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Socio-cultural Interactions and ESL Graduate Student Enculturation: A Cross Sectional Analysis

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To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Ethan W. Kruse entitled "Socio-cultural Interactions and ESL Graduate Student Enculturation: A Cross Sectional Analysis." I have examined the final electronic copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, with a major in English.

Ilona Leki, Major Professor

We have read this dissertation and recommend its acceptance:

Mary Jo Reiff, Bethany Dumas, Ron Taylor

Accepted for the Council:

Carolyn R. Hodges

Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School

(Original signatures are on file with official student records.)

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Ilona Leki
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We have read this dissertation and
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Mary Jo Reiff

Bethany Dumas

Ron Taylor

Accepted for the Council:

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Vice Provost and Dean of
Graduate Studies

(Original signatures are on file with official student records.)

SOCIO-CULTURAL INTERACTIONS AND ESL GRADUATE STUDENT
ENCULTURATION: A CROSS SECTIONAL ANALYSIS

A Dissertation
Presented for the
Doctor of Philosophy Degree

The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Ethan W. Krase
December 2003

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DEDICATION

To Mom, Dad, and Ben, who always knew I could,
and to Jill and Willa, who bring light to my days

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

There are many people without whom this work would not have been possible. I would like to begin by thanking the five graduate students who agreed to participate in this project. Each of them gave so much to the research, patiently and thoroughly answering my questions and granting me extended access to their academic lives. Not only were they interesting research participants, but they were also enjoyable people. I will always be grateful for their assistance. My thanks also go to the professors who agreed to be interviewed. Their candor added considerable definition to the study.

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation reports findings from a five-month qualitative study of a group of five ESL students pursuing graduate degrees in disciplines in the humanities. Focusing on disciplinary enculturation processes, the study sets out to answer two primary research questions: 1) What roles do literacy activities play in disciplinary enculturation? 2) What sorts of subject positions do ESL learners occupy as they enculturate into academic discourse communities? Answers to these questions are important because they can lend definition to the obstacles that confront ESL learners as they attempt to move towards professional participation in target discourse communities.

Anchored in the language-related scholarship of Halliday, Bakhtin, Vygotsky, Gee, Fairclough, and Foucault, the study uses interview, observation, and document analysis techniques to examine the ways advanced ESL learners' literacy activities are imbricated in social, cultural, rhetorical, and political contexts. Resonating with formulations of writing as a social endeavor, the findings reveal how learners' socio-cultural relationships with discourse community insiders influenced their capacity to negotiate discursive conventions. The project also contributes to our understanding of the political dynamics of second language literacy acquisition by examining the ways participants' socio-cultural relationships influenced their subject positioning in target discourse communities. Further, analysis of the strategies learners used to reconcile what were often sizable linguistic and cultural gaps between the literacy practices of their home cultures and those of English-language discourse communities brings understanding to the ways ESL learners' educational histories play into their

enculturation experiences. Although, as previous researchers have suggested, disciplinary enculturation certainly concerns broad disciplinary norms and conventions, this study focuses on the more local and immediate web of interactions and relationships that can either constrict or support learners' academic participation. Ultimately, this dissertation enriches notions of ESL writers by exploring how they, as much as the texts they produce, are situated in socially, culturally, rhetorically, and politically complex fields of academic practice.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Background to the Study

In the spring of 2001 at the International TESOL Conference in St. Louis, Missouri, Dwight Atkinson addressed the state of second language (L2) composition studies in what he referred to as the “post-process era.” His central point was that the field of L2 writing should be in regular dialogue with postmodern theories of communication, that the advent of such a dialogue had already placed L2 composition studies on the verge of what Atkinson referred to as a “paradigm shift.” His evocation of Maxine Hairston’s (1982) famous “Winds of Change” essay no doubt deliberate, Atkinson described how postmodern conceptions of communication are forcing L2 composition studies to reconsider the utility of the process approach to composition instruction. Citing a recent proliferation of scholarly attention to the ways academic writing connects to theories of power, community, politics, economics, culture, and self and identity, Atkinson argued that the process approach as traditionally researched and taught greatly oversimplifies the constellation of issues that overarch academic literacy activities. Not unlike first language (L1) compositionist Bruce McComiskey’s (2000) notion that the “post” in post-process is best understood to mean “extension” rather than “rejection” of the process-writing paradigm (p.47), Atkinson suggested that the most accurate way to characterize L2 composition studies in the postmodern era was actually not as “post-process” but rather as “process-plus.” He concluded with a call to supplement the process approach in both practice and research with attention to the ways social, political, and cultural forces shape academic writing.

If Atkinson is right to characterize L2 composition studies as undergoing a paradigmatic shift into a “process-plus” era, and given the field’s increased scholarly attention to cultural, social, and political issues that are outside the regular purview of the process-writing paradigm there is reason to suspect that he is, how should L2 compositionists respond? While this question opens up more ground than a single critical undertaking can cover, it is nevertheless vital for L2 composition studies to begin asking such questions because they provide access to a rich and emerging dialogue between postmodernism and the field of L2 writing. Although scholars have addressed some of the implications of postmodernity for L2 composition studies (see especially Atkinson, 1999; Casanave, 2002; Pennycook; 2001; Prior, 1998), at present the relationship between L2 writing and postmodernism remains undertheorized. For L1 composition studies, Faigley’s (1992) *Fragments of Rationality: Postmodernity and the Subject of Composition* offers what has become a widely accepted narrative of the coming of postmodernity to the field of L1 composition studies. While L2 composition studies can see much of itself in Faigley’s text, postmodernity’s relationship to L1 and L2 writing is different in significant ways, owing primarily to the differences between L1 and L2 writers. This study takes up some of these differences, most particularly the implications of L2 writers’ linguistic and cultural difference in the face of postmodern conceptions of community, communication, and identity.

Before going any further I should clarify that this study is not an attempt to re-write Faigley for L2 composition studies. That is a project to which others are attending (e.g., see parts of Pennycook’s [2001] recent work on critical applied linguistics in the postmodern age). Rather, I offer here an attempt to bring an important aspect of L2

composition research into contact with postmodern formulations of communication and learning. Specifically, this study contributes to the growing body of research on academic literacy which suggests that the acquisition of advanced, discipline-specific literacy skills can be meaningfully understood within the context of learners' disciplinary enculturation into academic discourse communities. Finding its theoretical origins in Halliday's (1978) belief that contexts always precede texts, that language is used and meaning assigned according to socio-rhetorical frameworks, this project uses qualitative research methodologies to try to understand the disciplinary enculturation experiences of five ESL graduate students. To try to make sense of the various complexities that shape disciplinary enculturation for these five participants, the study builds on postmodern theories of communication and learning—and their attendant emphasis on the sociohistoric, dialogic features of community and literacy—to examine intersections among literacy, discourse communities, genre, individual identity, and personal and institutional power in the field of L2 composition studies.

Although chapter three describes in detail the study's participants and methodology, a brief word on these subjects will help to contextualize the remainder of this introduction to the project. The participants were five ESL graduate students at a large public university in the South. I studied graduate rather than undergraduate students because graduate study is the means by which learners join the professional ranks of their disciplines, claiming authority within academic departments and, by extension, gaining access to personal, social, political, and economic privilege. Hence, graduate students are likely to be more highly aware of and concerned for their own disciplinary enculturation than undergraduates (Belcher, 1989). All five participants were studying in writing-

intensive academic disciplines in the humanities and represented four different academic departments, represented in this study as Department A, B, C, and D.¹ I chose to focus on learners in the humanities because I wanted to try to understand disciplinary enculturation in disciplinary areas that placed a high premium on writing ability, hypothesizing that there would be a connection between linguistic proficiency and successful enculturation. To collect data for this study I followed each participant from August to January of one academic year, interviewing them at intervals, interviewing their professors and advisors, examining writing samples and course documents, and observing participants in disciplinary settings. In keeping with qualitative methodologies, this study locates its findings within participant narratives, though in the fifth chapter I contextualize those narratives within a larger discussion of L2 writers in the post-process era. The project sets out to answer three primary research questions: 1) What are the experiences of ESL graduate students as they enculturate into academic discourse communities? 2) What roles do literacy activities play in disciplinary enculturation? 3) What sorts of subject positions do L2 learners occupy as they enculturate into academic discourse communities?

These questions are important because they tap into the ways L2 learners' academic and cultural histories can come into conflict with the literacy expectations and

¹I have masked the specific department names in an effort to increase my protection of my participants' anonymity. Unlike these other three programs, Department D behaves much more like a hard science, with graduate students spending much of their time in laboratories running experiments. Though Department D differs greatly from the other academic areas in the study, I decided to continue interviewing the participant from Department D because I judged that her experiences would provide an informative counterpoint to those of the other participants. Also, in my interviews with her and her advisor, I learned that Department D emphasized writing skills.

practices of English-speaking discourse communities. Dyson (1984) and Heath (1983) have argued that whenever learners begin work in new learning environments they are not blank slates because they must always reconcile new discursive behaviors and values with those of previous discourse communities. Though English-speaking discourse communities do not always recognize it, L2 learners working in U.S. universities bring a history of culturally and linguistically specific literate behavior that may differ from the expectations of their new discourse communities.

Taking up the implications of L2 learners' academic histories, Bizzell (1987) argues that academic discourse communities in English-speaking contexts are skewed against ESL learners because they force them to develop "multiple literacies." That is, not only must ESL learners grow proficient in the oral and written genres of discourse communities in their home countries, but when they begin their studies in English-speaking universities they encounter a new set of genre requirements, a new series of expectations for demonstrating their command of academic literacy (Angelova & Riazantseva, 1999; Blakeslee, 1997; Casanave, 1992, 1995, 2002; Chitrapu, 1996; Morita 2000; Riazi, 1997). With L2 learners, there can be a sizable linguistic and cultural gap between the literacy practices of their home cultures and those of their new English-speaking discourse communities, making it extremely difficult for them to transition smoothly into their new environments (Canagarajah, 1993; Shen, 1989; Li, 1999). One reason ESL graduate students may struggle to acquire the academic literacy practices of their new discourse communities is that English-speaking discourse communities do not always recognize that their codes and conventions are not particularly intuitive and are laden with culturally specific values and variables (Canagarajah, 1993; Hirvela &

Belcher, 2001; Land & Whitley, 1989; Li, 1999; Shen, 1989). Further, L2 learners must negotiate the difficulties of their new discourse communities in a language that they do not speak natively and may struggle to use effectively.

Whether ESL graduate students realize it or not, the stakes are high for them to enculturate smoothly and effectively because if they cannot develop proficiency in the literacy practices of their new discourse communities they risk losing access to the privileges and opportunities their new discourse communities can confer. This is not the first study to examine disciplinary enculturation issues. Contributing to a progression of recent L2 scholarship that has examined the connections between linguistic development and sociocultural contexts and relationships (e.g., Belcher, 1994, 1997; Casanave, 1995; 2002; Norton, 2000), this study concentrates on the ways learners' literacy practices are inevitably in dialogue with the larger social, rhetorical, cultural, and political contexts that shape their academic participation.

Having briefly reviewed the overall direction of this project, my intention in the remainder of this introductory chapter is to provide an overview of the theoretical considerations that have informed my conceptualization of the study as a whole. I deal primarily here with theoretical abstractions, saving a review of relevant literature on disciplinary enculturation for chapter two.

Postmodernism and L2 Composition Studies

I would like to preface this section with a brief word on the sources from which I have drawn to construct the theoretical overview for this project. Though my research is in L2 composition studies, in what follows I do use some concepts from L1 composition

studies. I do not do so offhandedly. When L2 composition studies was in its formative stages, both researchers and practitioners commonly assumed that ideas and practices from L1 composition studies could be transferred to L2 contexts without adjustment. While L2 composition studies has matured considerably as a field over the past fifteen years, developing its own journals and conferences and producing its own specialists, as Silva, Leki, and Carson (1997) point out there is still a tendency for L2 composition studies to absorb findings from L1 research uncritically. Leki (1992) has cautioned against such careless borrowing because it fails to recognize that L2 writers are different from L1 writers, that they bear heavier cognitive loads as well as different understandings of socio-rhetorical standards for effective communication. Though I have used L1 research in this introduction, I do appreciate that L1 and L2 composition studies are different fields. Where I have included research from L1 composition studies I have done so because I judged that the concepts under discussion could usefully inform the critical background to a study of L2 learners without unnecessarily splitting the theoretical lens I have focused onto L2 disciplinary enculturation. When necessary, I have qualified the L1 research I have used so that its concepts might more closely align with the particularities of L2 learners. I turn my attention now to a discussion of the relationship between postmodernism and L2 learner disciplinary enculturation.

Understanding disciplinary enculturation processes within the larger postmodern conversation currently informing L2 composition studies requires an appreciation for the connections between postmodernism and conceptions of communication and literacy. Though a protracted debate concerning the precise characteristics of artistic, literary, and cultural postmodernism would be misplaced in the present study (see Brooker, 1992 or

Selden, Widdowson, & Brooker, 1997 for a cogent discussion of these topics), to define the theoretical background that informs this investigation of ESL graduate student disciplinary enculturation it is necessary to address two important ways that formulations of postmodernism and L2 composition studies intersect. However, it should first be made clear that here the terms “postmodernism,” “postmodernity,” and “postmodern” are not meant to call forth radically different sets of ideas. Though I am working to situate this study in the larger postmodern-inflected conversation in L2 composition studies, the precise philosophical distinctions traditionally drawn among these three terms are not pivotal because this project does not set out to comprehend postmodernism in L2 composition studies as a theoretical response to the project of critical modernism. Hence, I follow Brooker’s (1991) lead and use “postmodernism,” “postmodernity,” and “postmodern” nearly interchangeably as a way to periodize and describe developments across and within disciplinary areas in late 20th century capitalist societies. The distinctions I make between these three terms are primarily denotative rather than philosophical, using “postmodernism” to call attention to a theoretical movement, “postmodernity” to refer to the condition or state of being under the influence of that movement, and “postmodern” as an adjective evoking both theoretical movement and condition.

To construct the theoretical framework for this study I address two important ways that postmodernism informs L2 composition studies. In “The Culture of Postmodernism,” an article that has come to play a central role in many discussions of postmodernity, Hassan (1986) contrasts conceptions of aesthetics in critical modernism and postmodernism. Modernism, Hassan observes, sees art as finished work, while

postmodernism considers art as always being in progress, in a state of happening. Applied to composition studies, this characteristic of postmodern aesthetics quite clearly suggests the process-writing paradigm and its stress on recursive writing practices. Though a potential weakness of the process approach is that it often fails to account for the realities of academic deadlines, process writing in academic settings is important theoretically because it creates opportunities for understanding literacy practices within the socio-rhetorical contexts in which they occur. That is, if writing is a recursive, ongoing process that invites writers to consult with colleagues, re-read source material, seek feedback from other readers, integrate others' perspectives and ideas, and re-write entire drafts—all standard features of process-writing—then it is clear that writing cannot be an isolated activity. Rather, process approaches to composition presuppose that writing happens in and can be influenced by community.

The link between process-writing strategies and writing as a community-oriented practice leads to a second important intersection between postmodernism and composition studies. Writing more than twenty years ago, Bizzell (1982) anticipated that L1 composition studies would shift its focus away from individual writers and onto the ways social contexts and conventions govern what and how writers actually write. In *Invention as a Social Act*, a work that continues to influence contemporary composition research, LeFevre (1987) confirms Bizzell's prescience as she challenges the widely held view of writing as the act of a solitary individual. Building on the work of linguists, rhetoricians, philosophers, and literary and cultural theorists, LeFevre insists that compositionists must consider the role of social contexts in writing because "the self that invents is . . . not merely socially influenced but even socially constituted" (p.2). In

theoretical terms, this turn from writer and text to contexts and communities reflects the modern/postmodern dialectic of the *signified* and the *signifier*.² Again oriented toward a discussion of aesthetics, Hassan (1986) identifies modernist strains of thought with the *signified*, a term that communicates the idea that the communicator can accurately replicate or signify a single meaning in the minds of others through informed manipulation of communicative mediums. The signified is a concrete, replicable object. In postmodern theories of aesthetics, such replication of meaning is not possible because meanings are multiple, abstract, and unique, giving rise to the postmodern *signifier*, a term that locates the process of making meaning in neither the communicator nor the communicative object, but rather in the contextual field in which communication occurs. The postmodern signifier posits meaning as subject to negotiation between a communicator and an audience who receives the communication. Consequently, postmodern conceptions of communication maintain that there is no such thing as a single meaning because personal, institutional, and contextual idiosyncrasies and histories always localize and historicize meaning-making processes. To understand communication it is thus necessary to probe interactional sites.

Moving beyond strictly theoretical applications, the *signified* and *signifier* dialectic finds considerable traction in sociolinguistic theories of language use.

² The postmodern *signified/signifier* dialectic is different from Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure's (1959/1983) differentiation between the "signifier" (the word for a concept) and the "signified" (the concept the word designates). Whereas Saussure's interest was in theorizing how linguistic signs convey meaning, the postmodern signified/signifier dialectic, as discussed by Hassan (1975), concerns itself with the tension between the precise replication of meaning and a society beset by meaning-obscuring incongruities and contradictions.

Fairclough (1989), for example, offers a tri-part model of linguistic production which places the literal text (spoken, written, or signed) within the discursive practice of producing and interpreting that text, which is in turn located in the socio-political practices that shape production and interpretation processes. Ivanic (1998) astutely notes that part of what makes Fairclough's model an accurate representation of textual participation is that "the 'text' box is relatively small in relation to the socio-cognitive and socio-cultural dimensions of language" (p.43). Fairclough's model thus indicates that understanding language use requires attention to the larger social, cultural, political, and rhetorical negotiations and contexts that shape the production, reception, and interpretation of language.

In L1 composition studies, Ede and Lunsford (1990) testify to the negotiation processes and contexts Fairclough describes. Using their own collaborative writing activities to contextualize their argument, Ede and Lunsford maintain that literacy practices are necessarily relational, meaning "scenes of writing are peopled, busy—full of the give-and-take of conversation and debate" (p.42). Although Ede and Lunsford contain the majority of that "conversation and debate" within a plainly evident collaborative process, they argue that the influence of relational contexts in writing processes extends well beyond any single collaborator to include social, political, cultural, and rhetorical communities. Applied to composition studies, then, the postmodern *signifier* suggests that academic literacy activities are always enmeshed in relational fields and that meanings are necessarily produced in and through community.

Writing alongside both sociolinguistics and composition studies in a field he refers to as "new literacy studies," Street (1993) addresses the theoretical ramifications of

shifting attention from writers to writing contexts through his differentiation of “ideological literacy” from “autonomous literacy.” Autonomous literacy, Street maintains, reduces literacy to exclusively “technical terms, treating it as independent of social context, an autonomous variable whose consequences for society and cognition can be derived from its intrinsic character” (p.431-432). For Street, autonomous literacy does not account for the full spectrum of activity and expectation that constitutes literacy practices in present day academic settings. Ideological literacy, on the other hand, tries “to view literacy practices as inextricably linked to cultural and power structures in society and to recognize the variety of cultural practices associated with reading and writing in different contexts” (p.433-434). Indicative of his own alertness to postmodernism’s insistence that binary oppositions are never absolute, Street points out that the “ideological model . . . does not attempt to deny technical skill or the cognitive aspects of reading and writing [that characterize the autonomous model], but rather understands them as they are encapsulated within cultural wholes and within structures of power” (p.435).

Street’s interest in understanding how larger cultural and institutional forces impact literacy activities is suggestive of Land and Whitley’s (1989) argument that what American writing teachers commonly ask L2 learners to do in order to experience academic success is to situate themselves in particular socio-political contexts that may or may not align with the cultural values and rhetorical histories they bring with them to writing contexts. However, as a postmodern understanding of communication suggests, advantageous socio-political situating depends on accurate linguistic and sociolinguistic participation carried out in accordance with local and historic contextual idiosyncrasies,

which are in turn influenced by both cultural and institutional power structures. Considered in conjunction with Fairclough's assertion that sociolinguistic negotiation processes shape communication and Ede and Lunsford's argument that relational contexts have an effect on texts, textual production, and textual interpretation, Street's ideological literacy model and its emphasis on culture and power structures offers a postmodern lens that can sharpen our view of L2 learners' disciplinary enculturation experiences in English-language environments.

In his re-visioning of critical applied linguistics in the wake of postmodernity, Pennycook (2001) writes that postmodernism, as a philosophical movement, advocates "the restive problematization of the given," a phrase he borrows from Dean (1994). With this basic theoretical charge in place, Pennycook holds that the value of postmodernism is that it calls us to question "many of the foundational concepts of received canons of knowledge," to remain skeptical of totalizing "grand narratives," and to attempt "to understand things in more local terms rather than in terms of grand theories" (p.134). Applied to the present study of ESL graduate student disciplinary enculturation and in concert with qualitative methodologies, such restive problematizing gives form to my attempt to describe and understand discipline-specific literacy practices and the localized social, political, cultural, and rhetorical interactions that shape those practices over time. By addressing these topics from the perspective of postmodernity, this project not only uncovers particularity and idiosyncrasy in L2 learner enculturation narratives, but, more importantly, it interprets and subsequently situates those narratives within larger institutional frameworks, in the process calling into question the idea that writing is the

determinant factor in L2 learners' disciplinary enculturation experiences, an assertion that I detail in chapter two.

Defining Disciplinary Enculturation

Describing the contours of graduate education, Prior (1994) writes that “students’ production of texts and professor and peer response to those texts are activities central to disciplinary enculturation” because these activities “provide an opportunity space for socialization into discursive practices, represent a central medium for the display of disciplinarity, and mediate the reproduction of disciplinary social structures as students achieve relative levels of ‘success’ and ‘visibility’” (p.489). Though perhaps uncomplicated at first glance, Prior’s adroit delineation of an intersection between student writing, academic socialization, and individual advancement raises questions about the processes through which disciplinary enculturation occurs. Though all learners in academic settings face disciplinary enculturation issues, the difficulties associated with disciplinary enculturation can be particularly acute for ESL graduate students working in environments where English is the medium of instruction. For, should learners prove less able or willing to adopt the codes and conventions of their chosen disciplines, they risk being relegated to the extreme margins of the academic community, almost certainly compromising their ability to acquire the skills and credentials requisite for full participation in their chosen fields (Bartholomae, 1985; Bizzell, 1982a, 1982b), a possibility that can be realized when ESL learners confront the intricacies of discipline-specific, graduate level literacy requirements (Allison, Cooley, Lewkowicz, & Nunan, 1998; Blakeslee, 1997; Canagarajah, 1993; Schneider & Fujishima, 1995).

In an influential essay entitled “Inventing the University,” Bartholomae (1985) lays groundwork for conceptualizing disciplinary enculturation, contending that whenever students write within university settings, they must “invent the university by assembling and mimicking its language while finding some compromise between idiosyncrasy, a personal history, on the one hand, and the requirements of conventions, the history of a discipline, on the other” (p.135). For Bartholomae, it is the tension between “personal history” and “the history of a discipline” that so perplexes students’ ability to “learn to speak our language, to speak as we do, to try on the peculiar ways of knowing, selecting, evaluating, reporting, concluding, and arguing that define the discourse of our community” (p.135). Bartholomae’s over-delineation of an us/them dichotomy notwithstanding, he is astute in his suggestion that successful disciplinary enculturation is “marked by [students’] ability to take on the role of privilege, by their abilities to establish authority” (p.162), actions which require students to adapt the literacy practices they bring to the university to the specialized demands of target academic audiences. While Bartholomae’s characterization of literacy development does lay out the central issue in academic disciplinary enculturation—students learning to communicate in the ways of their professors—it suggests that enculturation is a primarily cognitive endeavor whereby individual learners invent the university for and by themselves. Within both L1 and L2 composition studies, however, researchers have questioned the efficacy of cognitive apprenticeship models, arguing that writing is as much a social practice as it is a cognitive one (Beaufort, 2000; Belcher, 1994; Casanave, 1992; Flowerdew, 2000; Prior, 1998).

Traditionally, academia has bound privilege, authority, and success to writing ability (Bartholomae, 1985; Casanave, 1995; Freed & Broadhead, 1987; Prior, 1998), perhaps nowhere more so than in the humanities and social sciences, disciplinary areas where writing is the primary means of displaying and contributing disciplinary knowledge. While the process-writing paradigm initially encouraged compositionists to conceptualize and teach writing as a predominantly cognitive process negotiable through recursive writing practices, the last twenty years have witnessed increased scholarly attention to the ways social, political, cultural, and rhetorical contexts and interactions figure into individual composing processes. Signaling an interest in the ways various socio-rhetorical contexts factor into academic literacy development, recently researchers have been building on dialogic formulations of communication and learning (Bakhtin, 1981, 1986; Vygotsky, 1978) to explore academic literacy issues through a variety of “community” metaphors (e.g., academic, research, rhetorical, disciplinary, discourse), creating a relatively new field in composition studies, one we might refer to as “enculturation studies.”

Though the term “enculturation” came into prominence with Toulmin’s (1972) research on the ways novices acquire training through both formal and informal channels, in composition studies Jolliffe and Brier (1988) tie academic literacy to Toulmin’s ideas about enculturation to form the idea of “disciplinary enculturation.” Building on Jolliffe and Brier’s work, Angelova and Riazantseva (1999) define disciplinary enculturation as “a complex process that involves more than the acquisition of content knowledge; it also involves learning field-specific value systems and definitions as well as the reading and writing strategies associated with professional discourse” (p.491-492).

Although Angelova and Riazantseva (1999) are careful to note that disciplinary enculturation is “a complex process,” the compactness of their definition perhaps belies the extent of that complexity. Casanave (2002) writes that the term “disciplinary enculturation” is somewhat inadequate because it “doesn’t convey the particularity and layered complexity of the enculturation experience” (p.27), specifying that her own usage of the term refers to “an experience that is ongoing, layered, and necessarily always incomplete” (p.27). She maintains that disciplinary enculturation must therefore be defined “as a fluid and fuzzy, rather than unambiguously definable notion” (xviii). Working to account for some of the same complexities, Prior (1998) understands disciplinary enculturation through sociohistoric theories of practice that recognize the ways “disciplinarity is embroidered in history and in sociocultural values, beliefs, narratives, tropes, and ways of life” (p.16-17). The present study pays similar attention to the converging ground between participants’ present academic activities, their past educational experiences, the institutions in which they work, the people they work with and for, the non-academic relationships and contexts that influence their behavior, and the ways they respond to, interpret, and integrate their experiences. Coming into dialogue with postmodernism, the project investigates participants’ locally situated and contextualized academic experiences in an effort to understand how L2 learners position themselves within and are themselves positioned by academic discourse communities. The project also works to situate participants’ disciplinary enculturation narratives within the larger power structures that influence their creation.

