

# 11 KNOWLEDGE AND IDENTITY WORK IN THE SUPERVISION OF DOCTORAL STUDENT WRITING: SHAPING RHETORICAL SUBJECTS

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As knowledge moves centre stage in all sectors of society, governments around the world have identified the development of new researchers as one of the most critical infrastructure issues in knowledge-intensive societies (Canadian Association for Graduate Studies, 2005; Council of Graduate Schools, 2007; European University Association, 2007). Doctoral graduates are increasingly seen as “advanced knowledge workers” (Lee & Boud, 2008, p. 18), whose roles include the education of future generations of knowledge workers and researchers as well as the production and dissemination of original knowledge. In short, doctoral education is increasingly seen as a critical factor in spurring innovation, economic growth, and national prosperity.

For their research productivity, doctoral students, like all researchers, depend on their ability to write not only their dissertations, but, increasingly, also peer-reviewed publications as well as scholarship and grant applications. Indeed, as Hyland (2004) remarks, researchers rely on their writing “as a means of funding, constructing, evaluating and negotiating knowledge” (p. 5). Although often taken for granted, research writing is a highly specialized and discipline-specific social practice critical to knowledge making and to (re)producing disciplinary membership and identity (Bazerman & Prior, 2005; Green, 2005; Hyland, 2004, this volume; Horne, this volume; Kamler & Thomson, 2006; Prior, 1998; Tardy, 2009).

In this chapter, we draw on a larger longitudinal study of doctoral education in two Education faculties to shed some light on the knowledge and identity

work that constitutes doctoral education. Although the formation of disciplinary subjects is, as Green (2005) argues persuasively, best “conceived ecosocially, as a total environment within which postgraduate research activity (‘study’) is realised” (p. 153), here we are interested in the role supervision of doctoral student writing plays in enacting the knowledge and identity work of doctoral education. As we illustrate, the transformation that occurs during doctoral education involves the formation of rhetorical subjects capable of participating in the discourse practices that produce the specialized knowledge of their research communities. We are particularly interested in the rhetorical nature of this work—that is, the ways in which students find their location or position in the rhetorical situations that produce a community’s knowledge. More specifically, we would like to understand how students learn to participate in the highly situated, interested, contingent, and constantly evolving process of knowledge production in their fields. And we want to understand the role that supervisory sessions play in the formation of the rhetorical subject. Finally, we are curious about if and how the rhetorical nature of knowledge-making emerges in the conversation between students and supervisors about dissertation writing.

We explore these questions by considering recorded excerpts of those conversations. The comments reveal the extent to which supervisors’ feedback is designed to help doctoral students locate themselves appropriately and effectively in the rhetorical situations that produce their discipline’s knowledge. We hope our illustration opens up new opportunities for considering the role a rhetorical understanding of knowledge and identity work can play in making these acts of location and subject formation subject to critical exploration.

For this purpose, we begin by considering the particular role of doctoral education, and, specifically, the apprenticeship relationship between supervisors and doctoral students in the reproduction of the academic workplace and its practices. In doing so, we exploit the advantages a workplace learning perspective has for our understanding of doctoral supervision and its role in introducing students to that workplace. We then draw on rhetorical genre theory to conceptualize the specific knowledge and identity work that constitutes doctoral education. Next, framed by this rhetorical understanding, we present excerpts from doctoral supervision sessions as well as interviews with participants in order to trace some of the ways in which supervision sessions locate students in their research communities and shape them as rhetorical subjects. We conclude by exploring opportunities that arise from an understanding of doctoral writing as a deeply rhetorical and epistemic practice for a critical examination of disciplinary knowledge and identity questions as well as for the future of doctoral education in a knowledge-intensive society.

## UNDERSTANDING DOCTORAL WRITING THROUGH THE LENS OF WORKPLACE LEARNING

Because the doctoral education cycle focuses on original knowledge production, doctoral students play a very different role in universities than do undergraduate or even Master's students. Unlike undergraduate students and many Master's students, doctoral students must ultimately be able to participate in the ongoing knowledge-making endeavors of their research communities. Although some of them may pursue careers outside of academe, they seek membership in a research community in order to be able to contribute to that community's knowledge-making goals. In many ways, PhD students are newcomers in the academic workplace, serving an apprenticeship under the guidance of oldtimers whose task it is to help move students towards competent participation in the ways of producing knowledge that are appropriate to a particular academic community. Accordingly, we feel that the interactions between supervisors and doctoral students are best examined in the context of workplace learning (e.g., Engeström & Middleton, 1998; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger 1998), and particularly the learning of workplace writing (e.g., Bazerman & Paradis, 1991; Dias, Freedman, Medway, & Paré, 1999; Dias & Paré, 2000; Odell & Goswami, 1982, 1985; Spilka, 1993; Winsor, 1996). As we have argued elsewhere (Paré & Le Maistre, 2006a, 2006b), mentorship within organizations is often a distributed affair, with direction and instruction coming from many sources; nonetheless, in academia as in other contexts, the supervisory dyad remains a key relationship in the induction process. Examining this relationship through the lens of workplace learning gives us a number of advantages for understanding the ways in which supervisors help move students toward competent participation in their research community's knowledge-making practices.

