate student respondents, 20 indicated a preference for feedback that pointed out concerns of content and development of ideas.

> *"The feedback that provided me with an audience perspective was the most valuable. By that, I am referring to the moments where my sections lacked clarity or were difficult to read and the writing tutor brought this to my attention. I often feel like I become so close to my work that I understand what it is saying even if it is unclear to a reader."*

"Feedback was most useful when it was in detailed comments, often explaining the reader's reaction to material I had written, so that I had context to understand how my audience was responding to my work and therefore ways I might be able to hone or focus my writing more appropriately."

"Feedback on the clarity of the point I am making. This feedback helps me to make sure the point I am trying to make is getting across."

11 graduate student respondents indicated a preference for feedback that pointed out the need for inclusion of further detail or the need to delete included detail.

"The most useful feedback was feedback regarding the content of the paper. I feel comfortable with my writing skills, but I definitely appreciated it when people would be like 'this is too much detail, cut it down' or 'you need to provide more context'."

"Filling in gaps that I may have the information in my head, but I didn't communicate in my writing."

"I most appreciated feedback about what was expected and what information I needed to take out. For the first, as a grad student, I'm still learning the expectations of the field, and I need my advisor to guide me there. For the second, I may think something is important, but others may not, and I don't want a lot of extra ideas and words to weigh my reader down."

10 graduate student respondents indicated a preference for explanations about the reader's concerns and their suggestions for addressing them.

"Feedback that offers a solution/suggestion is far more useful than feedback that simply points out a problem."

"I'm grateful for detailed feedback. I get very frustrated when someone recommends 'general feedback' with little direction for what they want. For example, when someone just says that a block of text needs to be reduced by 30%, I don't know which parts they think are unimportant."

"Feedback that gave me options to strengthen something and I was able to make a decision. I felt more autonomy over the final product."

No graduate student respondents indicated preferring feedback that specifically addressed concerns of invention. Their indicated feedback preferences actually show concerns with style, delivery, and arrangement – concerns that were identified in the responses of those who provide them writing support, i.e., their advisors and writing center practitioners. Thus, perhaps graduate student writers only perceive their greatest struggles to be getting started, when in reality their struggles are more dispersed throughout the entire engagement with the extended writing project.

This bigger picture of graduate student writers' struggles can be seen by studying when writing support most commonly occurs. Graduate advisor respondents and writing center practitioner respondents both indicated they generally work more with graduate student writers during the stages of writing most concerned with style, arrangement, and delivery, not with those concerned primarily with invention. Graduate advisor respondents indicated working more closely with graduate student writers during the early and late stages of the extended writing process, and writing center respondents indicated working more with graduate student writers during the later stages, when development of ideas and content are the most concentrated. (See figure 20.) 58 advisors indicated working closely with graduate writers during early drafts of the document, 57 during the final stages of the project, and 54 during the development of the research questions.

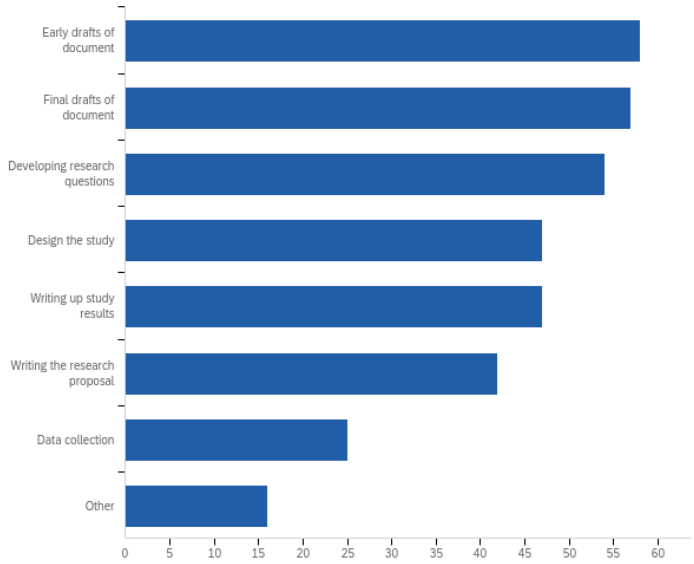

Figure 20: Responses to advisor survey question 15, when advisors work closely with grad writers

Graduate advisors wrote:

> *"Choosing an appropriate writing style and tone for the dissertation and for professional writing often is very difficult. Some struggle not to include their preferences and opinions throughout the writing rather than appropriately including that, with references, for concluding sections."*

> *"[A] major issue when it comes to writing theses and dissertations is that students struggle with sustaining a larger argument across multiple chapters – it's a new skill for them and very challenging."*

Writing center practitioner respondents indicated working more closely with graduate student writers at the later stages of the extended writing project. Concerns of clarity, organization, and revising are often addressed in these later stages and are not typically concerns of invention. Writing center respondents wrote:

> *"Typically, graduate students will request assistance once their long-term project is already in its final stages. . . It is not often that I work with graduate students on their long-term projects for an extended period because they only want their final product checked."*

> *"There may also be communication issues, often exacerbated by language barriers, on highly nuanced writing. Grad students are also under a lot of pressure to work quickly, which is the biggest barrier to helping them improve their writing. Often, they work so quickly they cannot thoughtfully revise or faithfully account for the feedback they have received."*

The data from graduate advisor and writing center practitioner surveys suggest that further inquiry into this question of the disconnect between what graduate student writers see as their moments of greatest struggle and what those who support them see as their greatest struggles is needed. Perhaps what graduate writers are interpreting as a problem of simply getting started is truly a matter of not knowing how to handle questions of style, arrangement, and delivery. Perhaps they see their greatest struggle as getting started due to the difficulty that awaits them. Graduate student respondents wrote,

> *"WRITING IS HARD. It's hard to let yourself just write and not judge too much on initial drafts. The toughest thing about writing a dissertation is telling yourself to stop reading/researching and just WRITE."*

> *"Writing is just hard, especially when you have the personality that strives for a 'perfect' draft. So much time can be spent on revising and changing up sections in the draft that have already been written, and the continued revision takes time away from new sections that could be written. It can be hard to overcome that and make strides in the project."*

Thus, it is likely that there is more to the graduate student respondents' original indications of struggles with making themselves write, and more to graduate advisors' and writing center practitioners' indications that graduate student writers' greatest struggles involve aspects of design and arrangement. This is an important line of inquiry that cannot be answered by this set of data; however, future research could spend more time discovering the rationales behind the disconnect of what graduate student writers see as their major concerns and what those who provide them support.

Assumption vs Reality: Distorted Views of the Other

Because of the amount and intensity of the level and kind of writing graduate student writers engage in, it might be expected that they would be seeking out writing assistance wherever they can find it. Also, due to the workload many advisors are operating under, it might be expected that graduate advisors are recommending graduate student writers seek out other avenues of writing support to supplement what they can provide. However, survey results indicate graduate student writers are not using the one campus service devoted entirely to writing, the campus writing center. The data show that graduate student writers and their advisors generally believe writing center services are geared toward the needs and experiences of the undergraduate student population. Unfortunately, they don't appear to be incorrect in this assumption. 75% of all graduate student writer survey respondents, 119 graduate students, indicated having never used writing center services for their graduate writing projects. 43 graduate student respondents indicated feeling the writing center was ill-equipped to work with them. (See figure 21.)

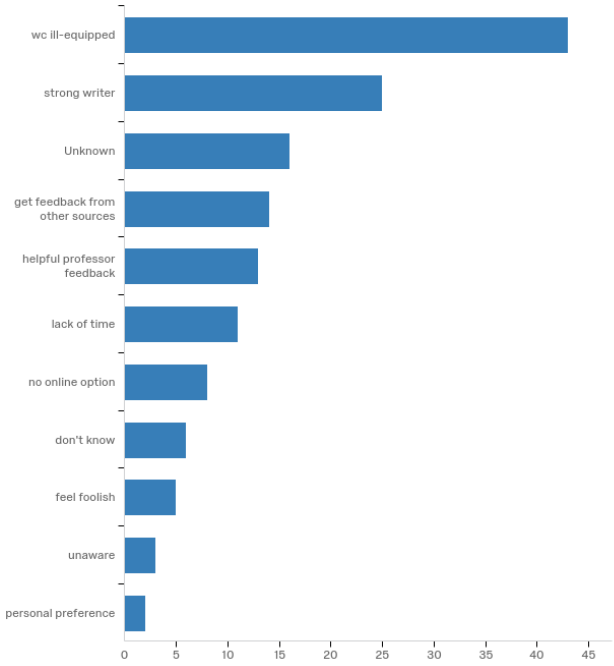

Figure 21: Response to graduate writer survey question 18, why they don't use writing centers

Graduate student writers responded:

> *"I don't feel like I would get much benefit from the Writing Center because the tutors are geared for people getting their bachelor's and associates degrees."*

> *"In my college, the writing center staffs are mostly undergrad students. My colleagues have told me that they didn't get much useful feedback there, so I haven't bothered to go there."*

> *"I feel that for a PhD dissertation I need disciplinary experts to get feedback from in terms of content and disciplinary conventions. Since I am confident in my general writing abilities, I feel I don't need the writing center for help with lower- or higher-order writing concerns."*

> *"I work at a different campus than my program. My work campus does not have a strong grad population in the humanities. The WC is almost entirely staffed by undergraduates many of whom are or have been my students. I am pretty humble, but not that able to get over myself."*

Advisors also indicated a belief that writing centers are meant primarily for undergraduate students. Only 39 graduate advisor respondents indicated that they encourage their graduate student writers to use the writing center services. Graduate advisors responded:

> *"It is primarily for undergraduate students; tutors typically lack the technical language to help engineering graduate students understand their audience and write to that audience."*

> *"Provision is designed for undergrad composition courses, but they will help grads with assignments. They struggle to provide support for research-based work that needs support. This is a weakness of our writing center."*

> *"I'm not very familiar with it, but others have told me that our Writing Center is most appropriate for basic composition, like undergraduate level general writing projects, but unable to provide scientific writing support at the graduate level. I would consider sending students for whom English is not their first language to the Writing Center."*

It is obvious from the data that the most commonly held view of writing centers is that they are meant primarily for undergraduate students; this will be of little surprise to those in the Writing Center field. What is important to note, however, is that this view would necessarily keep graduate advisors from recommending such services to their graduate student writers as it would follow that tutors in the writing center would not have the training, knowledge, or understanding of graduate-level work to provide meaningful assistance.

What was unexpected was that the results from the writing center practitioner survey supported such assumptions. It appears that writing centers are indeed primarily equipped to assist undergraduate student writers. 64% of writing center respondents indicated their center works primarily with undergraduate writers, 16% indicated their centers primarily work with graduate writers, and 21% indicated an equal focus on undergraduate and graduate writers. These findings then support those feelings identified by graduate writers and their advisors. Campus writing centers are more than likely focused primarily on assisting undergraduate student writers, who have smaller and less intense writing projects, and undergraduate tutors are likely not trained on how to successfully assist graduate student writers with the unique needs of extended writing projects. Again, the data supports such assumptions. 58% of writing center tutor respondents indicated not having received training specifically aimed at working with graduate writers, and 63% of administrator respondents indicated not providing training specifically aimed at working with graduate writers. This data is a result of the pervasive line of argument in the writing center field that what works for undergraduate writers works, unchanged, for graduate writers, as well. While this may be true on some level, if the majority of graduate writers and their advisors have the perception that their writing centers are not prepared to provide the assistance needed, it is unhelpful for writing center practitioners to dig in their heels and refuse to change. With or without training, 95% of writing center respondents indicated they did feel comfortable working with graduate writers. However, it must be noted that of the 102 respondents, 33% indicated their role was

that of Director (or similar title), and 52 respondents indicated either being in the process of a doctoral degree or having completed a doctoral degree. 38 respondents indicated either being in the process of a master's degree or having already completed a master's degree. Only 20 respondents were either in the process of completing or had already completed a bachelor's degree. Thus, the respondents for this survey weighed heavily toward writing center practitioners with personal experience with graduate-level writing projects.

Included in the data from the graduate student writer and graduate advisor surveys is the belief that not only are writing centers geared toward undergraduate student writers, but they are also of more benefit to some fields than to others. Graduate students responded:

> *"I don't think they can help me. They do not know anything about my field."*

> *"Those in the writing center typically have no idea how to do composition and linguistics research, as the only graduate level writing in which they are trained is writing for literature courses. They also have little/no training in rhetoric and composition, so they rarely have the ability to explain any tacit knowledge they have about writing when revising my drafts."*

> *"Science writing is also very specialized and contextual, so I find it easier to get input from fellow scientists."*

Graduate advisors also indicated a belief that writing center practitioners are of more help to some than to others. Of the 16 comments in which advisors specifically mention who the writing center can assist, there were 8 mentions of what writing centers are NOT able to assist with. These comments typically revolve around the idea that a writing center staffed by undergraduate student writers is unable to help with graduate-level concerns or that the writing center is seen as a space where general writing assistance can be found but anything related to genre- or field-specific help cannot be found there.

> *"Tutors typically lack the technical language to help engineering graduate students understand their audience and write to that audience."*

"They struggle to provide support for research-based work that needs support. This is a weakness of our writing center."