To conceptualize disciplinary enculturation for graduate students it is useful to turn to Lave and Wenger’s (1991) *legitimate peripheral participation*, a theory that

equates learning with increasing levels and varieties of sociocultural participation in a target *community of practice* and suggests that learning stems from “the growing use value of participation, and by newcomers’ desires to become full practitioners” (p.122). For Lave and Wenger, a legitimate peripheral participant is a newcomer to the community of practice who participates to a limited extent in the work of established experts, moving from the periphery toward the perceived center of the community of practice as skill and knowledge levels increase. In a departure from traditional apprenticeship models (e.g., Rogoff’s [1990] “guided practice” model), Lave and Wenger’s legitimate peripheral participation offers a “decentered view of master-apprentice relations” (p.94), rejecting the idea of community centers and masters in favor of a model of social practice in which learners are always in multiple roles relative to a whole community. In this way, as Flowerdew (2000) suggests, legitimate peripheral participation can help account for learning that occurs outside of formal classroom settings, such as interacting with advisors and professors, completing work on original research, deciphering the intricacies of degree expectations, building relationships with other practitioners, submitting articles for publication, and readying research for oral presentation. Legitimate peripheral participation thus offers a theoretical framework for examining the literacy activities that the participants in this study engaged in as they pursued their graduate degrees.

Academic Literacy Practices

To arrive at a postmodern understanding of disciplinary enculturation it is necessary to complicate traditional understandings of academic writing by examining the

contexts in which writing occurs, paying careful attention to the ways contexts shape both writers and their writing. To date, L2 composition studies has addressed disciplinary enculturation within a broad contextual range. Within this range, many researchers have focused on learner writing as the key component of enculturation, likely because it is through writing that learners are judged academically fit or unfit relative to target academic discourse communities (Casanave, 1995; Ivanic, 1998; Prior, 1994, 1998). A considerable portion of the present study, however, addresses literacy activities that strictly speaking are not writing in the sense of putting words on pages. To account for the ways social, political, and cultural factors shape academic writing and, by extension, disciplinary enculturation processes it is necessary to expand our conception of academic writing, or, as Casanave (2002) puts it, to “assume that academic writing includes many kinds of text-based literate behaviors, including reading and talking” (p.30). Utilizing such an expanded notion of academic writing, what Casanave refers to as “academic literacy practices” (p.30), this study attempts to describe and understand learners’ experiences as they enculturate into academic disciplines that traditionally place a high premium on writing ability. While the responsibility to produce written academic work is ever-present for the participants in this study, their actual writing is not always the most salient issue. Rather, emerging from these participants’ academic experiences during the semester I followed them is clear evidence that disciplinary enculturation involves an array of literacy activities that are in large part tied to Street’s (1993) ideological literacy, such as forming and cultivating interpersonal relationships with peers and superiors, finding tenable research projects, discovering the intricacies of academic requirements

and responsibilities, and situating individual interests into a wider academic field, activities that reach considerably beyond individual composing processes.

Though certainly being able to produce effective academic prose is integral to academic success, learning to participate successfully in an academic discipline involves more than just gaining linguistic facility. That is, academic literacy practices depend on an assemblage of what Crosswhite (1996) refers to as “deep competences” (p.190), a term he uses to refer to “features of our being, features of our identities as participants in a particular culture, a particular society in a particular place at a particular time” (p.190). For Crosswhite, whenever learners speak or write—I would broaden that to say whenever they participate in any communicative exchange, be it speaking, writing, reading, or listening—they “affirm these [deep] competences to use a particular language in a particular way, and so affirm the appropriateness of particular discourses and all that belongs with them” (p.190). Crosswhite implies that through communication individuals not only support the communicative contexts in which they participate, the “particular discourses,” but they also make statements about what “belongs” in that context, including the communicator him or herself, a concept Gee (1990) explores in his theorizing on *discourse* (see later discussion of this material).

Crosswhite’s concept of deep competences is seminal to the critical background for this study for its suggestion that through communication individuals automatically tie themselves to social, political, cultural, and rhetorical contexts, in the process making a statement of identity about themselves. Importantly, however, Crosswhite does not secure his formulation of deep competences to any one communicative practice, opening up a conceptual field in which to view academic literacy as encompassing the wide variety of

communicative activities that take place within academic settings. In this way Crosswhite raises the idea that virtually every communicative act a learner performs has implications for that person's identity within a given context and, by extension, for the ways contexts themselves regulate which communicators do and do not fit in. Also important is Crosswhite's idea that effective communication requires that competences be "deep." Applied to academic settings specifically, Crosswhite suggests that the individual learner must master a broad assortment of communicative practices in order to affirm established discourse patterns and therein solidify individual belonging. Working off of Crosswhite's ideas, in the present study I use the terms "academic literacy practices" or "academic literacy activities" to refer to my participants' written, verbal, and nonverbal academic communication, their "deep competences." At times when I want to specify a particular communicative mode, I use corresponding language, e.g., "academic writing" to refer to the process of producing actual words on pages.

Discourse Communities

The term "disciplinary enculturation" carries with it the idea that learners are actually moving into something, though there seems to be little consistency within composition studies regarding exactly what that might be and how it might happen. A useful construct for theorizing disciplinary enculturation is *discourse community*, a term that requires careful definition as a result of its extraordinarily varied applications in both L1 and L2 composition studies. As a theoretical construct, discourse communities find their conceptual origins within the sociological research paradigm, from which, in a study of group dynamics and conduct, Goffman (1969) observed that people naturally tend to

emulate the behavior of the community in which they find themselves. At base level, composition studies retains this idea, viewing discourse communities as spaces in which people engage in like practices. However, as Lave and Wenger's (1991) theory of legitimate peripheral participation suggests, in academic discourse communities if incoming learners wish to emulate the communicative practices of established members of the community (e.g., professors and advanced students) they must gain proficiency in literacy activities that cannot always be observed and readily imitated.

In accordance with Casanave's (2002) expansion of writing to include an array of "literacy practices" and with Crosswhite's (1996) theory of "deep competences," *discourse community* as a theoretical construct is significant because it both encompasses the full range of academic literacy activities and places them into a real "community," a term that evokes the existence of shared knowledge and behavior while also suggesting social, historic, rhetorical, and personal intersections. Analyzing the discourse community metaphor, Swales (1990) delineates the following six characteristics of discourse communities: 1) a broadly agreed upon set of goals; 2) mechanisms for intercommunication among community members; 3) established procedures for providing feedback to individuals; 4) one or more accepted communicative "genres"; 5) a specified lexis; and 6) a threshold level of members each with a suitable degree of expertise. Swales (1990) sums these six characteristics to argue that "social conventions" ultimately govern discourse communities, placing literacy acquisition squarely within a socially determined framework. Flowerdew (2000) underscores this point when he argues that *discourse community* "stresses the participatory, negotiable nature of learning and the fact that learning is not always based on overt teaching" (p.128).

Though Swales' (1990) neat list of six characteristics may imply that discourse communities are well-ordered entities, both his own recognition of the role of "social conventions" and Flowerdew's (2000) indication that "overt teaching" cannot account for the complexities of "the participatory, negotiable nature of learning" indicate that discourse communities are highly complex, particularized, and idiosyncratic. Yet, as Prior (1994) observes, structuralist theories of discourse and society have "encouraged us to imagine [discourse communities] as autonomous objects existing in a detemporalized space, as territories to be mapped or systems to be diagrammed" (p.488). Prefiguring postmodernism's emphasis on heterogeneity and instability, Bizzell (1982) holds that healthy discourse communities are always a mass of contradictions and therefore resist structuralist attempts to codify and make uniform, an observation supported by both L1 and L2 compositionists (e.g., Bazerman, 1988; Casanave, 1995, 2002; Cooper, 1989; Harris, 1989; Ivanic, 1998; Prior, 1998). Casanave (1995) explores this instability, maintaining that the discourse community metaphor breaks down under scrutiny, "as the meaningful units get smaller and smaller. We find subcommunities within communities, and multiple embeddings of microsocieties within subcommunities, and finally a great diversity of a small number of individuals in the innermost circle" (p.88).

One way to try to comprehend the instability and mutability of discourse communities is to probe meanings of the term "discourse." As a theoretical construct, *discourse* spans an impressive range. Reviewing the term's wide application, Ivanic (1998) writes that "discourse" is used "as shorthand for a complex concept, and is used in many different ways by different people, usually but not always involving the use of language, often including far more than language" (p.18). Traditionally, Ivanic observes,

“discourse” has meant something like “linguistic product,” or “representation through language, the physical form of which is spoken or written text” (p.18), though she adds that composition studies has extended the term “to include representation through visual, bodily and other media, using the word ‘language’ metaphorically to include ‘visual language’ and the word ‘text’ to mean ‘a representation in any medium’” (p.17-18).

Complicating this idea of *discourse*, she notes that the term has also come to mean “a mediating mechanism in the social construction of identity” (p.17), an idea that finds its roots in Foucault’s (1975) theory that discourses are tantamount to institutional power structures and disciplinary mechanisms and thus function as technologies by which powerful ideologies position subjects. Continuing along the same lines as Foucault’s interest in the ways institutions discipline and correct wayward individuals by curbing difference, Gee (1990) defines “discourses” as ways of displaying (through words, actions, values, and beliefs) membership in a particular social group or social network. Arguing that established discursive patterns facilitate the apprenticeship of discourse community newcomers by experienced members of the discourse community, Gee (1990) theorizes that if newcomers prove unable or unwilling to adopt established discourses, the discourse community will either relegate them to the discursal margins or expel them altogether. Of course, a third possibility that Gee (1990) does not mention is that individuals will in fact resist the discourse community, subtly altering the discourse to advance personal interests, an event de Certeau (1984) explores at length in his writings on strategic appropriation of dominant discourses. In keeping with the postmodern notion of meanings-in-use, Prior (1991, 1994, 1998) tries to account for the complexities of *discourse* by moving away from conceptions of it as a fixed object to

argue that discourses are always processes of linguistic interaction and negotiation which inevitably implicate individual users in fields of power. Ivanic (1998) ultimately reaches a similar version of *discourse*, understanding the term “as an abstract noun with no plural, mean[ing] something like ‘producing and receiving culturally recognized, ideologically shaped representations of reality’” and referring “more to the process of representing reality than the product, but encompass[ing] both” (p.17).

Four crucial ideas emerge from these varied formulations of *discourse*. Of prime importance is Gee’s (1990) idea that discourses are ways of displaying membership, with “membership” defined as the sense of belonging that arises from feeling free to disagree with dominant positions or make mistakes without risking loss of membership. Thus, *discourse* works as an umbrella term that covers the full spectrum of communicative practices that take place within a specific context. A second crucial characteristic of discourse is Prior’s (1998) and Ivanic’s (1998) observation that discourses are best conceived of as ongoing processes because such conceptions foreground the social networks of interaction in both time and place that shape communicative contexts. Hence, much like Bakhtin’s (1986) *utterance*, discourses have meaning as activated constructs. And, as such, discourses derive their power from the community of users who are actively using the discourse’s codes and conventions. Logically, then, without continual activation (i.e., use), discourses lose their currency.

Thirdly, and related to both discourse as a means of displaying membership and the idea of discourse as process, is Ivanic’s (1998) position that discourses mediate the social construction of identity. Because discourses revolve around an ongoing process of affirming membership within a community of users, they have obvious ramifications for

personal subjectivity. A learner's discursive proficiency figures prominently into determining his or her identity among fellow discourse users, perhaps nowhere more so than in academic discourse communities, an idea Faigley (1992) places alongside a postmodern interest in localized particularity when he observes that "subjectivities are located within discourses" and thus "they are deeply involved in relations of power and institutional authority" (p.112). Norton (2000) has suggested that these relations are further shaped by a learner's "investment," a term she uses to denote an individual's desire to learn and practice the target language. Norton (2000) holds that understanding learner investment is critical because it taps into learner "agency," a concept that refers to the ways learners form and conceive of their identities within communities of practice. Norton's contribution is important because it provides a means of conceptualizing the learner's role in shaping and monitoring his or her disciplinary enculturation experiences.

Finally, Foucault's (1975) and Gee's (1990) ideas about the ways discourses are always bound up in relations of power are important for their suggestion of an affinity between *discourse* and Louis Althusser's (1971) conception of the ideological state apparatus (ISA). For Althusser, an ISA is an institutionalized body that exercises power and control over individuals who coalesce around a shared set of values, beliefs, and aims. As a result, an ISA places people into various "subject positions" in an effort to make sure that the institution maintains stability and cohesion, in the process affording enormous power to the ISA. Scott (1985) has contended that wherever there is power there is necessarily resistance, an idea that is especially important for its suggestion that not all learners can or will align with the dominant discourse and will thus look for (and often find) ways to subvert, appropriate, or transform discourse for personal advantage.

Collecting these features of *discourse* as a theoretical construct together, I would like to suggest that the term represents an ongoing process of demonstrating membership within powerful collectives of individuals who have been drawn together by like values, beliefs, and goals. As such, *discourse* has strong implications for individual positioning within what Lave and Wenger (1991) refer to as the “community of practice.”

With the above theoretical conception of *discourse* in place, I would like to return to my earlier formulating of “discourse community.” As already mentioned, researchers have observed that discourse communities are invariably complex and instable, a “mass of contradictions” (Bizzell, 1982b). While Casanave (1995) is undoubtedly correct when she observes that under scrutiny discourse communities break down into smaller and smaller units, those units nevertheless do hold together, however loosely, around broad understandings of purpose, which, in graduate-level academic settings are intricately enmeshed in the perpetuation of the discourse community itself through participation in knowledge-making activities. What I argue here is that the protean nature of discourse communities is a function of their affinity to the postmodern *signifier*. That is, like postmodernism’s *signifier*, discourse communities themselves posit meaning as subject to a process of social, cultural, political, and rhetorical negotiation and ratification between communicators and the audiences who receive their communication. And, just as the postmodernism *signifier* is entwined in relational contexts, so too are discourse communities. Thus, to understand the ways discourse communities function we must examine the interactive contexts from which they derive their meaning. *Discourse community*, as a hierarchical, complexly stratified, participatory site, is a useful theoretical construct for contextualizing an individual learner’s participation relative to a

perceived discorsal center. Moreover, because the discourse community itself, rather than the individual, plays the major role in defining and legitimating communicative activities, *discourse community* helps to explain disciplinary enculturation by offering language for situating individual experiential contexts within the larger framework of postmodern understandings of communication and community.

Genres in Postmodernity

Disciplinary enculturation brings with it the suggestion that individuals actually do or make something to enable their movement into and within discourse communities. Following the lead of L1 compositionists, L2 composition researchers have turned to the work of Russian literary and linguistic theorist Mikhail Bakhtin (e.g., 1981, 1986) to facilitate an understanding of the ways discourse communities connect with postmodern meanings-in-use, academic communication, relational contexts in academic settings, socio-cultural constructions in postmodernity, and conceptions of ideological literacy (Atkinson, 1999; Pennycook, 2001; Prior, 1998; Ramanathan & Atkinson, 1999). Germane to the present study are the ways that Bakhtin's theory of *genre* contributes meaningfully to the study of literacy activities within the context of disciplinary enculturation into academic discourse communities.

In "Speech Genres," an essay that has become foundational to postmodern analyses of communication, Bakhtin (1986) presents the world not as a stable object with unequivocally clear meanings, but rather as a dynamic social milieu inundated with multiple meanings. His unit of analysis is the *utterance*, a term he uses to refer to the smallest of communicative elements. Bakhtin draws on the *utterance* to theorize that

language has no meaning until it is uttered or in-use, until it has entered the social field that shapes communicative interaction.

For Bakhtin, communicative development thus entails, as Prior (1998) summarizes, “not knowledge of the rules and terms of abstract systems,” but rather “the accretion and active appropriation of concrete historical knowledge of practices-in-use, knowledge that traces the trajectory of an actively orienting person through a complexly differentiated sociohistoric landscape” (p.20). To account for “the other,” that is, the potential receiver of meaning within the “sociohistoric landscape” of communicative interaction, Bakhtin (1986) augments the *utterance* with *addressivity*, or the utterance’s “quality of being directed to someone” (p.95). With addressivity as the hinge that binds communicative practices together, Bakhtin (1986) maintains that the utterance finally depends “on those to whom the utterance is addressed, how the speaker (or writer) senses and imagines his addressees, and the force of their effect on the utterance” (p.95). Theorizing that utterances necessarily occur within sociohistoric, layered fields of use replete with reactive, co-constructing *others*, Bakhtin (1981) writes that language and meaning are bound by what he refers to as *heteroglossia*, a term that points towards the coexistence and interplay between utterances and emphasizes that communicative acts are always in dialogic relation to one another. Prior (1995) pulls together Bakhtin’s foundational theories, suggesting their connection to postmodernism’s stress on local terms and contexts: “utterances are dialogic because each word uttered is sedimented with traces of its sociohistoric use, indexed in the immediate situation, addressed to anticipated responses, imbued to varying degrees with individuals’ situated intentions and accents, and actively and reactively constructed by recipients” (p.487). Bakhtin’s ideas

about the utterance and addressivity are crucial to the present study for the way they give rise to a postmodern theory of *genre*.

Following the contextual sensitivity and interactivity of the Bakhtinian *utterance*, Bakhtin's (1986) theory of *genre* meshes with the postmodern view that communicative events cannot be fixed objects, but rather exist as negotiated exchanges occurring in relational contexts. Bakhtin (1986) defines genres as "typical forms of utterances" (p.63), though he also writes that they are always "changeable, flexible, and plastic" (p.80). That is, genres are communicative practices that develop as a result of iterative communicative purposes undertaken in reoccurring contexts. Genres are at all times responsive to the shifting and minute particularities that characterize all communicative contexts, a characteristic that is in many ways suggestive theoretically of the postmodern *signifier*. Likely because by definition genres are essentially acts of communication, compositionists have at times extracted *genre* from the postmodern dialogue which seems to surround it. For example, Ivanic (1998) understands genres as specified types of linguistic vessels: "a single genre (for example the undergraduate essay genre) also provides the container for a wide variety of discourses (for example, philosophy discourse, natural science discourse)" (p.46). Understanding genre as a near synonym for written text, Winsor (1996) writes that genres "embody the content, organization, and style that the discourse community believes will fulfill [its] purpose" (p.27). Genre-as-text definitions, however, seem to detach from the ways that communicative activities—including written texts—are always socially, culturally, politically, and rhetorically interactive and hence do not address adequately the postmodern connection between communication and community.

Building on Miller's (1984) position that genres are a form of social interaction and participation, Prior (1998) attempts to bring to the fore Bakhtin's (1986) conception of *genre* as "changeable, flexible, and plastic." Prior holds that if we are to see discourses as dynamic, mutable, and happening, then we must also activate *genre*, so that it "makes more sense to speak of genre generation, genrification, or generic activity" (p.69). Prior theorizes that genres have meaning as processes, as multidirectional transactions between communicator, receiver, and community. Concurring on this point in her assessment of postmodern understandings of genre, Freedman (1995) notes a recent "expansion of the traditional definition of genre"—in which "genres were seen as collocations of textual regularities, or text types"—to include "such notions as recurrent communicative goals, social processes, or sociocultural actions" (p.73).

The central tenets of this expanding formation of genre find their introduction in Swales (1990) excellent book-length treatment of the subject. Endeavoring to offer a means of investigating and understanding academic discourse, Swales (1990) holds that genre should be the starting point for analyzing academic communication because a "genre-centered approach offers a workable way of making sense of the myriad communicative events that occur in the contemporary English-speaking academy" (p.1). Defining "genre" as "a class of communicative events, the members of which share some set of communicative purposes" (p.53), Swales indicates that what makes genres potentially powerful is that their communicative purposes "are recognized by expert members of the parent discourse community and thereby constitute a rationale for the genre" (p.53).

For Swales, then, genres are the sustaining elements of discourse communities because they facilitate both discourse community members' communication with one another and the induction of new members to the discourse community, acts which solidify and perpetuate the discourse community's own existence. Further, Swales (1990) argues that the purpose behind genres is to establish constraints on allowable contributions to the discourse community, an objective which discourse community insiders recognize, apprentice members partly recognize, and non-members may fail to recognize all together. According to Swales, academic discourse communities compromise their ability to achieve shared goals if they do not possess familiar, accepted genres for communication.

It would seem that genres, or more precisely "generic activity," cannot be separated from the sociocultural forces that influence their construction and interpretation. Or, as Freedman (1993) puts it, genre "is best understood pragmatically: as social action, or as typified rhetorical response within recurrent (socially-constructed) situations" (p.272). This raises important questions about writer agency in generic participation. For, if genres are a "changeable, flexible, and plastic" form of social participation, as Bakhtin theorizes, then it seems logical that in academic contexts they would offer opportunities for learners "to reshape, realign, or reaccentuate a genre" (Freedman, 1995, p.75), therein creating space for individuals to gain greater control of their own discursal positioning.

During the months that I followed them, all five participants in this study were working to understand, produce, and interpret the preferred genres of their respective discourse communities. By conceptualizing genre production as process—Prior's (1998)

“genre generation, genrification, or generic activity”—it becomes possible not only to take into consideration the range of activities that constitutes that process, activities which are removed from traditional conceptions of genre-as-text, but also to situate this important process within the larger social, cultural, political, and rhetorical contextual fields that, as Street (1993) argues, guide literacy development via imbedded cultural and power structures. Finally, with the understanding that “genre” is not a synonym for “essay” but represents “a *class* of communicative events” (Swales, 1990, p.53) that are responsible for perpetuating discourse community stability, order, and power, it becomes possible to assess how generic participation in the form of literacy activities determines social positioning within the discourse community.

Power, Identity, and Disciplinary Enculturation

In a study investigating identity politics in academic discourse communities, Ivanic (1998) argues that “Writing is an act of identity in which people align themselves with socio-culturally shaped possibilities for self-hood, playing their part in reproducing or challenging dominant practices and discourses, and the values, beliefs and interests which they embody” (p.32). For Ivanic, it is during this process of reproducing or challenging discourses that writers “participate in the construction of their discursal identities through selection (mainly subconscious) among the subject positions they feel socially mandated, willing, or daring enough to occupy” (p.32). Summarizing the implications of identity formation within institutionalized power structures, Ivanic holds that “relations of power, interests, values, beliefs and practices in institutional settings enable and constrain people’s possibilities for self-hood as they write” (p.32).

By expanding Ivanic's use of "writing" to include the full range of academic literacy activities that comprise academic participation at the graduate level—Crosswhite's (1996) "deep competences"—it becomes clear that disciplinary enculturation has critical implications for intersections between individual identity and institutional power, an idea which is at the center of Bourdieu's (1991) contention that there is no such thing as an insignificant linguistic interaction because all linguistic interactions reflect traces of the social structures they both express and help to reproduce. Thus, for Bourdieu, sociolinguistic competence goes beyond issues of grammaticality to include both the right to speak and the likelihood that others will listen.

For the participants in this study, one of the factors that complicated disciplinary enculturation was that to speak and be listened to participants had to negotiate the different roles required of graduate students (e.g., student, professorial assistant, apprentice expert, disciplinary contributor, teacher, academic citizen) in an environment that was culturally and linguistically foreign. Lave and Wenger (1991) address the difficulties inherent to such multiple role playing, maintaining that it "implies becoming a different person with respect to the possibilities enabled by these systems of relations. . . . To ignore this aspect of learning is to overlook the fact that learning involves the construction of identity" (p.53).

Synthesizing Bakhtin's *utterance* with theories of discourse and discourse community, Street (1993) sees "little point . . . in attempting to make sense of a given utterance or discourse in terms only of its immediate 'context of utterance,' unless one knows the broader social and conceptual framework that gives it meaning" (p.440). As intimated earlier in my discussion of discourse and discourse community, disciplinary

enculturation puts learners in contact with broad social and conceptual fields which give form to the literacy activity deemed preferable in a given discourse community and, by extension, to the sorts of subject positions or identities that are available to discourse community newcomers. Hence, understanding disciplinary enculturation requires attention both to the ways that academic literacy activities position learners and to the agency (Norton, 2000) individual learners exercise as they participate within their respective discourse communities. Such analysis holds implications for both individual learner identity as well as the ways identity is shaped by dominant social and conceptual frameworks of power.

Chapter Conclusion

In their introduction to a book of essays on academic writing in a second language, Belcher and Braine (1995) are concerned that “students, no matter how determined, will not be able to add their voices to the academic conversation even in their own classrooms—that in fact their own voices will be irretrievably lost as a result of their initiation into the academic discourse community” (p.xix). Moving beyond individual classrooms, this study examines the experiences of ESL graduate students as they attempt to add their voices to what Bazerman refers to as the “conversations of the discipline” (1980, 1985), investigating the degree to which they feel they are being heard, the ramifications of their disciplinary participation, and the implications this has for their own discursive positioning. Mindful of the extreme particularity of discourse communities, I attempt here to ground participant narratives within localized contextual fields, making use of qualitative methodologies to understand participants’ experiences

and the ways that they impact and are impacted by the larger social, cultural, political, and rhetorical factors that give them form.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Historically, scholars in applied linguistics have focused on individual learner cognition to try to understand second language (L2) acquisition processes. However, influenced by theories of social practice and language use (e.g., Bakhtin, 1981, 1986; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch, 1991), within the past fifteen years researchers have begun responding to an interest in and call for research that examines the ways sociocultural factors affect L2 learners' acquisition of academic English.