To begin with, we hope that treating university departments as workplaces will help us de-mythologize the PhD process by knocking some of the ivory off the tower and making the doctorate a transition to working life rather than an initiation into some kind of secret society. It is not that we want to equate doctoral education to widget production, but we do want to acknowledge that some part of it is—or could be—a training in practices and procedures that are straightforward and teachable, though they are often learned by awkward (and sometimes painful) stumbling, trial and error, or imitation rather than direct instruction. Often constituting a kind of “invisible curriculum,” these practices are an academic community's knowledge-making activities. They involve the implicit (and tacit) regularities and routines of the discipline as well as the rifts, affiliations, allegiances and other divisions that characterize disciplines and help construct the subjectivities of new members (Green, 2005). They are usually learned, but not taught, enacted, but not articulated.

In addition, a workplace perspective on doctoral writing helps us uncover some of the unique characteristics of the academic workplace, two of which are particularly relevant for our study: first, in the academic workplace, researchers engage in their core activity, the making of knowledge, largely outside of their immediate organizational contexts—that is, outside of their departments and universities, within their far-flung disciplinary communities. In fact, the value they bring to their immediate organizational contexts is largely determined by the extent to which peers in those dispersed disciplinary communities accept and cite their knowledge claims, support their research proposals, recommend their articles for publication, or propose their work for research awards or their names for prestigious positions in their disciplinary communities and beyond. For doctoral students, this characteristic of the academic workplace represents particular challenges because disciplinary practices are not as easily observable in their daily physical spaces as knowledge-making practices might be in workplaces in other types of organizations. Instead, aside from occasional conferences, these practices are observable predominantly in the form of written discourse—in print, whether on paper or on the screen.

And this is the second key characteristic of the academic workplace: because knowledge is made in research communities that tend to be widely distributed, much social interaction happens in writing, be it proposing one's research, publishing one's work, reviewing the research of other colleagues for peer-reviewed publications and conferences, and more. As a result, the academic workplace is probably one of the most highly writing-intensive workplaces imaginable. For doctoral students, the challenge here is that social interaction and practices are not only difficult to observe, but that the written forums where they can be observed have been taught in a largely rhetorical way throughout their education—that is, as a matter of mere "information" or "sources." Accordingly, until they begin their doctoral education, students learn to think of articles and books as "sources" of information and facts for research projects. Hardly ever are they taught to regard written discourse as forums for social interaction, where knowledge claims are staked out, tested, questioned, suppressed, ignored, relegated to footnotes, defended, negotiated, accepted, or advanced; where scholarly reputations are built, negotiated, or destroyed; and where scholars align themselves with or against their colleagues, depending on their various epistemological, ideological, or ontological commitments. That is, the deeply rhetorical, interested, and situated nature of knowledge-making has remained shrouded or unspoken throughout much of their education.

In addition to helping us de-mythologize the PhD process and foregrounding key characteristics of academic settings, the workplace learning lens also provides us with the analytic power of contemporary theories of workplace and situated learning, including the developmental sequence predicted by Lave and

Wenger's (1991) notion of legitimate peripheral participation. That trajectory describes the learner moving toward competent practice through participation in a series of authentic and ever-more difficult workplace tasks under the direction and guidance of workplace veterans. So, for example, we might track a graduate student's progress from teaching assistant to seminar leader to undergraduate course instructor and, finally, as a new professor, to instructor and supervisor at the graduate level, where newcomer becomes oldtimer. Or, following a progression more relevant to the study reported here, we might trace development from course essay to comprehensive examination to dissertation and journal article.

Similarly tracing the trajectory of graduate student community membership, Prior (1998) identifies three modes of graduate student participation: "passing," "procedural display," and "deep participation" (pp. 100-103). Although he is careful to point out that these modes are not "a general stage model" (p. 100), Prior does suggest that the three modes "do capture ... some important patterns of participation in school-based disciplinary enculturation" (p. 101). In our own discussions, we have also considered three types of participation, which we see as characterizing an increasing sense of membership or disciplinary identification: undergraduate roles are often those of eavesdroppers, listening in on the disciplinary conversation and reporting it back to the professor (an actual member); Master's students' roles are, in Bakhtinian terms, often those of ventriloquists, able to sound like participants, but really only channeling the voices of actual members; doctoral students—if they are fortunate—find themselves increasingly involved as participants in work that matters, in work that will be public and that might affect others. Even more, as Golde and Walker (2006) suggest, they may come to see themselves as "stewards of their discipline." Their access to and engagement in the range of practices that constitute the community's work result in the "deep participation" to which Prior refers. That transformation marks the beginnings of membership and participation and is accomplished largely through writing as knowledge and identity work.