"The other tutors are not experienced in giving feedback on doctoral-level writing, especially in STEM disciplines."

Of the 39 graduate student respondents who indicated that they had at some point taken their extended writing projects to the writing center, 7 left comments that mentioned a lack of usefulness due to the tutor's lack of field or subject knowledge. One graduate student wrote, "Sometimes, the lack of specialized knowledge can present challenges in terms of being able to get feedback on additional sources or counterarguments to the theories I deploy."

Again, the results of the writing center practitioner survey support these assumptions. 71% of writing center respondents indicated their own field of study as being located in the humanities, which in this case includes writing studies, language studies, cultural studies, literature studies, applied linguistic studies, philosophy, and literacy studies. (See figure 22.). With such a heavy bias toward experience and expertise in humanities fields and so few with experience and expertise in other fields, it is understandable that graduate student writers and their advisors would not see writing centers as places where field-specific assistance could be available.

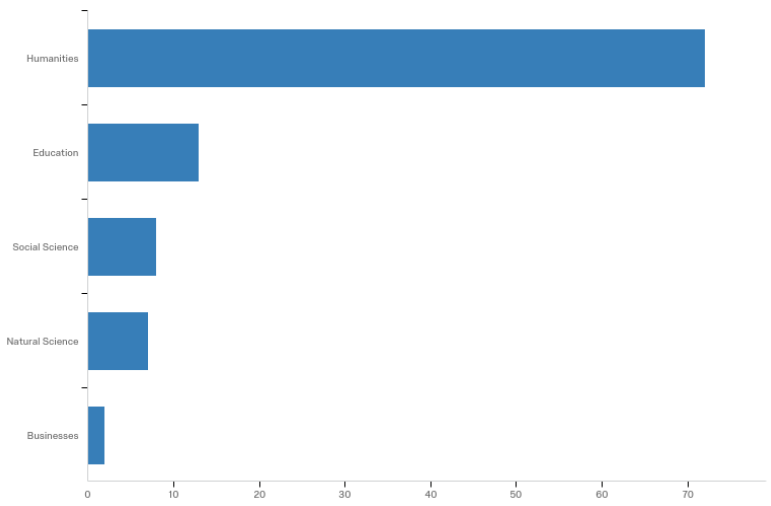

Figure 22: Response to writing center survey question 2, practitioners' field of study

In an environment meant to help with a wide swath of disciplines, it is not always possible to provide subject-specific assistance to all writers. There are, however, writing center practitioners who do see the value in providing writing assistance from those who have advanced writing experience or knowledge of the writing of a field. This often takes the guise of other graduate student writers or professional tutors who hold advanced degrees themselves. However, it is sometimes also advanced undergraduate students who have been trained to work with the needs of the extended writing project. Writing center participants responded:

> *"I think that any student is capable of tutoring a graduate student, but graduate students with long writing assignments deserve more than a tutorial that is designed for 'any student.'"*

> *"Only I (as the director) work with graduate writers: my staff of consultants is made up of undergraduates, so they consult with only other undergraduates."*

> *"I strongly believe that we as writing centers need to provide professional staff for graduate writers when possible. They can benefit from peer tutors, of course, but a professional staff member with a terminal degree can supplement that in important ways. These staff members can coach students through the thesis/dissertation writing process, provide perspective and advice, and help with the high-stakes genres that peer tutors might be less familiar with, such as journal articles, grant applications, and academic job applications."*

"Generally, graduate writers are specifically paired with graduate tutors on staff."

There are, obviously, those graduate student writers who do use the services offered by their campus writing centers, and they do find them beneficial. The top two reasons these graduate student respondents found the writing center helpful are the benefits of a having a non-expert perspective and having the opportunity to talk through their ideas with another person. (See table 1.) Graduate student writers found most helpful the feedback and questions provided by someone looking over their work who was a nonexpert. Graduate students responded:

"Getting feedback from a curious reader who may not be familiar with the details of my work helps me to gauge how clear and accessible my ideas are to others."

"I love the opportunity to talk about my work with someone else, especially someone who is less familiar with the topic. I have a standing appointment with the same consultant for the entire semester, and it is really a useful experience. Having a writing center consultant who isn't in my main area of study helps me to explain my ideas more clearly, and my particular consultant is great at explaining what he thinks I've said and helping me figure out how to put that into the writing."

"Having another perspective on my writing as well as that focused time dedicated to talking about my writing and revising it. It's extremely beneficial."

Graduate student writers also found helpful the fact that they could talk through their ideas with someone for a dedicated amount of time. They responded:

"I also appreciate being able to have a safe space to talk through ideas with colleagues that I am not always comfortable discussing with my dissertation committee members."

"In my experience, only prewriting activities have felt appropriate for graduate-level writing center use. Love brainstorming and talking through ideas, organization, research design, etc."

"It helps me the most in terms of talking through ideas. Getting to describe what my data revealed, what I had written so far, and then discussing ways to better understand and incorporate my data and analysis made my writing process much easier, especially when I got to a chapter I was particularly struggling with."

Aside from these benefits, what is obvious from the data is that few graduate student writers seek assistance from writing centers for genre- or field-specific concerns. Most visit for the ability to talk about and test their work on an audience. (See table 1.)

CODE	NUMBER OF RESPONSES CODED AS SUCH	PERCENTAGE OF RESPONSES CODED AS SUCH
Non-Expert Audience	13	35%
Talk	11	30%
Program/Field Knowledge	5	14%
LOCs	3	8%
Accountability	3	8%

Table 1: Response to graduate writer survey question 19, benefits of using writing center services

Graduate advisors also acknowledge positives to some of the programming offered by their campus writing centers. Though, when these positives are mentioned, they are often mentioned in conjunction with services designed especially for graduate students. Graduate advisors responded:

"We have a new-ish graduate writing initiative in our WC. And one of the most important things they've done for my students is hosting writing retreats (one-day and multi-day) at the end of the semester when students are trying to finish seminar papers or hit deadlines for submitting chapters. They have also done retreats over spring break or at the start of summer. Students have really loved those."

"There are multiple WCs on our campus. I run our Writing Support Services in our grad school of education."

"We have one GA [graduate assistant] writing tutor whose major is English whom we train to help other grad students across disciplines. Sometimes we have funding for two GA tutors. As director, I also participate in 'Dissertation Dive-ins,' which are virtual meetings with 4 to 5 grad

students in various stages of the writing process. It works like a support group where everyone provides feedback and I provide structure and feedback."

The disconnect being highlighted here is between the writing center's view of itself and the other two groups' view of the writing center. Because the writing center motto promotes an essential belief in a one-size-fits-all model of writing support, graduate student writers and their advisors may be justified in their beliefs that writing centers are not able to provide the assistance needed at the graduate level or in fields dissimilar to the fields of those who work there. With such a heavy bias toward experience and expertise in humanities fields and so few practitioners with experience and expertise in other fields, it is understandable that graduate student writers and graduate advisors would not see writing centers as places where field-specific assistance is available. It is apparent that the divide between the writing center credo that they can help any writer, at any stage, with any writing project and a fuller understanding of those skills and requirements that are genre- or discipline-specific is a great hurdle to overcome for centers wanting to provide more support to graduate student writers. However, not all writing center practitioners adhere strictly to the one-size-fits-all credo. Many do recognize some of the unique concerns of graduate student writers and do work to address those in practices beyond the individual tutoring session. Writing center practitioners responded:

"I found providing writing retreats or writing camps with some structured time for group discussion about progress and problems, self-reflection (by the student writers) on daily or longer-term writing goals and on their own writing process was very helpful and also greatly appreciated."

"Something we practice at our writing center is having a read-ahead hour before meeting with a graduate student working on a thesis/dissertation/research article for publication. In other words, the writer sends their work to us, a consultant reads the work creating comments, and then both of them meet to discuss comments."

"Each consultant usually sticks with the same grad students throughout the duration of their longer projects (thesis, dissertation, etc.) so that the grad student does not need to re-explain the project every time."

"In previous institutions I've worked at . . . we've had special programs for graduate writers in the Writing Center that I helped coordinate: an interdisciplinary writing studio for grad students working on their theses, weekly quiet writing time just for grad students, and a (mini) dissertation/thesis 'boot camp.'"

What is of interest here is that writing center practitioners also express beliefs and assumptions about graduate student writers and graduate advisors. Writing center practitioners responded:

"PhD students in particular are reluctant to share their struggles with writing with their supervisors, as they fear being thought incompetent."

"We find that faculty and dissertation chair expectations are often unclear which causes the student to procrastinate or stress about the project. The majority of my work as the Director of the writing center, in terms of my work with Masters and PhD students, is focused at the chairs and advisers who give bad feedback (if any at all) and are unhelpful when it comes to the writing aspect of the project. Most chairs and advisers are well versed in the research methods, but struggle directing good writing."

"Many of our graduate writers come in with a lot of anxiousness around citation b/c at the graduate level, the faculty seem to prioritize that when they talk about writing. (Much as faculty for undergrads focus on grammar b/c they don't have the training or lexicon for talking about writing processes rhetorically.)"

"We work with many thesis/dissertation students who say their advisors aren't very responsive or supportive, so we become quasi-advisors sometimes."

This illustrates the fact that distorted views of the work and experiences of others are suffered by all three groups. No one group has a monopoly on misunderstanding.

This data point to the argument that there are serious disconnects between writing centers and graduate advisors. There appears to be no love lost between these two groups. While in previous sections, it became obvious that graduate advisors were often unaware of or dismissive of the help available in the writing center, in this section it becomes clear that writing center practitioners demonstrate a belief that advisors often do not live up their end of the student/advisor relationship. As seen above, one writing center respondent even mentions feeling that the writing center often serves as a "quasi-advisor" to graduate student writers. This mutual misunderstanding is an important disconnect highlighted by the results of this project. Graduate advisors are a crucial element to a graduate student writer's successful completion of an extended writing project, and the inability for the writing center and graduate advisors to work collaboratively to assist graduate writers toward that goal ends up not only affecting the writer, but also the programs and the universities. This disconnect could be a major reason more graduate student writers do not seek help from the writing center, which could be causing them to extend their time in graduate school or even to not complete their degrees. These extensions and non-completions affect the reputation of the programs and the schools that house them. Thus, it is to everyone's benefit if graduate advisors and writing centers learn to work together to help graduate writers successfully and healthily navigate their extended writing projects.

Ivory Tower vs Tangled Village: Disrupting the Solo Act

Making it successfully through an extended writing process is not a solo endeavor. It takes a village to write a dissertation. According to the respondents of this survey, the importance of advisors, peer writing or accountability groups, and emotional support cannot be underrated. They are key aspects to the wellbeing of the writer and to the successful completion of the writing projects that are often the capstone of the graduate student experience. Graduate students responded:

> *"Surprisingly, I didn't have a hard time getting the writing done. I think a lot of this was owed to the fact that I wasn't embarrassed for my advisor to read my work and offer honest feedback. We have a good working relationship."*

"You cannot underestimate how much of an effect a graduate student's advisor can have on their writing. My advisor thinks that the only good writing style is hers. I think she writes very poorly . . . Yet, she still tries to nitpick my writing and make negative comments about it. Her doing so has caused me so much anxiety around my dissertation writing; I literally have had panic attacks after opening paper files. Advisors can really make or break the writing process."

"I have a weekly writing group where we share our writing and give feedback or simply sit there together and write. The members are all great students from my department, more or less in a similar stage, so we can share our experiences and tips."

"There needs to be more scholarly attention to writing groups. I participated in one with my dissertation chair and her other mentees. It was more of goal setting and accountability than a group where we read and commented on each other's drafts. If not for this writing group, I would probably not be graduating this year or gotten job offers."

Graduate student writers, however, were not the only group to discuss the importance of the advisor/writer relationship and the importance of forming writing groups. Advisors also discussed these as important aspects of the graduate student experience. Graduate advisors responded:

"As a discipline we need to focus more on developing practices & descriptions that make students feel safer with their advisors. In my discipline & with the outside students I've read & workshopped for, they all say they're afraid of their chairs."

"I believe graduate student writers would benefit from writing groups across disciplines. Many of our graduate programs are small, which means they lack the sort of cohorts found in larger programs. Interdisciplinary writing groups would counteract this problem and give students natural peers."

Building and maintaining successful working relationships with others can work to lessen the emotional toll the extended writing project can have on a graduate student.

> *"It is emotionally/psychologically difficult to deal with an extended project because it never feels like you fully complete anything. It lacks the satisfaction and motivation that comes from completing tasks and moving on, and it can wear on you after a while."*

Thus, it is imperative that the disconnects outlined here be tended to by all parties. Graduate student writers and those who offer them writing support, i.e., graduate advisors and writing centers, do not identify the same concerns to be overcome. Graduate advisors indicate a belief that graduate student writers struggle most with the acts of design and arrangement, writing centers demonstrated a focus on organizational concerns, but graduate student writers themselves identify struggling the most with the act of invention. The solution to this problem is two-fold. First, graduate student writers must actively seek out the assistance they feel they need. If they do not, they cannot truly expect to be provided that help. They need to put aside fears and feelings of inadequacy and explicitly ask for the help they feel they need. Second, graduate advisors and writing centers must work to provide assistance with graduate student writers' perceived needs and better explain or help graduate student writers identify other areas of concern. 50% of graduate student respondents indicated they had only been working on their extended writing project for 1-2 years, and 33% indicated having been working on theirs for less than 1 year. Thus, it may be that the struggle with invention is exaggerated because that is where so many of the graduate student respondents were at in their projects during the time they completed this survey and are, therefore, not yet aware of the struggles that await them as they make their way further into the project.