Though ranging widely in contextual emphasis and research methodology, what seems to draw much of this recent body of work together is an interest in what Ochs (1988) refers to as "language socialization," a process by which learners gain competence in new sociocultural contexts through exposure to and participation in linguistic interactions. The current study's focus on ESL graduate learners' enculturation into academic discourse communities finds its roots in this broad idea. To situate the study within the larger academic conversation in which it participates, this chapter reviews previous scholarship on ESL learners' disciplinary enculturation at the graduate level, delineating areas where the current study can contribute to our understanding of ESL graduate students' enculturation into disciplines in the humanities.

To help clarify the discussion that follows, I should begin with a word on the terminology I have used throughout this chapter. Although many researchers interested in this area of scholarship use the term "disciplinary enculturation" to describe the process through which learners gain competence and acceptance in academic discourse communities, terms such as "academic socialization," "academic initiation,"

“acculturation” and other synonyms are not uncommon. To emphasize the conceptual link among the studies reviewed here, I have used the term “disciplinary enculturation” throughout the chapter even if some of the studies discussed below have not used this exact term themselves. Further, I have included commentary on studies whose research agendas do not explicitly explore disciplinary enculturation issues when such studies raise topics that connect closely to ideas that are central to understanding the current state of research on disciplinary enculturation.

I should also mention here that recent research on disciplinary enculturation has resulted in a more complex, more nuanced understanding of enculturation processes. That is, whereas initial studies of disciplinary enculturation, particularly those coming from L1 composition studies (e.g., Berkenkotter, Huckin, & Ackerman, 1988; Haas, 1994; McCarthy, 1987), suggested that disciplinary enculturation was mainly a solitary process that occurred as learners gained competence in specific literacy activities, researchers have now begun to recognize that enculturation involves more than discipline-specific skill acquisition and occurs through learners’ personal and historical interactions and relationships with peers, professors and advisors, and institutions (Casanave, 1995, 2002; Prior, 1991, 1998). Although disciplinary enculturation certainly concerns broad disciplinary norms and discipline-specific communicative competence, it also points towards the more local and immediate web of interactions and relationships that can either constrict or support learners’ academic participation.

I would like to add an additional word on these interactions and relationships. Researchers have traditionally studied disciplinary enculturation only in terms of the process through which students learn to communicate successfully in target discourse

communities (Angelova & Riazantseva, 1999; Casanave, 2002; Prior, 1994, 1998).

However, I would like to draw a distinction between enculturating into a professional academic discourse community and enculturating into the physical space where one comes into contact with that professional academic discourse community. That is, a preliminary step in the process through which learners begin making accurate contributions to professional discourse communities involves their ability and inclination to enculturate into the academic departments, universities, and societies that contain those communities.

A brief overview of the research contexts discussed below is also warranted. This chapter reviews studies of graduate learners at both the master's and doctoral levels. Learners at the doctoral level must enculturate into their target discourse communities if they wish to become professional contributors to their fields. The parameters for master's students' disciplinary enculturation are perhaps less clear. While it is true that the master's degree is not generally terminal and that master's students do not face the same academic rigors as Ph.D. students, master's students are nevertheless working in environments where their coursework and master's theses can serve as early movement towards participation in a professional academic discourse community. Ivanic and Camps (2001) maintain that master's learners are caught in between being a novice and specialist, and Casanave (2002) has argued that it is during the master's degree where "the transition from novice to expert begins to take place" (p.84). Although master's students may decide to conclude their studies once they earn their degrees, ending their enculturation into a professional academic discourse community, for as long as they are enrolled in master's programs they are in environments where the model before them is

one that encourages disciplinary enculturation, even if that enculturation only lasts for the duration of a one or two year graduate program. For the purposes of this chapter, when it seems pertinent to the findings under discussion I do draw attention to whether the research context involves learners pursuing master's or doctoral degrees. Otherwise, I use the generic terms "graduate student" or "graduate learner" to refer to research participants.³

Finally, it may also be useful to preface this literature review by saying that much of the research examined here is qualitative in nature, and, as is a given with qualitative research methodologies, these studies' findings are not meant to be generalizable (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). What is true in the research contexts reported below is not necessarily true for all learners under similar conditions. The findings reported here are particular to a given setting, a specific learner or group of learners, a precise task or activity, an explicit time. However, within the particularity of these studies we can discern a interconnected body of scholarship that does speak to the experiences of ESL graduate learners as they pursue advanced degrees in institutions where English is the language of

³ This literature review also references a number of studies of the enculturation experiences of learners who have recently completed their graduate studies. Even though such individuals are no longer graduate students, they are still in the early stages of gaining proficiency in the skills they will need to maintain or secure positions in target academic discourse communities (Casanave, 1998; Flowerdew, 2000; Matsumoto, 1995). While the conferral of a graduate degree is an important event in the development of any scholar, it does not automatically signal the learner's full and complete disciplinary enculturation. Rather, as its affinity with Lave and Wegner's (1991) legitimate peripheral participation seems to suggest, disciplinary enculturation is an ongoing process that occurs on a continuum as learners gain greater levels of expertise in the social, communicative, and cognitive practices of their fields, a process that does not cease upon the learner's graduation. Thus, I refer to findings from studies of newly graduated scholars who are working to gain or solidify positions in professional academic discourse communities.

instruction. Though the studies range widely in their contexts and findings, my overriding sense from the literature on disciplinary enculturation reviewed here is that as a field L2 composition studies has under-considered the importance of institutional and interpersonal contexts and relationships and the ways they shape L2 learners' literacy activities, in the process framing their enculturation into target discourse communities.

Contributions from L1 Research: A Representative Study

A broad survey of the literature on enculturation-related topics suggests that disciplinary enculturation concerns many of the same activities for both L1 and L2 learners (e.g., writing discipline-appropriate texts, acquiring requisite background knowledge, building relationships with peers and professors, fulfilling degree requirements, contributing to professional academic conversations, etc.). Though the focus of my research is on L2 learners, I would like to begin by taking some time to examine closely an influential and oft-cited L1 study. This is not meant to suggest that L2 learners encounter disciplinary enculturation in the same way as L1 learners. Rather, I have included this L1 research so that I might use it as a point of reference for articulating how findings from L2 studies add to, complicate, and differentiate from L1 findings.

Writing some fifteen years ago, Berkenkotter, Huckin, and Ackerman (1988) offered an extended study of an L1 writer's development over the course of his first year in a doctoral program in rhetoric and composition. Responsive to Bartholomae's (1985) argument that newcomers must write their way into privileged positions in the university, Berkenkotter, Huckin, and Ackerman (1988) analyzed five texts written by their research

participant, “Nate,” to try to understand how he changed to fit into his target discourse community. Though the researchers recognized that graduate students “are initiated into the research community through the reading and writing they do, through instruction in research methodology, and through interaction with faculty and their peers,” they held that a “significant part of this initiation process is learning how to use appropriate written linguistic conventions for communicating through disciplinary forums” (p.12).

The researchers grounded their study in an analysis of the texts Nate wrote and the processes through which he wrote them. Among their findings, the researchers observed that although Nate’s professors gave him specific feedback on his writing assignments, they did not watch closely over his development as a writer. Rather, it was up to Nate to use their comments to try to diagnose where his rhetorical techniques failed to conform to the preferred genres of his graduate program. Berkenkotter, Huckin, and Ackerman’s (1988) analysis of Nate’s attempts to alter his writing so that it would fall in line with the genres of his field demonstrated that, while writing involves sociocultural interactions between professors, students, peers, and published texts, for the most part Nate worked alone, self-monitoring his own interaction with the texts he was writing. After analyzing Nate’s writing over the course of five assignments, the researchers concluded that he was in firm command of his writing processes “when not burdened by such cognitively complex tasks as adopting an appropriate register (which included using rhetorical and stylistic conventions with which he was unfamiliar) and instantiating abstract concepts into prose” (p.18-19).

Although initially Nate struggled with his academic writing, as it turned out he was an uncommonly strong writer and progressed rapidly in his writing development,

determining relatively quickly and easily what he had to do to produce the sort of academic writing that his professors would reward. The researchers concluded that Nate's movement into the professional academic discourse community of rhetoricians and compositionists was occurring primarily through his ability to produce specialized written discourse within a narrowly defined disciplinary context.

Unresolved Questions in Nate's Enculturation

While Berkenkotter, Huckin, and Ackerman's (1988) work is useful in its description of how an L1 writer came to understand how to alter his writing so that it would conform to the expectations of his academic discourse community, the study passes over some important issues. For example, writing in response to Berkenkotter, Huckin, and Ackerman (1988), Ackerman (1995)—who identifies himself as Nate, the research participant in the original study—criticizes the earlier study's exclusive focus on writing, arguing that “The exterior qualities of the . . . papers I wrote mask, to some degree, the ongoing epistemological quest of a student who, like all other students in graduate school, simultaneously tries to satisfy the demands and constraints of each professor and class while at the same time seeks a separate scholarly identity” (p.147). For Ackerman (1995), one of the problems of the original study was that it placed all of its efforts to understand his movement into an academic discourse community on textual production, leaving out the ways sociocultural relationships and interactions influence discursal positioning and concomitant identity formulation. Also limiting was that Berkenkotter, Huckin, and Ackerman (1988) portrayed Nate's target discourse community as a stable, rule-governed entity that oversaw newcomers' literacy activities

in a clear and consistent manner, facilitating learners' steady entrance into the discourse community as they learned to produce the community's privileged genres. However, as numerous researchers have shown (Bazerman, 1988; Bizzell, 1982b; Prior, 1998; Casanave, 1995, 2002; Ivanic, 1998), discourse communities are filled with contradictions and inconsistencies, mutable understandings and shifting allegiances that complicate even established participants' disciplinary participation. Finally, and especially relevant to this study of L2 learners, it is important to recognize that Nate's literary participation was made easier by his background. A native speaker of English, Nate began his Ph.D. program having earned a bachelor's in English and a master's in education and had spent the summer immediately preceding the start of his doctoral studies participating in a National Endowment for the Humanities summer seminar for college teachers. Thus, while Nate was successful in his disciplinary writing, his background likely contributed more to his success than the researchers acknowledge. In short, Nate was in optimal linguistic, cultural, educational, and experiential condition for producing effective writing in his Ph.D. program. Moreover, even as Berkenkotter, Huckin, and Ackerman's (1988) analysis provides interesting access to Nate's thought processes as he composes, the study abstracts Nate from the wider contextual and relational field that, as LeFevre (1987) argues, is at the core of textual production.

I bring Berkenkotter, Huckin, and Ackerman's (1988) work into this literature review because its heavy focus on texts more so than writers and on assignments more often than relationships is exemplary of an approach both L1 and L2 researchers have taken to try to understand learners' transitions into new discourse communities.

Berkenkotter, Huckin, and Ackerman's (1988) study seems to me to be emblematic of a

discipline that has so honed in on *text*, the actual words on the actual pages, that it has not considered enough the ways linguistic, social, cultural, rhetorical, personal, and political contexts surface in and can impinge upon writers' textual production processes. This tendency to focus exclusively on texts is prevalent in treatments of disciplinary enculturation issues in both L1 (e.g., Bartholomae, 1985; Chiseri-Strater, 1991; Doheny-Farina, 1989; Dudley-Evans, 1991; Jacobs, 1982; McCarthy, 1987; Winsor, 1996) and L2 composition studies (e.g., Allison, Cooley, Lewkowicz, & Nunan, 1998; Connor & Kramer, 1995; Connor & Mayberry, 1996; James, 1984; Paltridge, 1997; Shaw, 1991). While learning to produce effective academic prose is certainly a part of disciplinary enculturation, if we are to understand this process we must pay attention to a broader spectrum of activity than a strictly textual focus permits.

Disciplinary Enculturation and L2 Research

Researchers in L2 composition studies have demonstrated that the linguistic and cultural differences that separate non-native English-speaking students from their native English-speaking peers result in L2 learners facing a significantly different set of issues as they enculturate into target discourse communities (Angelova & Riazantseva, 1999; Belcher, 1994, 1997; Casanave, 1992, 1995; 2002; Norton & Toohey, 2001; Scott, 2000). Hence, many studies of disciplinary enculturation in L2 composition studies have moved considerably beyond Berkenkotter, Huckin, and Ackerman's (1988) exclusive concentration on academic text, though text-focused studies remain common. My intention in the remainder of this literature review is to use Berkenkotter, Huckin, and Ackerman's (1988) study to help frame four significant topics in the L2 literature on

disciplinary enculturation. I then conclude with an articulation of the ways the present study aims to fill gaps that remain in this body of work.

Writing and Disciplinary Enculturation

Though disciplinary enculturation involves an array of literacy activities (e.g., writing, reading, speaking, building relationships—and each of these can be broken down into several distinct activity categories), it is not uncommon for L2 researchers to view writing as the most important factor in learners' disciplinary enculturation. There are only a handful of studies of the ways ESL graduate students' enculturation is connected to non-writing literacy activities—e.g., see Hall's (1993) and Morita's (2000) work on L2 learners' oral participation in disciplinary contexts. The likely reason for the heavy focus on writing is that, as a number of researchers have observed, writing ability largely determines learners' academic fitness relative to target discourse communities (Bartholomae, 1985; Casanave, 1992, 1995; Ivanic, 1998; Prior, 1998). Or, in terms of Swales's (1990) theory of academic genres, students must learn to produce the preferred genres of their discourse communities before they can expect to enculturate into those communities. This is true perhaps nowhere more so than in graduate school where one of the most important ways learners signal their transition from apprentice to professional is by demonstrating written generic competence in the form of seminar papers, theses or dissertations, and publication of original research (Casanave, 1998; Connor and Mayberry, 1996; Flowerdew, 2000). It is important for learners to gain control over their community's genres because if they prove unable or unwilling to write the genres of their discourse communities, they risk discursal marginalization (Bartholomae, 1985; Bizzell,

1982a, 1982b), a problem that can be especially acute for ESL learners who are unfamiliar with the codes and conventions of academic discourse in institutions where English is the language of instruction (Allison, Cooley, Lewkowicz, & Nunan, 1998; Belcher & Braine, 1995; Cadman, 1997; Canagarajah, 1993; Schneider & Fujishima, 1995).

To date, L2 researchers interested in understanding how ESL graduate students learn to participate in their discourse communities have examined learner writing within a variety of narrow research settings, including single academic classes (Canseco & Byrd, 1989, Prior, 1995); single academic writing assignments (Connor & Kramer, 1995; Connor & Mayberry, 1996); use of research in academic writing (Chitrapu, 1996); the transition from an English composition class to writing in a disciplinary field (Hansen, 2000); individual academic departments (Angelova & Riazantseva, 1999; Casanave, 1992, 1995); graduate theses and dissertations (Cadman, 1997; Belcher, 1994; Scott, 2000; Shaw, 1991); and post-graduate publishing (Casanave, 1998; Flowerdew, 1999, 2000; Gosden, 1995; Matsumoto, 1995).

Berkenkotter, Huckin, and Ackerman (1988) reported that Nate wrote effectively when he was not hampered by “such cognitively complex tasks as adopting an appropriate register” and “instantiating abstract concepts into prose” (p.18-19). Given the exigencies of graduate-level writing, however, it is difficult to find very many writing tasks that graduate learners must complete that are not cognitively challenging, that do not require attention to appropriate register or the expression of abstract concepts. This is especially true for L2 writers who, unlike Nate, can rely on neither expertise as a native English speaker nor intuitive understandings of the cultural practices and values of

English-speaking discourse communities to help them overcome literacy-related difficulties. Leki (1992) has maintained that for non-native students, “entering our universities means entering into competition in the domain of language against others who are natural experts” (p.136). And, as a number of researchers have suggested, writing remains difficult even for successful L2 graduate students who are at advanced levels of enculturation in English-speaking discourse communities (Angelova & Riazantseva, 1999; Blakeslee, 1997; Prior, 1991; Scott, 2000). Because they possess neither instinctive linguistic ability in English nor ingrained understanding of English-language educational contexts and values, L2 learners are at a distinct disadvantage to their native English-speaking peers, students who are culturally and linguistically primed to succeed in English-language academic contexts.

In an effort to determine how best to assist L2 writers, researchers have tried to come to a finer understanding of the areas where L2 writers experience the greatest difficulty. For instance, Allison, Cooley, Lewkowicz, and Nunan (1998) explored the language-related difficulties of L2 graduate students writing dissertations in English by surveying graduate students, analyzing extended pieces of student writing, and interviewing graduate advisors. Attempting to catalog “the communication demands peculiar to an extended piece of academic writing” (p.213), Allison et. al. found that L2 writers encountered difficulties at all stages of the writing process. The researchers identified four main problem areas in the graduate students’ writing in English: 1) failure to organize the thesis so that objectives, purpose, and outcomes were clearly defined; 2) failure to support arguments with relevant literature and a tendency to overstate or generalize the significance of research findings; 3) inability to organize information at the

paragraph level and to develop the text appropriately; 4) “local” problems with editing, spelling, grammar, and bibliographic referencing. Though the researchers observed that at first sight “local errors were the most evident, by far the greatest number of communication problems occurred at the macro-level of audience, purpose and overall structuring” (p.212).

Although Allison et. al. clearly describe some L2 learners’ writing difficulties, part of what weakens research that focuses exclusively on learner texts is that such approaches seldom consider the ways texts always exist within dialogic contexts. For instance, numerous L2 researchers have established that linguistic and cultural differences between L2 graduate students and those who respond to their writing can have a detrimental impact on ESL learners’ communicative effectiveness (Blakeslee, 1997; Cadman, 1997; Fox, 1994; Scott, 2000; Shaw, 1991). Hence, cataloguing writing problems outside of the contexts and relationships in which they occur does not necessarily help us to understand what factors perpetuate linguistic difficulties.

Pivotal to enculturation research are studies that explore the differences between the ways ESL students learn to write in their home cultures and the writing expectations of English-speaking discourse communities. For instance, Angelova and Riazantseva (1999) followed four ESL learners through their first year of graduate school to try to understand how they learned to write and think in their new discourse community. They found that the issue was not that the four learners did not know how to write, but rather that they wrote and thought in ways that were outside of the dominant practices of their discourse community, resulting in their experiencing problems with topic selection, register, audience, organization, grammar, and purpose. The research participants also

indicated that, unlike their American peers, they had difficulty approaching their professors to discuss academic difficulties because such behavior had not been a part of the academic culture of their home countries. As a result, when they had difficulties the ESL students were largely unable to seek guidance from those who were instructing them when they began work in English-language discourse communities.

In a study covering some similar ground, Casanave (1995) examined the experiences of L2 graduate students beginning work in a sociology Ph.D. program to try to understand how they conceptualized and participated in their new discourse community. Casanave found that the rigorous structure of the graduate program could not guarantee that learners would respond in the ways their professors desired. She concluded that the learners' enculturation into the sociology discourse community had more to do with the ways their linguistic and cultural backgrounds fit or, in some cases, did not fit with the internal structure and belief system the discourse community itself imposed. As Casanave (1995) writes, "Rather than being immersed in communities of unidirectional contextual influences, student writers use a multiplicity of local resources to respond to their training in diverse ways" (p.107), at times resisting aspects of the program that do not mesh with their established personal and cultural identities. Perhaps not surprisingly, Casanave (1995) also found that despite the program's attempt to monitor and control learners' progress, not all the participants ultimately evolved into sociologists.

Both Angelova and Riazantseva (1999) and Casanave (1995) introduce readers to motivated, intelligent, talented students who, though successful in educational settings in their home cultures, struggle to satisfy the literacy demands of their new environments. And, as Casanave's (1995) work in particular suggests, to focus on learner texts alone to

try to understand their struggles is to miss out on determining how texts themselves grow out of learner histories and relational contexts. Interestingly, research suggests that L2 writers tend to isolate themselves from interactions with more experienced members of their discourse communities as they work on disciplinary writing tasks. In a survey of L1 and L2 graduate students and their advisors, Dong (1996) found L2 writers tended to be so focused on their own writing that they were less likely to confer with more knowledgeable readers or to seek support from on-campus writing resources. Dong (1996) also found that L2 writers tended to work alone, unable or unwilling to participate in the sorts of communicative exchanges that could help them learn how to write in ways that would be more acceptable to their discourse community.

Also useful to understanding the connection between writing and disciplinary enculturation are studies that span a range of activities over an extended length of time. For instance, in a two-year study of one L2 doctoral student's experiences writing a dissertation in agricultural economics, Scott (2000) concluded that the dissertation was both the means by which the student enculturated into his discipline as well as the "embodiment of the enculturation process" (p.155). Responsive to LeFevre's (1987) work on writing as a socially situated activity, Prior (1994, 1995, 1998) carried out a series of case studies involving both L1 and L2 graduate students from six different disciplines. Concentrating on the ways individual writing tasks are both implicitly and explicitly negotiated between professors and students, Prior (1998) argued that to understand academic writing we need to consider the "complex microhistories of situated action, perception, and evaluation" and "the strategic interpretive work that renders such histories, typical, unexceptional, practically invisible to participants" (p.63). In his study

of graduate students' coursework in a sociology seminar, Prior (1995) maintained that "determining what gets accepted and rewarded [in the classroom] is crucial to understanding the academic writing task" (p.49), an observation which points towards the important role professors play in selecting what writing projects graduate students pursue beyond the classroom and how students conceptualize the potential of those projects within the contexts of disciplinary conversations in professional academic discourse communities.

In contrast to Berkenkotter, Huckin, and Ackerman's (1988) research, Prior (1995) indicates that academic writing processes cannot be extracted from the specific, interactive, dialogically complex contexts in which they occur. Further, Prior's work suggests that to comprehend the connection between academic writing and disciplinary enculturation it is necessary to consider writing development over time and in relationship with others, within what Prior refers to as the "microhistory" of a learner's academic literacy development. However, even as Prior (1994, 1995, 1998) tries to describe these microhistories, one of the limitations of his work is that it focuses exclusively on writers in classroom settings. While graduate learners' writing for their academic coursework unquestionably contributes to their enculturation experiences, it is but a part of the enculturation process. While students must learn to produce successful seminar papers if they are to experience success in graduate school, successful acquisition of this skill does not in itself signal a learner's full disciplinary enculturation. Learners must also acquire the skills they will need to speak and write professionally in their discourse communities. For this to happen, learners must also enculturate into the physical environment where their discourse communities are housed so that they can

construct a network of people who can support their efforts to enculturate into the professional community.

Finally, it is instructive to consider the ways disciplinary writing practices and expectations may differ according to broad disciplinary areas. In a study that probed the importance of writing in the sciences/technologies versus the humanities/social sciences, Casanave and Hubbard (1992) surveyed 85 teachers from 28 departments at Stanford University about the writing they assigned to graduate students, how they evaluated writing, and their perceptions of graduate students' writing problems. The researchers found that in the humanities and social sciences writing played an important role from the very beginning of the degree-seeking process, whereas in the sciences and technologies writing seemed to become important only at the end of the program as learners wrote their dissertations. Jenkins, Jordan, and Weiland's (1993) survey of graduate engineering programs seconds this finding.

In her investigation of the differences between writing in the sciences/technologies versus the humanities/social sciences, Belcher (1989) found that "organization appeared to be a problematic feature mainly for the non-science students, that is, those in fields with no single agreed-upon discourse paradigm" (p.217). Further, and germane to my own study, Belcher (1989) observed that L2 learners frequently found genres in the humanities and social science genres to be less stable and knowable than genres in the sciences and technologies. Further, in scientific and technological disciplines L2 graduate students may be in better position to write their dissertations/theses because, as Shaw (1991) found, it is not uncommon for science and technology dissertations/theses to grow out of student/advisor co-participation on a team

research project. As a result, in the sciences and technologies advisors regularly exert considerable influence on graduate students' topic selection, literature review content, and discussion format, largely because advisors and students frequently co-published articles out of the students' dissertation projects (Shaw, 1991). Focusing on learners who were in the humanities, my own study questions the solidity of these distinctions between writing in the humanities/social sciences vs. sciences/technologies.

Given the importance of writing to L2 learners, and, for that matter, to the L2 composition teachers charged with readying students to write successfully for academic audiences, it is not surprising that there is a substantial body of research that tries to unravel enculturation issues through concentrated attention on L2 learner writing. However, as Prior's (1994, 1995, 1998) work on learner microhistories and socially situated activity and Casanave's (1992, 1995, 2002) and Braine's (2002) writings on the importance of looking beyond learner texts to try to understand literacy activities suggest, to understand how learners produce academic texts demands that researchers take into consideration the ways that textual production processes are always rooted in interpersonal relational contexts. And, inasmuch as textual production is a key activity in disciplinary enculturation processes, it is especially important to complicate our understanding of L2 learners' writing through consideration of the ways social, cultural, and linguistic contexts factor into L2 learners' literacy activities.

Disciplinary Enculturation and Learner Relationships

To understand L2 learners' disciplinary enculturation it is important to consider the full spectrum of literacy activities that factor into participation in an academic

discourse community. In an article on ESL graduate students' academic literacy acquisition, Braine (2002) argues that as a field L2 composition studies has over focused on writing, in the process ignoring other topics that are integral to disciplinary enculturation processes. Or, as Braine (2002) puts it, "a fundamental shortcoming of most [studies of socially situated academic literacy] is their focus on writing tasks alone" (p.63). Recounting his own experiences as an ESL graduate student, Braine (2002) contends that academic literacy at the graduate level involves "more than the ability to read and write effectively" (p.60). He argues that academic literacy also requires graduate students to be able "to adapt smoothly to the linguistic and social milieu of their host environment and to the culture of their academic departments and institutions" (p.60). Hence, Braine (2002) maintains that L2 graduate learners need "sound social skills" in addition to high levels of English proficiency (p.65). In his conclusion, Braine (2002) writes of the need for research that looks beyond learner writing in its attempt to understand the process through which ESL students enculturate into academic discourse communities.

Moving beyond the strictly textual focus of Berkenkotter, Huckin, and Ackerman (1988) and anticipating the research gap Braine (2002) describes, a limited number of L2 researchers have looked into the ways contexts and relationships factor into disciplinary enculturation. A critical line of inquiry examines the ways learner relationships with professors and advisors factor into their disciplinary enculturation. For example, anchored in an investigation of ESL learners' textual production processes, Belcher (1994) looked at three ESL doctoral students' relationships with their advisors. She found that one way for L2 graduate students to "confidently negotiate" the dissertation-writing

process was for them to build egalitarian rather than hierarchical relationships with their advisors, a process that not only required sociolinguistic skill on the part of the learner but also an advisor who was willing to break away from traditional, hierarchical graduate student/advisor relationships. In Belcher's (1994) research, it was actually the weakest of the three writers who experienced the greatest success during her dissertation writing process, an eventuality that Belcher attributes to that student's collaborative relationship with her advisor.