## DOCTORAL WRITING AS KNOWLEDGE AND IDENTITY WORK: A GENRE PERSPECTIVE

To understand the knowledge and identity work at the heart of this membership trajectory, we have depended on rhetorical genre theory (e.g., Artemeva & Freedman, 2006, this volume; Bawarshi & Reiff, 2010; Bazerman, 1988; Bazerman, Bonini, & Figueiredo, 2009; Campbell & Jamieson, 1978; Coe, Lingard, & Teslenko, 2002; Devitt, 2004; Freedman & Medway, 1994; Giltrow, 2002, this volume; Miller, 1984; Paré, 2005; Schryer, 1993, this volume), one mani-

festation of a perspective in the study of language that sees writing not as a set of portable skills, but as situated social practices. Genre theory assumes that repeated textual practices arise in human collectives because they produce material, intellectual, ideological, and/or relational outcomes valued by the collective or a sub-group within the collective. These practices have, at their core, hard copy or electronic texts that display similarity across instances of their production. Such typical texts are what we used to call genres—that is, documents that, over time, exhibit similar patterns in linguistic, lexical, structural, topical, and intentional features.

More recently, beginning with Campbell and Jamieson (1978) and Miller (1984), genre theorists have expanded their focus out from that physical text to the regularized outcomes, actions, or consequences of generic literate practice, as well as the contextual and conceptual regularities that shape the production of standardized texts: the institutional and intellectual processes by which participants identify and assemble appropriate resources and arguments, the collaborative activities—such as meetings, co-authoring, peer reviewing—through which texts develop, as well as the patterns and habits associated with the distribution, consumption, and archiving of texts. For example, the repeatedly occurring need for developing new researchers in a given field has predominantly been met through the genre of the dissertation, which over time has developed a somewhat stabilized appearance in that field—certain similarities in structure, types of argumentation, ways of positioning claims, ways of citing others—as well as regularized social processes involved in the production of a dissertation, such as supervision meetings and exams, that have become expected, valued, and normalized in a given disciplinary and institutional location.

For the purposes of our study, three insights from genre theory are particularly pertinent: First, genres maintain and regularize the production of certain kinds of knowledge outcomes valued in a given research community; in short, genres are epistemic. That is, genres regularize who can participate in a genre and in what role; what is appropriate to be said, what not, in what order; what kind of previous knowledge can or must be included or excluded (e.g., how practitioner knowledge or knowledge from different disciplines is to be handled, etc.); what kinds of knowledge claims can be made, how, based on what evidence; what makes an argument credible; how data can or must be generated, justified, and discussed; or what disciplinary orthodoxies must be reproduced and which ones can be questioned. As Graves (this volume) illustrates, for example, researchers depend on understanding the kinds of arguments that will persuade colleagues to accept their knowledge claims—that certain facts do indeed exist. Or as Hyland (this volume) illustrates, researchers depend on shared practices of social interaction that have evolved over time to enable their collective knowl-

edge-making endeavors. In short, genres provide the spaces that assemble, enable, and constrain knowledge production in ways that have evolved in research communities through repetition over time in order to meet a given community's knowledge-making goals.

Second, genres inscribe, enable, and constrain not only a range of particular knowledge-making practices and outcomes, but also the identities (Bazerman, 2002; Green, 2005; Kamler & Thomson, 2006; Paré, 2002, 2005) that make the production of specialized knowledge in a given field possible. In Bazerman's (2002) words, "genre shapes intentions, motives, expectations, attention, perception, affect, and interpretive frame" (p. 14). For example, through writing a dissertation, participants learn the extent to which they must distance themselves from their knowledge claims through the use of the passive voice, for instance; or conversely, they learn the extent to which they must reflect on their role as researchers in the knowledge-making process in order to render their knowledge claims less open to questioning and perhaps more credible in a given research community. Or in literature reviews, which Kamler and Thomson (2006) describe as "the quintessential site of identity work" (p. 29), doctoral students learn to align themselves on contested terrain with certain disciplinary groups or factions by adhering to and reproducing certain disciplinary patterns, regularities, and assumptions (Kamler & Thomson, 2006). From a genre perspective, therefore, writing is deeply implicated in the development of identities: it is through their participation in genres that writers gradually learn to (re)produce certain types of disciplined knowledge as well as the identities that make the production of this disciplined knowledge possible. Accordingly, completion of a dissertation in anthropology will produce researchers with disciplined ways of thinking that allow for the production of the kind of knowledge that is valued in anthropology by identifying with and adhering to specific disciplinary paradigms; completion of dissertations in physics or social work or any other field will likewise produce different types of thinkers and thinking, including the kinds of epistemological stances that are valued in those research communities. In other words, rhetorically, the process of identity or subject formation involves the act of locating oneself in an ongoing disciplinary knowledge-making endeavor.