The second disconnect to address is that of the distorted views amongst the three groups about the work that is actually done by themselves and the others. Graduate student writers and graduate advisors generally see the writing center as a space designed for and dedicated to assisting undergraduate student writers with their shorter and more general writing projects and, therefore, as being of little help to graduate student writers. Though this belief may rankle the feelings of some in the

field of writing center studies, it is corroborated by the results of the writing center practitioners' own survey. This project has identified that many writing centers do, in fact, focus primarily on the needs and experiences of undergraduate student writers. This is not a negative aspect of writing centers, however. Undergraduate student writers need such spaces and such services dedicated to their success. The important point to take away from this particular finding is that this reality needs to be recognized and accepted as truth before true progress can be made in the direction of providing genuine, focused support for graduate student writers. As one respondent put it, "I think that any student is capable of tutoring a graduate student, but graduate students with long writing assignments deserve more than a tutorial that is designed for 'any student.'" This reality needs to be addressed and the blanket statement that one service and one set of training can really help any writer, at any level, at any stage of the process needs to be seriously reconsidered. Until the one size fits all motto is exorcised, strides cannot truly be made toward building programs and relationships that genuinely provide all students with the kind of writing support they need.

Because successful completion of an extended writing project is not a solo endeavor, it is imperative to mend fences between the groups that offer writing support to graduate student writers, i.e., graduate advisors and writing center practitioners. Because graduate student writers are experts-in-the-making, they need the help of others to show them the ropes. Though this finding is not new or surprising, it is important to continue to research and write about such aspects of the extended writing project because each incoming batch of graduate student writers and each new graduate faculty advisor may need to be made aware, or reminded as the case may be, of the difficult and lonely endeavor the graduate extended writing process can be. As a field, we must continue to develop and refine strategies that will help graduate student writers successfully complete their projects. Thus, I contend that the most important fissure to address is the disconnect between graduate advisors and writing center practitioners because it has the potential to do the greatest amount of damage. Building those

connections and understandings can only work in favor of the graduate student writer, and the health and success of the graduate student writer is success for the graduate advisor, the graduate program, and the university. I also contend that once the primary disconnect between writing centers and graduate advisors is on the repair, and as writing center practitioners begin to more openly accept the fact that one-size-fits-all is not always the best approach, the disconnects regarding graduate student writers asking for and receiving the help they most need will naturally begin to be addressed and can be focused on more fully by all parties. Ameliorating the evident disconnects between graduate advisors and writing center practitioners can also work to close the gap between the humanities-trained writing center practitioners and the science-focused fields, creating unprecedented multidisciplinary writing support. Once the lines of communication are open between graduate advisors and writing center practitioners, fruitful discussions can be had about the needs and expectations of writing in various fields and programs can be collaboratively to best address those needs.

Conclusion

The data found herein reveal that the two most important first steps toward creating and maintain productive support spaces for graduate student writers is to bridge the gap of distorted understandings between graduate advisors and writing center practitioners, and to address the needs of graduate student writers as they see them. Opening lines of communication between graduate advisors and writing center practitioners can begin with conversations about their shared understandings of the struggles of graduate student writers. The result that both graduate advisors and writing center practitioners identify arrangement concerns as a significant struggle for graduate student writers is one way the current gap between them can be bridged. This commonality can be used to start to break down the communication barriers that have clearly arisen between these two groups. It can be used as a way to approach and contend with the concerns graduate student writers perceive as being their primary struggle, the act of just getting started. Once graduate advisors and writing center practitioners

are working on the same side, they can tackle together the concerns of graduate writers and work to smooth out the rough edges of the struggles graduate student writers are not yet aware are just around the bend.

Chapter 5

Developing the Expert Through Graduate-Focused Writing Support

I think people really see writing as a separate process, you know. It's not, though. It's communication, and the bedrock of good communication is actually having something to communicate.

Cierra[2], Graduate Student Interview Participant

Since the publication of the first monograph from the Council of Graduate Schools in 2008, the study of the experiences, needs, and struggles of graduate student writers has been on the rise. However, there is still much to be learned from graduate students themselves, particularly regarding the relationship between what they say they do when they write and what they actually do. Thus, this project aimed to answer these two questions: 1) What are the writing experiences of graduate student writers? and 2) How do graduate student writers describe their writing experiences? To answer these questions, 16 graduate student writers who had attended one week of a four-week dissertation boot camp program during the summer of 2019 on the campus of a large, Mid-western, public university were observed writing for 30 minutes and then interviewed immediately after with a semi-structured interview method. The purpose of the observations was for the researcher to witness first-hand the composing practices of graduate student writers. Those observations were then used as the basis for individualized questions asked during the 45-minute follow-up interviews. The purpose of the interviews was to get the graduate student writers to elaborate on their reasons for the writing practices they

[2] All names used in this chapter are pseudonyms.

engaged in during the observation period and to articulate their beliefs about writing in general, their personal writing abilities, and writing support services available to them on their university campus. The data collected from those 16 graduate student writers led to the three interrelated arguments found in this chapter:

1. revision processes provide a lens through which to witness how graduate student writers fluctuate between moments of novice and moments of expert;
2. support for both writing and emotional needs are key aspects of the graduate student writer's experience; and
3. graduate student writers prefer feedback from similar others.

These three arguments work together to build the case that graduate student writers are best served by writing centers that can offer graduate-focused writing support provided by similar others, i.e., those who have completed or are also working on graduate-level extended writing projects. The data from the observations and interviews suggest that those who offer writing support to graduate student writers must also be able and willing to offer emotional support, and participants indicated a need to feel respected, understood, and supported by advisors. Graduate student participants also indicated that they found value in receiving writing support from similar others and are hesitant to seek out assistance from those they feel have not experienced the stakes inherent in graduate-level writing. Ultimately, if universities want to increase graduate student retention and completion, they must provide dedicated, graduate-focused writing support that meets graduate student writers where they are and that promotes their emotional well-being.

This chapter will provide a description of the study participants, including the number of participants and the fields from which participants hailed. It will then provide evidence for each of the three interrelated arguments regarding graduate student writers' existence in the liminal space between novice and expert, their need for writing and emotional support, and their desire to work with similar

others. From there, data from the interviews will support the argument that to increase retention and completion of those enrolled in graduate programs, universities must provide multiple layers of sustainable, graduate-focused writing support.

Description of Participants

Over the course of the four weeks of the summer dissertation bootcamp (SDBC) program, 16 graduate student attendees were observed and interviewed. A total of 75 minutes was spent with each participant: 30 spent silently observing and taking notes during their writing time, and 45 used for the post-observation interview. Each post-observation interview consisted of at least 12 questions, with more added based on the observations. All 16 participants were in the process of earning a doctoral degree; 9 were working on some aspect of their dissertation project; 4 were working on some aspect of their proposal for their dissertation project; and 3 were working on a project related to a future dissertation project, i.e., an article on which to be first author and use to apply for a grant, a project-in-lieu because the participant had not done a master's thesis, and an f31 grant to fund one year of dissertation work. Among the 16 participants, fields of study were divided relatively evenly, with 5 from a humanities field, 5 from an education field, 5 from a natural science field, and 1 from a social science field. All 16 participants are represented in the comments and experiences discussed within this chapter.

Revision Processes and the Liminal Space Between Student and Expert

Throughout the course of their graduate education, graduate students are being exposed to disciplinary enculturation. "[D]isciplinary enculturation is a complex, open achievement, situated in streams of interpenetrated activity" (Prior, 1994, p. 521). The disciplinary identity of the graduate student writer is constantly in flux; they are neither experts nor novices. Expertise is fluid. A discussion in a graduate seminar can see expertise shift among the members, from the advanced graduate student who has spent years studying a nuanced aspect of a subject, to the professor who has been longer in the field, to another graduate student who has just begun his graduate studies (Jacoby & Gonzales, 1991;

Prior, 1994; Reid et al., 2011). This shifting occurs depending on the topic, the context, and the members, themselves. The revision practices of graduate student writers can provide a lens through which to witness these fluctuations in action. For example, one graduate student participant, Lucy, said of the work she was doing at the time of this study, “My thought process there is if I should have to run the analyses again or make any sort of changes . . . I'm writing down the exact steps that I've taken so that I can come back to those.” Lucy’s observation and interview session came immediately after a visit she had with a member of her dissertation committee who was helping her use data analysis software to analyze her data. Thus, her expressed thoughts on the process were coming from a place of learner, of disciplinary novice. She was aware that she may have made an error or that some other, later process may require her to run her data analysis again, and she wanted to be able to retrace her steps. However, such a sophisticated understanding of the process of writing also demonstrates an expert approach. Lucy’s comment demonstrates an understanding that though it may not be desirable, it is possible that she would have to retrace her steps, so she has kept track of them, a practice even disciplinary experts engage in.

Nevertheless, studying revision practices as a search for the rules for novices and rules for experts is not going to offer much insight into a practice that is not so much about achieving expertness but of progressively internalizing practices that are necessary for successful completion of the extended writing project and entrance into the field (Prior, 1994). Therefore, approaching a study of the revision practices of graduate student writers requires an ability to identify moments that suggest a student or learner practice and moments that suggest an expert or professional practice. In Nancy Sommers’ influential article on the revision strategies of student and experienced writers, she identifies trends in the revision processes of student writers and of more experienced writers. Generally, Sommers found student writers’ revision processes were grounded more in the fine details of that piece of writing, and

experienced writers frame their revision work in larger contextualization concerns, concerns such as how to better frame their arguments or how to situate their work in the field.

Of student writers, Sommers argues, "[S]tudents place a symbolic importance on their selection and rejection of words as the determiners of success or failure for their compositions" (Sommers, 1980, p. 381). This focus on the importance of finding the precise word was evident in some comments made by participants in this dissertation study. Lauren commented,

> "I want to be as precise as possible. I don't know if it's because of my creative writing background in poetry and wanting to have the best word for the job, but … It's kind of hard to describe, but it's a precision thing. . . I have a little bit of a perfectionist streak. So even before showing [my advisor] or anybody else what I'm working on, I want to make sure that it's beyond a rough draft."

Comments such as this highlight how graduate student writers occupy the learner space. The focus on the perfect word choice as the element that pushes it "beyond a rough draft" is an indication that this participant is not in this moment focused on "seeing" the larger picture of her argument. Instead of commenting on a desire to see her project holistically, Lauren's comment rests on a belief that writing is not done until it is perfect. Sommers (1980) might argue that such an approach would land Lauren squarely on the student side of the spectrum and that an experienced writer would not be as concerned with perfection but would focus on more comprehensive aspects of the project.

Of experienced writers Sommers (1980) says, they "describe their primary objective when revising as finding the form or shape of their argument. Although the metaphors vary, the experienced writers often use structural expressions such as 'finding a framework,' 'a pattern,' or 'a design' for their argument" (p. 384). The participants in this dissertation project did not describe such a stage of revision. None mentioned building a framework, pattern, or design for their own arguments. However, they did indicate awareness of their projects as existing beyond the realm of the dissertation and within an

academic discourse. They mentioned how their data informed their arguments and how their work would contribute to the field. Thus, though they did not seem to reach Sommers's description of expert, they did demonstrate an understanding of their writing as being meaningful beyond themselves. Travis said, "Now, I have to make sense of my findings in terms of my hypotheses, the ones that were confirmed and the ones that were not confirmed and relate those findings back to the literature to try to see my contribution." Travis's comment about relating his findings back to his original hypotheses and to the work that has already been done in the field illustrates how he identifies himself as being beyond merely student and entering the realm of expert, which is occupied by other experts.

Yet, participant comments also demonstrated moments when they exhibited behaviors predominantly associated with student writers. One graduate student writer, for example, was unable to move past a significant part of her extended writing project for months. That writer, Hannah, said,

> "My chapter one . . . was very difficult for me because my topic includes three main topics in my field of study, and my advisors kept talking about 'You need to funnel. You need to funnel.' But even they couldn't give me a funnel. So, for a good six, seven months, I had no funnel, so I couldn't go anywhere with my chapter one, and I think that was super difficult. Then, finally, they said, 'Well, just do some transition sentences,' and I was like, 'Ok, I'm not exactly sure what you mean by that.' That's when I first went to the tutoring and the tutoring really did help me get to proposal."

This comment highlights Hannah's inability in that moment to view her writing holistically enough to see how each of the pieces fit together to make one cohesive argument. Thus, her learner identity moved to the forefront, and she sought out the help of a similar other in the form of a graduate student tutor from the campus writing center. Once she received that assistance, she was able to move past her roadblock to a successful proposal project.