In a study that explored how L2 writers interacted with the rhetorical, linguistic, and cultural contexts in which they were writing, Riazi (1997) discovered that for four Iranian graduate students in education, gaining disciplinary literacy was as much an interactive, social process as it was a textual process. Riazi (1997) reported that his participants "said they relied extensively on interacting with other members of their academic community as strategies both for composing and as a way of improving their performance of academic tasks" (p.127). Riazi (1997) concluded that for his participants successful disciplinary writing was a "social-cognitive process" (p.105) because it required them to integrate their individual cognition with the wider social context that shaped and received their writing. Other researchers have also examined L2 writers' interactions with those who read their writing and found a strong connection between effective writing and supportive academic relationships between students and their advisors (Scott, 2000; Shaw, 1991).

Though finding sources of helpful writing support are beneficial for any graduate learner, in her study of graduate students' experiences writing theses/dissertations, Dong (1998) found that ESL learners frequently lacked social networks and seldom took

advantage of writing support systems. Dong's (1998) research is important because it suggests that L2 writers may often be working without literacy support as they attempt to penetrate target discourse communities. The stakes are especially high for L2 graduate students to be in healthy, clearly communicated relationships with their advisors. In a study that grounded its investigation of literacy activities in L2 learner relationships, Blakeslee (1997) examined the struggles of a sixth-year ESL doctoral student in physics attempting to write for publication with his advisor's assistance. The pair's work together went poorly, largely because of their inability to construct a relationship in which communication lines were clear and uninhibited. As a result, the student labored on with inaccurate representations of the wider audience for the article and an inability (or perhaps refusal) to adapt his rhetorical strategies to meet his professor's demands. In the end, after 22 frustrating drafts, the student abandoned the co-publication effort, leaving the professor to appropriate what was left and publish the article himself. Though Blakeslee (1997) interprets the problem as stemming from the L2 learner's communicative difficulties with English, the far greater problem seems to have been that the advisor and student were unable to construct a relationship where cultural and rhetorical differences were recognized and discussed, leading to the ultimately unsuccessful conclusion of their co-publication effort. In a study along a similar line, Jenkins, Jordan, and Weiland (1993) found that advisors in an engineering department felt compelled to take over the writing of struggling L2 graduate students' master's theses because they felt they had done all they could to help the student finish and it was too expensive to continue to pay them on research contracts. As with Blakeslee (1997), one of the issues here, though Jenkins, Jordan, and Weiland (1993) do not explore it, seems to

be that advisors and graduate students were unable to or refused to clearly articulate expectations to one another, making it difficult for either side to get questions asked and answered in a productive manner.

In a study that reveals the sorts of difficulties ESL graduate students sometimes face when trying to build clear, effective relationships with supervisors, Hemphill (1996) studied the interaction of ESL graduate students and their non-native professors as they co-authored articles in an engineering department. Hemphill (1996) found that neither professors nor students fully recognized how cultural and linguistic differences surfaced in the actual texts they produced together, though both clearly saw how cultural and linguistic distance made face-to-face interactions difficult. Hemphill (1996) suggests that one of the factors that interfered with professors' and students' collaborative writing was an inability to build partnerships where communicative limitations were clearly recognized and accounted for. Relationships with advisors and professors are not the only important connections for L2 learners. In a study of 11 ESL students at a community college, Benz (1996) found that building positive connections with peers as well as professors was necessary for learners to penetrate their academic communities.

What all of these studies of the intersections between academic writing and sociolinguistic relationships suggest is that while academic writing is enmeshed within sociocultural contexts, for L2 learners it can remain an especially difficult part of the enculturation process if they write in ways that are different from their target discourse community's preferred genres and do not have the ability or inclination to cultivate relationships with advisors who will support their efforts. Also important is recognition that L2 learners' academic experiences in their home countries contribute to their

interpretive framework for negotiating academic discourse communities in English-dominant environments. If individuals with power in English-language discourse communities view L2 graduate students as though they are the same as their L1 counterparts, or, perhaps more troubling, as though they are blank slates onto which the values and knowledge of a new discourse community can be easily written, they add to the disadvantages L2 learners already face when they begin graduate study in a language they do not speak natively in a culture they do not know intuitively. Given that L2 learners are invariably in relationship with others as part of their graduate study, a sociocultural network that can support or hinder their efforts to varying degrees, it is necessary to situate learners' literacy activities within the context of those networks.

Disciplinary Enculturation and L2 Learner Isolation

Although Berkenkotter, Huckin, and Ackerman (1988) reveal little of Nate's relationships with others, we can presume that he is not socially, culturally, and linguistically isolated in his new discourse community even though he is new to the Ph.D. program in rhetoric and composition. A native speaker of English, he shares his professors' and English-native peers' language and has extensive experience in U.S. academic settings. Without question, Nate is an experienced member of the broader culture in which his graduate program is located. For ESL graduate students pursuing advanced degrees in English-language discourse communities, however, the potential to be socially, culturally, and linguistically isolated greatly complicates disciplinary enculturation processes.

Researchers have found that it can be difficult for ESL writers who are isolated from others in their discourse community to participate accurately in the target community's communicative genres (Dong, 1998; Flowerdew, 2000; Schneider & Fujishima, 1995; Scott, 2000). In an illustrative example of the possible consequences of isolation for L2 learners, Schneider and Fujishima (1995) conducted a single case study of an ESL master's students who lacked both the linguistic ability to identify and adapt to the intricacies of his academic discourse community's communicative genres as well as the social skills to forge relationships that might support his efforts. Unable to communicate easily in speech or in writing, the research participant, "Zhang," was isolated throughout his graduate study and received little support from his professors. Beyond resolving to "work harder" (p.19) on his studies, Zhang was at a loss as to how to improve his situation and was ultimately unable to maintain his program's required GPA and had to leave the university.

In another study that adds definition to what it means for an L2 learner to be isolated, Flowerdew (2000) examined a newly graduated Ph.D. student's attempts to publish portions of his dissertation after returning to his native country. Though the participant, "Oliver," had been a successful writer and graduate student in the U.S., once he returned to his native Hong Kong he experienced great difficulty revising his work. Oliver himself explained that the problem stemmed from his returning to his home country, a place where he felt a "lack of a common dialogue from the mainstream" which caused him to lose his "ability to link to the hot topic" (p.135). Though Oliver did finally publish an article from his dissertation, he only did so after giving up much of his control

over the article to the editors of the journal to which he had submitted it.⁴ It is important to note that in Flowerdew's (2000) research Oliver, having returned to his home country, was almost certainly not "isolated" in the common sense; he was in an environment where he was comfortable, had friends, and understood the cultural values. However, the problem seems to have been that he was separated from the academic discourse community he was seeking to enter. Though having a supportive network of friends and family was undoubtedly comforting, that network could not guide Oliver toward the production of the disciplinary genres that were desired by his target discourse community. Oliver's case suggests the importance of L2 learners being positioned in communities and relationships that can closely support their efforts to participate in literacy activities that conform to the target community's privileged genres. That is, to enter English-language discourse communities L2 learners need to find guidance in those communities. Supportive friends and family cannot replace the role of insiders in the target discourse community.

For L2 learners who, unlike Oliver, are still working in the physical environments of their discourse communities, isolation has the potential to damage what Norton (2000) refers to as learner "investment," by which she means the "socially and historically constructed relationship of learners to the target language" (p.10). For example, Schneider and Fujishima's (1995) Zhang struggled during his graduate study because he was unable to bridge the linguistic and cultural gaps that separated him from others in his discourse community, in the end losing his hold on the resources and privileges that his

⁴ See Canagarajah (2002) for an insightful analysis of the politics of non-western academics' attempts to publish in western journals.

master's degree would have conferred. Ironically, L2 learners' isolation is potentially exacerbated when they are in English-language discourse communities but have numerous speakers of their native language with whom to interact. That is, as Beer (2000) pointed out, if L2 learners in English-language discourse communities use their native language at home with their families and among their peers at school, it can be difficult for them to acquire the oral English skills they will need to participate successfully at their discourse community's professional level in the form of conference presentations and internships. Further, if L2 learners only interact with other speakers of their native language, they may struggle to develop the sociolinguistic skills they will need to construct effective, supportive socio-academic support networks.

Researchers have argued that L2 learners can overcome isolation by offering resources target discourse communities deem desirable, in the process renewing their investment (Norton, 2000). For example, in a study of learners in nonacademic settings, Norton and Toohey (2001) reported respectively on the experiences of a Polish immigrant working in a fast food restaurant and a Polish elementary school student. Norton's research participant, "Eva" struggled to gain acceptance in the social networks of her workplace until she was able to prove her worthiness to her peers—a feat she accomplished by getting her partner to drive them places in his car. Similarly, Toohey's "Julie" overcame her isolation at school by tapping into the benefits of having an older cousin who was an experienced speaker of English. For both Eva and Julie, integrating into their respective discourse communities allowed them to take steady strides towards bettering their standing within those communities.

In academic settings, however, for L2 learners to overcome isolation appears to require either a hospitable discourse community—one where, for example, an advisor works especially closely with the L2 learner, as in Belcher’s study (1994)—or a circumstance where the learner can offer something the discourse community wants, as Norton’s Eva did for the other workers in her restaurant. While the first of these two scenarios does happen in academic contexts (e.g., see Belcher, 1994, 1997), the second appears to be a rare occurrence for L2 learners in U.S. institutions, prompting Canagarajah (1993) to observe that ESL learners often occupy negative, outsider subject positions in English-language discourse communities, as happened with Zhang in Schneider and Fujishima (1995) and the physics student who wrote 22 drafts with his advisor before abandoning the project in Blakeslee (1997).

To assess disciplinary enculturation processes it is important to understand the parameters of L2 learner isolation. Though the present study does take as its starting point the learners’ literacy activities, their sense of connectedness both to other learners and to professors and advisors figured prominently in their enculturation experiences. Most importantly, we must consider how degrees of learner isolation have the potential to impact learner investment (Norton, 2000) and accompanying identity/subject positioning in the target discourse community.

Identity and Disciplinary Enculturation

A number of researchers have explored how studying in culturally and linguistically foreign environments impacts L2 learners’ identities. For instance, Fox (1994) offers a series of narratives of ESL graduate students writing in English-language

environments. In a particularly telling example, Fox (1994) writes of a woman from Sri Lanka who struggled to write in English even though she had been speaking English for thirty years. Though she had been accepted into a doctoral program at a major U.S. university, after receiving consistently negative feedback she came to feel “like a misfit” and “very unwanted, very put down” (p.3). As a result of her difficulties writing in English, she began to wonder “if people knew that I had a culture of my own, or that there are even any worthy people in my society. I even wondered what people here must think of Buddhists” (p.3). Difficulties writing in English lead her to question her cultural identity, or, at least, how members of her target discourse community interpreted that identity.

Also related to ESL learner identity, researchers have found that ESL graduate students can face a considerable loss in status when they begin studying in English-language environments. For instance, Hirvela and Belcher (2001) studied how difficulties writing in English impacted ESL graduate students’ identities. One of their participants, “Fernando,” described his need to be known by his American professors in the same way that his colleagues in Venezuela knew him:

But it was very important for me to let them know that I’m here. Because before coming here, I was a director at a school. That means I was the chairperson of the department. So, I was a professor, I was the chairman of my department, I was the academic coordinator. (p.93)

Because his accomplishments in his home country were not resulting in his having a similarly high status in his new environment, Fernando was concerned that the identity he was projecting was putting him into a negative position. Hirvela and Belcher (2001) point

out that the issue for Fernando was not that he did not understand the material he was learning but rather that he could not articulate his understanding as effectively as he could have in his native language. As a result, Fernando felt as though he had lost the identity he had worked so hard to construct in Venezuela.

Also interesting are the accounts of Gale (1994) and Shen (1989), two students from China who experienced identity conflicts when they enrolled in graduate programs in U.S. universities. Both describe the difficulties of reconciling the identities they had cultivated in China with the identities they were capable of constructing in English. Shen (1989) describes his struggles to write his way into a position where he will be recognized in the same way as he had been in China as an “uphill battle to recapture ‘myself’” (p.459). Although both authors portray their struggles to cultivate an identity in English as a positive experience, what should not be overlooked is that the difficulties they faced are not the same as those encountered by their native English-speaking peers. To pursue graduate study in a culture they do not know intuitively and in a language they do not speak natively, ESL graduate students must reconstitute their identities according to their cultural and linguistic differences from native English-speaking students. Even when learners view this identity construction as a positive growth experience, they still must undergo a period of enculturation when their linguistic performance does not let them accurately reflect their cognitive understanding of disciplinary material. As a result, L2 learners find themselves placed in negative subject positions. And, without the linguistic ability to articulate their ideas clearly in the target discourse community, ESL graduate students may be powerless to construct an identity that puts them on even ground with their native English-speaking peers.

Resistance and L2 Learner Literacy Activity

In Berkenkotter, Huckin, and Ackerman's (1988) study, Nate did not resist the values and practices of the rhetoric and composition discourse community he sought to enter. While it is true that in his first writing assignments he expressed frustration, throughout the study he evidenced his determination to succeed in his discourse community according to the community's terms. Nate appeared to have accepted the conditions of his enculturation and was not particularly interested in challenging his community's established channels. This is hardly surprising given that Nate had no real motivation to resist. He was succeeding in his disciplinary work by following both the explicit and implicit guidelines set down before him. In contrast, L2 learners may be more likely to resist their discourse communities in an effort both to retain native-language identities and to carve out a space for themselves that does not force them to compromise literacy behaviors and abilities acquired in their home countries.

As Belcher (1997), Casanave (1995, 2002), and Beer (2000) have demonstrated, L2 learners at both the master's and Ph.D. levels may well choose to resist enculturation, exercising their power to reject or challenge aspects of academic discourse that do not align with their personal goals, self-images, and native-culture identities. Nonetheless, it is important to recognize that even in resistance such learners engage with enculturation processes because resistance itself—whether conscious or unconscious—does not entirely remove learners from the enculturation context so long as they remain in their graduate programs (Fox, 1994).

L2 learner resistance to target discourse communities can take on several forms. Beer (2000) found ESL graduate engineer students were frequently unwilling to give up

the values of their home academic environments even as professors in their new English-language discourse communities counseled otherwise. In Casanave's (1992, 1995) case studies of "Virginia," a Puerto Rican woman enrolled in a graduate sociology program, she found that Virginia felt so strongly about the disconnection between her own background and the program's theoretical strain (dominated by white men, both professors and the authors students had been assigned to read) that she refused to follow along, writing against the program's theoretical agenda before eventually leaving the program altogether. Though Blakeslee (1997) does not address the possibility of resistance in her study of the physics graduate student who wrote 22 drafts in an attempt to co-publish with his advisor, the student and advisor's inability to produce a draft that satisfied both of their expectations surely reflects a form resistance, perhaps unconscious.

Belcher (1997) offers the most complete depiction of L2 learners resisting their discourse community, in the process transforming their own enculturation experiences. With some interesting connections to Hirvela and Belcher's (2001) study of the tension L2 learners face when trying to write in a new discourse community while simultaneously affirming and communicating an identity established in the learner's home country, Belcher (1997) explores how two women, "Hiroko" and "Yi-Ying," took control of aspects of their disciplinary enculturation. Belcher found that both women created space for fusing the values and identities they had in discourse communities in their home countries with the established mode of discursal participation in their new English-language discourse communities. In the process, both learners were able to enact change on their new discourse community, forcing professors and superiors to reevaluate

the community and open up new ways of knowing and new modes of academic expression.

Being attuned to learner resistance is vital to the study of disciplinary enculturation processes because enculturation is closely tied to issues of power and authority. Given that successful enculturation into a discipline affords learners with a considerable return on their investment (Norton, 2000), there are necessarily powerful forces charged with maintaining standards for newcomers. Scott (1985) theorizes that in contexts that are so charged with power and questions of access there is always going to be resistance. For L2 learners, this resistance can result in a refusal to enter into lopsided competition with their native English-speaking peers. Instead, L2 learners may use their cultural and linguistic differences as a way to advance their own standing by offering the discourse community a perspective and mode of expression that their native English-speaking peers cannot. To undertake an investigation of L2 learners' disciplinary enculturation experiences warrants attention to the ways L2 learners, a group that has the potential to be disempowered due to linguistic and cultural variance from English-dominant communities, may resist or transform discursal literacy practices.

Chapter Conclusion

To this point in the chapter I have described major research divisions in the literature on disciplinary enculturation. I want to conclude by articulating where this study aims to make its most important contributions to the body of work on L2 learner enculturation. As my earlier discussion of writing and disciplinary enculturation indicates, one of the limitations of current understandings of L2 graduate student

enculturation is that many researchers have tended to put the majority of their emphasis on texts and textual production. In the present study, while all five participants were under pressure to produce academic writing that conformed to the standards of their respective discourse communities, four of the five were not overly concerned with their writing or the writing process, with the rigors of producing sentences, paragraphs, and pages. Rather, the dominant issue for the participants in this study was their relationships with other members of their discourse communities and how those relationships supported (or failed to support) their literacy activities. Further, the existing research directs our attention to the possibility for learner resistance. Given that discourse communities are always unstable, resistance appears to be a useful heuristic for conceptualizing learner behavior within a context that is notoriously uncertain in an environment that does not necessarily embrace the ways L2 learners diverge from dominant literary behaviors.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

To understand disciplinary enculturation processes this study used a cross-sectional qualitative research design. The strength of cross-sectional designs is that over a relatively short period of time they allow the researcher to gain a detailed overview of a developmental process through comparison of participants at different stages of the process (Baltes, Reese, & Nesselroade, 1988; Creswell, 1994). In general, cross-sectional approaches only collect data from each participant in one meeting and then compare the results (King, 2001). However, in this study I extended the research for a period of five months, repeatedly interviewing participants, observing them in disciplinary settings, corresponding with them, and interviewing their professors and advisors. Although the duration of the study was too short to allow me to follow research participants through their entire enculturation experience, it was long enough to open a window onto a specific period in each participant's disciplinary enculturation.

To try to offset some of the limitations of the short duration of this study, I used a combination of retrospective and prospective analysis (Baltes, Reese, & Nesselroade, 1988). That is, whereas retrospective analysis accesses participants' memories of and reflections on events that occurred prior to the research present, prospective analysis tracks the developmental processes under study as they unfold (Baltes, Reese, & Nesselroade, 1988). Although retrospective analysis can be restricted by participants' recall difficulties and memory failures, Menard (1991) has argued that combining retrospective and prospective analysis can result in an enhanced understanding of the

research phenomenon because such an approach allows the researcher to gain access to the ways past events influence participants' present activities and perspectives.

By recruiting participants at different stages of their graduate study and then following them for five months, my approach combined the efficiency of a cross-sectional design with the repeated contacts characteristic of case study research (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Though I do not amalgamate my participants' varying experiences into one larger narrative of L2 learner enculturation, I do think that looking across the five very different cases examined in this study can enrich our understanding of some of the major issues ESL graduate students may experience as they enculturate into target discourse communities.

Participants

Participants for this study were selected from among ESL graduate students enrolled at a large state university in the U.S. during the fall 2002 semester. Parameters for selection included enrollment in a graduate program in either the humanities. However, I ruled out participants who were in the midst of graduating because I feared that at such a busy time they would be more likely to discontinue their participation in the study. Also, participants could not have previous educational experience in the U.S. prior to their enrollment at the university because such experience would have contributed to their enculturation process in a setting to which I did not have access. To determine departments from which participants could be recruited, I analyzed online program descriptions and degree requirements. To be an eligible setting from which to recruit participants, departments had to require written comprehensive examinations or original

researched theses at the master's level. Additionally, departments meeting the above criteria also had to emphasize writing in their curriculum. To determine how much writing students had to do in a given department, I consulted online course descriptions for 400-, 500-, and 600-level courses in each department. To be a suitable department, written work had to constitute approximately half of the assessment measures. The emphasis on writing was an important part of the criteria for identifying eligible departments because my research questions focused on how participants' literacy activities contributed to their enculturation. While writing was not the only literacy activity I was interested in, it was a useful criteria for determining which departments to target because writing projects can be the axis around which other literacy activities (reading, speaking, building academic relationships, etc.) revolve. Based on my analysis of graduate program writing requirements, I looked for participants in the Psychology, Sociology, Anthropology, English, and Geography departments and the College of Human Ecology and the College of Communications.

To recruit participants I contacted the department heads of programs where writing was an important part of the curriculum to inquire whether or not they had ESL students enrolled and, if so, how far along they were in their programs. After answering my questions, department heads referred me to their administrative assistants, from whom I obtained e-mail addresses of potential participants. Table 1 details the number and location of the ESL graduate students that potentially fit my criteria.

I sought to recruit between six and eight participants. I selected this number of participants based on both Winsor's (1996) *Writing like an engineer: A rhetorical education*, in which she had four participants, and Ivanic's (1998) *Writing and identity:*

Table 1. Potential Participants.

Location	Number of ESL graduate students
College of Human Ecology ¹	30
College of Communications ²	10
Psychology	6
Sociology	4
Anthropology	2
English	1
Geography	1

1. The College of Human Ecology contains a number of different departments (e.g., Child and Family Studies, Human Resource Development, Nutrition, Human Ecology, Public Health, Safety). However, as this study was beginning the College of Human Ecology was in the process of dividing in two. One half joined with the College of Business Administration and the other became part of the newly formed College of Education, Health, and Human Services. As a result, there was a considerable amount of administrative uncertainty regarding the number and location of ESL students. This was because in several of the departments individual students had to choose whether they wanted to join with the College of Business Administration or with the College of Education, Health, and Human Services. Administrators explained to me that they could not determine exactly which departments ESL students were in because this information was changing as students decided which way they were going to go. However, the total number of ESL students who were enrolled somewhere in what had been formerly known as the College of Human Ecology was 30.
2. In the College of Communications I was unable to determine the precise departments in which ESL students were studying.

The discursive construction of identity in academic writing, a study that had eight participants. Like my own research, both of these studies were qualitative in design and addressed a range of experiences connected to literacy development. Further, working with such relatively small numbers of participants, Winsor (1996) and Ivanic (1998) successfully gained an understanding of complex developmental processes. Also, I judged that having between six and eight participants would allow me to get a sufficiently rich cross-section of data related to disciplinary enculturation.

Based on my criteria for suitable departments and potential participants, approximately three weeks before the fall semester I was able to identify twelve potential

research participants representing five different departments. My initial contact with them was through an e-mail I sent inquiring whether or not they would be interested in meeting me and hearing about the study. (See Appendix A for a copy of the query letter I e-mailed to potential participants.) Of the twelve, six were willing to meet me: one each from Department A, B, and C and two from Department D.⁵ Initially, all six agreed to participate in the study. However, one discontinued her participation after one interview, citing a lack of time to meet with me for additional interviews.

I have ordered my introduction of the five participants who stayed in the study according to the amount of time they had spent in their graduate programs.⁶ That is, I begin with two learners who were new to their respective discourse communities and then move on to a student who was nearing the end of her third year in her program. Next, I introduce a doctoral student who was a little more than half way through her program before concluding with a participant who had successfully defended her dissertation the semester before the study began. All participants are identified by pseudonyms.⁷ The following biographical sketches include background information, academic histories, motivation for studying at the university, and a concise presentation of any additional information that helps to give a sense of the person, including a brief

⁵ As is explained in detail in the following section, I had met the participant from Department A during the department's orientation week for new graduate students.

⁶ By chance, all of the participants in this study were female. However, given the small number of participants in the study, I do not here attempt to draw conclusions based on a gendered analysis of the participants' activities. Although gender doubtlessly plays into socio-cultural interactions, the scope of this study was focused on language and culture rather than gender.

⁷ In choosing pseudonyms I tried to maintain the general feel of the participants' names. For example, one of the participants had chosen to go by a common Western name instead of her given Chinese name. Thus, her pseudonym is a common Western name.

word on oral English skills. The information about participants' oral English abilities is important because it figured into participants' sociolinguistic competence, which for some greatly shaped the experiences they had at the university. Table 2 shows a graphic representation of participants' background information.

Hana: 1st Year Master's Student in Department A

Hana came to the university from South Korea to work on a master's degree. Fashionable and pleasant looking, at age 28 she was four or five years older than most of her peers in the master's program, and, with a master's degree in contemporary American drama already in-hand from a university in South Korea, she arrived on campus two weeks prior to the start of the study confident that she would be successful in reaching her academic and personal goals at the university. Hana decided to pursue additional graduate study in the U.S. because she judged that having a second master's degree and later a Ph.D. from an American university would greatly improve her chances of someday obtaining a professorship in South Korea teaching contemporary American drama. Though at the time of this study she had not yet decided which universities' Ph.D. programs she would apply to at the conclusion of her master's work, she was certain that her current university would be on the list.

I should also mention here I met Hana during her department's new-student orientation week, a five-day series of workshops covering departmental procedures and policies, information about teaching responsibilities, orientation to the university's Writing Center, and presentations on pedagogy by experienced teachers. As the

Table 2. Participant Background Information.