Part of this disciplinary identity formation and location involves producing and reproducing what Sullivan (1996) calls disciplinary "orthodoxies" (p. 227). According to Sullivan, these orthodoxies include four kinds of disciplinary knowledge: The first type of knowledge, a discipline's "narrative knowledge," explains the current overall ways of viewing the world—why the things being studied are the way they are according to current disciplinary lore. The second kind of knowledge involves assumptions about the ways things are done (methodologies, ontologies, and epistemologies) in the discipline—the way the

disciplinary group goes about the business of research, which includes both the explicit rules of methodologies and the underlying tacit assumptions (about the world, about what we can know and how) on which they rest. The third kind of knowledge is knowledge about the “system of social and power relationships” (p. 229) in the disciplinary group: a territorial map of who’s who in a given field—who should be credited with what accomplishment, who can or should be cited with whom, who should not be cited and why not, and who should not be cited together (e.g., which researchers do not make good bedfellows conceptually) and why not. Finally, the fourth kind of knowledge is “doctrinal knowledge” (p. 230), which involves explanations of specific instances, artefacts, or events. They constitute, in Sullivan’s words, “episodic narratives” (p. 230).

As Sullivan notes, for researchers to have their knowledge claims accepted (i.e., to claim a contribution), researchers must allege innovation in the fourth kind of knowledge—knowledge about specific instances—and sometimes in the area of methodologies (though rarely about the tacit assumptions underlying these methodologies). Knowledge claims that question the overall conceptual narrative of the field, the assumptions underlying its ways of doing things, or even disciplinary hierarchies, are much riskier and therefore relatively rare. And omissions on the disciplinary landscape may be highly political statements of epistemological or ideological alignment or contestation. Given that new researchers begin with their previous conceptualization of academic discourse as “sources of information,” how, then, do they develop disciplinary subject positions that allow them to participate in these disciplinary knowledge-making practices? As Green (2005) notes, this development of a disciplinary subject position that allows for the production of disciplinary knowledge is much of what doctoral work and supervision are about: “Supervision ... must be seen as a (pedagogic) practice producing subjects, as directly and actively implicated in the socio-symbolic work of subject formation, or the discursive construction of subjectivity: the constitution of the academic subject” (p. 152). And as we illustrate below, that process of subject formation is a deeply rhetorical process, and whether or not it is recognized as such, it has deep consequences for students as well as for their disciplines.

The third key insight from genre theory that is important for our purposes here is the notion that genres have considerable normalizing force. Because of their rootedness in community tradition and routine—their evolution through constant repetition over time, genres become part of the tacit realm of automatic, ritualized practice, appearing as universal or “common sense” to long-time participants in a genre (Paré, 2002, 2005). This normalizing force has a number of consequences for knowledge production and, in particular, for the participation of newcomers in collective knowledge-making practices, harboring what we have elsewhere described as a paradox (Starke-Meyerring, 2011)



that proves highly consequential for students as well as for supervisors (Paré, 2011): On the one hand, as they sink into “common sense,” genres provide some degree of stability for efficient interaction for those who have been socialized as participants in these genres. On the other hand, their existence in the tacit realm makes genres less accessible to critical examination and questioning; rather, they become “just the way things are done.” And importantly, because long-time participants are immersed in them, genres appear universal, shrouding their historical evolution and specificity to the community in which they evolved. Importantly, for newcomers, what appears as universal to long-time members represents new territory with established, normalized ways of interacting that shape expectations of a genre long before newcomers enter the scene. As Horne (this volume) shows, this dilemma is a considerable source of intimidation, anxiety, and feelings of vulnerability for newcomers. And for doctoral students, this dilemma presents difficult challenges as students aim to participate in a community’s normalized knowledge-making practices (Starke-Meyerring, 2011). As we show here, this dilemma also presents challenges for supervisors who must explain the knowledge-making practices of their research communities—practices they can perform but not necessarily articulate.

## DOCTORAL SUPERVISION: LOCATING STUDENTS, SHAPING ACADEMIC SUBJECTS

To study the ways in which supervision sessions work to locate students in the ongoing knowledge-making practices of their research communities, we draw on audio-recorded supervisory sessions between faculty members and their PhD students as well as on interviews with students and supervisors about these sessions. All sessions were focused on discussing dissertation proposals or chapter drafts; the topics addressed in these sessions ranged across the sub-disciplines of Education. Our analysis of these supervision sessions and interviews yielded five themes that shed light on the process of locating students in disciplinary knowledge-making practices.