Graduate student writers fluctuate between moments of demonstrating a learner approach to revision to moments of demonstrating an expert approach. Sommers (1980) argues that student writers have "an inability to 'see' revision as a process: the ability to 're-view' their work again, as it were, with different eyes, and to start over" (1980, p. 382). Such a description does not fit the graduate student participants in this study. As is evident from the comments shared thus far, the graduate student participants in this dissertation study do see revision as a process. All study participants mentioned the value of crafting and revising multiple drafts. Some discussed their own processes of beginning with non-stop, unencumbered writing, just letting what comes to their heads out onto the paper before returning to cut, revise, and reorganize as needed. Athena remarked, "My advisor calls it 'word vomit,' where you just kind of pour everything out. This will also help with writing another publication that I'm working on too, so it's just the general like spit everything out I know about serotonin receptors so that I can take pieces-parts to other writings." Athena's comment exhibits an understanding that revision will take multiple forms and will be engaged in at different stages of the process. She recognizes that she has a lot to say about the topic, and her first order of business to get that knowledge out of her head and onto the page. Once that is done, she plans to revisit the writing and to cut it up as necessary, depending on the writing project for which she will be using it. However, at the same time Athena is demonstrating what would be considered expert revision behavior, she is also relying on the wisdom and guidance of another expert, her advisor. Her comment opened with "my advisor calls it word vomit," providing credibility to her approach through the ethos of her advisor.

Graduate student participants mentioned being able to go back through their writing, even complete drafts of their writing, and deleting whole chunks if they felt it was necessary. Cierra said, "Almost nothing from my original draft ended up in my final copy. I'm really big on deleting whole swaths of text. . . I have multiple trash files, so I'm not deleting it forever. If I want to go back, I can, but I like to just get things out because a lot of times it's just helping me think about things." Her willingness

and ability to re-see, rethink, and revise what she had created reveals an expert approach to revision because it demonstrates an ability to see the larger arc of the work. She is not getting caught up in the finer details, nor is she getting stuck in one part of the process, unable to move past it. Another participant who approached revision as an expert was Jane. She mentioned revision as a practice she engages in as she composes. Jane said,

> "I sort of edit and write at the same time. I moved things around, found better parts for them, or got rid of content, which I always like doing. It's like cutting out things that I think aren't as useful and may bog me down when I don't need to be or make the paper a little too in the weeds when it doesn't have to be. So, I like taking out some parts."

In this comment, Jane expresses enjoyment in the revision process. She "like[s] taking out some parts" because she believes it works to build a better piece of writing. This, too, is an example of an expert approach to writing. Though she is not using metaphors of framing as Sommers (1980) would expect, she is demonstrating a vision of her piece of writing as a whole, and if sections of writing need to move or be removed, she is happy to make the changes.

Other participants in this dissertation project alluded to the fact that they engage in different kinds of revision processes at different stages of the writing process, demonstrating another example of an expert approach to revision. Renée stated, "When I get closer to submitting something, I'm like 'okay this needs to make sense.' And I have to really watch the wording I'm using and my grammar and all of that stuff." Renée's comment demonstrates a belief that revision toward the later stages of a piece of writing must take the audience into account, and the focus of that revision must be on crafting a piece that the audience can understand. Athena also indicated a belief that revisions strategies are determined by the ultimate purpose of the writing. She argued,

> "I will start polishing it for whatever purposes I want to work on. If it's going to be for my f31 grant, then I'll obviously have to get it shrunken down a lot because they have page limits. So,

then it's more polishing to only include what is absolutely necessary. But if I'm moving it into a publication, sometimes that involves adding more sentences to connect things and stuff. It just depends on what it's going to be used for."

This comment demonstrates Athena's understanding of how audience and purpose play an important role in approaches to revision. It also illustrates an expert approach to revision because she is able to envision her writing doing work in the world and plans to revise accordingly. For the particular project she was working on at the time, part of it was going to do the work of earning her an f31 grant from the National Institute of Health to fund her last year of graduate school, and part of it was going to be turned into a publication needed to help her begin to build the publication record necessary if one wants to work in academia. Cierra also talked about revision practices related to different stages of the process. She said, "So, the editing, I don't see it as a separate process while I'm doing this. At the end it is. I mean, at the end when you're going through and trying to make sure that you don't have any typos or anything, then yeah, but as it is, I also use it to just keep me kind of in the space." Here, Cierra mentions revisions that occur throughout her composing processing and revisions that occur toward the end of her composing processes. While she composes, she engages in quick edits, the purpose for which is to help her remain engaged with the text. Toward the end of her composing processes, she sees revision as a separate process, and the purpose of revision at this stage is to catch typos and grammar issues. This understanding of revision not as one kind of activity but as varying depending upon the stage in the process and the task at hand is the mark of a sophisticated writer.

The rate at which graduate student writers attain this level of professional, writerly sophistication does, of course, vary depending on a variety of factors, just a few of which are the student's previous experiences, future goals, and current contexts. "One-way stories of assimilation into the center of a community and equally stereotyped tales of resistance belie the complexity of enculturation as practices situated within local relationships and contexts" (Prior, 1995, p. 320).

Enculturation, becoming expert, is a two-way street. Not only does the institutionally recognized expert exert their academic will onto the graduate student writer, but the graduate student exerts their own will in return. Thus, as the data from my own study demonstrate, graduate student writers never fully exist in one space or the other; their authority, their expertise is constantly in flux depending on context and situation. Furthermore, words are not neutral. They come with their own baggage, identifying their user as having or perhaps lacking certain social and/or academic affiliations (Prior, 1995). Graduate students may not always want to openly and without resistance adopt the formal jargon of the field. They may not fully identify with the identity of expert as of yet. Other concerns may keep them from identifying with the academic jargon. They, therefore, avoid using it in their own writing, making them appear more as student than as expert. Thus, though revision practices provide a lens through which to view when and how graduate student writers move between novice and expert identities, such work is not bias-free and must be recognized as such.

Writing and Emotional Support as Key Elements of the Graduate Student Experience

Key among graduate student participants was their attitudes toward their advisors. Research has shown that the writer-advisor relationship is significant in the graduate student experience (González-Ocampo & Castelló, 2018; Odena & Burgess, 2017). This research has pointed to the need for advisors to be mindful of the interpersonal aspect of the relationship and to the nature of the feedback provided (Murphy, Bain, & Conrad, 2007). In this dissertation project, graduate student participants spoke positively of their own relationship with their advisors but expressed discontent with the feedback they were receiving. These notions of contentment or discontent stemmed from feelings of respect, understanding, and support, either from advisors or from similar others. Of his working relationship with his advisor, Kyle said,

> “She's great. I switched to her recently, and it's been an unbelievable transition. She and I just really gelled. We always had, and it was kind of one of those things we were like, ‘We probably

should have been linked before, but we made it here anyway.' She's been great. The last two months I've really made a lot of strides. Two or three months ago wasn't looking very good, but now I'm going to defend the prospectus in late July, so lots of strides. She's been great."

Kyle and his advisor had established a working relationship that he respected and appreciated. He mentioned their ability to work well together and that his advisor had helped him progress through his dissertation in a way that he was unable to previously. This ability to communicate in a mutually respected and understandable fashion is important in the writer-advisor relationship. As is seen in Kyle's comment, such a relationship can help a graduate student writer progress through the extended writing project more quickly and with increased success. Jillian also remarked on her relationship with her advisor and their ability to communicate easily with one another. "We have very similar writing styles, which is kind of nice. It helps us be able to communicate. She understands what I'm saying fairly easily. She and I have written together before, so that's very helpful." The key to their success is their ability to communicate with each other in a way that both can understand and respect.

Evidence of a breakdown in the writer-advisor relationship was most evident in graduate student frustrations with their advisors' feedback. They were not receiving the kind of feedback they wanted from their advisors. Two complaints were that feedback was not invasive enough or it did not indicate to the graduate student writer that the advisor had spent time reading the draft. One participant felt like her feedback from her advisor works the draft in circles until it ends up back where it started. Sarah said,

"I have to first write for [my advisor] to give comments, and for it to be improved multiple times. Sometimes, I feel like I write something or not write something, and then she will tell me to remove it or add something, and then two weeks later completely do the same thing that I started with, you know, so it's frustrating. But I think that's a process that everyone goes

through, like every student goes through it with their [advisor]. It's not something that's just specific to me."

Sarah complains that her drafts go through multiple revisions only to end up back where they originally started. Perhaps what is happening here is a matter of Sarah and her advisor enculturating each other (Prior, 1995, pp. 311-318). Sarah influences her advisor, her advisor influences Sarah, and they end up in a place that Sarah finds familiar and interprets it as being back where they started. However, Sarah's frustrations could also stem from a lack of understanding of the purpose of the particular writing project, as Renée remarks show in her comment;

> "I did have a session with my advisor. I had turned in this proposal, part of it, just a draft of it, and then she called me in and said we need to work on your writing. I said, 'okay.' So, we sat down, and then she had me do section by section and change each section. I'm not really sure what the purpose of the exercise was, still. I think she wanted me to change it more towards an article that we would submit, but it's a non-thesis project, and it was my understanding that, in a non-thesis project that . . . you really need to put everything in to prove that you have done the research, and you have looked into the literature, and you have done exhaustive work on it, and write so that you can show your understanding. I did a couple sections, and then she gave up on it. So, I don't know what we were improving in my writing."

According to this comment by Renée, she and her advisor are having difficulty communicating understandings of purpose to each other. Renée indicates her advisor had a concern about her writing when she mentioned her advisor remarking that they needed to "work on [her] writing." Renée, however, also expresses confusion about the purpose of the writing she was being asked to do and the purpose of the revision exercise. She remarked, "I don't know what we were improving in my writing." It was also unclear to her why they needed to do this kind of work on a draft. She stressed the fact that what she had submitted was just "part of it, just a draft of it." From a later comment made by Renée, it

does not appear that she and her advisor had been successful in clearing up their misunderstandings. Renée commented,

> "I do have a section in one of my papers that I'm writing right now that I'm having trouble getting past because the feedback on it was that in the scientific sense you're a nobody, and so you have to cite this. No, I understand that. . . Stuff like that, I delete. I understand that scientifically I'm a nobody. I wasn't planning on not citing; I just didn't have the citation in right now."

Renée expresses frustration over receiving feedback that she feels is unnecessary and a waste of time at this drafting stage. She said, "I understand that scientifically I'm a nobody. I wasn't planning on not citing; I just didn't have the citation in right now." This suggests that she did not see a reason to provide citations at the drafting stage, but her advisor did. It also suggests that she is looking for a different kind of feedback than what her advisor is providing, causing her to have "trouble getting past" this particular writing task. In their study of 25 advisors, Barnes and Austin (2009) also discovered that graduate student writers want more explicit feedback from their advisors. Participants of this study corroborate their conclusion.

Feedback frustration can be interpreted by the graduate student writer as a lack of care and effort on the part of the advisor. Not only are graduate student writers looking for clear communication and support with their writing needs, but they are also wanting their advisors to be responsive to their affective states of being. They want to know that their advisors are there to support their emotional needs as well (Murphy, Bain, & Conrad, 2007). Of her advisor, Rachel said, "She's very supportive and positive about everything, and she asks good questions. When I wasn't as engaged in [my extended writing project], I wasn't engaged at all. She's like, 'where are you?' . . . The structural equation model that scared me, she's like, 'no, you can do it.' . . . Yeah, it's a good relationship." Rachel's comment illustrates this need for advisor support to pair emotional and writing support. Rachel wants to feel like

her advisor is putting forth the time and effort to care about her success, and she is receiving it. Jane, on the other hand, does not feel like she is getting the emotional support she needs from her advisor. Jane said,

> "What I want in feedback is not necessarily what I'm getting. I haven't submitted to many people, but what I want is constructive criticism, and that is not necessarily what I get. . . It could be because the draft that I sent my professor last year was not complete, but [the feedback] was just a few questions about wording choices, and what I want is 'this does not make sense' or 'where's the content about this' and 'this should go up here.' I want it to be more invasive, and I want it to be more showing that they put time and effort into reading it."

Jane's comment is layered. On the surface, the misunderstanding is that the Jane is looking for a kind of feedback her advisor isn't providing. However, what she comes to by the end of her complaint is that she feels this dearth of feedback is a demonstration of a lack of effort by her advisor. She says, "I want it to be more showing that they put time and effort into reading it." One of the primary methods of communication between graduate student writers and their advisors is through the student's writing and the advisor's feedback. When there is a breakdown in this communication method or when one interlocutor feels the other is not as engaged in the conversation, animosity blossoms.

Not only did graduate student participants express a lack of faith in their advisors' inclinations to care, but they expressed a lack of faith that their university as a whole entity cares enough to provide the kind of time and attention they feel they need. This is a key component of Travis's frustration. He said,

> "I think the university will not pay people to help us become better writers. . . Their argument might be 'you've got an advisor,' but my advisor, like all advisors, is busy. So, I think there should be more availability of full-time professors to review drafts. I understand that that's supposed to be the advisor's job, but I think the advisor is harried. I mean, they're just so busy and they get

> tired and burnt out. . . I would like more feedback, but I'm not going to hold my breath for it because I know that [my advisor's] resources are strained. They're always asked to do more with less."