Participant	Hana	Sangita	Yung-Li	Inez	Jenny
Gender	Female	Female	Female	Female	Female
Age	28	25	31	40	early 30s ¹
Home country	South Korea	India	South Korea	Mexico	China
Degree pursued	M.A.	Ph.D.	M.A.	Ph.D. (completed)	Ph.D.
Education²	B.A., British Literature; M.A., Contemporary American Drama	B.A., Home Science; M.A., Human Development; M.A., Child and Family Studies	B.A., British Literature	B.A., Actuarial Sciences; M.A., Counseling; Ph.D., Department D	B.A., Medicine; M.A., Endocrinology
Residency in the U.S.³	2 weeks	2 years	3 years	4 years	2 years
Career goal	Professorship in South Korea	Undecided between academic, government, and industry positions	Professorship in South Korea	Professorship in the U.S.	Undecided between professorship in China and work outside academia

1. Jenny was reluctant to give her precise age, stating only that she was in her early 30s.
2. "Education" represents degrees already completed at the outset of the study. All degrees had been obtained in participants' home countries.
3. "Residency" refers to the length of time the participant had lived in the U.S. prior to the study's beginning.

department's incoming Assistant Director of Composition when Hana arrived, I played a facilitating role throughout the workshop week, answering new students' questions and participating in presentations about various aspects of the program. Early on in my interviews with Hana I discovered that she wanted to use part of our interview time to ask me questions about the department's culture and its policies and procedures, perhaps because when we first met I was in a position where I was speaking with some authority about the department and its expectations for newcomers. Though I was concerned about intruding on her enculturation experience and, in the process, compromising myself as a researcher, I decided to answer her questions as best I could because I saw that one of the reasons Hana agreed to be in the study at all was that she hoped I could help her get adjusted to the department. My purpose in mentioning this information is that I want to acknowledge this aspect of Hana's participation in the study here because it contextualizes the way our participant/researcher relationship evolved.

When Hana entered the program she had considerable experience as a writer in her native language. In addition to her master's in contemporary American drama, she had a bachelor's degree in British literature and had written both bachelor's and master's theses in her native language. In her previous university work in South Korea she had received enthusiastic and positive evaluations of her writing, and she had published a portion of her master's thesis in a periodical in South Korea. When she moved to the U.S. she had comparatively little experience producing academic English but was confident that she would be able to handle the coming writing load.

At numerous times in our interviews Hana expressed frustration with her oral skills in English. In my interactions with and observations of her she clearly

comprehended the vast majority of what was said. However, she indicated that in her coursework at times she “cannot catch what people are saying,” particularly during class discussions when the thread of the conversation moved quickly and the register of the language being used was academically difficult. Also, by the end of a day Hana said that she was often so intellectually tired that she had a difficult time focusing on what others were saying. In conversation, she tended to respond slowly, often taking long pauses while she formulated what she wished to say, a practice that Hana said made it difficult for her to participate in class discussions in her coursework: “The thing [that] makes me terrible is that I cannot speak in class. But even though I read the text, I cannot say about some topics. I cannot speak about any ideas, like other students.” She also indicated that she felt anxious and uncomfortable when she was around native English speakers that she did not know well because she felt that her own pronunciation difficulties would unnecessarily burden a native speaker. At times, I struggled to understand the prosody of Hana’s accent, especially in some multi-syllabic words.⁸ While Hana’s oral English skills were a source of frustration to her, an analysis of her experiences suggests that the larger issue for Hana was actually that the sociolinguistic competence that she had gained in

⁸ I had trouble understanding Hana’s speech when she was using high register, multi-syllabic vocabulary, as in the following exchange about an article she was reading for one of her graduate classes:

H: I try to understand, sometimes I, sometimes, like “carnivalism.” It is from article so I can find other reference book for this term.

E: Did you say one of the terms, “cannibalism?”

H: Yeah.

E: As in eating humans?

H: Eating humans?! No, it’s like, that has the meaning like a festival. Carnivalism.

E: Carnivalism? Wait. [writes both words on paper] Okay, not cannibalism.

H: [laughs]

South Korea did not help her determine how to begin interacting effectively with the native English speakers in her new discourse community.

Sangita: 1st Year Ph.D. Student in Department D

Like Hana, Sangita was just starting a new graduate program. However, she actually arrived at the university from her native India two years prior to the start of this study to earn a master's degree in Child and Family Studies (CFS), a program she completed successfully the spring before this study began. At the start of this study she was set to begin work on a Ph.D. in Department D, a field that would allow her to focus on her long-standing interest in adult education more than her master's in CFS had. Unlike Hana, Sangita had already spent some time in the academic culture of the university.

Friendly and gregarious, Sangita expressed her willingness to participate in the study almost before I had finished describing what I was asking of my participants. At age 25, she had already earned a bachelor's degree in India in Home Science (similar to Home Economics in the U.S.) and a master's degree in Human Development. Growing up, Sangita spoke Telugu at home, though she also is fluent in Hindi, Tamil, and English, which was the language used in her schooling in India.

Sangita originally decided to pursue graduate study in the U.S. because she wanted to have an opportunity to conduct original research, something that was not emphasized in her university experiences in India. Interestingly, she chose to take the "non-thesis" option in her master's program, completing instead a take-home written comprehensive exam that was evaluated favorably by a committee of three professors. As

for long-term career goals, throughout the duration of this study Sangita was trying to decide if she would use her Ph.D. to obtain a professorship or a job in government or perhaps industry. Also, she did not yet know if she wanted to try to stay in the U.S. or return to India upon completing her studies.

Sangita's oral English skills and her command of idiomatic language impressed me as being very strong. In our interviews she spoke quickly and accurately, deftly maneuvering through her own thoughts as she formulated what she wanted to say. Although her accent was strong, overall her pronunciation was clear and I seldom had difficulty transcribing what she had said. I almost never heard Sangita make grammatical errors, and she peppered her speech with the sort of filler words and idioms that were common among her American counterparts at the university.

During the months when she participated in this study, Sangita was just beginning to determine how she would try to fit into her Ph.D. program. She was still meeting professors and peers, gaining a sense of the academic conversations that were going on in her new discipline, and making decisions about what future research avenues she might like to explore. In the background of this orientation process was Sangita's experience in the CFS master's program she had just completed, most importantly her developing understanding of the expectations for academic research writing in the U.S.

Yung-Li: 3rd Year Master's Student in Department B

Yung-Li came to the university from South Korea with her husband three years prior to the start of this study. Before coming to the U.S. she had earned a bachelor's degree in British Literature in South Korea. For the first year of her residency in the U.S.

she stayed at home to care for the couple's infant daughter while her husband worked on a Ph.D. at the university. After one year at home, Yung-Li began a master's program in Department B. When I met her she was entering her third year in that program, continuing work on a master's thesis begun the previous spring. In her early thirties, attractive, and scholarly-looking in small round glasses, Yung-Li was soft-spoken and initially reserved, though once she felt comfortable being interviewed she displayed a dry, self-deprecating sense of humor. Yung-Li's long-term career goal was to continue her work in her field in a Ph.D. program at another U.S. university so that eventually she could return to South Korea and become a professor.

In our interactions Yung-Li occasionally had difficulty articulating what she was thinking, sometimes pausing for ten or fifteen seconds in the middle of her sentences as she searched for the English words she wanted to use. At times, she was unable to say what she meant in English, explaining with an embarrassed smile that she would have to abandon her attempt to communicate an idea because she simply did not know how to voice her thoughts. Yung-Li had a sense of humor in these instances, often shaking her head and laughing slightly when she ran into a thought she could not quite capture. Describing her background learning English, Yung-Li explained, "Like most of Korean students, I have spent so [much time working on] reading and—not as many times as reading—and writing. But not speaking. I'm still uncomfortable with speaking and listening or hearing." Yung-Li placed a great deal of emphasis on the importance of strong speaking skills, believing that oral fluency is the primary means by which a learner is accepted into a linguistically foreign environment, as she indicated in our first interview together: "Before coming here I heard that my husband's professor told him

that if you don't speak English fluently you can never be a member of the society. My husband told me that and I think, yeah, that it is true.”

Jenny: 3rd Year Ph.D. Student in Department C

I first met Jenny as a student in my ESL composition class two years prior to the start of this study. When I contacted her over e-mail about possibly participating in the study, I did not realize I knew her because my contact information listed her under her given Chinese name, Tsai-Chin.⁹ Though this name was included on official class rosters and final grade sheets for the class I had her in, I had only known and remembered her by her American “nickname,” Jenny. When we reconnected in a lounge inside the university library, we were both surprised to find that we already knew one another. She said she was unsure if I was the same Ethan who had taught her English 121 class two years prior and was pleased to learn that, in fact, she did know me. Though she described an extremely busy schedule, she said that knowing me ahead of time made her willing to make time to participate in the study.

At the start of the study Jenny was in her third year in a Ph.D. program in Department C, a program that I soon learned has more in common with the hard sciences than it does with the programs it is housed with in the College of Human Ecology. In many ways, the structure and practices of Department C set Jenny apart from the other participants in this study. Specifically, as explored below, the doctoral program in Department C was set up to ensure new students' steady and effective enculturation into that discourse community. When the study began Jenny was already finished with her

⁹ Jenny's Chinese name, “Tsai-Chin,” is also a pseudonym.

coursework and was conducting dissertation research in her advising professor's laboratory.

Very small and thin, Jenny is pleasant and conscientious. She was extremely devoted to both her academic work and her dissertation advisor and seldom took time out of her studies to pursue social relationships. Before coming to the U.S. she had completed a bachelor's degree in Medicine and a master's in Endocrinology (internal medicine), during which she worked as a "resident doctor," a position that she likened to a medical internship where she followed doctors' orders and conducted routine medical tasks. As part of her bachelor's and master's programs in China she wrote extensively in her native language, Mandarin. She said that the only important writing she had to do in English prior to studying in the U.S. was the abstract for her master's thesis.

Jenny was not certain of her future career goals, though at times she talked about pursuing a two-year post-doc in China after finishing her Ph.D. and then looking for a faculty or research position in her field. Other times she spoke about leaving academia altogether, though she never described a clear plan for what she might do if she left academics. The problem with her field in academia, as Jenny described it, was that

To common people it's something unreal, I think. Because I'm from clinical medicine [from her master's degree in China]. It's hard to explain this feeling. I mean, probably you can look at the cell, lots of [laboratory] work is very effective in the cell, but in broad way you can do nothing to the whole system, the whole organism.

Jenny had come to feel that research in her field did not reach beyond laboratory settings. When I asked her if it was possible to do research in her field that did have an impact

beyond the laboratory, she replied, “I don’t believe so. But in the future, maybe. . . . Right now, I just, do I really need to do more research?! I think actually I need more experience in society rather than in research.” Though Jenny was doubting whether or not a Ph.D. in her field would get her a career she would enjoy, one that allowed her to use her knowledge to help people improve their lives, part of her motivation to complete her degree came from a desire to please her parents, who, as she said, “want me to have a Ph.D. degree. And I’ll get it, and after that I’ll think about what I want to be in the future more.”

Of the five participants in this study, I had the most difficulty understanding Jenny’s spoken English. She spoke so fast that it was often difficult for me to catch individual words, and it took me several interviews before I became accustomed to her accent. Jenny also tended to speak very softly, a habit she developed in China where, as she explained, “people always think if you speak in low voice, kind of gentle, you are educated.” Though she was aware that people frequently strained to understand her spoken English, she said that changing her speech was difficult because her “speaking style” had been “rooted in [her] mind for a long time.”

Inez: Ph.D. Completed in Department D

Inez came to the university from Mexico four years prior to the start of this study to begin work on a Ph.D. in Department D. Of the five participants in this study, Inez had been in graduate school in the U.S. the longest. She had successfully defended her doctoral dissertation the summer before she began participating in this study and was planning to use the coming academic year to revise a portion of her dissertation into an

article to be co-published with her dissertation advisor. Though Inez's goal was to obtain a professorship in the U.S., at the start of the study she had not yet begun her job search because she wanted to bolster her vita with some article publications and because her husband, an American she married nine months before the start of the study, still had two years to go on his Ph.D. in Environmental Engineering, necessitating that they stay in the area until he finished his studies. Inez and her husband planned to reside in the U.S. once he completed his degree.

Prior to coming to the U.S. to begin her Ph.D. program, Inez had earned a bachelor's degree in Actuarial Sciences from a large public university in Mexico. After working for five years in an insurance company, she returned to school to get a master's degree in Counseling, during which she wrote a thesis and also published two articles in Spanish, one individually and one co-authored with a group of her classmates. Having recently written a dissertation, she had the most extensive English writing background among this study's five participants.

At a young-looking 40 years of age, Inez radiates warmth and sincerity. In all of my interactions with her, I was struck by how calm she appeared to be, how completely at ease she was with herself and her environment. Inez is also an empathetic person. On numerous occasions during our interviews she inquired about my own academic progress, expressing generous support for me as a fellow graduate student going through the rigors of writing a dissertation. Inez's command of oral English appeared to me to be very strong. She spoke clearly and articulately and made almost no grammatical and syntactical errors. She explained that part of the reason she had become so comfortable

speaking English was that her husband, an American, spoke no Spanish, necessitating that she speak English at home all the time.

Data Collection

Participant Interviews

The primary data gathering technique was the long interview (McCracken, 1988), a type of structured interview technique that allows the researcher to conduct a focused inquiry into participant attitudes and experiences while remaining open to exploration of the unexpected or the unusual (McCracken, 1988). A long interview typically lasts about an hour (McCracken, 1988). I interviewed participants anywhere from four to six times, depending on their availability and willingness to meet me. I strived to schedule interviews with participants at approximately one-month intervals, though this was not always possible because of participants' busy schedules. All interviews were audio-taped and later transcribed.

Interviews were conducted in a variety of settings according to participants' preferences. I met Sangita and Jenny in an empty conference room on the top floor of one of the buildings on campus. Initially I met Hana and Inez in the same setting, but after three interviews each wondered if we could meet in a coffee shop located on the outskirts of campus. I was open to the suggestion, and we conducted the remaining interviews at the coffee shop. (Thankfully, the shop's surprisingly loud espresso machine was not close enough to my tape recorder to drown out my participants' voices.) All my interviews with Yung-Li took place in a conference room in the university's International House, the

setting that Yung-Li indicated was most convenient for her schedule. Table 3 details interview schedules for each participant.

In my first interview with each participant I explained what I was asking of my participants and the general point of the study. Once individuals agreed to participate, the remainder of the initial meeting was spent gathering background information and educational histories from each participant.¹⁰ The initial meeting lasted approximately 45 minutes. Appendix B shows the interview guide for the first meeting.

In my second interview with participants I asked them about their writing experiences, both in their native languages and in English in the U.S. The goal of this interview was to gain a detailed picture of each participant as a writer and as a user of academic English. This information was vital to my ability to understand how participants' literacy abilities factored into their enculturation. Appendix C contains the second interview guide.

I began the third (and all subsequent) interviews by asking participants about their recent academic activities. Occasionally this line of questioning took up a considerable portion

¹⁰ I was not able to offer participants compensation for participating in this study. I had contemplated offering tutorial services, but ultimately concluded that it was not feasible for me to make such an offer. In my final interview with four of the participants I asked them for their feelings about participating in the project. Participants said they liked contributing to the study because it gave them a chance to think about and articulate their feelings. Inez's answer to how she felt participating in the project captures a common sentiment among the participants: "I don't know if I ever would have come of thinking of these things if I would have never participated in this project. . . . It gave me a sense of security, like reflecting on what I have done, what I can do, people that have been important in my life and have been there and help me finishing my studies, develop my professional skills, my personal skills. So, yeah, I enjoy it a lot."

Table 3. Participant Interview Schedule.

Participant	Hana	Sangita	Yung-Li	Inez	Jenny
Department	A	D	B	D	C
Number of Interviews	6	5	5	5	4
Interview Dates¹	Sept. 6 Sept. 13 Oct. 25 Jan. 10 Mar. 4 May 8	Aug. 19 Aug. 29 Sept. 27 Nov. 8 May 7	Aug. 22 Sept. 4 Oct. 16 Jan. 14 May 5	Aug. 13 Aug. 20 Sept. 27 Jan. 8 May 6	Aug. 7 Aug. 23 Oct. 17 Dec. 5 ²

1. The final interview for four of the five participants took place several months after the main period of data gathering had ended. As explained in greater detail below, during the final interview I checked my interpretation of the data with the participants.
2. Jenny was unable to meet me for any more interviews after December 5; she regretfully explained that she had become too busy for any more meetings. I was unable to meet with her to check my interpretations.

of the interview time, particularly when participants reported on activities that were especially significant or troublesome. When this portion of an interview went on for a long period of time, I sometimes had to save some of the questions in my interview guides for future interviews. In some cases, when participants began talking about their recent activities, the natural course of the conversation addressed my interview questions.

The third interview with each participant also explored their academic relationships with peers, professors, and, if applicable, advisors. The third interview was intended to help me gain an understanding of the sorts of interactions participants had with others and how these interactions affected their academic participation. Appendix D shows the interview guide for the third interview.

After the third interview I saw that my participants' experiences were so divergent that in future interviews my questions pertained to their specific situations. Thus, beginning with the fourth interview my interview questions became individualized to

each participant's experience. For example, my fourth interview with Hana concentrated on her work as a graduate assistant in the university's writing center.

Additionally, beginning with the fourth interview I began to question participants about my observations of them in disciplinary settings (described below). In these interviews I asked for their reflections and impressions of the events I had observed in an effort to enrich my perspective on the activities I had witnessed.

After the fourth interview I stopped meeting with participants and began to concentrate on analyzing the data. After three months of working with the data, I scheduled a final meeting with each participant to get feedback on my analysis. Several days prior to my final interview with each participant I sent an e-mail to the person I was about to interview with a written summary of my interpretations of the data I had collected. These summaries were in outline form and were participant-specific. In other words, I only shared my interpretations about Sangita, for example, with Sangita, not with all of the participants. I e-mailed this information ahead of time so that participants would have an opportunity to read the summaries before our final meeting. In these final interviews I gave participants a chance to respond to my interpretations of the data. I began the interview by telling participants that though I had been as accurate as I knew how to be, I very much wanted them to correct my understanding of their situation and experiences if I had been inaccurate. Unfortunately, I was unable to schedule a final interview of this nature with Jenny, who said she did not have time to meet me. The four participants who did meet me for a final interview each felt that my presentation had been accurate and made only minor corrections in my interpretations. See Appendix E for a sample of one of the written summaries I e-mailed to participants.

Interviews With Professors or Advisors

In addition to interviewing participants I also interviewed at least one professor or the advisor for each participant. All professors are identified by a pseudonym. (See Appendix F for a copy of the letter I sent to professors and advisors to set up our interview.) The purpose of these interviews was to gain a finer understanding of the socio-cultural relationships in which participants were working. Table 4 details the schedule for interviews with participants' advisors or professors as well as their relationship to participants.

The focus of the interviews with professors/advisors was on their interactions with the participants themselves. Additionally, these interviews addressed the role of writing in the participants' academic community as well as impressions of the process through which an individual moves towards academic professionalization. These interviews offered a point of comparison for the data I gathered from my graduate student

Table 4. Advisor/Professor Interview Schedule.

Participant	Advisor/Professor	Relationship to participant	Date
Hana	Dr. Sarah Anders	Supervisor in Writing Center	Nov. 14
Sangita	Dr. Sean Collins	Advisor ¹	Nov. 12
Yung-Li	Dr. Amy Denardo	Advisor	Dec. 1
Inez	Dr. Camilla Washington	Former professor, dissertation committee member	Dec. 11
Jenny	Dr. John Lewis	Advisor	Dec. 9

1. Dr. Collins and Sangita did not actually formalize their advisor/advisee relationship until after the conclusion of the study.

research participants. Appendix G shows an interview guide for meetings with advisors or professors.

Observations

I observed each participant at least once in an effort to contextualize participants' descriptions of their literacy activities. Observations were meant to supplement insights gained from interview data. That is, by observing participants in disciplinary settings, I more precisely contextualized the sorts of interactions they experienced and competences they displayed in actual disciplinary settings. I was only able to observe four of the five participants in disciplinary settings. Yung-Li, the master's student in Department B, said she was not comfortable having me observe her because other people in her program would "know why I was there," and she did not want to draw any undue attention to herself. When I asked her if I could attend a meeting she was about to have with her advisor and a research collaborator she was working with she said she would prefer that I not attend. I was able to observe the other four participants in a variety of settings. I did not have as much flexibility to determine which activities I would be able to observe as I had initially anticipated because over the duration of this study participants had relatively few interactions where they were comfortable having me observe. For example, though I had hoped to accompany participants to meetings with their advisors, participants were not always comfortable having me observe such meetings. I had planned to attend class with participants. However, only two of the participants were still taking classes, and one of them, Hana, did not want me to accompany her to class. The other participant, Sangita,

had classes at times that conflicted with my own teaching schedule. Table 5 lists the observation sites and dates for each participant.

During the observations I was able to conduct I took extensive field notes (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) detailing both what went on in the observation setting as well as my impressions and interpretations. Appendix H contains a sample of my field notes from one of the observations.

Participant Writing

Over the course of this study I also collected writing samples from the participants. The purpose of the writing samples was to provide another source of potential information on participants’ literacy abilities. Additionally, when possible I obtained papers that had been commented on by professors so that I could see what sorts of feedback participants were receiving. Table 6 details the writing samples I obtained for each participant.

Table 5. Participant Observation Schedule.

Participant	Setting	Date
Yung-Li	Preferred not to be observed	n/a
Hana	Three shifts in the Writing Center where she worked as a graduate assistant	Sept. 15, Oct. 16, Nov. 8
Jenny	Presentation to peers and faculty in her department	Oct. 9
Sangita	Two open graduate student meetings with department head	Sept. 7, Nov.12
Inez	“Dead Thesis Society” meeting	Jan.25

Table 6. Writing Samples Collected from Participants.

Participant	Writing Sample	Professor comments
Yung-Li	Paper written for introductory course in Child and Family Studies; Master's thesis ¹	yes no
Hana	Paper written for Introduction to Literary Research course	yes
Jenny	2 drafts of an abstract for a seminar presentation	yes
Sangita	Take-home final exam for introductory course in Child and Family studies	no
Inez	Dissertation ²	no

1. I was not able to look at Yung-Li's master's thesis until after this study was concluded. While the study was going on I had asked to see drafts of her thesis. However, as explained in the following chapter, Yung-Li did not actually begin drafting her thesis until a few weeks before it was due, which was several months after our last regularly scheduled interview. I was able to examine her thesis several months later when it became available in the university library.
2. I obtained Inez's dissertation from the university library.

E-mail Correspondence

A steady source of data throughout the project came from regular e-mail correspondence I had with the participants. I wrote to participants once every three weeks (provided we did not have an interview scheduled at that time) to inquire generally how they had been, how their work had been going, and what sorts of projects were in the near future. The purpose of these e-mails was to help me stay informed on the status of their work and feelings about their recent activities. Additionally, the e-mail exchanges provided me with an opportunity to seek clarification on topics raised in the interviews. I decided to e-mail participants because I wanted to get relatively frequent indications of their feelings about their academic work, but I was concerned that asking them to journal

their thoughts would unnecessarily burden them. Appendix I contains a sample of one of my e-mail exchanges with one of the participants.

Conclusion to Data Collection

The variety of data sources was meant to ensure the sort of “thick description” (Geertz, 1973) that facilitates triangulation of the data. Denzin (1989) writes that achieving thick description is vital to successful qualitative research because it allows the researcher to present “detail, context, emotion, and the webs of social relationships” and to evoke “emotionality and self-feelings. . . . The voices, feelings, actions, and meanings of interacting individuals are heard” (p.83). In amassing information from interviews with participants themselves, their e-mailed correspondence to me, my observations of them, my assessment of their writing, and my interviews with their professors or advisors, I arrived at a richly textured understanding of my participants’ enculturation experiences.

Data Analysis

To analyze the transcribed data I followed Goetz and LeCompte’s (1984) and Bogden and Biklen’s (1998) descriptions of analytic induction. In this approach the researcher repeatedly rereads and reexamines the data in an effort to discern salient themes. The iterative nature of this approach allows the researcher to analyze the data continually, altering and redirecting interpretations as additional data elucidates and complicates the phenomenon under investigation. To organize my analysis of the transcribed data I used NUDIST 7.0, a Microsoft Word compatible qualitative research

computer program that enables the researcher to organize complex data and emerging patterns. NUDIST 7.0 does not code data for the researcher; it only allows the researcher to move data easily from one code to another and to memo (Miles & Huberman, 1994) the data as it is analyzed.

The various sources of data were coded and examined using both open and axial coding procedures (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The open coding identified large concepts or patterns in the data to be organized into constitutive categories. The axial coding then added structure and depth to these categories by looking for relationships and connections within and across categories. In their discussion of open and axial coding, Strauss and Corbin (1998) are careful to advise that open and axial coding should not to be undertaken sequentially. Rather, open coding (analyzing for broad meaning) and axial coding (enriching broad categories with subcategories by identifying relationships among the data) are best undertaken contemporaneously. In this way, the researcher can be flexible and responsive as new data comes in and as new insights are developed through inductive data analysis. The following is a list of the major categories that emerged in recursive analysis of the data:

1. Transitioning into new environments
2. Making connections with discourse community insiders
3. Finding a research focus
4. Writing in the discourse community
5. Reconciling cultural differences
6. Receiving academic support
7. Participating in the professional conversations of the discourse community

Given the cross-sectional design of the study, not all the participants' cases contained data addressing each of these major themes. For example, Hana, who was brand new to

her department, had not at all begun to participate in the professional conversations of her discourse community. The seven themes listed above reflect the issues that were of major importance to at least one of the participants. The strength of the cross-sectional design is that it allows the researcher to gain a detailed overview of the phenomenon under study by looking at participants at different developmental stages (Baltes, Reese, & Nesselroade, 1988). Although this means that not all the themes apply to all the participants in the study, the participants as a group demonstrate that disciplinary enculturation is enmeshed in the above themes.

Chapter Conclusion

The small number of participants in this study does not lend itself to generalizing the data to a larger group of ESL graduate students. However, the value of a cross-sectional research design like the one used in this study is that it paints a richly textured picture of the complex activities, perspectives, and concerns that can influence L2 learners' disciplinary enculturation experience. In this way this study lays down a foundation of inquiry into L2 learner enculturation onto which subsequent research can solidly build.

CHAPTER IV: RESULTS

Introduction

This chapter explores the results of a focused inquiry into the enculturation experiences of the study's five participants. Though I recognize that no research methodology can reproduce participants' experiences completely, I strive to present each participant's story as accurately and faithfully as I know how. However, it is also important to recognize that, as Brodkey (1987) observes, "narratives do not explain themselves" and must therefore be "yet another retelling, another selection and reduction of reality" (p.48). To make the requisite selections, to cull from the data those elements that speak to salient issues in each participant's disciplinary enculturation, my dilemma "is much the same as it is for anyone who attempts to narrate an experience. . . . the questions are always what to tell and how to tell it" (Brodkey, 1987, p.38).