### *Theme 1: Competing institutional and disciplinary locations*

One of the first things to notice about supervision and doctoral writing is their location at the intersection of multiple communities and activities, a location that prompted Green (2005) to observe the “ecosocial” nature of supervision. Similarly, others have referred to this complex setting as the site of “competing activity systems” (Lundell & Beach, 2003) or as “laminations of activity” (Prior, 1998;

Prior & Min, 2008). Both supervisors and students participate in many other collectives, both within and beyond the university. But we wish to draw attention to the ways in which the supervisory dyad functions as the intersection of two workplaces in particular—the local world of the university department and the dispersed world of the academic discipline. As Golde and Walker (2006) note, the academic department is “the nexus of the discipline and the institution” (p. 8). For the individual scholar, the department is home base for participation in a highly diffuse and distributed disciplinary community; thus, the student and supervisor might well be the only members of their particular community in the department—digital literacy researchers, for example, in a department of curriculum and instruction. At the same time, academic departments and faculties have their own history, traditions, and practices. In both the local and far-flung communities, the individual joins collective activities that make, market, and competitively value knowledge in a variety of goods and services: from courses and programs of study to proposals, grant applications, and journal articles. PhD students are learning to participate simultaneously in these dual, articulated communities. They must learn to act with and within the rules and regulations, divisions of labour, and mediational means of two communities of practice.

Our data allowed us to identify exchanges that pertain to the regulatory practices of the local community, the deadlines, procedures, relevant personnel, and rituals of the department: when comprehensive exams are written, what forms must accompany them, when progress reporting forms must be submitted with whose signature, and so on. Examples are not necessary; they are the administrative trivia of our university lives.

However, many of the institutional regulations and practices intersect in significant ways with student opportunities for exploring and developing disciplinary identities; they have deep implications for student’s knowledge and identity work, specifically for how students are locating themselves and being located in disciplinary landscapes. When departments require a quantitative research methods course, extra-departmental representation on doctoral committees, or timed comprehensive examinations, for example, they are creating the conditions for the student’s intellectual work and identity development. Perhaps one of the most prominent sites of intersection between institutional and disciplinary locations is that of the supervisory committee. As the committee must draw on a limited number of department members for at least some of its composition, it may well bring together not only members from different disciplines, but also members from the same discipline with diverging or even incommensurable epistemological, ideological, or ontological commitments. Such intersections between institutional and disciplinary locations in supervisory committees can lead to considerable tension for students as each committee member seeks to orient the student

from a particular disciplinary location, as this student's comment on working with a committee member illustrates (St = Student; Su = Supervisor):

St: So she [committee member] – at first, she wanted me to scrap my chapter on activists, and I was kind of upset and I really didn't know what to say. I didn't want to just disregard her comments. I said that her comments were very different from the other ones I had received [from other committee members], and I was wondering if we could meet the committee and kind of decide where I would go and she said that she was not open to [deal?] with that.

The student here is encountering competing accounts of disciplinary narratives—of what should and should not be included, and it seems that for the committee members these expectations are normalized, as genre theory would lead us to expect. As we have noted elsewhere (Paré, Starke-Meyerring, & McAlpine, 2009), in some cases, the dissertation proposal and the dissertation itself may well be the most complex documents that researchers ever write, as they negotiate their committee's competing and perhaps conflicting or incommensurable genre worlds, with all the implicit epistemological alignments and expectations of such worlds. While researchers may eventually circumvent those negotiations simply by publishing in journals that are compatible with their own disciplinary values and assumptions, the doctoral committee may place students right in the middle of conflicting normalized disciplinary expectations.

How then do supervision sessions work to help students negotiate competing institutional and disciplinary locations? From our data, one strategy seems to be to provide evidence of the appropriateness of the students' disciplinary locations through publication, that is, through peer-reviewed verification of the student's disciplinary alignment, assumptions, and values. In the following excerpt, a supervisor offers such a strategy, advising the student to indicate that she already has community support for her argument:

Su: I think maybe what you should say is – have a footnote to say in that chapter – that some of this work has already been published in an international journal, or whatever, because that's gone through a peer review process, it's been published and [that] tells people that you've already got the seal of approval from your academic peers in an international journal.

As this excerpt shows, the more integration into the disciplinary community the new researcher can demonstrate—for example, through previous pub-

lications—the more credible her PhD thesis will appear to her departmental committee. However, these sessions also reflect the dilemma of newcomer encounters with normalized discourse practices. Although students encounter the “politics” of conflicting disciplinary locations, they are left to wonder if such politics are simply a matter of idiosyncratic quirks among department members. Without conscious attention to these questions, the deeply rhetorical nature of knowledge making may remain shrouded to them.