Like Jane's comment earlier, Travis's is also layered. He conveys frustration about not getting enough feedback from his advisor, about feeling like his advisor is incapable of devoting the desired time and energy to helping him, and about universities not finding value in providing the necessary support for students like him. When graduate students believe that neither their advisors nor their universities are invested in their success, it is not surprising that retention and completion are concerns.

Along with their advisors, graduate student writers also seek out feedback and academic companionship from others, both inside and outside of the academy. Participants expressed a tendency toward appreciating opportunities to share their writing with others and to receive feedback from them and for opportunities just to work near other graduate student writers working on similar projects. Participants in this dissertation study mentioned working with coworkers or lab mates, peers inside and outside of their programs, writing tutors, professors, co-authors, romantic partners or friends, and statistical or citation consultants. They also mentioned feeling motivated and rejuvenated after just spending a few hours writing in the same room as other graduate student writers. Participants mentioned requesting and receiving feedback in various environments and during various stages of the writing process, even when feedback was accompanied by hefty emotional baggage. Kyle argued, "To become a good writer, you have to be okay with constructive criticism. That's a big one. I think I learned that during my masters. I was like 'Why does everyone hate my writing? Is it really that bad?' It's okay. It's a good practice. They were just trying to help you even though sometimes you think it's not helpful." Kyle's comment explicitly highlights the emotional side of receiving feedback and attributes that emotion to personal interpretations of it. His comment also provides an argument that such an emotional response to feedback is common, but writers must be able to put those emotional responses

aside and use the feedback in productive ways. Kyle also said, “I like to give [my writing] to somebody who hasn't seen it or doesn't know anything about it just because they're completely removed from what I'm writing about and they'll catch things that my advisor or I wouldn't catch just because we've read it so many times.” Thus, even though Kyle is aware that with feedback can come unwanted negative emotions, he also recognizes the value in receiving that feedback and actively seeks it out. This approach was working in Kyle’s favor as at the time of his interview, he had just been offered a full-time teaching position and was on track to complete his dissertation and graduate in the upcoming spring semester.

For some participants, feedback was received in disciplinary writing courses or in collaborative writing projects. Participants found such environments to be beneficial to their growth as writers and experts. Of her required graduate-level writing course Rachel said,

> “My experience in that dissertation prep class was extremely helpful. . . We were sharing drafts with each other, and bouncing ideas off of each other, and turning in a purpose statement or something to the instructor, and then she would send it back with comments. So, throughout I was getting that feedback. . . Everybody was doing different things, and it gave me an opportunity to get better at explaining [my project], at knowing it.”

Rachel’s comment highlights how beneficial graduate student writers find feedback when it’s provided by both peers and professors, even if those peers are engaging is different kinds of extended writing projects. For her, the value was not only in the feedback she received but also in the repetitive practice she had explaining, clarifying, and defining her project. Such practices of repetition also appear in collaborative writing situations, when writers must make their ideas clear to one another in order for them to coalesce into one comprehensive piece. For example, Athena said, “My current lab mate [and I] are trying to write a letters paper for publication. This is the first experience I've had . . . trying to merge our writing together into one cohesive document. . . We're still at the word vomit stage and sharing it

with each other." Athena is also the participant who commented on using the practice of just getting her thoughts out of her head and onto paper as a first step in creating multiple kinds of documents, i.e., F31 grants and solo-authored publications. Thus, she has repeatedly illustrated that she finds value in the necessary repetition and revision that are inherent in such practices.

Participants were not just seeking the active involvement of others in their writing processes. They also appreciated simply being surrounded by similar others who were also working on extended writing projects. Of my time observing him, Kyle said, "I kind of like having someone watching me. It kind of keeps me focused. It almost says, 'Hey, I can't slack off because someone's watching me and analyzing me.' That's part of why I like dissertation boot camp. You get to see everyone else working, and you're in the environment where everyone is kind of working on something similar to you." Kyle's comment highlights the fact that having similar others present and working on similar tasks is a boost to productivity. Simply having someone passively present creates a feeling of expectation to be productive, which is why dissertation boot camps are an increasingly popular feature on many college and university campuses. Kyle summed up the reason for appreciating the presence of others with his comment, "You get to see everyone else working, and you're in the environment where everyone is kind of working on something similar to you." Thus, not only is it beneficial to have someone present, but it is even more beneficial if those individuals are similar others, other graduate students, working on similar projects, other extended writing projects. Travis expressed an analogous feeling, "If I'm in a room full of people on a computer, and I put on the sports news, I can look around and be like, 'Huh, it doesn't look like anybody else is doing the sports news. Try to get back to focus.'" Like Kyle, Travis finds it useful to be near similar others working on similar tasks, but the reason he provides is slightly more nuanced. Travis appreciates it because he notices it keeps him focused when he sees similar others focused. Travis and Kyle both use their presence as motivators for productivity.

Like Kyle and Travis, Katie also appreciated the dissertation boot camp atmosphere because it benefited her productivity. However, for Katie, the motivation came because the presence of similar others working on similar tasks renewed her belief in herself and reminded her that she was not alone. She said,

> "I went to one weekend bootcamp, also, which just kind of renewed my faith in the fact that I can finish this. That I can do it. It's a little intimidating when you're sitting next to someone who's remapping the human genome or something, and I'm over there with my cell phone study. I'm like, 'Hey, but whatever.' When you're not in the university anymore, it's helpful to be around other people that are working on the same thing or working on the same kind of endeavor just to remind you that you're not alone."

Katie's argument is that an environment with similar others working on similar tasks keeps feelings of isolation and loneliness at bay. This is important for her because where she is in her progression, she no longer feels like a part of the campus graduate student community. At the time of her interview, Katie had finished coursework and was working from home as a freelance writer. She also worked as an adjunct instructor for her university department, teaching one or two undergraduate classes each semester. She was married and had children at home but having an opportunity to be reminded that there were others out there who were also trying to complete an extended writing project was an emotional boost for her that kickstarted her completion of her project. At the time of her interview, Katie was on track to graduate in the upcoming fall semester.

The data from this study suggest that the writer-advisor relationship is a two-sided coin. While relationships between the two can be beneficial and promising when participants felt respected, understood, and supported, when they did not, frustrations arose and caused feelings of discontent. Graduate student writers attempted to alleviate the stress this caused by seeking out support from others. It didn't matter whether that support was actively found through feedback and conversation

with similar others, or passively found through simple presence of similar other engaged in similar activities.

Prefer Writing Feedback from Similar Others

Supporting the argument for the necessity of writing tutors who are either advanced graduate students or professionals who have completed their own extended writing project is the fact that conversations with similar others contribute to ongoing disciplinary enculturation (Ochs et al., 1992; Prior, 1994).

> [S]hared background knowledge and interpersonal bonds of trust and affect, whether at home or in other settings, may very well propel multiple perspective-taking, theory building and other complex cognitive skills, whereas more distant personal and professional relationships may very well inhibit the development of these skills. (Ochs et al., 1992, p. 68)

What this means for writing centers is that it is more beneficial to build a writing support environment where graduate student writers can find similar others who are familiar with the kind of work they are doing, those who are in the process of or have already completed their own extended writing project. The data from this dissertation study did not yield any surprising or unexpected results. Graduate student participants expressed concerns about visiting a writing center they see as being devoted primarily to undergraduate students, as they felt it unlikely they would receive much beneficial support from those unfamiliar with the expectations and emotional aspects of the extended writing project. This often stemmed from a belief that undergraduate students do not have enough experience or training to help with such advanced writing. It also arose from a dislike of the thought of requesting writing assistance from students they teach, i.e., undergraduate students.

Graduate student participants expressed a belief that the writing center on their campus, a writing center staffed primarily by undergraduate students, is not set up to help with extended writing projects. Sarah, Kyle, Travis, and Rachel all expressed doubt in the ability of an undergraduate student to

help them with their graduate-level writing concerns. Rachel remarked, “This might be completely incorrect, but I kind of think more of like undergraduate or even maybe grad, but maybe not dissertation.” While their comments convey doubt about the writing center’s ability to help graduate writers, they also show doubt about their own beliefs. By including phrases like “this might be completely incorrect” and “I don’t know” attached to their judgments, participants were leaving a door open for their minds to be changed about how their campus writing center can help them. Essentially, they are asking for evidence that supports an argument that they really can be helped by such support services. However, it would be difficult to convince a graduate student writer that a writing center could be helpful for them if they knew that help would come from an undergraduate student. Some study participants expressly rejected the idea of being tutored by an undergraduate student. Sarah argued, “This is extremely technical scientific writing, and I would not trust an undergraduate.”
Travis said, “When I first went there [the writing center], it was not with a PhD student; it was with somebody else that was less educated than that. I'm thinking, ‘I'm not going to ask an undergrad for help with my writing. I teach undergrads. They're just not qualified.’” These are not uncommon attitudes. Study participants had a keen desire to work with similar others. They desired to work with those who have completed an extended writing project or those who were also in the process of completing one.

Participants who mentioned having used or indicated the possibility of using the writing center focused their remarks on sentence-level concerns, likely indicating a belief that this is the only or best kind of help available at the writing center. Sometimes, this was due to differences in fields of study. Sarah said, “Our writing is so technical that maybe after a couple edits after my boss is done with it, giving it to someone like the writing commons to make sure there's no grammatical errors probably would be helpful, but because of the technicality of my writing, I don't really know if that's very helpful in the initial stage.” Sarah’s comment indicates that she has difficulty believing those outside of her own

field could provide writing help beyond grammatical concerns that would be of much value to her. Likewise, Rachel said, “I kind of associate it more with English Comp, or a lit class, or writing a term paper, something like that. Students that are maybe struggling more with basic mechanics, and how to organize things, and things like that.” Sarah’s and Rachel’s comments demonstrate an understanding that their campus writing center is a place for writers to go if they are struggling with basic sentence constructions. Not only do they not see a writing center as a place for graduate writers, but they see it as a remedial space that cannot assist with content issues. This is not uncommon for writing center scholars and practitioners to hear (Mannon, 2016).

Study participants also mentioned not needing to use campus writing center services because they have others who can assist them, others who are more familiar with their fields and topics. Sarah said, “It's just like sometimes if you're writing on a deadline, then that's, coworkers especially more so than even friends from your PhD program, coworkers are familiar with the material that you're writing, so people don't get hung up when there are unfamiliar words involved.” When she mentions coworkers as the best readers, she’s referring to the people she works with in her lab. At the time of her interview, Sarah was working on her PhD in Biological and Neurological Sciences, so her lab mates would be familiar with her dissertation topic. Her comment suggests that she values this kind of subject knowledge the most in those she asks for feedback. Her comment also suggests this preference is due to a concern about time constraints. She implies that deadlines are often looming, and she feels there is not enough time to explain the subject matter to a disciplinary outsider if she wants to meet that deadline. These concerns point back to the data that suggest that graduate student writers prefer writing assistance from similar others. They are comforted by and find reliable feedback that comes from such individuals in a way that they do not when it comes from those who have not reached the same level of experience or expertise.

Where participants indicated feeling comfortable with others who are not as familiar with disciplinary conventions or content was when they acknowledged the insight that could come from such a reader. Kyle explained, “Those people who are removed from the study can sometimes point out things that go way over your head because you're so into what you’re working on. What makes sense to you doesn't make sense to other people who haven't seen it.” Kyle recognizes that the novice outsider can be a valuable resource for identifying concerns not noticed by the writer. Another participant, Lauren, said she found the novice readers in the writing center helpful during her prospectus writing because her work centered on undergraduate writers. Lauren said, “So, hearing from them as students [about] things that worked and things that didn't is part of my goal with my research.” Even though Lauren’s comments centers on the benefit of the outside reader, she’s also remaining firmly in the realm of similar others in terms of her subject of study. In her case, the undergraduates from whom she was seeking writing assistance were also able to assist her with seeing her arguments from their perspective, a perspective directly linked to her research. Thus, though the writing center tutors were unfamiliar with the expectations of her discipline, they were able to provide a valuable perspective. One participant also found value in her campus writing center when she found a writing tutor who was familiar enough with academic writing conventions to help get her back on track with her dissertation proposal. She said,

> “When I found out about dissertation boot camps, I started going, and they offered [writing] tutoring, and I was like, ‘yes, please’ because I am not an academic writer, so I didn't know what [my advisors] wanted me to do. I was just writing my information, and they wanted me to connect it all together and have it flow. I haven't done that in a while, but it helped me a lot in the beginning phases of my dissertation. It helped me get the proposal.”

These comments show that graduate student participants were aware of the benefits that could be had from receiving feedback from others unfamiliar with their disciplines or topics. Yet, those benefits were often tied to concerns for which they could not find adequate assistance within their disciplinary others.

Noticing concerns that might go unnoticed by disciplinary readers and concerns tied to generic conventions of academic writing were pointed to as possibly being within the sphere of the writing center's capabilities.