I would like to take a moment here to describe the factors that guided my decision of both "what to tell and how to tell it." Let me address those in reverse order. In determining *how* to report my participants' experiences I worked under the principle that my participants should speak for themselves as much as possible. Thus, I have grounded my analysis of the data in my participants' own words. While I had a hand in adjusting their volume and direction as I concentrated on activities and events that contributed to disciplinary enculturation, my intent was always to locate the emerging narratives within the data I gathered. Additionally, throughout this chapter I have worked to show connections among the data, particularly with regard to the ways participants' narratives compare and contrast with one another. In exploring relationships among participant experiences I hope to enrich the analytical value of the data by situating specific cases

within the broader narrative of the enculturation experiences of a group of ESL learners working in English-language discourse communities.

Determining *what* to tell was a complicated enterprise. Qualitative research methodologies quickly amass more data than can be treated effectively in a single study. My data came from interviews with participants and their advisors and professors, participants' written reflections on and answers to specific questions or topics I had queried them on, and field notes from my observations of participants in disciplinary settings. To try to detect and understand disciplinary enculturation in such a large amount of data it was vital that I construct a heuristic for identifying when and to what extent enculturation had occurred. To pinpoint the ways the data reflected enculturation, I began with an examination of participants' transition into graduate school in the U.S. because the ease of their transitions played into the amount of physical and intellectual energy they devoted to trying to figure out how to begin communicating in the ways most privileged by their target discourse communities. The transitional period was especially important to this investigation of disciplinary enculturation because two of the learners had not yet progressed beyond the beginning stages of graduate work at the university. I also assessed enculturation by exploring participants' felt-sense of satisfaction and comfort with their graduate experience. To examine this area I explored both participants' interpersonal relationships with advisors and professors as well as participants' literacy experiences in their discourse communities. To determine participants' level of disciplinary enculturation I also relied on both participants' self-reports of how efficiently and effectively they were able to negotiate the rigors of their

graduate programs as well as their professors' and advisors' assessment of their academic progress and ability.

Finally, it is important to preface this chapter with a return to my earlier discussion (from chapter one) of the relationship between graduate school and disciplinary enculturation. Even for the advanced participants in this study, graduate school was not an exact equivalent to the professional discourse community. That is, as long as learners are in graduate school they are in an environment where they are not yet expected to participate at a professional level without guidance from an established member of the target community. In other words, graduate school is not the professional discourse community; rather, graduate school is a material, intellectual, procedural, rhetorical, and institutional space where learners can transition into the professional discourse community. For the participants in this study, then, disciplinary enculturation involved learner movement toward being able to participate in the professional discourse community without oversight from an advisor or professor. Thus, even beginning master's students' literacy activities in graduate school constituted enculturation work. Although most of the literacy activities of the participants in this study were confined to course requirements or graduate theses and dissertations (only two had published or presented their work), these activities nonetheless constituted the learners' attempts to acquire the skills and relationships that would eventually lead to their being able to participate in the professional discourse community without institutionalized support from advisors and professors. Hence, graduate school, while it is not the professional discourse community, acts as the doorway through which learners step into that community.

Major Themes in Participants' Narratives

This analysis reveals that disciplinary enculturation did not occur until participants had achieved a level of comfort and stability in their new environments. The findings also suggest that disciplinary enculturation was greatly influenced by the quality of participants' relationships with more experienced members of their discourse communities. I also analyze here how participants' acquisition of discipline-specific literacy practices was a function of their ability to construct effective academic support networks. Because I am interested here in the particulars of my five participants' narratives I have refrained for the time being from connecting their experiences to the existing literature on disciplinary enculturation, saving that work for the following chapter. The events and issues related below range widely in context, though when taken together they offer a compelling portrait of the factors that come into play for ESL graduate students as they enculturate into academic discourse communities.

Transitioning Into a New Environment

The initial step in participants' disciplinary enculturation appeared to have less to do with learning how to become a participating member of an academic field than it did making the transition to graduate student life in the U.S. Before learners could enculturate into their discourse communities they first had to transition into the physical environments that surrounded that community. That is, participants had to become comfortable with both their living situations in the U.S. (where they lived, who they lived with, how they met basic needs for food, companionship) as well as the physical space in which they took classes, interacted with professors and peers, and worked as graduate

assistants. The ease with which participants settled into their new environments played into the amount of physical and intellectual energy they devoted to trying to figure out how to begin communicating in the ways most privileged by their target discourse communities. For some participants, this transition was closely connected to starting on academic work, though for others transitioning had more to do with simply becoming comfortable with life in a new university and culture. Table 7 offers information on the specific factors that affected participants' transition into their new environments.

Easy Transitions: Inez

Of all the participants, Inez, the recently graduated Ph.D. student from Mexico, had the smoothest beginning to academic study in the U.S. When she arrived her brother was at the university working on a Ph.D. in Computer Science, and her aunt and uncle lived just twenty minutes away and provided a place for Inez to stay for her first eight months. With a solid network of familial support in place when she arrived, Inez was able to devote most of her time and energy to her academic work: "I didn't have to worry about bills or groceries or cooking. It was a good transition. I knew the place [from visiting my brother]. I knew some people, not many, but some. My family." Once Inez had purchased a car to commute to and from the university, she said she did not have to concern herself with any other aspect of her living conditions and could focus exclusively on her schoolwork. Or, as she put it, "I could separate my life personally and professionally. I could just focus on school."

Table 7. Issues in Learner Transition.

Factors affecting transition	Hana	Yung-Li	Jenny	Sangita	Inez
Having familiarity with university before beginning graduate program				x ¹	x
Communicating easily and comfortably with native English speakers				x	x
Experiencing difficulty overcoming language barrier with native speakers	x	x	x		
Feeling isolated in graduate department	x	x	x		
Living close to relatives					x
Enrolling in a department with a strong orientation program for new students			x		
Having family members to care for		x			
Making friends with American students				x	x
Making friends with people from home country				x	

1. Sangita was familiar with the university from her master's program in CFS. However, when she arrived to begin her master's (two years before the start of the study) she was completely new to the university and the U.S.

Among this study's participants, Inez appeared to have enculturated the furthest into her discourse community. As discussed in greater detail below, she had constructed an extensive academic support network, come to understand where there were gaps in her field's knowledge base, and found ways to make meaningful contributions to her field. Her smooth beginning to living in the U.S. allowed her from the very beginning to devote her energies to utilizing the resources of her discourse community to acquire competency in her community's communicative genres.

Easy Transitions: Sangita

Sangita's transition to living in the U.S. was similarly smooth. Though she lacked local support from family when she began her master's two years prior to the start of this study, she benefited from the efforts of the Indian Student Association, a group that picked her up at the airport, helped her find a place to live, answered questions about the university and its culture, introduced her to other ESL students in her field, and generally helped to make her early months in a new environment as comfortable as possible. Sangita ended up becoming good friends with several of the students from the Indian Student Association. Like Inez, from the very beginning Sangita had few non-academic distractions and could devote her energies to learning how to participate in her discourse community.

When I met Sangita she was undergoing a second transition, this time into the Department D doctoral program. She appeared to be completely free from anxiety as she began her new program. She had a familiar living situation, ample friends, and already knew the professor who would turn out to be her advisor. Also, with very strong verbal

skills in English, Sangita appeared comfortable as she interacted with her fellow Ph.D. students. For example, at a monthly departmental meeting I attended for all Department D students at the start of the semester, Sangita looked happy and relaxed as she chatted casually with her American peers before the meeting began. Once the meeting was underway, she contributed regularly to the conversation and asked questions, evidencing some familiarity with the topics under discussion (graduate program procedures and requirements) as well as confidence in her oral command of English.

When I asked her about her transition into her doctoral program, she reported that she drew great confidence from having “figured what was expected out of the system here as to how you have to write your papers.” Also, she drew confidence from having successfully completed her master’s degree the previous spring, an accomplishment that confirmed for her that she could handle the academic load of graduate school in the U.S. Further, with extremely strong verbal skills, Sangita was not reluctant to extend herself in interpersonal interactions with her peers and professors, as examined below. Although there was much she did not know about her academic path, Sangita appeared to get off to a focused start in her explorations of her new discourse community.

Easy Transitions: Jenny

Jenny, the doctoral student from Department C, reported that when she first arrived in the U.S. there were times when she was uncomfortable because “in China [I] have knowledge, [I] have a degree, [I] can work with others very well. But here sometimes [I] cannot speak, [I] cannot listen.” However, the structure of the Department C Ph.D. program itself eased Jenny’s transition by immediately connecting her to an

advisor to work for (her “boss,” as she called him) and a laboratory filled with projects for her to work on. As explored later on, Jenny’s advisor, Dr. John Lewis, helped to ease Jenny’s transition by carefully overseeing her progress from the very beginning of her studies. Jenny explained that his guidance was pivotal: “Basically, I just learned how to fit myself in because my advisor was giving me advice.”

Interestingly, Jenny did not make friends with the other students in her graduate program because she felt cultural differences between her and the American students in her lab kept them from forming close ties to one another:

I think it’s difficult to have a really very close friendship with people, between people from different cultures. We can get very well along with each other. But, because of difference in culture, sometimes I cannot understand what the others thought.

Although during her first year in her graduate program she often felt lonely, she said that whenever she was “feeling bad,” she kept her feelings to herself because “I think everybody has his own self-esteem. Very shame to talk with others: ‘I’m not okay.’ It’s a bad feeling to talk about that. Normally I think I just keep doing my work.” While she did not develop friendships with other students in her discourse community, her transition to graduate school in the U.S. was made easier by having an advisor waiting for her from the first day when she arrived on campus.

Difficult Transitions: Yung-Li

Unlike Inez, Sangita, and, to a lesser extent, Jenny, Yung-Li experienced a difficult transition to graduate school in the U.S. Before starting her studies she had had

to return to South Korea to obtain a student visa. She traveled with her infant daughter and the two stayed with Yung-Li's parents for one month. When they returned to the U.S., Yung-Li explained that her daughter "needed more time to readjust to her [daycare] life" and cried a lot, detracting from Yung-Li's ability to focus on the difficulties of beginning an academic program in a new subject area. As a new mother whose husband was working long hours in a doctoral program, Yung-Li remembered that during the first year of her master's program she "just cried every time" because she "needed to adjust to everything" and "didn't have enough time to study and take care of my daughter and work [for my graduate assistantship] and everything."

Yung-Li's transition to graduate study was also difficult because, as she said in our first conversation, "I'm still uncomfortable with speaking and listening or hearing." Yung-Li's difficulties using English in interpersonal interactions resulted in her being isolated from her peers in class and co-workers in the Child Development Lab where she worked as a graduate assistant. Her experiences in the Child Development Lab are illustrative of the difficulties Yung-Li faced interacting with some native English speakers.

The Lab is a small daycare located on the periphery of campus. Although initially Yung-Li was nervous about working in the lab, her first year passed by without undue hardship. However, Yung-Li's second year turned out to be terribly disappointing. The two full-time teachers with whom she worked in the lab appeared to not want to spend time getting to know Yung-Li, something she attributed to their lack of interest in people who do not speak English natively. As she described her interaction with them it was

clear that this was a topic she did not enjoy revisiting. Asked about her co-workers in the lab, she replied,

That part was hard for me. I couldn't build any rich relationship with them. We could just talk about children, maybe. Not about my personal thing or their personal thing. They just talked together all the time. And I just did my things.

E: Did you feel like they saw you as someone who could contribute?

Y: [very long pause, eyes tearing] I don't know. I think that they are just, they are not students. They're working here. And maybe they may expect I need to work there. I don't think they [pause] I don't think they [longer pause] I—I'm sorry. I think they just expect my help, I mean my works. As I felt, they didn't consider, they didn't like considering my ability in speaking. And, I don't know. [pause] It was not very good personal experience for me.

Yung-Li's sense of isolation from the two women with whom she worked twenty hours per week was exacerbated when two student teachers from the Education department joined her and the two full-time teachers in the classroom. Yung-Li judged that the two student teachers seemed to know each other well prior to entering the class. One of them was a former substitute in the Child Development Lab and "knew very well the two [full-time] teachers." As Yung-Li remembered it, "They were very close, the four of them. They were very close. So, I just felt I'm an outsider." Though they were all very busy caring for the children, in what little time they did have to interact with each other Yung-Li felt she could not participate "because I was not familiar any of those issues they were

talking about. Sometimes their dogs, their pets, their neighborhoods. Their life. Their life are different than mine.”

Left out of the social interaction among the four other people working in the classroom, Yung-Li felt so bad about the situation that she cut her hours in half for the second semester, halving her graduate stipend. Looking back at her second year in the child development lab, Yung-Li believed that the problem was that her co-workers were “not ready to listen to the other people if they don’t speak English very well or have different culture. That’s what I’m thinking. They’re not ready. They don’t look like to be interested in the difference that I have.”

Yung-Li also felt isolated from the other graduate students in the classes she was taking during her first two years in the program. Citing her inability to speak English fluently and to understand spoken English without difficulty, Yung-Li said that she realized that being an ESL learner would separate her from her American classmates because, once they got through the department’s orientation, an event she missed because of a scheduling conflict, “they could just know more and more about people, system, and everything. But I could not.” She said she felt like an outsider “in class and just everywhere.”

By the time I met her two years after she had begun her master’s program, Yung-Li’s situation had improved. As her daughter got older and became accustomed to daycare Yung-Li had an easier time as a parent. Also, having finished her coursework, Yung-Li no longer had reason to interact with her peers in the her master’s program and had given up her assistantship in the Child Development Lab. Over the duration of this study Yung-Li appeared to be living comfortably as a graduate student in the U.S. and

had ample energy to devote to her work on her master's thesis. However, as examined below, the difficulties Yung-Li had getting to know native English speakers in her graduate program and in the Child Development Lab continued to be a problem for her as she worked with her thesis advisor on her master's thesis.

Difficult Transitions: Hana

Hana's transition into her department was perhaps the most obviously troubling. Although she was attracted to the master's program at the university for its strengths in her field, she was also drawn to the program because her pre-application inquiries indicated that she would be the only Asian student in the department. Before her arrival Hana envisioned becoming friends with her American peers. Unfortunately, over the duration of this study she never was able to make friends with her peers. In an interview midway through her first semester, she had begun to doubt the wisdom of attending a program where she was "the only Asian, not American, in department," ruefully shaking her head as she observed, "It's not a normal situation. Only Asian student in the department, it's not a normal situation."

During this study Hana devised multiple strategies for getting to know the other graduate students in her program, including attending conversation classes at the university's International House to improve her speaking ability, reading her assigned course materials aloud to practice her pronunciation, and making time for departmental meetings and lectures where she hoped to strike up conversations with other members of her department. Regrettably, none of these strategies translated into her gaining the

American friends she had hoped to have when she decided to study in the U.S., leaving her feeling exhausted, inadequate, and guilty for not trying harder to make connections.

Hana discovered that being the only ESL student in her program left her socially isolated from other members of Department A. Asked why it was so important that she make friends with American students from her own department, she explained, “Because I am also a [Department A] student. I don’t want to be a stranger. That’s very important.” Hana’s sense of social isolation from other members of her department was the dominant issue for her throughout this study and took up a majority of her energies. In each of the five interviews I conducted with Hana from August to January, she described how her inability to build relationships with her American classmates and, to a lesser extent, with her professors was a continual source of frustration and disappointment.¹¹ Ultimately, for Hana, enculturating into the discipline and its literacy practices was overshadowed by her attempts to achieve a comfortable existence in the physical space of her new academic department.

This was nowhere more apparent than in Hana’s work as a Graduate Assistant, a position in which she was supposed to tutor students in the university’s Writing Center. The Center’s director, Dr. Sarah Anders, was concerned that Hana lacked the language skills necessary for diagnosing problem areas in student writing and articulating her thoughts to the students she was tutoring. Ultimately, her concerns about Hana’s

¹¹ Interested in Hana’s experience and recognizing an opportunity to follow her throughout her master’s degree, I continued meeting with Hana after the study concluded. In an interview at the end of her first year in the program she reported that her second semester was no more successful than her first in terms of her ability to form bonds with her American peers and professors.

difficulties with English led her to decide not to allow Hana to tutor students. Dr. Anders put Hana to work as the receptionist at the front desk of the Writing Center, a job that permanently removed Hana from all tutoring responsibilities. Unable to join in with her peers in tutoring students in the Writing Center, Hana felt inadequate and “stressful” because it was very important to her that she receive the same treatment as her classmates, that she work, as she put it, “at the same level with other peers.” Hana ended up feeling cut off from her peers in the Writing Center and did not participate in the frequent conversations that were commonplace among tutors as they waited behind the desk for their next tutoring appointments to begin. Thus, even when she was in an environment where her peers were interacting informally with one another she did not join in.

Conclusion for Transitioning Into a New Environment

Participants’ experiences as they transitioned into life in the U.S. suggested that conceptions of disciplinary enculturation ought to be broadened to include the process through which learners transition into the physical environments where they first come into contact with their discourse communities. For example, Hana was so concerned with figuring out how to overcome social isolation in her department that during this study she really was not ready to begin taking steps towards enculturating into a professional field. Her greater concern was enculturating into the physical community of her graduate program. Presumably, to enculturate into her discourse community she would either need to conquer her inability to build relationships with her peers or find a way to not let her sense of isolation divert her from concentrating on learning the literacy practices of her

field. Although the other four participants experienced varying levels of success in their enculturation into professional discourse communities, they are all linked together in having progressed beyond the stage where their academic experience was dominated by the difficulties associated with transitioning into a new department and university in a new culture.

Gaining Academic Support

A significant part of all five participants' disciplinary enculturation was their capacity to build relationships with people who could support them academically. Frequently these relationships began as participants were making the transition to life in their new environments and continued as they began to participate in their communities' academic conversations. The quality and effectiveness of participants' relationships with others figured into how effectively they were able to negotiate the literacy demands of their discourse communities. Not all of the relationships and interactions described below are academic in nature, though all had an impact on learners' acquisition and use of their community's literacy practices and, by extension, their disciplinary enculturation.

Hana: Struggling to Build Relationships in the Discourse Community

As may be deducible from my description of Hana's search for American friends among her peers in Department A, Hana had a hard time building connections with others in her discourse community, including the professor she wanted to have as her thesis advisor, Dr. Walt Roberts. Hana's experiences with Dr. Roberts are instructive because they show how her understanding of professor/student interactions thwarted her ability to

begin building a support network that would aid her enculturation into her professional discourse community.

Within the first month of her first semester, Hana met Dr. Roberts twice, once at a departmental reception for new students and again a couple weeks later in the university library. After their second meeting in the library, Hana remembered him saying “please mail me if you have any questions or something you want to say.” Though she knew she had to get to know Dr. Roberts, she never did contact him during her first semester because, as she explained it:

I didn't try to mail him because I have to evaluate [a text] to mail him about, because I cannot say just “Hello.” I have to have a topic to tell him about. And then, I didn't do anything about that, even though I must. I just think I have to mail him about my interest, but after I spent a day I [was too] exhausted [to contact him].

As the semester progressed into its final month, Hana began to chastise herself in our interviews whenever I asked her about Dr. Roberts, saying that she was “so lazy” because she had not contacted him.

Even when Hana enrolled in one of Dr. Roberts's courses the following semester, she was unable to establish a relationship with him. The course required hundreds of pages of reading each week, multiple writing assignments, and midterm and final exams. Although she was struggling to keep up with the work, Hana was reluctant to meet with Dr. Roberts. As she had during the first semester, she felt that if she were going to go see Dr. Roberts in his office she needed to devise a content-specific question and comment to justify the visit. Unable to generate a suitable conversation topic, she never did go to see

him to discuss her interest in contemporary American drama or to inquire about the possibility of his serving as her thesis advisor.

Further, she was extremely reluctant to pursue any sort of special accommodations as an ESL learner, explaining at the midpoint of the semester, “I’m getting tired to tell I’m a different person with other students: ‘I’m an ESL student. So I have some kind of problems so please understand me.’ I don’t want to say like that.” She was not using the difficulties she experienced as an ESL student as a way to justify a visit to Dr. Roberts, even though early in the semester they had had a conversation where he told her to let him know if there was anything he could do to help her with the material. She ended up making a B in his class.

Hana’s inability to establish a relationship with Dr. Roberts placed her in a precarious position. According to the department’s Director of Graduate Studies, a student who is planning to write a thesis needs to have an advisor established before the end of the second semester of the first year. This way, the advisor can help the student draw up a summer reading list that will prepare the student to write a thesis proposal at the start of the following fall semester. However, Hana had neither approached Dr. Roberts about advising her thesis nor even met with him to discuss her interest in his area of expertise. Hana’s earning a B in his class is also an area of concern. In my interview with the department’s Director of Graduate Studies she explained that for students who want to go on to a Ph.D. program, a B is “the lowest grade a student can get” because a B “means you’re in trouble. There’s something not working. Definitely.” When I asked Hana about her grades, she only said that she was “extremely disappointed” when she

made Bs. She did not evince knowledge that the Bs she was making were putting her in a risky position with regard to her application to Ph.D. programs in the U.S.

Sangita: Beginning to Establish a Support Network

Sangita, the first-year Ph.D. student in Department D, was beginning to establish an effective relationship with Dr. Sean Collins, the interim department head of Department D. Unlike Hana, who did not approach Dr. Roberts because she did not have “a topic to tell him about,” from the very beginning Sangita found opportunities to get to know Dr. Collins better. While taking one of his courses she visited him in his office regularly to discuss course material and her career goals. In fact, as a result of their conversations about Sangita’s academic goals Dr. Collins recommended that Sangita pursue her Ph.D. in Department D rather than CFS because the former would allow her more opportunity to pursue her interest in adult education. Reflecting on her first course with Dr. Collins once it was over Sangita felt that they “tied in very well together.”

Thinking that he would become her dissertation advisor, as this study began she started attending informal monthly meetings Dr. Collins held with all graduate students. At one of the meetings I attended Dr. Collins talked with a group of six students about degree requirements, thesis and dissertation considerations, departmental events, and publication and conference presentation opportunities. During this meeting Sangita appeared comfortable as she asked Dr. Collins for his advice on navigating her program’s degree requirements and participating in her field’s professional conversations.

Over the course of this study Sangita began to strengthen her relationship with Dr. Collins, using it to help her make decisions regarding her graduate study. When she

started the Department D Ph.D. program she did not yet know what research area she would pursue. However, she recognized that she could take the coming year to focus her inquiries onto a specific topic. To this end, she asked Dr. Collins to suggest possible research avenues to her through e-mail several times throughout her first year in the program. Once she settled on one, he helped her to narrow her ideas by directing her to recent literature on the topic. Though at the end of the study she had not yet officially asked him to be her dissertation advisor, she planned to do so in the near future. In short, within her first semester in her Ph.D. program Sangita appeared to be well on her way to securing Dr. Collins' support and guidance, thereby increasing her chances of determining how and where she could contribute to her discourse community.

Sangita was significantly different from Hana in several ways. Whereas Hana frequently chastised herself for being "lazy" and explained that "all problems caused by me," Sangita was comfortable viewing the first semester of her doctoral program as a "journey" and "as a learning experience." Also, unlike Hana, who was distraught over her lack of connection to the American graduate students in her department, Sangita was comfortably interacting with her American peers, something she attributed to her verbal command of English: "I was contributing to class and talking with them. . . . I was confident of what I was saying, even if I hadn't said too much, because I knew they could follow what I was saying." Although both women were in their first year in a new graduate program, the important differences between them were in their ability to interact with their peers and professors and, perhaps more importantly, that Sangita's transition into her doctoral program had been informed by two years working in the academic culture of the university in another department.

Yung-Li: Laboring with Ineffective Support

Yung-Li, the third-year master's student in Department B, was completely unsuccessful in constructing an academic support network. The only person Yung-Li looked to for help on learning how to contribute to her field's academic conversations was her thesis advisor, Dr. Amy Denardo. As becomes clear in the narrative below, Yung-Li's relationship with Dr. Denardo was so ineffective that it compromised her ability to learn the literacy behaviors of her discourse community.

Yung-Li's and Dr. Denardo's relationship was troubled from the very beginning, largely because of drastically different conceptions of how advisors and advisees should interact with one another. For instance, Yung-Li did not ask Dr. Denardo to be her advisor until she had developed what she thought was a focused, workable research question. Yung-Li proceeded as if it was her responsibility to generate the topic without an advisor's guidance. Unfortunately, because Yung-Li was new to Department B, she had an extremely hard time coming up with a topic. She explained that it took her two years "just to have an idea" because "I didn't know! I didn't have enough knowledge to decide what I'm going to research." The idea Yung-Li eventually came up with was to do an American/South Korean cross-cultural comparison of teachers' and parents' beliefs about play in the classroom. She expressed that going into the thesis project she "really wanted to study Koreans about early childhood education" because with such research experience she felt she "could get a job more easier in Korea someday." Once she had asked Dr. Denardo to be her advisor, Yung-Li expected her to work closely with her throughout the thesis, helping her shape the project's direction and scope. Yung-Li said

that this expectation had come from her understanding of the ways professors advise students in South Korea: “In my country teacher is, actually advisors, are supposed to give ideas and not just helping but more directing students where to go. And I guess at first I expected the same way from her.”

Dr. Denardo’s had an entirely different conception of how advisor/advisee relationships should be. She told me she cultivated “fairly informal relationships with graduate students,” wanting them to see her “as a fellow learner, as a collaborator, as a person with an inquiring mind like they have.” To foster the sort of co-learner relationships she liked to have with her graduate students, Dr. Denardo gave Yung-Li total freedom to design her project, wanting her to make “her own decisions and choose her own way of research.” However, Yung-Li did not share Dr. Denardo’s vision of how advisors and advisees should interact, and thus “didn’t feel any really close to her. I think I didn’t expect the same level in the relationship. . . . I don’t think I can expect any friendship or collaborate, that kind of stuff with a professor. I just think, not close.”