*Theme 2: Locations on the disciplinary map*

A similar theme emerges in the consideration of external examiners of a thesis, although here the act of locating the student may be less constrained by the composition of the department. However, the act is no less rhetorical: just as in the consideration of departmental committee members, the act of location here has consequences for whether knowledge produced by students is accepted or rejected, whether they become members or not. Consider the excerpt below, in which a supervisor explains to a student why it is important to think carefully about the names of external examiners for her nearly-finished dissertation (according to university rules, three are listed, and one is randomly chosen by the graduate school to evaluate the completed dissertation):

Su: The thing is, with PhD theses, you've got to be careful about who you choose to be external examiners. Someone like [Prof. X], for example, might fail this [dissertation] because, you know, I mean, there's a bunch of people, of which [Prof. X] is part, and I think that she'd have huge problems with this, okay? There are other people who wouldn't, and who would read it the same way that [supervisor and another committee member] would read it, you know. And I think that's who we'll send it to. We'll put them down as the examiners. There's, if you like, a politics to it, right? And I've seen students, a few students every so often – very, very smart, bright students – and they've got very low evaluations simply because their position in the thesis doesn't correspond with that of the examiner, and they pasted them on it.... I saw in one case where the examiner basically wrote a page of comments on the fact that the student hadn't used her work.

By describing a potential examiner as a member of an opposing group, the supervisor is helping the student locate herself in the discipline's “system of social and power relationships” (Sullivan, 1996, p. 229). The excerpt is a prime

example of a supervisor trying to alert the student to the disciplinary map, the contradictions, and deeply held conflicting values and disciplinary knowledges the student will need to navigate. As the supervisor notes, while some researchers “would have huge problems” with a set of assumptions or methodological choices, “there are other people who would not, and who would read it the same way [as the supervisor would].” Since the student cannot possibly be expected to align with the underlying assumptions, conceptual, and hierarchical narratives of conflicting disciplinary factions, the supervisor attempts to help the student choose an external examiner whose ways of conceptualizing disciplinary narratives and hierarchies align with those of the student’s work.

As Sullivan (1996) notes, rewriting or questioning underlying disciplinary narratives or hierarchical maps is a risky undertaking for any scholar, let alone a new researcher, who will likely be less aware of the conceptual narratives, methodological assumptions, or hierarchical maps specific disciplinary factions may consider appropriate. What is unclear from this example, however, is to what extent the student realizes that what the supervisor is talking about is not simply the individual idiosyncrasy of a particular professor or even of a particular group of people, but the tacit calls of disciplinary groups for allegiance to particular conceptualizations of disciplinary knowledges and perspectives. Other than the word “politics,” the conversation does not contain any shared language or terminology with which student and supervisor could explore the dynamics of disciplinarity and the politics of disciplinary subject formation in the genre of the PhD dissertation. As a result, conflicting disciplinary ways of knowing may sometimes be glossed over, sometimes avoided, and sometimes, perhaps, simply suffered. Without direct attention to the rhetorical nature of knowledge making, alignment, and subject formation, students may find it difficult to learn how to make decisions about where and how to locate themselves, where to place what arguments, or when and how to engage in discussions of competing theories.

In guiding students to locations on the disciplinary map, supervisors also explicitly attend to the current narratives of those maps and help students understand whose theories have currency, who should be placed where in the hierarchy, with how much attention, and why. So, for instance, in discussing a dissertation’s literature review, a supervisor says the following:

Su: A lot of adult education theory goes back to them [Gramsci and Freire]. So I think what you should do is figure out, when you read this again, just make sure that you’ve genuflected enough to them.

Similarly, in the next example, from a session focused on a dissertation proposal, the student is wondering how to draw the disciplinary “map” in her thesis,

whom to include, and whom to leave out. The supervisor directs the student to a start based on the student's research question and evokes a "we" or "somebody" audience that needs to understand this map:

St: I also don't know how much I need to report on previous research in institutional theory in my Conceptual Framework [section].

Su: Well, enough so that we understand what you're using and what you're adding. So, I would say you don't have to be too verbose, but enough so that somebody can understand the pieces that you're putting together.

Although the comment sounds straightforward, chances are that once the map is starting to take shape, the student will learn that the "we" or "somebody" will likely have more expectations of how the current lay of the disciplinary land is to be rendered, such as who will be on the map, next to whom, with how much territory, and more.