Even so, the participants in my study trended toward appreciating the most the feedback that came from similar others, whether that similarity was found in level of degree or field of study. According to Reid et al. (2011), a group of scholars researching the experiences of college students close to graduation, found that an individual's engagement with their chosen field during their time as a student is connected to their personal identification with the field as they enter it. Thus, it is important for graduate students to engage in "legitimate peripheral participation" in order to develop a sense of belonging to the field, to continue the transformation from student to professional, from novice to expert (Reid et al., 2011). Participating in conversations about their academic writing projects with similar others can provide graduate student writers with opportunities for such peripheral participation. Thus, graduate student writers are best served by those who are or have been in a similar position, being also in the process of completing an extended writing project or having already completed one. Developing professional relationships with similar others can be achieved by providing graduate student writers with university sponsored writing centers that are focused on the unique needs of graduate-level writing and that are staffed by similar others. Data from this study suggest that building such a writing center will work to entice graduate student writers to use such writing support more frequently because they will feel listened to, understood, and as if their needs are being met.

Discussion

Outlining the experiences of 16 graduate student writers who attended one week of a four-week dissertation boot camp program during the summer of 2019 leads to the argument that universities need to provide graduate-focused writing support to increase satisfaction among graduate student writers. The graduate student writers who participated in this study reported feelings of

frustration and neglect, of being overwhelmed and under-supported, and of valuing time spent with similar others. Making graduate-focused writing support a priority could work to ease the struggles felt by graduate students and their advisors alike by providing other feedback options for graduate students who need more than their advisors can give and for advisors of whom more is expected than they can offer. It would provide more opportunities and spaces for graduate students to practice and strengthen their expert identities. Prioritizing graduate-focused writing support would also provide graduate students more opportunities for much needed time and space to interact with or just simply work next to similar others, thereby increasing their self-efficacy and their productivity. Participants in this study talked about some of their *would-likes*: existing supports they would like to see done differently or new supports they would like to see developed.

For instance, of dissertation boot camps, participants suggested hosting more frequent online and field specific events in order to account for various availabilities and for the desire to have more opportunities to work with similar others. Participants requested online versions of the face-to-face DBC programs because busy schedules or overly long commutes made their participation in on-campus events implausible. One such participant, Tim, remarked, “I wouldn't have time to go to it, even the weekend boot camps. There's always some family stuff going on. . . With being a [career], there's always a basketball tournament. There's always a band concert. Then, I have my own kids I have to do stuff for on weekends.” Tim’s comment illustrates that neither the weekend boot camp events offered once a month during the fall and spring semesters, nor the week-long events offered during the summer are ideal for his situation. If there were an online DBC program available for the many graduate students in Tim’s situation, more graduate student writers could access the beneficial support programs like DBCs provide. Like Tim, Rachel also commented on her inability to make it to on-campus support programs. Though unlike Tim, she also indicated a desire for more discipline focused DBC programs. She said,

> "It'd be nice if, maybe [the DBC] could get arranged by discipline or maybe even having kind of an informal group that gets together or even have a space in Blackboard [online learning management system] or something just to bounce ideas or something. . . I live in Ashtabula county, so to come to campus, I can do it, but it's over an hour drive one way. Having that group would be a nice."

As Tim and Rachel point out, developing a variety of graduate-focused writing support programs to address concerns of graduate student writers who live far from campus or who lead lives with packed schedules would go a long way in helping to keep them engaged and working toward the end goal, graduation.

Graduate student participants also expressed a desire for more accountability during DBC events. The DBC attended by the participants in this study was a just-write version where space, time, and food was provided, but how writers spent their time was entirely up to them. No structured writing activities or supports were offered. Another boot camp model was offered by Lee and Golde in their 2013 article, "Completing the Dissertation and Beyond: Writing Centers and Dissertation Boot Camps." They suggest a "writing-process" models "work under the assumption that students' writing productivity and motivation are significantly enhanced by consistent and on-going conversations about writing" (p. 2), thus they offer workshops, group writing discussions, and check-ins along with uninterrupted time and space to write. Such a model is what participants in this study were asking for. Katie suggested,

> "I think it would be great too, as part of the boot camps to have, since we're here and we're tangible and we're at the university on campus to have just a plan [where] everybody has to sit down with the writing person and everybody has to sit down with the research methods persons or a statistics person, either at the start and the finish or something like that. . . I realize that's a lot of probably pretty involved [activity], but it might actually just boost someone so far forward that they don't even know that that was a problem or something."

Katie's reasoning for suggesting such accountability measures is to "boost someone so far forward." The genre of the graduate-level extended writing project is completely new for most graduate student writers, which means they are going to have many moments of feeling boundlessly unsure of themselves. Building the suggested support structures into DBC programs could help to alleviate some of that stress. Support structures of this nature could also work to lessen some of the pressure advisors feel from graduate student writers to provide unlimited focused, personal attention.

In addition to the support structures suggested by Katie, offering opportunities for DBC attendees to create and share SMART (**s**pecific, **m**easurable, **a**chievable, **r**elevant, and **t**ime-bound) goals could help to strengthen the community of similar others present at the event. Graduate student participant, Beth, mentioned, "My whole thing that I wanted to use [the DBC] for was accountability. But nobody was asking me, 'Did you write your goals? What were they?' And then each day, 'Did you meet your goal?' Because hell no, I did not. But other people did, and I certainly, I don't know, I feel like that was something that could possibly have been done a little better with the boot camp." Beth's comment stresses the argument that graduate student writers want and need to be held accountable by their peers of similar others for their productivity. Providing graduate student writers structured time to discuss their progress and their struggles, as Beth suggests, can work toward reducing feelings of isolation and even the notoriously present imposter syndrome felt by so many graduate students. If graduate student writers are witness to the strengths and shortcomings of similar others, they may not feel quite so alone, which could in turn assist with retention and completion concerns for university.

Participants also indicated a desire for more opportunities to form graduate-focused writing groups. Writing groups could be a first-step, low-cost solution to the concerns highlighted by participants in this study. Gradin, Pauley-Grose, and Stewart (2006) discuss two writing groups started by their University writing center, and aside from paying the Writing Center Director's salary, who facilitates both groups, there is little other cost involved. Participants in this dissertation project

discussed the possible benefits of engaging in small, graduate-focused writing groups of 3-4 writers working on similar writing projects. These writing groups would offer graduate student writers opportunities to engage with similar others, to hold each other accountable for productivity, and to reduce feelings of isolation and depression. Renée discussed an unsuccessful attempt made by her and a peer to start their own accountability group. She said, "One person in my cohort wanted to do a little accountability group. We kind of tried to study together before, and I don't do as well with writing for a while, and then chatting back, and then writing, and then chatting back." Renée's concern with this attempt was that she and her peer were unable to focus when they tried to work together. Renée complains that the process of writing for a brief time, engaging in conversation, and writing again was not an ideal situation for her. Thus, this arrangement did not last long. Lauren also brought up the idea of the writing group as a way to combat the isolation she was feeling. She said,

> "Having . . . some sort of support in the program that is low stakes we could check in with each other maybe go to [a local coffee house] or something and write and maybe not even talk during that time but just having folks around, because this last part, the writing the dissertation, that has felt really isolating, and I also I suffer from depression, so doing things by myself and being only accountable for myself that can be kind of hard sometimes."

At the time of her interview, Lauren was six years into a four-year program and was hoping to graduate in the upcoming spring semester. Developing writing support groups would not only provide opportunities for graduate student writers to grow into professionals, but they could also fight the strain that accompanies writing in a new genre with a looming deadline, and stakes that feel like it's make-it or break-it time.

The data from this study suggests that graduate student writers need clearly defined, graduate-focused spaces that consciously operate as Communities of Practice (CoP) (Wenger). Communities of practice are groups of people, small or large, who engage in a process of collective learning in a shared

domain of human endeavor (Coffman et al., 2016; University of Oregon Libraries, 2011). Coffman et al. (2016) argue, “In addition to personal traits like intelligence and motivation, doctoral students need the support of experienced academics and other graduate students to facilitate the socialization process into academia and engage in scholarly activities” (Coffman et al., 2016, p. 31). The graduate student participants in this study reported feelings of frustration and neglect, of being overwhelmed and under-supported, and of valuing time spent with similar others. These feelings and their list of would-likes speak directly to the Council of Graduate Schools (2010) imperative to “Offer a writing assistance program for graduate students at all stages through trained writing coaches or writing consultants (senior-level graduate students trained in writing); offer writing assistance to groups of students from several disciplines so they can appreciate the commonality of writing difficulties” (pp. 4-5). Developing CoPs at the graduate-level can ease the struggles of graduate students and their advisors. Participating in one small CoP, provided Coffman et al. with the space, opportunities, and similar others that helped them practice and perform their scholarly selves. Opportunities like this are what the graduate student participants in this study are looking for. Thus, universities must embrace and promote graduate-focused writing support to facilitate the development of graduate student writers as professionals and provide a support system that will help them make it to completion.

Chapter 6

Sympathetic Vibrations: Building Writing Support Programs for Graduate Student Writers

Doctoral study is a unique and paradoxical mode of institutional learning. It typically includes formal and informal elements, proceeds through instruction and autonomous discovery, and can be intensely individual and quintessentially social. Nowhere are these paradoxes more apparent than in doctoral candidates' experience of writing.

Sara Cotterall

Sympathetic vibration is "the driving of a mechanical or acoustical system at its resonant frequency by energy from an adjacent system vibrating at this same frequency" (Kinsler, 2014). This essentially means that if one object is vibrating, the energy from that vibration will cause other objects at the same frequency to also vibrate. Imagine two alike tuning forks positioned near each other. When one is tapped, it begins to vibrate. The energy from that vibration moves outward, contacts the other tuning fork, and causes it to vibrate as well. The vibrations of that second tuning fork are called sympathetic vibrations because the occurrence is a result of the vibrations of the first. A key element of this concept of sympathetic vibration is that those tuning forks must operate at the same frequency. If they do not, the vibrations of the first will have little to no effect on the movement of the second. Graduate student writers work in much the same way. When they come into contact with similar others (i.e., other graduate students) who are writing and working toward a similar goal, that energy from those similar others pushes its way out to them, making them write as well. When Margie, an imaginary graduate student writer, comes into contact with similar others who have passed graduate school

milestones, the resulting energy from the passing of that milestone radiates out and influences her. However, if she comes into contact with an undergraduate writer who has just passed an undergraduate school milestone, the energy coming from that accomplishment does not have as significant an effect on her.

This dissertation project was prompted in part by my own personal experiences as a graduate student writer and as an assistant director in my campus writing center. As a graduate student writer, I struggled finding similar others with whom I could create and from whom I could receive feedback. As an assistant director, I struggled to get graduate student writers to use the writing center services being offered. To find out why this was happening, I designed a study aimed at understanding in more detail the experiences of graduate student writers working on extended writing projects. Because writing centers are a key aspect of the identified problem and because graduate advisors are an integral part of any graduate-level extended writing project, these two groups were included in this study. This dissertation project was designed to uncover intersections and disconnects between what graduate student writers report they do, what graduate student writers actually do, what advisors believe graduate student writers do, and how writing centers can develop practices and programs that best fit the multidimensional experiences of graduate student writers. Through the use of surveys, observations, and interviews, the data collected during this study show that graduate student writers identify a persistent struggle with the act of invention, while graduate advisors indicate the graduate writer's most pervasive struggle to be with the acts of design and arrangement. Data also show that graduate students and graduate advisors believe writing center spaces are designed primarily to assist undergraduate students, a belief that is supported by the actual practices of writing center practitioners. The data also illustrate that writing support practitioners and advisors alike must accept that it is important to meet graduate student writers where they are in terms of their emotional and writing needs. Advisors are not expected to be mental health counselors, but they should be willing and able to

address the emotional nature that is an aspect of completing the extended writing project. Graduate student writers want to feel like their advisors are devoted to the successful completion of the dissertation project. Graduate student participants also indicated finding the most value in working with similar others.

Graduate student writers are typically responsible for three kinds of writing: writing for academic purposes - classroom-based projects and extended writing projects; writing for conferences - proposals and presentations; and writing for publication. In the United States, the extended writing project is typically one of two kinds, the master's-level thesis or the doctoral-level dissertation. Graduate-level extended writing projects require a substantial reliance on self-discipline, as the writer must be able to maintain focus on one topic and document over the span of years. The purpose of the extended writing project is to add knowledge to the field, and it is written for a specialized audience made up of disciplinary experts. The graduate student writer must also negotiate the expectations of multiple faculty members who make up a small committee intended to provide feedback and assistance. The extended writing project has high stakes in that successful degree completion depends upon successful document completion. When applying to graduate school, the graduate student writer is likely aware of these well-publicized milestones. However, the expectations and processes along the way may be shrouded in mystery. While there are any number of guidebooks available and workshops offered to help graduate students write a dissertation or craft a literature review, there are few that offer advice on such aspects as choosing the people with whom they will work closely for the foreseeable future. Before graduate student writers reach the extended writing phase, they must decide on a dissertation topic, choose a dissertation advisor, and assemble and communicate with a dissertation committee. Though the graduate student-advisor relationship is one of the most important relationships in a graduate student's experience, little guidance is offered on this choice. Graduate students, instead, may be left to their own devices and gut instincts.