The difficulties Yung-Li experienced writing her thesis in part stem from the gap between her own expectations for how Dr. Denardo would guide her and how her advisor actually worked with her. The larger problem, however, was not so much that they had different expectations but that they never communicated their differences to each other in a way that productively advanced their work together. In what follows I briefly narrate the evolution of Yung-Li’s thesis to illustrate how the ineffectiveness of her academic support network negatively impacted her attempt to enter her discourse community.

Dr. Denardo told me that she knew from the very beginning that the idea Yung-Li initially brought to her was unworkable within the confines of a master’s thesis:

Oh she had it really big! She not only had us looking at the teachers' beliefs and comparing that to what the teachers perceived their actions to be, but she had the other component where she was going to go in and observe what they actually did. And then she was going to compare all three points.

Surprisingly, Dr. Denardo never told Yung-Li the cross-cultural research idea was too broad. Rather, she advised Yung-Li to continue doing background reading on the topic. Her behavior suggests that she hoped Yung-Li would read enough of the literature in her field to discover on her own that the cross-cultural research design was more than could be handled in a master's thesis. My suspicion is that Dr. Denardo wanted Yung-Li to take complete ownership of and responsibility for the project.

Though she had been advised by Dr. Denardo to keep reading, Yung-Li was actually not successful in finding a significant body of literature that addressed her topic. To try to get Dr. Denardo to give her more explicit directions for her research, Yung-Li began keeping a notebook of her thoughts and ideas throughout the spring before this study began. Each time she met with Dr. Denardo she would show her the notebook "so she could know the ideas." However, as Yung-Li told it, Dr. Denardo never looked at the notebook very carefully. Rather, she continued to tell Yung-Li to keep reading, a piece of advice Yung-Li found increasingly unhelpful: "We met so many times, but many of those meetings we didn't do anything in them. I think she just said I need to study more and more." She did not find Dr. Denardo's directions helpful because she had already invested weeks searching the databases in the university library and had only found one book on her topic. After reading that book as well as the material in that book's

bibliography, Yung-Li believed that she was ready to conduct her cross-cultural study. Thus, unbeknownst to Dr. Denardo, Yung-Li made contact with someone in South Korean who had access to Yung-Li's ideal research population and arranged to travel to South Korea over the summer before this study began to collect her South Korean data set. Because Dr. Denardo never directly told her otherwise, she was confident that her advisor approved of the cross-cultural research design.

Shortly before she was to leave for South Korea, Yung-Li asked Dr. Denardo if she thought it would be all right for her to gather her Korean data even though she had not yet written and defended her thesis proposal. Dr. Denardo told her she could not collect any data yet because not only had she not gotten her master's proposal approved but she had also not sought Human Subjects approval for her research design. Yung-Li felt trapped between what Dr. Denardo had said she could do and what her contact person in South Korea claimed was a one-shot opportunity at getting the data over the summer. Ultimately, Yung-Li went against Dr. Denardo's directions and traveled to South Korea to collect the data without an approved thesis proposal and without Human Subjects approval. When she returned for the start of the fall semester, she had over half of the Korean data with arrangements for the collaborator to send her the other half as soon as it was collected.

During the first month of that fall semester Yung-Li assembled her thesis committee and wrote a proposal for the cross-cultural study. When the committee met to discuss the proposal, they told her what Dr. Denardo had known from the very beginning: the cross-cultural design was too big. The committee recommended that Yung-Li only conduct the American half of the study, perhaps saving the Korean portion for a future

dissertation project. Throughout this interaction Yung-Li did not tell anyone, including Dr. Denardo, that she had gone to South Korea and already had the Korean data set, though she pushed hard to be allowed to do the full cross-cultural study for her thesis in an effort to see that her trip to South Korea would not be wasted effort and expense.

Once the committee meeting was over, Yung-Li was understandably angry at her advisor for not telling her sooner that there were problems with the research design: “the scope of my research was getting bigger and bigger and [Dr. Denardo] didn’t exactly say it was very big research, you cannot do that. So, I was not sure! I did not have any idea about the practical things!” In keeping with her perspective that advisors were “supposed to give ideas and not just helping but more directing students where to go,” Yung-Li had interpreted Dr. Denardo’s silence about the research design as an indication that she was behind the cross-cultural study. She now realized that Dr. Denardo had “just watched until I decided and until I had an idea and everything and waited until the proposal.”

Yung-Li did what she could to salvage the research she gathered in South Korea. A month after the proposal meeting she told Dr. Denardo she had gone ahead and collected her Korean data set through the mail to perhaps use in a future project. For her Human Subjects approval, Yung-Li changed the dates on the approval forms so that they would coincide with when she told Dr. Denardo she had collected the data. Dr. Denardo never found out that Yung-Li collected her Korean data set prior to the proposal meeting. In fact, her overall assessment of Yung-Li demonstrated that she did not know her advisee as well as she suspected:

E: You mentioned that in some of your courses you try to make people comfortable so that they will be willing to take risks. Is Yung-Li a risk taker?

D: She's a risk taker in that she really has pushed for a much bigger and more involved piece of research than anybody on her committee thought she should do. That's risky.

E: I see.

D: But she's not a risk taker with regard to wanting those parameters defined by which the system works. She wants to know that she's doing the right thing, at the right time, in the right space. So she's not going to step outside the lines of what's appropriate for research. She's going to do that by the book, by the numbers.

Ironically, Yung-Li had proceeded through much of the research without a clear indication from Dr. Denardo that she was in fact "doing the right thing, at the right time, in the right space." Moreover, Yung-Li had stepped well outside of the boundaries for appropriate research by doctoring her forms for Human Subjects and going against her advisor's wishes.

Several months after this study ended Yung-Li did successfully defend her master's thesis. At the conclusion of my association with her she was still hoping to find a future use for her Korean data set. Inexplicably, she told me in our final conversation that she was applying to the Ph.D. program at our university and would ask Dr. Denardo to direct her dissertation. She said she wanted to work with Dr. Denardo because she believed her former advisor could help her find a use for her Korean data set. Though she

was clearly still frustrated with Dr. Denardo, she hoped that their work together would go better on a dissertation project.

Several important observations stand out with regard to Yung-Li's relationship with her advisor. First, it is striking that Yung-Li did not have an advisor until near the end of her second year of her master's program. Most students complete the master's program in Department B in two years; it took Yung-Li three years. She was delayed substantially by her belief that she had to come up with a narrowed research topic by herself. Another reason for her slow progression through the program was that she and Dr. Denardo were unable to communicate effectively with one another. Dr. Denardo described numerous occasions when they were designing Yung-Li's survey questionnaire when she would send Yung-Li away with what she thought were clear instructions, only to have her return two weeks later having not understood what it was the Dr. Denardo wanted her to do. It is true that if Dr. Denardo had come right out and said early on that the cross-cultural design was too broad for a master's thesis she could have saved Yung-Li considerable time and expense. However, Dr. Denardo never knew that Yung-Li intended to gather her data over the summer before she wrote the thesis proposal. Thus, she also did not know that Yung-Li was looking for a contact person to help her gather data and making plans to go to South Korea. Perhaps most detrimentally, Yung-Li could not adapt to Dr. Denardo's hands-off advising style and appeared to interpret her advisor's lack of specific feedback as tacit approval for the cross-cultural direction the project was taking. Regrettably, having never taken a single research methods course she lacked the requisite knowledge to see that the cross-cultural study she envisioned was far more than she could do in a short time. That she could reach the stage of conducting

individual research without gaining a more solid background in research methodology suggests that the course requirements of the program itself failed to help put Yung-Li in a position to conduct individual research. Not only had Yung-Li never taken a research methods class but she also had never taken any coursework in statistics, forcing her to rely on Dr. Denardo to help her interpret her data.

The problem for Yung-Li and Dr. Denardo did not appear to be tied to oral competence in English. Though Yung-Li sometimes struggled to get her ideas to come out in the way she wanted them to, she clearly understood what was said to her and was very capable of making herself understood. The issue for Yung-Li was that neither she nor Dr. Denardo ever discussed their different expectations for advisor/advisee interaction. Hence, the two labored against one another more often than they worked in concert. In her final assessment of her work with Dr. Denardo, Yung-Li attributed the problem to her own lack of comfort with the advisor/advisee relationship: "I was not confident to ask something, ask what I wanted, what I expected, or what I wanted to get from my advisor. I just was not confident to say that." Consequently, Dr. Denardo's practice of giving her advisees complete responsibility for their projects resulted in Yung-Li taking that responsibility but not knowing how to put it to effective use. As a result, she ended up with a thesis that did not have anything to do with her interest in early childhood education in her home country and a South Korean data set that had cost her considerable time and money to gather. Further, because her relationship with Dr. Denardo was basically dysfunctional, the lessons she learned while working on her thesis had less to do with how to begin contributing to her field than they did with how to finish a project as one of Dr. Denardo's advisees.

Jenny: Working Effectively with an Advisor

Like Yung-Li, Jenny's support network consisted of one person, her advisor. However, whereas Yung-Li's relationship with Dr. Denardo did not so much bring Yung-Li into the field as it did test her patience and durability, Jenny's relationship with her advisor, Dr. John Lewis, was both productive and supportive. Part of the reason Dr. Lewis and Jenny worked well together was that the doctoral program itself was set up to put new graduate students in immediate and closely monitored contact with their future dissertation advisors. Unlike the programs of the other participants in this study, to be admitted into the Ph.D. program in Department C is to be accepted by a specific advisor and laboratory. Because the admission procedure aims to connect new students with labs and advisors that align with their interests, new Ph.D. students in Department C do not have to spend the first year or two of their degree looking for an advisor and research area. Rather, from the moment they arrive on campus they have an advisor and begin work on his or her research agenda. Students' dissertation ideas ultimately come out of the work that their advisors assign them to do.¹²

¹² Dissertations in Department C are unlike those written by students in the humanities and social sciences. Department C dissertations come out of students' participation in their advisor's research agenda. While working on the projects Dr. Lewis assigned to her, each time Jenny came up with unexpected or unusual results he gave her an opportunity to follow up on the research, to explore the possible causes of the findings in greater detail. Her dissertation was growing out of these opportunities. That is, as Dr. Lewis explained, once students begin work on a directed project they inevitably begin "moving further and further away from the project [he] gave them, but complimentary to it." Unlike learners in the humanities and social sciences, students in Department C do not design their own research projects. Rather, dissertations must come out of collaboration with their advising professors because to do otherwise, as Dr. Lewis explained, is too expensive: "any given research project will cost \$60,000, \$80,000, \$120,000. Students

Not only was Jenny in a graduate program that put her into an immediate, formalized relationship with an advisor, but also her advisor Dr. Lewis took his role in guiding his advisees' progression through the program very seriously. For example, even before she was drafting pieces of her dissertation he helped her on her writing for all of her classes. He also pushed her to present her research findings at conferences and scheduled a weekly meeting with her where she could ask questions and talk over future research opportunities.

The formalized relationship between Jenny and her advisor allowed her to begin honing her research skills as soon as she arrived on campus. That is, once she was accepted into the doctoral program and Dr. Lewis's lab, she started on a series of research projects that were meant to help her acquire the research skills she would need to become a contributing member of her discourse community. Her first duty was meant to be very easy: she had to care for forty mice and chart their weight and body temperature. As she grew more comfortable in the program and proficient in her research techniques, Dr. Lewis assigned her projects of increasing difficulty and importance. He also kept a weekly "standing appointment" with her at which she briefed him on her research progress, received his instructions for the next week of work, and asked any questions that she had. By dictating what projects she would pursue in the lab and how she should

can't just come and say, 'Well, I'd like to do this. Will you help me with this?'" because the lab is responsible for fulfilling research contracts funded by business and government entities. In Department C, students learn "the research process" through the contracted projects Dr. Lewis assigns, and then their dissertations develop from "projects which link with the work, the directed, funded work, or logical outputs of it." This practice allows students to utilize the lab's funded resources, e.g., disposables, animals, radioisotopes, etc.

pursue them, Dr. Lewis remained in close contact with Jenny as she gained research skills and began conducting research for her dissertation.

Interestingly, although Jenny shared a lab with other graduate students and all were working on Dr. Lewis's research agenda, in two years Jenny's peers had not become a part of Jenny's support network. She felt that "they are very kind," but that "we have distance from each other because we have language difficulty. We could not communicate with each other very well. We have different in culture and we [people from China] are very conservative." Jenny felt that she could not interact with her peers outside of the lab because they did not have anything in common:

If you come from a different culture, what do you talk about? When you have background knowledge that they don't have? Where you come from? History from whatever? You don't understand very well. So, you cannot just have a drink at a bar and meet these people.

After two years in the program Jenny still did not converse much with her peers about work or personal lives. She reported that she did not know what their dissertation topics were or how far along they were on them, even though she worked side by side with them on a daily basis.

However, with an advisor who was carefully overseeing her progress in a laboratory that ensured that she had opportunities to pursue dissertation research, Jenny did not appear to need to find any more sources of support. She was experiencing success, confident in her belief that pleasing Dr. Lewis was the surest way to move through the Ph.D. program. Though Jenny's support network consisted of one person, her faith in him was well placed. By the end of this study she had successfully published a

chapter of her dissertation, had two other chapters drafted, and had already presented her research at two national conferences. She appeared to be well on her way to enculturating into the Department C community. Although she did not have an emotional support network made up of friends of family on campus, she did not appear to need the sort of emotional support such individuals could provide. Jenny was succeeding by utilizing the professional support she received from her advisor, Dr. Lewis.

By comparison, Yung-Li, though she and Jenny ostensibly had the same sort of arrangements with their advisor, was experiencing difficulty because the advisor/advisee relationship did not effectively generate the professional support Yung-Li needed. However, Yung-Li did receive emotional support from her husband and friends. For example, when she was trying to decide if she should collect the Korean data set even though Dr. Denardo had told her she could not do so, she said “I talked to everybody and everybody, my friends and my family said, ‘You can just [gather the data]. Just don’t tell your advisor.’” Interestingly, the collaborator who was to help her gather the South Korean data also advised her to go ahead and get the data even though Yung-Li did not yet have approval from the university’s Human Subjects office: “My Korean collaborator said just [gather the data] because [I] don’t need any approval for doing my research in Korea.” Although Yung-Li received emotional support from friends and family and professional advice from her South Korean collaborator, neither of these sources of support could substitute for the sort of professional guidance Yung-Li needed from her advisor. Thus, while Yung-Li had people who were backing her decisions and giving her encouragement, because these individuals were not members of the discourse community

Yung-Li was seeking to enter they were not able to help her succeed according to the terms of Dr. Denardo and the discourse community she represented.

Inez: Utilizing an Extensive Support Network

Unlike the other four participants who had, at most, one person supporting their academic participation, virtually all aspects of Inez's enculturation occurred within the context of a broad network of individuals who were vested in supporting her academic development. Inez utilized this network to help her with her writing, to negotiate the linguistic and cultural difficulties of graduate study in the U.S., and to ensure her enculturation into her professional discourse community. I do not mean to imply here that Inez formed relationships with others as part of a cunning strategy for negotiating linguistic and cultural difficulties. Rather, I believe that Inez's sociolinguistic competence, her ability to interact with others in a way that communicated her interest in and respect for them, won people's friendship, loyalty, and assistance.

At the center of Inez's support network was her advisor, Dr. Grant Crandall. In Inez's mind, building a strong relationship with him was crucial to her success in graduate school. Or, as she explained it, "if you don't have a good relationship with your advisor, it's almost impossible. That's the most important part of your process is your advisor." Guided by this idea, Inez met with Dr. Crandall, the head of the department, the spring before she came to the university at a time when her application to the Ph.D. program was still pending. Knowing already that he was the professor with whom she wanted to work, she used that meeting to ask questions, establish rapport, and generally define herself as an interested, serious-minded student. Once Inez was accepted into the

program, Dr. Crandall became her official advisor and began, as she phrased it, “paying attention to everything I was doing.” Assessing her relationship with him, Inez remarked that “from that [first] moment until the last moment, he was very, very good for guiding me through the program.” As examined more fully in the following section, one particularly important part of Dr. Crandall’s guidance was his willingness to work with Inez on her writing, something he did throughout her dissertation and continued to do as the two collaborated on an article from Inez’s dissertation research.

Inez’s assembled some important additional pieces of her support network during her first semester on campus. Though she had considerable writing experience in Spanish, when she began writing in English at the university she ran into some fairly severe problems. One of her first professors, Dr. Camilla Washington, vividly remembered reading Inez’s first paper and thinking to herself: “‘Oh my God! It’s like the woman can’t write!’ I mean, it was just awful!” Dr. Washington called Inez aside after class to tell her that her writing skills were not where they needed to be to succeed in graduate school. Inez vividly remembered Dr. Washington saying, “Inez, *we* need to do something because there’s a problem here.” Dr. Washington’s use of the plural pronoun “we” was apparently conscious because she took an active role in getting Inez some writing support. She called a student named Peter, one of Inez’s peers, into her office and asked him if he would help Inez with her writing and “kind of coach Inez in her classes,” a responsibility Peter accepted.¹³

¹³ At the time of this study Peter had already graduated and moved out of the area. I wanted to ask him about his interactions with Inez but was unable to obtain contact information.

Inez's partnership with Peter was very productive, and, as it turned out, he met with her once a week throughout her entire first year in the Ph.D. program to work with her on papers for all of her classes. In their meetings Peter took many different aspects of Inez's writing into consideration in his critiques, telling her, as she remembered it, "this is what you should do. This is what should be written. . . . you say things straight. Make your sentences short. Here you are too wordy. You have here this idea and words of other people to support. Here's your references." Though initially Dr. Washington had worried that Inez's writing difficulties would threaten her chances to succeed in her graduate program, once Inez began receiving assistance from Peter and, later, the tutors in the university's Writing Center, she was able to produce written work that conformed to her professors' standards.

Inez also ended up building a strong and effective relationship with Dr. Washington, whom she asked to be on her dissertation committee. Once she was on Inez's committee, Dr. Washington invited Inez to participate in the "Dead Thesis Society," an informal monthly thesis/dissertation support group she had started to help students get through their extended research projects, or, as she put it, to "bring life into theses and dissertations that had stalled." Deriving its name from the movie *Dead Poet's Society*, the Dead Thesis Society also acted as an all-purpose source of support: "If a student had a death in their family, if they were sick, if they had to have surgery, the group has been very supportive. It's just been a tight, tight-knit little group." Inez found a steady source of motivation in the Dead Thesis Society, describing the group as "something that is pushing you. Like, 'Oh, she finished,' or 'she did this.' So, it's like, I should do it. I can do it. And I think, at least I need that." In this way the group itself

supported Inez's academic progress. Though she grew close to all the members of the Dead Thesis Society, her relationship with Dr. Washington was particularly meaningful. After she had finished her degree she continued attending the group's meetings, in part because she and Dr. Washington had become so close. In fact, Dr. Washington remarked to me that she had "almost felt like a big sister to [Inez]."14

The manner in which the Dead Thesis Society supported members' academic advancement was plainly evident in the meeting I attended. For example, talking about research writing with some of Dr. Crandall's advisees, Dr. Washington advised students to "cite Dr. Crandall! He's very forgiving if he sees his name. It will get you mucho brownie points, so work it in there somehow." During this study, Inez was the most senior member of the Dead Thesis Society other than Dr. Washington, and, although she deferred to Dr. Washington throughout the meeting, whenever she had an opportunity to contribute she did so in an assertive and conscientious manner. Ever careful in her interpersonal interactions, Inez avoided appearing smug or too sure of herself by carefully qualifying the advice she gave to the younger students with phrases like "in my situation" and "for my circumstance." Whenever Inez spoke, the other attendees nodded, took notes, and leaned towards her, eager to glean whatever they could from their more experienced and successful colleague. Inez had, quite clearly, progressed from being a

¹⁴ An indication of how close Inez became to both Dr. Washington and Dr. Crandall was that when she got married nine months before this study began, she invited both professors to the ceremony and then back to her aunt and uncle's house for the reception, an offer that touched Dr. Washington in particular because the guest list was extremely short. Also, when Inez's parents came to visit it was important to her that they have a chance to meet both Dr. Washington and Dr. Crandall.

student who needed others to support her to being someone who was capable of lending her support to less experienced learners in the discourse community.

Finally, in addition to her relationships with Peter, Dr. Washington, and Dr. Crandall being integral to her graduate study, Inez's relationship with her American husband proved to be an important part of her disciplinary enculturation. Though when she met her husband she was already fluent in English, she felt that her English improved dramatically once they began dating because, since he spoke no Spanish, she began using English almost exclusively, her only use of Spanish being in telephone calls to her family in Mexico and occasional conversations with her aunt and uncle. Inez's husband also served as a strong source of support as she navigated her way through the dissertation process. For instance, when it came time for Inez to begin recruiting participants for her dissertation research, her husband coached her on her phone interview techniques: "I had to interview people on the phone as part of my project. He helped me practice that phone interview. And he was like, 'No, you sound bad. You sound very insecure. Let's do it again.' He was terrible! [laughs]." Though he was in a different department (Electrical Engineering) and had not yet written a dissertation himself, Inez felt that he had superior knowledge of the university culture, that, as she put it, "he knows the process" and could be "an informer on American culture, graduate school." Though clearly Inez's marriage was substantially different from her relationships with her professors and colleagues, her husband did provide a steady source of personal and academic support that enhanced Inez's ability to navigate the rigors of her program.

Conclusions for Gaining Academic Support

A question that needs to be answered is how Inez alone out of the five participants was able to construct such a deep and extensive network of support. Inez attributed her success in building relationships to the training she received in her master's degree in Counseling: "I had training in interviews and interpersonal communication before. So, I think that helped me in building relationships, in making sure that people hear you, knew that you were here, establishing links." Also, Inez felt that her strong verbal abilities gave her "some tools to transfer those same skills in Spanish to English." However, Inez was not the only participant who had strong verbal abilities. Sangita was similarly fluent, though as a newcomer to the discourse community she was still in the beginning stages of constructing a support network. Though Hana, Yung-Li, and Jenny were all linguistically capable of communicating effectively with native English speakers, they did not enjoy the easy fluency that Inez displayed. Possessing high levels of sociolinguistic competence, Inez had established clear and effective lines of communication with her supervisors and peers. Over her four years of graduate school Inez had constructed a network of relationships that helped her navigate the difficulties of her doctoral program.

Of course, it bears mentioning here that Inez was the most senior participant in this study. The other learners had not had as much time to establish their own support networks. Though Sangita was yet new to her discourse community, that she had established a connection with a potential advisor by the end of her first semester suggests that she was on her way to building a similar network. For her part, Jenny she did not appear to need to find any additional sources of support other than Dr. Lewis. The

structure of her doctoral program coupled with her advisor's willingness to monitor her progress left her well positioned to become a professional contributor to her field.

For the remaining two participants in this study the outlook was less positive. As was evident in Hana's insistence that she had to have a concrete idea to discuss with her potential thesis advisor, she clearly did not understand that students go to their professors' offices sometimes just to begin figuring out what questions they want to ask. Also discouraging for Hana was that she had not been able to build relationships with anyone from her program. And, with just one year left until her graduate funding ran out, she had not left herself much time to reverse the patterns of her first year. Given Hana's inability to begin building a relationship with Dr. Roberts, it appeared as though she had the potential to begin a master's thesis without having established a professional connection with the professor who would advise the study. This was also precisely the dilemma that Yung-Li had found herself in.

Although Yung-Li had progressed to the point of trying to construct a support network, she had not been able to do so in a way that positively influenced her enculturation. Unable to establish clear and effective lines of communication with Dr. Denardo, Yung-Li labored through a thesis project that was not on the topic she was most interested in (early childhood education in South Korea). Her relationship with Dr. Denardo resulted in her spending considerable time, energy, and money just trying to figure out what she was going to be allowed to do rather than on determining how to begin making contributions to her field. Most amazingly, Yung-Li appeared likely to continue on in the relationship even though it had been startlingly ineffective and unsatisfying.

What links Hana and Yung-Li is that the sociolinguistic competence they had in their home cultures was at odds with the contexts they encountered in their discourse communities in the U.S. For example, both learners were reticent to communicate their thoughts to their professors because they believed they should not approach professors until they had generated concrete ideas by themselves. For example, Hana interpreted Dr. Roberts's entreaty to visit his office if she ever had questions as an invitation that was only good if she arrived having done significant preparatory work for the visit. Although Yung-Li had progressed to a point where she did have an advisor, she was unable to get her advisor to give her the sort of professional support she needed. Yung-Li blamed herself for the lack of effectiveness in the relationship, explaining near the end of her thesis project that she "was just never confident to say, 'I wanted you to do this' or 'I need this from you.'" Handicapped not by their linguistic ability but by the sociolinguistic difference of their understanding of graduate student/professor relations, both Hana and Yung-Li struggled to construct effective relationships with individual professors.

Stepping back from the particulars of any one participant's experience, for disciplinary enculturation to occur learners appeared to need some form of academic support, whether it came from an individual professor or from a network of people. The experiences of these five ESL graduate students in building or failing to build relationships with people who could guide their literacy practices suggest that learning to contribute to disciplinary conversations involves far more than gaining cognitive knowledge. As Inez's and Jenny's cases demonstrate, effective academic support can result in rich, steady movement toward enculturation into professional discourse

communities. To be successful, the participants in this study had to master more than their content areas. They also had to make connections with more experienced discourse community members who could help them develop the literacy behaviors they would need to participate in their target discourse communities.

What may be more important than learners' ability to construct effective academic support networks is whether or not learners step into contexts where academic support is given to them even if they do not know how to ask for it. When both Inez and Jenny began their studies they almost immediately encountered established members of their discourse communities who made an effort to support them. For instance, Dr. Washington worked to get Inez writing support just as soon as she read Inez's first paper. For Jenny, being accepted into the Ph.D. program in Department C ensured that she would be in a formalized advisor/advisee relationship from the very beginning of her studies. Although Inez was able to extend her support system to include multiple individuals, what separates both her and Jenny from the participants who did not have effective support was that Inez and Jenny entered learning environments where academic support was provided for them whether they sought it out or not. In Inez's case, that initial support came through informal channels as individuals perceived problems in her the linguistic ability and acted on opportunities to help her. By contrast, for Jenny the initial support came from her graduate program's practice of connecting each new student with an advisor and an established research agenda.