### *Theme 3: The logics of disciplinary locations*

Much of the time in the sessions we recorded was taken up with talking through sections of the draft texts, sometimes to determine if problems identified in earlier sessions had been addressed, and sometimes to uncover new problems. During these parts of the conversation, supervisors offered advice in their role as critical readers: clarify a term, expand a definition, provide a transition, reach a conclusion, cite a source. Again, in many cases, the supervisor appears to be discussing a universal reader—someone concerned with things like sentence-level logic (cohesion), repetition, or topical progression:

Su: Here you sort of rapidly converge on something, and I don't have enough justification for what led you there. And then you need some sort of conclusion here: So, what does this tell us? Research in this field is fragmented? Underdeveloped? Can they [strands of research] be integrated? Or is [fragmentation] a choice? So, you want to give a kind of sum-up. "Here's where things stand. Here's where I see the strengths and weaknesses of each."

There seems the possibility here of explicit instruction in disciplinary rhetoric—that is, the situated ways of knowing in the discipline, including the range

of arguments that are available, called for, or possible in advancing a claim; how much justification is needed for certain kinds of claims; why such justification is needed; what kind of evidence is considered persuasive and why; what kinds of conclusions are to be drawn from a given discussion; or in Sullivan's (1996) words, how the logic of a conceptual narrative is to be developed in a given research community. But we saw few examples of such overt attention to a community's knowledge-making practices. Even where readers were more explicitly evoked, they were characterized as generic readers, as anyone who happened to be reading:

Su: One thing that you need to show in this thesis is what I would call a guiding thread – a sort of conceptual, theoretical backbone that threads through the whole thesis, and that's learning in your case.... [Later in the transcript:] Again, you need ... that guiding thread, the backbone of the thesis. Like a sentence or a short paragraph here and there to pull the reader back into the thesis and to make it clear to them that this is not just a series of essays you've slung together.... When you're writing a thesis, one of the things you need are road signs to guide the readers through the thesis prepare them intellectually to expect what's coming. And, if you don't do that, then they get lost, they get confused, and they get pissed off. So, what you've got to do is continually remind people what you're about.

As Hyland (2004, this volume) shows, however, such "road signs" or meta-discourse are likewise highly situated; that is, they are specific to research communities, serving their particular epistemic needs. A logical connection between ideas that may need to be articulated to an outsider, for example, may well be the only logical connection imaginable to insiders and thus mark a writer who foregrounds that connection as an outsider. Disciplinarity in these examples, then, remains largely implicit, unarticulated. In referring to the conclusion, the supervisor makes tactical statements—concrete questions—that provide a procedure for the student to follow, now and in future academic writing, presumably regardless of disciplinary location. Although the conclusion is largely about engaging in the ongoing research conversation, about what the discussion so far means for the research conversation and for the student's argument, little attention is paid to the rhetorical act of engaging in an ongoing conversation or why such arguments are necessary, what role they play in the collective knowledge-making endeavor or in shaping the specific contribution of the student's work, and so on.

*Theme 4: Locations beyond academe*

To a large extent, the dissertation is a learning genre—one that is mostly concerned with disciplinary subject formation. As such, dissertations are read mostly by committee members; rarely do practitioners or the public, for example, seek out dissertations to inform their work or other decisions. In qualitative research, however, particularly work employing action or participatory action methodologies, dissertations may well present students with unique complexities of locations beyond academe in that their dissertation may well have an important effect on the participants who have likely built a relationship of trust with the doctoral student researcher. In the next excerpt, a student expresses anxiety about the effect of her action research at the college which is her research site:

St: I'm feeling more pressure than I thought I would because it's not just my mom who's going to be reading this, and you. [The administration at the research site] is very interested in this work.... So, here I was, I was speaking to four deans and a vice-dean, and everyone kept saying to me, "really looking forward to reading," and I was sitting there thinking, "why are my hands breaking out in a sweat?" ... And it's not that I think that my work won't be of the highest quality, but I feel now the pressure of doing it in a very efficient timeline so that the results are relevant and that I hold up my end of the bargain.

The "bargain" this student must fulfill is the dissertation research she promised to share with her participants in exchange for access to the college. After an academic career in which the sole response to academic texts was a grade and a few notes scribbled by a professor (or TA), the doctoral student is suddenly faced with an authentic rhetorical task, as her supervisor's response confirms:

Su: It's good that you're thinking about your audience—it's really good that you're thinking of your audience—because ultimately if you want this PhD to do something, at the end of the day, you've got to think about who that audience is going to be and how is it going to be of use to them. And it seems to me that's where you want to position yourself.