Concepts of personal motivation, dedication, and emotional investment are aspects of graduate work that may not be talked about explicitly within graduate schools. Graduate students may feel alone with the struggle of their extended writing project and have only the lore passed down from student to student as guidance. In these situations, especially, graduate students must be internally motivated to complete, or the likelihood of leaving the project before completion increases. Odena and Burgess (2017) argue that personal motivation and emotional connection to the chosen research topics are often the driving factors that kept a graduate student working toward completion (p. 582). Every individual is uniquely motivated and emotionally connected to something, and emotional connection can be hugely motivating factor, especially in such a daunting undertaking as the extended writing project. However, there is more to the story than motivation and connection. Holmes et al. (2018) discuss three possible hindrances to motivation: a lack of time, a lack of confidence, and a lack of resources. With such obstacles in the way, it may be difficult for a graduate student writer, no matter their personal level of motivation or their emotional attachment to their dissertation topic, to complete the extended writing project. Liljedahl (2018) argues there are two research themes that constantly appear differentiated in graduate student discussion, doing the research and writing up the research. He found graduate students associate mostly positive emotions with doing the research and mostly negative emotions with writing up the research. Though Kamler and Thomson (2014) argue persuasively against the use of the phrase “writing up,” survey respondents in this dissertation project did identify the act of invention, i.e., finding time to write, making themselves write, and staying focused when writing, to be the top struggles encountered with the extended writing project. Thus, as Glew, Challa, and Gopalan (2014) argue, “The curricula of doctoral programmes should include a multi-phase approach that is integrated into different stages of graduate training” (p. 1391). Addressing this call to action, this concluding chapter provides a compilation of six suggested programs and practices, five of which can be relatively low cost, that can assist universities and graduate schools in cultivating a sustainable culture of writing.

Study Results

Survey responses collected as part of this dissertation project suggested graduate student writers identify a persistent struggle with the act of invention; they find it most difficult to sit down and begin the task of writing. Graduate advisors, on the other hand, indicate the graduate writer's most pervasive struggle to be with the acts of design and arrangement; they find graduate student writers have the most difficulty organizing their writing and designing their research projects. Data also show that graduate students and graduate advisors tend to harbor the assumption that writing center spaces are designed primarily to assist undergraduate students, an assumption that many writing center practitioners take issue with, but one that is corroborated by the practices they often engage in. Observations and interviews revealed that graduate student writers fluctuate between moments of novice and moments of expert, and that writing support services and advisors alike can help to create opportunities for graduate student writers to practice their disciplinary expertise. Interviews with graduate student participants revealed the importance of support for both writing and the emotional aspects inherent in the crafting of an extended writing project. Graduate student participants also indicated a preference for feedback and academic interaction with similar others. Thus, graduate student writers are best served by writing support that can offer support at the graduate level and that is provided by similar others.

Graduate-focused writing centers do exist at schools such as North Carolina State University, Oregon State and Ohio University, and University of California, Los Angeles, and there is some scholarship on tutoring graduate writers (Grouling & Buck, 2017; Mannon, 2017; Summers, 2016; Vorhies, 2015). However, the field of Writing Center Studies has only recently begun to address their experiences. Thus, this dissertation addresses two branches of inquiry located beneath the umbrella of the overarching question: What role can writing centers play in assisting graduate student writers with the experiences of the extended writing processes? First, through three separate but related surveys,

this dissertation delved into discovering perceptions of graduate student writers, the perceptions of faculty members who advise graduate student writers, and the writing center practitioners who attempt to assist graduate student writers. Second, through observations and interviews, this dissertation project captured brief moments of the experiences of graduate student writers. This mixed methods approach offered multiple perspectives of the graduate writer's experience and a glimpse into the practices and beliefs of graduate students themselves.

Graduate-Focused Writing Programs as Communities of Practice

The data found in this dissertation project suggest that graduate student writers desire clearly defined programs that are consciously designed to facilitate multiple Communities of Practice (CoP), a group of people who engage in a process of collective learning in a shared domain of human endeavor (Wenger, 1998). Not all groups of people who gather are CoPs. In order to be considered a CoP, the group must have a domain of interest, a community of engaged members, and a shared practice (University of Oregon Libraries, 2011). Those involved in a CoP are committed to a shared area of interest and have "a shared competence that distinguishes members from other people" (University of Oregon Libraries, 2011, p. 2). In a CoP, members also engage in discussions, provide assistance for one another, and share information. They learn from each other. Members of a community of practice do not just share an interest, they engage in a shared practice, and they develop and share resources, information, stories, etc. Writing support services that are centered on and devoted primarily to graduate student writers could create ideal spaces for CoPs to occur. Explicitly embracing and promoting this idea of the graduate writing center as a CoP can help create opportunities for graduate writers to practice their expert identities. This study indicates that given the proper support structures, graduate-focused writing centers can alleviate some of the pressure felt by graduate student writers and their advisors. Writing center practitioners can serve as the bridge between groups, helping to promote healthy and successful graduate student writers. Creating a sustained writing culture and making writing

support services an integral aspect of graduate student education across campus is a necessity for such work to be done.

A graduate-focused writing center would not just be a tutoring or consulting space but a space for communities of practice to form and for resonance to occur. Lefevre (1987) situates resonance as a moment "when an individual act – a 'vibration' – is intensified and prolonged by sympathetic vibrations. . . People who act as resonators help an inventor to locate himself or herself in a tradition and a community and to live in a way that is conducive to further invention (p. 65). Like the tuning forks mentioned above, graduate student writers who are provided with opportunities to build communities of practice could operate as sympathetic vibrations for each other, writing, growing, and practicing their disciplinary identities with each other, intensifying and prolonging the effects of one vibratory act. Whereas within the traditional academic schema, graduate student writers may only have their advisor to act as an initial vibration, which means the likelihood of the sympathetic vibrations lasting for any length of time may be quite low. However, with increased opportunities to build CoPs, similar others could also provide initial vibrations. Once a graduate student writer's sympathetic vibration begins, they could in turn be initiators of another vibration, and so on and so forth, and back and forth, thereby lessening the strain on graduate advisors and increasing satisfaction, retention, and completion for graduate student writers. Data from the interviews with graduate student writers participating in the summer dissertation boot camp support this idea. Participants indicated that just being in the same room with other graduate students working on similar projects made them more motivated to work on their own. They also showed a preference for receiving feedback and support from similar others and a dissatisfaction with the amount and kind of feedback they were receiving from their advisors. Participants wanted more evidence that their advisors were putting forth time and effort in providing feedback, and they interpreted the amount and kind of feedback as a direct result of their advisor's interest in their success.

Six Possible Programs Dedicated to Graduate Writing Support

This data-based dissertation study of 363 survey respondents, 8 hours of observations, and 12 hours of interviews suggests that a graduate-focused writing support program should be grounded in four essential goals: provide space and time to write, deliver feedback from experts and similar others, offer flexible support options, and extend opportunities to practice disciplinary expertise. Practices which would enact these commitments might look like these six possible graduate-focused programs:

- Writing Center
- Writing Groups
- Writing Retreats
- Three Minute Thesis Competition
- Workshops
- Resource Blog

The first of these programs, the Graduate Writing Center (GWC) is the costliest in terms of human, financial, and space resources. However, it could also work as the central hub for each of the other five programs, making the costs of each minimal. According to the *Executive Summary* (2010) of the Council of Graduate Schools series of PhD Completion monographs, establishing a central hub of graduate student writing support could also increase graduate student retention and completion numbers, thereby countering any human, financial, and space costs with educational completion and job placement for graduate students, which increases the economic and cultural profile of the university. The GWC could offer the traditionally recognized space and consultations of a writing center but be geared toward the needs and work styles of graduate student writers, offering training for writing consultants, advanced graduate students or professional consultants who have completed their own extended writing projects, encouraging resonance. Following the advice of writing center scholar, Talinn Phillips (2017), the GWC could prioritize the recruitment of multilingual tutors and tutors from

disciplines across campus. The writing consultants in the Graduate Writing Center may offer graduate student writers the traditional one-on-one, face-to-face (f2f), or synchronous online consulting sessions. However, the sessions may be scheduled for up to two hours to accommodate the length and depth of the extended writing project, and the writer may be encouraged to send their work at least one hour ahead of time to provide the consultant time to review the document and formulate feedback prior to the meeting. Thus, each consultation could be scheduled for up to three hours: one hour for pre-session review of the document and two hours for consultation with the writer. Such practices work to offer graduate student writers the most beneficial use of their consultation time as the consultant may not be trying to simultaneously contextualize the work while providing useful feedback. In addition to the f2f and synchronous online consultations, the GWC could offer asynchronous online writing consultations. These sessions could also be scheduled for up to two hours. Graduate student writers could submit their document and be informed of the day and time they should expect a response, which may be at minimum three hours from the time of submission and at most 48 hours from the time of submission, allowing the consultant up to three hours per session to review the document and formulate written or recorded feedback.

The physical space of the Graduate Writing Center is just as important as the consultations offered there. The GWC could provide workspace for writers and consultants to meet f2f, but it could also provide space for graduate student writers to just write. Computer stations could be available and offer writers a dual screen set-up where they could bring their own laptop or use provided computers, and printing services could be offered in the same space. The dual screen set-up is beneficial for writers at any stage of the process but often more so when working with data or revising because they can have one set of information on one screen, another set on the other, and then easily move between the two. These computer stations could provide distraction-free space for graduate student writers to work but also be communal enough for writers to see similar others working on their own extended writing

projects, creating opportunities for sympathetic vibration. The GWC space could ideally also provide an area where writers could decompress during writing breaks. This space could include comfortable chairs, couches, and end tables arranged in such a way as to promote social interaction amongst graduate student writers from disciplines across the university. The GWC space could also offer graduate student writers a separate space set up much like a conference room where they could meet in small groups for just-write or accountability group sessions, or where small workshops could be held.

The second suggested graduate-focused program is student writing groups. The Director of the GWC could provide training and support for those departments or graduate students who wish to develop such groups, and those held in the GWC space could be multidisciplinary and facilitated by GWC staff, while those held in departmental spaces could be discipline-focused and facilitated by advanced graduate students from the department. Writing groups could meet on a regularly scheduled basis and be a combination of just-write groups and accountability groups, whichever fits the needs and wants of the particular group of graduate student writers. Just-write groups could meet together in a space and spend an allotted amount of time simply working on their own extended writing projects near others engaged in a similar activity. Accountability groups could meet and share their goals and progress with each other, holding each other accountable for reaching their writing goals in a professional and respectful way. Both types of writing groups could also include members sharing their work with each other and providing and receiving feedback. Such practices could be determined by the group members and their reasons for forming or joining the group, building communities of practice and encouraging resonance. To add flexibility to the program, writing groups could be held either f2f or in an online environment. Options for the online environment could include synchronous or asynchronous practices. Groups such as these work to promote the idea of continuous engagement with extended writing projects. While practices like dissertation boot camps and writing retreats are beneficial for bursts and spurts of writing, the development of regularly scheduled writing groups could work to build a culture of

sustained engagement and likely lead to an increase in the timely completion of the extended writing project.

The third program that could put into practice the goals of providing space and time to write, delivering feedback from experts and similar others, offering flexible support options, and extending opportunities to practice disciplinary expertise is the dissertation boot camp or writing retreat. The Director and staff of the GWC could design, promote, and facilitate such a program. Costs included could be limited to coffee and tea offered throughout the day to participants, and three meals a day catered by campus food services. As expected, such programs could be offered at regular intervals throughout the year: perhaps one in the fall semester, one during winter break, one during the spring semester, and one during summer break. Such retreats could offer a combination of time for writing, goal setting and sharing, consulting with experts or similar others on writing processes, statistical software, or research design. Due to the size of such retreats, these may be held in a larger, more communal campus spaces such as the library.

The fourth suggested graduate-focused program is the Three Minute Thesis (3MT) Competition. To be officially recognized, the Director of the GWC could register the university with the University of Queensland, a free service, and hold 3MT competitions once every fall semester. The Three Minute Thesis is a university-wide competition that offers graduate students working on extended writing projects opportunities to practice sharing their work with a group of interested but non-specialist others. Each participant gets one slide and three minutes to present their research, and winners of each round progress through the competition from the university to the regional level. Prizes for these competitions are determined by the hosting university and can be designed to work within the university or GWC budget. Other costs associated with this program may be providing light refreshments and beverages for attendees and judges, who would be disciplinary faculty from across the disciplines.

The fifth suggested program is a series of workshops dedicated to the successful completion of many kinds of graduate student writing could also be offered. These workshops could be facilitated by the Director of the GWC, or the Director could enlist the help of campus professionals such as librarians, other support professionals, or discipline faculty, depending on the topic to be addressed. Such workshops could often have a target audience of graduate student writers; however, to be of the most benefit, workshops could also be held that are targeted toward faculty members who work with graduate student writers. Those workshops targeted at graduate student writers could include writing projects that are often not discussed and for which little support is offered, such as choosing a committee, designing research protocol, or prospectus writing. They could also include grant writing, exam preparation, exam defense, conference proposal writing, conference presentation preparation, and writing for publication. Writing projects such as these are all integral to the successful completion of a graduate program; however, support for their creation is often limited to nonexistent. Communications scholars, Meagan Kittle Autry and Michael Carter (2015) offer a description of various workshops their university offers that are focused on the writing processes involved in the extended writing project, from forming an advisory committee to defending the dissertation, from coursework through graduation. Purposeful approaches to such genres could benefit graduate student writers and faculty members alike in that graduate student writers feel supported, and advisors have colleagues dedicated to lessening their burden when it comes to helping graduate student writers build academic identities.