We don't believe these types of comments would be made at the Master's or undergraduate levels. The research dissertation is often the first academic text that presents the student with such an authentic rhetorical task beyond aca-



deme, and in these comments there is a concern with a “real” audience—that is, one beyond the department and the committee. One of the expectations of belonging to a community is the willingness and ability to communicate beyond its borders. Thus, a key part of learning for doctoral students is shifting their gaze, or extending their locations, to the broader communities—academic and non-academic—that might value their research. This expectation is increasingly being made explicit in the doctoral education literature. For instance, Richardson (2003) sets as a key outcome of Education PhDs that students learn to view research as socially situated and develop sensitivity to different discourses in different settings and with different audiences. And the European Community has developed a common expectation of PhDs that they can effectively interact not just with peers, but with the larger scholarly community, and society in general (Joint Quality Initiative, 2004).

However, the deeply rhetorical nature of such knowledge work across academic and public, community or practitioner locations, remains unaddressed, although it has serious consequences for how disciplinary knowledge may affect communities outside academe. For example, research produced in particular academic locations, with the particular epistemological, ontological, and ideological subject positions they inscribe, may well co-opt, deny, or suppress local knowledges; or it may reproduce dominant class and power structures, facilitate the colonization of people, and reproduce social marginalization (e.g., Canagarajah, 2002; Giltrow, 2002).

*Theme 5: War stories, or normalizing the newcomer’s encounters with new locations*

The final theme we would like to consider reflects a common task for doctoral supervisors: allaying the doubts or rising panic students experience from time to time.

St: I was a little scared at first [that a published paper was too close to her own work].

Su: No, no, you see that’s a common thing. I suffered from that when I was doing my doctorate. I thought that you had to do something that was so innovative, so completely new. And yet, it doesn’t work that way. It needs to be founded on [others’] work, but it will never be exactly the same.

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St: I still don't know [what I'm looking for].

Su: It's normal it's still fuzzy at this point, but you are at the point where you can start writing out what specific questions you would ask.

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St: It's hard. I know when I was doing my thesis, you're just so close to it. You can't see the forest anymore, you're looking at the bark.

As the excerpts suggest, the supervisors identify with the students, recalling their own struggles and encouraging the student to feel like a colleague. They make clear that this aspect of the journey is normal for those entering the community. Here we see strong elements of support, affirming the difficulties and attendant emotions that are part of the work of the dissertation. Since isolation is so prevalent as a doctoral experience (Golde, 2005), and attrition particularly frequent during the dissertation process, this type of support may, in fact, be a critical but overlooked feature of these conversations.

To be sure, normalizing the dilemma of entering new landscapes that seem so “common sense” to those inhabiting them may well soothe the sense of anxiety and vulnerability students experience over this process of location and subject formation. And yet, here again, we see an opportunity for supervisors, students, and their research communities to make the established genres that regularize their discipline's ways of knowing subject to critical exploration: dissertation writing is a project of rhetorical subject formation that reproduces world views, epistemologies, ideologies, and ontologies that sustain disciplinary knowledge-making practices. We see thoughtful attention to the rhetorical nature of disciplinary knowledge making and subject formation as vital to doctoral education.

At the very least, critical engagement in the rhetorical nature of subject formation can help free students from a position where they are the object of subject formation—being located by someone for whom the disciplinary landscape has become normalized. Rather, by attending to what we might call “the rhetoric of subject formation,” students may not only be able to transcend the anxiety and vulnerability that accompanies the dilemma of entering normalized landscapes, but they may also develop some sense of empowerment over how to make decisions about their locations on disciplinary maps and their participation in disciplinary knowledge-making practices. Indeed, becoming stewards of

their disciplines, in Golde and Walker's (2006) terms, may require nothing less than a robust rhetorical awareness of and participation in disciplinary knowledge and identity work.

## CONCLUSION

Joining the disciplinary research discussion is a challenging task for new researchers—one that involves a complex process of knowledge and identity work. Understanding this work through the lens of workplace learning allowed us to direct our attention to the writing-intensive nature of the academic workplace and to the role that supervision of doctoral student writing plays in this work. As we illustrated, during discussions of the dissertation, supervisors help students locate themselves on complex disciplinary maps. These rhetorical locations constitute sites of tension between competing epistemologies, ideologies, and ontologies; they inscribe specific disciplinary logics; and they interact in complex ways with locations beyond academe. Thus supervisors are deeply implicated in the shaping of rhetorical subjects.

However, this process of subject formation—if conducted uncritically—reproduces and normalizes “common” sense disciplinary ways of knowing and renders them universal. If the rhetorical nature of the process of subject formation is shrouded in common sense, students are given few opportunities to reflect on who they are becoming, how they are aligning themselves, or whether they wish to reproduce certain disciplinary logics and values. Therefore, as we have argued here, a robust rhetorical awareness of and participation in disciplinary knowledge and identity work is vital to advancing not only knowledge production within and across disciplines themselves, but also to increasing student agency in the production of the subject positions that produce that knowledge.

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