For faculty members who work with graduate student writers, workshops designed to assist with concerns such as the emotional aspects of working with graduate student writers, building explicit, collaborative, and realistic timelines with graduate student writers, and building credit-bearing, graduate-level writing courses within the discipline could benefit both the faculty and the graduate student writers. Discipline-specific writing courses could promote a culture of writing across campus and

be taught by discipline faculty with assistance from the Director of the GWC. Another possible workshop with a faculty target audience could be one dedicated to demonstrating how programs such as the Graduate Writing Center and writing groups can benefit them by easing some of the pressure inherent in the advisor-writer relationship, thereby encouraging them to promote such programs amongst their graduate student population.

The sixth and final suggested program could be an online, graduate-focused blog devoted to providing resources for the campus-wide graduate student population. Such a resource could be published at regularly scheduled intervals and provide writing resources to help graduate student writers across disciplines. The Director and staff of the GWC could be responsible for building and maintaining the blog, posting materials that could be beneficial to all disciplines. Such resources could include interviews with professors, experts in the fields, or other graduate student writers about their writing processes, strengths, and challenges. A blog could be an ideal resource, as it could be easily searched, and the information readily retrieved by graduate student writers at any time.

The usual suspects may likely provide obstacles to be overcome for each of these proposed programs. Time may be at a premium. Money may be difficult to come by. Faculty in the disciplines may not see the value in explicit writing instruction. Graduate students may not participate in large numbers. However, obstacles do not mean attempts should not be made. Each college or university may need to decide which practices and programs are plausible at their school, and each find ways around the inevitable roadblocks that arise along the way.

Study Implications

This research of graduate student writers' experiences can contribute to the fields of Writing Center Studies, Writing Studies, Writing Across the Curriculum, and Writing in the Disciplines in meaningful ways. The everyday practices and continued growth and relevance of each field can be improved by systematically studying the needs of this one group, i.e., graduate students working on

extended writing projects. Though others have conducted research and published scholarship on graduate student writers in writing center spaces, this project offers the unique aspects of first-hand observations of graduate students writing and the inclusion of the experiences and beliefs of graduate writers who have not used writing center resources. This dissertation also brings the voices of graduate student writers and their feelings toward their campus writing center services to the fore. In much writing center scholarship, it is the center itself that takes front and center stage. This project foregrounds graduate student writers, highlighting the importance of their experiences and the continued academic propensity to overlook them. While there is a growing body of writing center scholarship dedicated to the experiences and needs of graduate writers, more is needed to build the depth and breadth necessary to construct grounded pedagogical theories that can be used when working with graduate student writers. Thus, what we currently think when we think of Writing Centers has reached an age of what Wardle & Clement (2016) might call a "consequential transition," when views, individuals, and social organizations change in such a way that the institution or organization experiences becoming something new (p. 162). This newness includes writing support models that move beyond a focus on the one-to-one, Socratic method tutoring model and into models that include practices, research, and publications on various models, such as writing groups, accountability groups, and dissertation boot camps. It also includes writing center practitioners divesting themselves of the belief that a one-size-fits-all model. This project works to support an argument for writing support programs that are dedicated to the needs of graduate students and that offer writing support models beyond the scope of the traditional writing center session.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Graduate Student Survey Questions

1. **What is your current level of study?**
    - Master's
    - Doctoral
2. **At what type of institution are you currently studying? (Categories based on Carnegie classifications.)**
    - Unknown
    - R1: Doctoral University - Very high research activity
    - R2: Doctoral University - High research activity
    - M3: Master's Colleges and Universities - Smaller programs
    - M2: Master's Colleges and Universities - Medium programs
    - M1: Master's Colleges and Universities - Larger programs
    - D/PU: Doctoral/Professional University
3. **What is your first language?**
4. **With which gender do you most identify?**
    - Male
    - Female
    - Transgender Male
    - Transgender Female
    - Gender Non-conforming
    - Prefer not to answer
5. **What is your age group?**
    - 20 - 29
    - 30 - 39
    - 40 - 49
    - 50 - 59
    - 60 - 69
6. **What is your major field of study?**
7. **How long have you been in your graduate program?**
    - 1 - 2 years
    - 3 - 4 years
    - 5 - 6 years
    - 7 or more years
8. **Are you currently in the process of an extended writing project [thesis / dissertation]?**
    - Yes
    - No
9. **What is your extended writing project?**
    - Thesis

- Other
- Dissertation

10. **What parts of the research / writing processes have you completed? (Check all that apply.)**
    - developing research questions
    - writing the research proposal
    - just beginning to draft
    - Approved research proposal
    - some data collected
    - completed drafts of 1-2 chapters
    - all data collected
    - completed drafts of all chapters
    - nearing dissertation defense
    - completed dissertation defense
    - Other
11. **How long have you been working on your extended writing project?**
    - Less than 1 year
    - 1 - 2 years
    - 3 - 4 years
    - 5 - 6 years
    - 7 or more years
12. **Select the top three (3) aspects of the writing process that you feel you struggle with the most:**
    - Designing the research
    - Conducting the research
    - Translating data into writing
    - Getting started writing
    - Organizing my written work
    - Conciseness
    - Clarity
    - Providing enough information / explanation
    - Revising
    - Staying focused when writing
    - Applying feedback
    - Finding the time to write
    - Making myself write
    - Other
13. **Select the top three (3) aspects of the writing process about which you feel the most confident:**
    - Conducting the research
    - Designing the research

- Organizing my written work
- Applying feedback
- Translating data into writing
- Clarity
- Revising
- Providing enough information / explanation
- Conciseness
- Getting started writing
- Finding the time to write
- Staying focused when writing
- Making myself write
- Other

14. **Rank the option(s) below in order of those that best describe your typical writing processes for your extended writing project to those that least describe your typical writing processes for your extended writing project. (drag and drop)**
    - Pre-write (brainstorm or outline) before writing
    - Just start writing
    - Write in large chunks of time (3 or more hours of writing at once)
    - Break writing time up into smaller parcels of time (1 -2 hours of writing at once)
    - Write one draft and seek out feedback
    - Try to get the first draft as close to perfect as possible
    - Write multiple rough drafts before seeking out feedback
    - Allow rough drafts to be truly rough
    - Write only when a deadline is close
    - Write every day
    - Other
15. **During your extended writing project, have you sought writing feedback from any of the following? (select all that apply)**
    - Your primary advisor
    - Peers in your program
    - Faculty in your program other than your primary advisor
    - Faculty in other programs or at other schools
    - Tutors at the Writing Center
    - Peers in other programs or at other schools
    - Other
    - I have never sought writing feedback from anyone during the writing of my extended writing project.
16. **How did you use the feedback you received?**
    - I incorporated it all into subsequent drafts.
    - I didn't incorporate any of it into subsequent drafts.

- I incorporated some of it into subsequent drafts.
- Other

17. **Please describe the kind of feedback you found most useful and briefly explain why.**
18. **Have you ever visited the Writing Center with your graduate-level writing?**
    - Yes
    - No
19. **Why have you never visited the Writing Center with your graduate-level writing?**
20. **What did you find the most helpful about your visit to the Writing Center?**
21. **What did you find the least helpful about your visit to the Writing Center?**
22. **Please share any other thoughts about your experience with an extended writing project that you would like to share but that have not been explicitly asked in this survey.**

Appendix B

Advisor Survey Questions

1. **In what type of institution are you currently working? (Categories based on Carnegie classifications.)**
    - R1: Doctoral University - Very high research activity
    - R2: Doctoral University - High research activity
    - D/PU: Doctoral/Professional University
    - M1: Master's College or University - Larger program
    - M2: Master's College or University - Medium program
    - M3: Master's College or University - Smaller program
    - Unknown
2. **What is your first language?**
3. **With which gender do you most identify?**
    - Male
    - Female
    - Transgender Male
    - Transgender Female
    - Gender Non-conforming
    - Prefer not to answer
4. **What is your age group?**
    - 20 – 29 years
    - 30 - 39 years
    - 40 - 49 years
    - 50 -59 years
    - 60 - 69 years
    - Prefer not to answer
5. **What is your field of study?**
6. **Do you advise master's or doctoral students?**
    - Master's
    - Doctoral
    - Both
7. **How many graduate students have you advised on their extended writing projects [thesis / dissertation / publication]?**
    - 20 or more
    - 16 - 20
    - 11 - 15
    - 6 - 10
    - 0 - 5

8. **Q7 - What are the top three (3) aspects of the writing process with which you feel graduate writers need the most help?**
    - Designing the research
    - Conducting the research
    - Translating data into writing
    - Getting started writing
    - Organizing their written work
    - Revising
    - Applying feedback
    - Finding the time to write
    - Making themselves write
    - Meeting deadlines
    - Other
9. **How many graduate students are you currently advising on extended writing projects?**
    - 1 - 2
    - 3 - 4
    - 5 - 6
    - 7 or more
10. **As part of your advising practices, do you encourage your graduate writers to seek advice from any of the following? (select all that apply)**
    - Their primary advisor
    - Faculty in their program other than their primary advisor
    - Faculty in other programs or at other schools
    - Peers in their program
    - Peers in other programs or at other schools
    - Tutors at the Writing Center
    - Other
11. **What is your most used method of providing feedback to your graduate writer advisees.**
    - verbal, in-person feedback
    - written, marginal / in-line feedback
    - written, global feedback
    - Combination of the above (please briefly describe)
12. **At what stage(s) of the extended writing project do you work closely with graduate writers? (select all that apply)**
    - Developing research questions
    - Writing the research proposal
    - Design the study
    - Data collection
    - Writing up study results
    - Early drafts of document

- Final drafts of document
- Other

13. **Do you encourage graduate writers to visit the Writing Center on your campus?**
    - Yes
    - No
14. **Briefly describe the kind of assistance provided by the Writing Center on your campus.**
15. **Please share any other thoughts about your experience working with graduate writers on an extended writing project that you would like to share but that have not been explicitly asked in this survey.**

Appendix C

Writing Center Practitioner Survey Questions

1. **In what type of institution are you currently working? (Categories based on Carnegie classifications.)**
    - R1: Doctoral University - Very high research activity
    - R2: Doctoral University - High research activity
    - D/PU: Doctoral/Professional University
    - M1: Master's College or University - Larger programs
    - M2: Master's College or University - Medium programs
    - M3: Master's College or University - Smaller programs
    - Unknown
2. **Indicate your current level of education.**
    - Bachelor's - in progress
    - Bachelor's - completed
    - Master's - in progress
    - Master's - completed
    - Doctoral - in progress
    - Doctoral - completed
3. **What is your major field of study?**
4. **What is your first language?**
5. **With what gender do you most identify?**
    - Male
    - Female
    - Transgender Male
    - Transgender Female
    - Gender Non-conforming
    - Prefer not to answer
6. **What is your age group?**
    - 18 - 28 years
    - 29 -39 years
    - 40 - 49 years
    - 50 - 59 years
    - 60 years or older
7. **What is your role primary in your Writing Center?**
    - Undergraduate Tutor
    - Graduate Tutor
    - Professional Tutor
    - Assistant Director (or similar title)

- Director (or similar title)
- Other

8. **How long have you been working in the Writing Center field?**
    - Less than 1 year
    - 1 - 2 years
    - 3 - 4 years
    - 5 - 6 years
    - 7 or more years
9. **How would you describe the demographic of the writers your Writing Center provides services for?**
    - Only undergraduate writers
    - Only graduate writers
    - More undergraduate writers than graduate writers
    - More graduate writers than undergraduate writers
    - Equally undergraduate writers and graduate writers
10. **In your role as writing tutor, have you ever worked with a graduate-level writer on an extended writing project?**
    - Yes
    - No
11. **Generally, what are the top three fields the graduate writers with whom you have worked were studying?**
12. **What aspect(s) of the writing process have you worked on with graduate writers? (select all that apply)**
    - Designing the research
    - Conducting the research
    - Translating data into writing
    - Getting started writing
    - Organizing their written work
    - Conciseness
    - Clarity
    - Providing enough information / explanation
    - Revising
    - Staying focused when writing
    - Applying feedback
    - Finding the time to write
    - Other
13. **Are you comfortable working with graduate writers on extended writing projects?**
    - Yes
    - No
14. **Have you ever received training in a Writing Center to work with graduate writers?**

- Yes
- No

15. **Briefly describe the training you received.**
16. **What aspect(s) of the writing process do graduate writers request assistance with the most in the Writing Center in which you currently work? (select all that apply)**
    - Designing the research
    - Conducting the research
    - Translating data into writing
    - Getting started writing
    - Organizing their written work
    - Conciseness
    - Clarity
    - Providing enough information / explanation
    - Revising
    - Staying focused when writing
    - Applying feedback
    - Finding the time to write
    - Other
17. **What are the top three fields from which graduate writers come to use your Writing Center's services?**
18. **Do you provide separate training for tutors to work with graduate writers?**
    - Yes
    - No
19. **Briefly describe the training you provide.**
20. **Please share any other thoughts about your experience working with graduate writers that you would like to share but that have not been explicitly asked in this survey.**