Writing in the Discourse Community

A common thread among the participants in this study was the need to produce academic writing that conformed to the expectations of target discourse communities. Though all five participants experienced difficulty learning to write effective English prose, with the exception of Hana they all had relationships with people who at least tried to help them overcome the difficulties they faced when writing in English. Researchers interested in disciplinary enculturation have devoted significant attention to understanding learner texts and composing processes. However, to understand the processes through which the participants in this study tried to negotiate discursive writing requirements it is important to consider both individual literacy activities as well as the ways learner writing was informed by relationships with established members of target discourse communities.

Hana: Writing on Her Own

Hana had not yet found a way to fulfill her discourse community's expectations for acceptable graduate student writing. Interestingly, she did not discover that she was unable to produce the genres her discourse community demanded until her second semester in the master's program. During her first semester she took two classes, one in research methods for studying literature and the other on contemporary drama in the theater department. Both of her classes gave her carefully prescribed writing assignments that seldom required her to advance an original line of argument. One of her professors left no marks on her papers other than final grades. The other confined his commentary to grammar and vocabulary issues. In an interview one month after the term began she said,

“I don’t have much problem with my English because I take two research courses. In the courses I don’t have writing. Just read many books.”

Hana was disappointed in the class she took in research methods because as she explained, “when I register this course I had expectation to learn the U.S. style to write dissertation.” Instead, the course required her to read and answer narrow questions about scholarly articles, analyze textual variants between different drafts of a literary work, and check quotations from a scholarly article against their original sources. Hana made As in both of her classes the first semester. She felt confident enough to enroll in three graduate classes the following semester.

It was in Hana’s second semester that her difficulties with the literacy practices of her discourse community were exposed. All of her classes assigned numerous writing projects and two of the classes culminated in individual research papers. Though Hana struggled almost from the very beginning of her second semester, as mentioned previously she was reluctant to approach her professors for extra help. She ended up making two Bs and a B+ in her coursework. At least part of the problem for Hana was that she was trying to learn how to produce her community’s preferred genres without the benefit of an academic support network. Just as she was isolated socially in her department, she was also alone in her attempts to write her way into the discourse community. Though she worked hard on her papers, she explained that “my writing betray me every time,” resulting in her receiving a steady string of Bs on her assignments.

Yung-Li: Writing Without Effective Academic Support

When Yung-Li began her master's program, not only was she new to her field but also she had never before written an academic paper in English. Nevertheless, once her coursework started Yung-Li was able to keep up with the workload even though she did not always understand the course material and had a hard time finding ways to participate in class. Or, as she explained it, "whatever I got lost just one second, I totally lost what's going on in the class. What professor is saying. Not just because of speaking, but speaking and content. I was not familiar with anything in my studies." Further complicating Yung-Li's first semester was that she struggled to make time for all of her school and parental responsibilities. Additionally, she felt unable to communicate easily with both her peers and professors in the master's program: "The biggest problem for me is speaking. I have full set of idea in my mind, but sometimes I don't know how I can say. Just, 'Oh, never mind.' I still have difficulty speaking."

With such difficulties facing her, it would not have been surprising if Yung-Li had struggled with her academic writing. However, her inexperience with the course content and with writing in English did not hurt her academic performance, both because her professors appeared sympathetic to the difficulties she was experiencing and because she was able to improve her writing as the semester progressed:

It was okay because the professors understood my situation. I could see when I read my writing after that [first] semester it was not good. But, I also could see my writing developed more and more as the semester is going. So, it was not very bad. After that semester, I could get more confidence.

For Yung-Li, the development she perceived in her writing came from her ability to, as she put it, “beat most of Americans in writing,” by which she meant she “could be more prepared [by] spending more time in reading and looking up for reference and reading, studying.” As she entered her second semester in the master’s program she had gained considerable confidence in her writing ability, in part because she had made it through her first semester without any of her professors telling her that her writing was unfit for her program. Yung-Li also gained confidence from her strong-felt conviction that it was okay if her writing was different from that of her native English-speaking peers:

If somebody compares my writing with a native speaker’s, then maybe mine [pause] I’m thinking that to express one idea, there should be several ways, so many ways to express one idea. I guess mine is a little bit simple. Simple and not very—how can I say? Maybe not high level, not very elaborated. I still have that problem, but it is okay. It is okay for me to write like that.

Throughout her coursework Yung-Li’s approach to academic writing in English served her well. Her professors were evidently impressed with her willingness to research her topics extensively and did not penalize her for expressing her ideas in “not very elaborated” ways. She completed her coursework with a 4.0 grade point average.

The only significant area where Yung-Li struggled with her writing was in understanding rhetorical differences between how she had been taught to write research papers in South Korea and how her American professors expected her to write research papers. On an essay she submitted during her first semester she received a zero because, as the professor’s end comment indicated, “This is a literature review. Where are your

ideas?” Yung-Li was shocked to learn that she needed to include her ideas, believing that the best way for her to demonstrate her command of the topic was to present a detailed literature review of all the material she had read. Yung-Li used the assignment as a learning experience, concluding that “from now on I need to include my opinion, and okay, that is important.” She had no more problems of this nature.

Although Yung-Li wrote successfully in her coursework, when she began working on her thesis she started to struggle with her writing. Once she finally finished the research and started the actual drafting of the thesis, Dr. Denardo edited Yung-Li’s writing so that it would meet the standards of the thesis committee. As Dr. Denardo saw it, helping Yung-Li with the actual language was “part of [her] responsibility.” However, as is perhaps predictable given other aspects of their relationship, Yung-Li and Dr. Denardo’s interaction over the actual writing did not effectively advance Yung-Li’s entrance into the discourse community.

The primary problem was that Dr. Denardo did not work closely with Yung-Li on the writing. Throughout the semester when Yung-Li was trying to complete the thesis Dr. Denardo maintained a busy travel schedule and was frequently unavailable to read drafts of Yung-Li’s work. Yung-Li submitted five drafts of various sections of the thesis to Dr. Denardo over the semester. Yung-Li said that on two separate occasions Dr. Denardo actually lost the drafts; one other time she forgot that she was in possession of a draft and thus did not ever read what her advisee had given to her. With the remaining two drafts Yung-Li waited for no less the four weeks before receiving her advisor’s comments. As the deadline for submitting theses to the graduate school approached, Yung-Li said that

she had only a partial draft and had received only minimal feedback from Dr. Denardo on what she had written.

According to Yung-Li, with just one week remaining to complete the thesis, Dr. Denardo finally found time to work with her. Describing the process through which they wrote the thesis, Yung-Li said, “We finished it just one week, from Monday to Friday. We met everyday. It was crazy for me.” Each meeting ended in the mid-morning, at which point Yung-Li would return home and make corrections until late into the night. The next day she would return to Dr. Denardo’s office and repeat the process. Although this collaboration did result in a thesis that met the committee’s approval, Yung-Li was upset because she was ultimately unable to submit a final copy to the graduate school before the deadline, resulting in her having to register and pay for additional graduate hours for the summer semester: “I was really angry. Especially when . . . I [had to] request the extension for my defense date . . . I was really angry at that point. I really wanted to finish it.”

The problem for Yung-Li was that Dr. Denardo either did not have or would not take the time to work with her on the thesis throughout the semester. Interestingly, though Yung-Li was angry that the graduate school would not grant her an extension, she was not particularly upset with Dr. Denardo for not giving her feedback earlier in the semester. She felt that the writing process had taught her that, as she phrased it,

I need to know my advisor’s schedule first. Whenever I want to finish something and want my advisor to help me or look at it, I need to follow her schedule because this semester I just couldn’t meet her. . . . [Once] it took her one and half months for her to finally get my draft back to me.

Yung-Li forgave Dr. Denardo's tardy return of her writing, even though it ultimately resulted in her having to race through the thesis in one week.

In the end, Yung-Li indicated that she had come to believe that the problem with the project had less to do with her writing ability than it did with her relationship with Dr. Denardo. Or, as she put it, "Maybe the communication between us was not enough. Other than my study, we didn't really talk about personal stuff, you know. I mean, life."

Continuing her reflection on her relationship with Dr. Denardo, Yung-Li explained that

Whenever I met with my advisor we just talk about my study. We didn't have any other personal relationship other than that. So maybe we didn't know each other well. . . . We couldn't have an opportunity to build a strong relationship because we didn't meet each other many times. So we couldn't have a relationship. I don't know. Maybe I just, I was too passive.

Yung-Li thought that knowing Dr. Denardo as a person rather than just as an advisor might have helped her situation. Moreover, as her concern for her own passivity suggests, she had come to suspect that she was to blame for much of the difficulty she experienced working with Dr. Denardo. As it was, though Yung-Li did finish the thesis, it is doubtful that any writer would be able to integrate their advisor's feedback into a larger framework for disciplinary writing if the bulk of that feedback came over the course of one frantic week.

Sangita: Writing as She Learned Had Been Taught

Sangita's experience learning how to produce academic writing that conformed to her discourse community's preferred genres reveals that definitions of and procedures for

academic writing can vary considerably between cultures. In her home country Sangita had emerged as a strong writer in her bachelor's program was placed in the highest of three levels of English writing proficiency. When she came to the U.S. she experienced little trouble with English grammar and syntax, making few of the stigmatizing errors that characterize the writing of many L2 learners. However, during her first semester in the U.S. Sangita learned that the writing instruction she received in India had not prepared her to meet the rhetorical demands of academic research writing in an American university.

Both of the classes Sangita took in her first semester had writing assignments that required her “to critique articles based on a kind of format that was already set” by her professors. The rhetorical forms were divided into sections, each one directing the student to write a short paragraph about an aspect of the article under analysis. Or, as Sangita described the assignments: “it was like, this is the author, this is the title, this is what he’s looking at, these are the results, these are the discussions. So, it was very structured.” Sangita performed well on these assignments, receiving A-level marks on them throughout the term. At the end of the semester, however, in each of her classes she had to write research papers in which she advanced an original argument for the first time, synthesizing the course material as she detailed her own ideas about the topic under discussion. No rhetorical form was provided to assist her in structuring her ideas. Also, neither paper assignment explicitly stated the professor’s expectations for or definition of research writing. When she turned in her papers, she was confident that she would continue her string of good grades: “I *knew* for a fact that I was good at writing English. I was very confident with myself and my work.”

A few days later one of her professors contacted her to tell her that there was a problem with her final paper because she had plagiarized, an offense that would lower her final grade. Sangita was shocked and remembered asking herself “how come in the last minute after three or four months am I suddenly getting this?!” The ire was still in her voice as she described her reaction two years later: “It was December of 2000 that I suddenly, these two [papers] blew up in my face, saying ‘You need to re-examine your writing skills!’” She was confused because prior to that point her professors had favorable assessments of her writing. Further, for her final papers she had relied on rhetorical strategies that had served her well throughout her bachelor’s and master’s programs in India. As she explained, “I was writing the way I was taught to write in India. And I had *no* problem back home at all! At all!”

The problem with both of Sangita’s final papers that first semester was that there was a rhetorical difference in the way she learned to write academic papers in India and what her professors were expecting of her. She explained that no one had ever taught her what plagiarism was because in India “you never run into issues about plagiarism. We never face that problem back home.” Sangita elaborated on how she had been taught to write in India:

The way we were asked to write our papers in our bachelor’s and master’s was, okay, you will not know this subject. So you cannot write anything like you know it. So, you find stuff from different books. Look at different books. Look at different authors. Pick up whatever they have to say about this work. So pretty much lift his words and put it in, and you just stand and say, “okay, this is what I mean.” Your points of view don’t come into

play there. It's just "he said this, he said this, he said this." And you finally come up with a conclusion. And probably just the introduction and the conclusion are your own contributions. The rest of the main body of the whole thing is not your work. It's just, you're making sure that you have the relevant information from different authors.

Given her understanding of what a research essay should do, it appears to have been inevitable that she would encounter difficulties when she had to write papers that expected her to integrate her own ideas with a synthesis of multiple sources.

In one of the classes where she had been told she plagiarized she received a zero on her final assignment, though it only counted for a small portion of her final grade and she still ended up with an A in the class. In her second course, the professor called Sangita into her office and tried to help her understand why what she had written would not do. Sangita was relieved that the professor in her second course took the time to teach her what "American professors consider plagiarism [to be]" because "almost every professor, the first thing they tell you is 'plagiarism is not acceptable blah blah blah blah.' And fine, I understand what you're saying. But unless someone looks at my paper and says, 'this is plagiarism,' I really don't know what it looks like." Though Sangita had an A average in the course going into the final assignment, her professor gave her a B+ for the term and had her rewrite her paper over the break between semesters. After resubmitting her paper, Sangita received an A on it, but the professor told her that "there was no scope for improvement" on her final grade for the course. Although Sangita was disappointed in her final grade for the course, she did not feel that the grade was unfair, viewing what she referred to as her "plagiarism experience" as a learning opportunity.

Early in the next semester, Sangita was again accused of plagiarism. When her professor called her in to discuss the problem, Sangita recognized almost immediately that he was talking about the same issue that her professors from the first semester had noted: she had not included enough of her own ideas and had not properly cited her sources. Coming to understand that her professors expected her to include “pretty much my own ideas” while occasionally referring to published sources, Sangita was able to avoid plagiarism problems throughout the rest of her master’s program and became confident in her ability to conform to the rhetorical expectations of her American professors.

Like Yung-Li, Sangita found that the way she had been taught to write in her home country was radically different from what her professors in the U.S. expected. Although only Sangita was accused of plagiarism, the issue for both her and Yung-Li was that they submitted papers that compiled the ideas and opinions of published authors without contributing commentary that was distinctly their own. That Sangita’s professors viewed what she did as “plagiarism” not only reveals the culturally sensitive application of the term, but more importantly it demonstrates the importance of L2 writers being able to reconcile the rhetorical values of their home cultures with those of English-language discourse communities. Sangita attributed her own ability to do so in large part to the professor who took the time to explain to her what her professors meant by plagiarism: “I was just happy that my professor knew that [plagiarism] was not what I was trying to do. . . . [that she] actually took the time to sit down and explain stuff to me.”

Jenny and Inez: Writing Successfully in Their Discourse Communities

For Jenny and Inez, learning to write in ways that conformed to their discourse communities' standards was intricately enmeshed in having found effective sources of academic support. For instance, Jenny's advisor Dr. Lewis was especially helpful to Jenny as she worked to make her writing conform to the expectations of her new discourse community. From the very beginning of their association he worked with her as she wrote papers for her classes, a process that consisted of Jenny submitting drafts to Dr. Lewis for him to make editorial corrections on. Jenny found this tremendously useful because "once my advisor correct that writing several times, I can use it [as a model] to do very well."

Jenny's and Dr. Lewis's work together appeared to be paying off. Assessing Jenny as a writer after two years in the program, Dr. Lewis said that she "has done a good job organizing her thoughts, for example. Her thinking skills are good. Her organizational skills in writing are good. Some of her grammatical skills are wanting. That's just a technical thing, but I have to point it out to her." Dr. Lewis felt Jenny had improved as a writer, though he was still concerned that she did not always know what sorts of topics warranted written discussion. Or, as he put it, "there are times where I feel that in the discussion of the paper . . . she has raised issues that I feel really don't belong in the literature. They're too basic. It's too basic a discussion to be had." He addressed this problem by editing "too basic" passages out of Jenny's work, explaining to her that her writing had "to make a contribution, a substantial contribution to the biomedical sciences." Jenny recognized that to make such contributions she needed to read extensively, to figure out "what's going on in this knowledge," a task she accomplished

by studying material off of reading lists from her advisor. Though Jenny still struggled to make accurate determinations about which topics warranted extensive discussion, Dr. Lewis reported that over the first two years in the Ph.D. program she had greatly improved her understanding of how to contribute to the profession and had “moved from being a student who needed others to a student who is now a resource for others in the lab. And that’s the expected progression. That’s how it works.”

Inez’s support network was so extensive that multiple people were actually involved in helping her write for her discourse community. Peter, the student that Dr. Washington recruited to help Inez edited all of her during her first year of coursework. Once she began working on her dissertation, her advisor, Dr. Crandall, began editing Inez’s work. In fact, he was so thorough in his critiques that, according to Dr. Washington, those students who had worked with Dr. Crandall referred to his style of working with graduate students’ writing as “bleeding all over the paper with his red ink.” In addition to having Peter and Dr. Crandall as sources of close textual help, Inez also received assistance from her husband when he counseled her on how to gather phone interview data effectively so that when it came time to write she would have strong material to work with. Finally, Inez’s writing benefited from her association with Dr. Washington and the Dead Thesis Society, especially since Dr. Washington herself dispensed advice on how to win over Dr. Crandall. Not long after this study concluded Inez successfully published an article from her dissertation with Dr. Crandall’s help. The article marked her first in-print contribution to her discourse community, and she saw it as “just the beginning” of what she hoped would be a long career of researching and writing about her interest in language and/or ethnic minority workers in the U.S.

Jenny and Inez are linked in that both had advisors who regularly co-published with their graduate students. Hence, their advisors had an interest in ensuring that their writing was clear and effective. It is apparent that both advisors took the responsibility to make sure that their students' writing would be acceptable to the wider discourse community and thus spent considerable time editing their students' work. Though at the conclusion of this study it was unclear how successfully Jenny and Inez would be when they began having to write without their advisors' guidance, while in graduate school they had established channels for negotiating the writing demands placed on them. In short, because of the effectiveness of their support networks, both learners had been able to make professional contributions to their target discourse communities. In doing so, they altered their standing in the discourse community, getting their ideas and work out into the professional ranks of their respective fields.

Conclusion for Writing in the Discourse Community

Learning to produce academic prose that conformed to discourse community expectations was an important part of all five learners' academic experience. The issue, however, extended beyond putting words on the page to include participants' effectiveness in establishing support networks for their academic participation. As is evident in Table 8, a graphic representation of the resources participants used as they completed writing tasks in graduate school, three participants worked on their writing with a thesis or dissertation advisor. However, only Inez and Jenny had had positive experiences with their graduate research projects, in large part because they both had advisors who offered consistent oversight of their work. That is, while Inez, Jenny, and

Table 8. Writing Resources Used by Participants.

Writing resource	Hana	Yung-Li	Sangita	Jenny	Inez
Models of successful writing				x ¹	
University Writing Center					x
Native English-speaking Peers					x
Professors in their coursework			x		x
Thesis or Dissertation Advisors		x		x	x

1. The models Jenny used were actually her own papers after her advisor had edited them.

Yung-Li all may have had advisors who helped them with their writing, only Inez and Jenny prospered because only their advisors were willing and able to monitor the development of their texts over time. Because Yung-Li's advisor did not support her over the duration of her thesis, Yung-Li was not only unable to conduct the research efficiently but she was also unable to write the thesis in a timely manner, leaving her just one week to hurry through the actual writing. Given that Yung-Li had written successfully for her professors while she was still taking classes, in her case perhaps the best support she could have received from Dr. Denardo might have been a clearly articulated indication that she needed to look elsewhere for regular writing support during the semester when she was actually drafting her thesis. Also noteworthy is that of the five participants only Inez took advantage of multiple writing resources. For her part, Jenny did not seem to need to find additional resources. Her practice of the writing that Dr. Lewis edited as a model was working well, especially given that Dr. Lewis remained willing to continue working with her on her writing. Although Sangita had benefited when her professor explained to her how her writing could be considered plagiarism, once she knew how to write in ways that conformed to her professors' expectations, she

was confident in her own ability to meet the literacy demands of her graduate program, explaining that once she knew how to avoid plagiarism “I know I’ll do a good job at the end of it.”

However, Sangita’s experience with plagiarism raises a different issue. Unaware of the rhetorical conventions of her target discourse community, she turned to the only form of research writing she knew and was accused of plagiarism as a result. Sangita’s difficulties in this area illustrate the potential problems that L2 learners face when they try to write their way into U.S. discourse communities using rhetorical conventions that are culturally different. Interestingly, Sangita’s plagiarism experience resulted in her receiving her first real literacy support. That is, once her cultural and rhetorical difference from her American peers became apparent, one of her professors immediately stepped in and helped her learn how to make her writing conform to the expectations of her new discourse community. As Sangita explained it, the professor for whom she had rewritten her paper

actually sat down with me with that paper and told me as to, okay, she actually went through everything with me with that paper. . . . And I mean, I saw the difference between my first [paper that had been labeled as plagiarism] and the second [rewritten] paper.

Though she did have one more instance with plagiarism in the following semester, after that she immediately recognized that the professor who brought it to her attention “was pretty much talking about the same thing.” Once she corrected that paper she knew that she understood how to avoid plagiarism, a feeling that was confirmed at the end of her second semester in the master’s program: “I was definitely more confident because I had

by then, the end of the spring, I had turned in, I think, four or five [more] papers without any problems.”

Finally, Hana’s writing during her second semester effectively illustrates the obstacles L2 writers face when they encounter disciplinary writing tasks that they cannot perform accurately without assistance. Though Hana worked hard on her writing, without a support network to help her produce genre-appropriate writing she could only make Bs in her courses, a result that, according to her department’s Director of Graduate Studies, would jeopardize her chances of getting into a Ph.D. program. Also, as Table 3 shows, part of the problem for Hana was that she was not using resources that would help her with her writing, and she was unable by herself to improve rapidly enough to get the As she would need for her Ph.D. program applications.

Chapter Conclusion

As is plainly evident, the five participants were in diverse academic contexts and at different stages of enculturation. Though their narratives range widely, the core of common activity that links these five participants is the connection between their literacy practices and their ability to construct relationships with people who supported their academic progress. For instance, Hana had not yet established a connection with anyone who could support her participation in her discourse community. Thus, she labored through her first year in isolation, making Bs in her second semester classes largely because her writing did not conform to her discourse community’s expectations. Given that she was so preoccupied with making social contacts with her peers, that is, with transitioning into her new environment, Hana simply did not appear ready to focus on

figuring out how to enculturate into a professional discourse community. In our final meeting together, Hana reflected on her first year in the master's program and largely blamed herself that, as she put it, "My situation is totally contrasted with my expectation."

Yung-Li was in a somewhat similar position. She too had not found an effective source of support for her academic participation. For instance, she lacked the disciplinary knowledge to recognize that her research design was unworkable and the linguistic and disciplinary knowledge to write the actual thesis without close support from Dr. Denardo. Further, Yung-Li did not interpret Dr. Denardo's unwillingness to engage with the cross-cultural design until the proposal meeting as evidence that the design itself might be flawed. On the other hand, in Yung-Li's defense such an interpretation might well have been beyond even a native English speaker given Dr. Denardo's lack of forthright advice. Thus, Yung-Li responded to Dr. Denardo's silence as if it meant that she approved of the research idea. Ultimately, she wasted considerable time and money on a research idea that Dr. Denardo knew from the very beginning was untenable. Although she had successfully defended her thesis, she had had such an ineffective relationship with her advisor throughout the project that the thesis became a test of her patience rather than a vehicle for her entrance into her discipline's professional conversations. Yung-Li had come to believe that many of her problems stemmed from the gaps between her expectations and Dr. Denardo's practices. Nonetheless, she was prepared to continue her work with Dr. Denardo, believing that if she was less passive and worked to try to get to know her advisor outside of their academic relationship Dr. Denardo would be able and willing to work more productively with her.

Sangita's had so far had a largely positive experience in graduate school in the U.S. In her master's program she had overcome the cultural distance between how she had been taught to write papers in India and how her professors in the U.S. expected her to write. Moreover, in the Department D doctoral program she was comfortable with Dr. Collins and appeared to be establishing a productive relationship with him. Sangita's firm control over her spoken English and her apparent comfort in sociolinguistic interactions helped her feel comfortable interacting with Dr. Collins, therein bolstering her chances of gaining a supported entrance to her target discourse community. That she spent her first year getting to know him and soliciting his feedback for research ideas certainly suggests that she was headed in a profitable direction.

Inez and Jenny both appeared to be comfortable in their respective discourse communities. Inez had constructed a varied and extensive academic support network which she was able to use to ensure her accurate negotiation of the literacy practices of her community. Although Jenny lacked a true network of support, the structure of her program coupled with her advisor's diligence in overseeing her development put her in a position where she really did not need additional sources of support. In other words, Jenny did not have to seek out sources of support because they were essentially provided for her when she began work in Department C. Both Inez and Jenny were in successful relationships with people who supported their attempts to gain entrance to the target discourse community. Not surprisingly, both had undergone the most extensive enculturation of the five participants in this study, each co-publishing articles with their advisors.

In the following chapter I integrate these findings with the existing literature on disciplinary enculturation. Specifically, I explore the ways postmodern formulations of communication and discourse can productively inform our understanding of academic support networks and the ways they impact L2 learner literacy practices and, by extension, disciplinary enculturation experiences.

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION

Introduction

At the outset of this study I charged myself with answering three research questions: 1) What are the experiences of ESL graduate students as they enculturate into academic discourse communities? 2) What roles do literacy activities play in disciplinary enculturation? 3) What sorts of subject positions do L2 learners occupy as they enculturate into academic discourse communities? As the study evolved, I found that I needed to adjust my research questions slightly. Originally, with my first and second questions I had anticipated being able to separate participants' specific literacy activities (e.g., writing theses or dissertations) from more general experiences in academia (e.g., interacting with professors and peers). However, soon after the study began I found that my first research question with its broad focus on "experiences" in actuality encompassed my second and third research questions. That is, the first research question created an overarching line of inquiry that guided my investigation of participants' literacy activities and subject positioning. Thus, in this chapter I articulate answers to my second and third research questions: 2) What roles do literacy activities play in disciplinary enculturation? 3) What sorts of subject positions do L2 learners occupy as they enculturate into academic discourse communities? To answer these questions I explore here the ways the present study informs the larger body of research on disciplinary enculturation. In the conclusion to the chapter I come back to my first research question's overarching attention to learner experiences.

Before moving into the actual discussion portion of this chapter, it may be helpful for me to re-articulate the definition of disciplinary enculturation at the core of this study.

Drawing from Casanave (2002), Prior (1998), and Angelova and Riazantseva (1999), throughout this research I have defined disciplinary enculturation as the process through which learners move towards being able to participate professionally in target academic discourse communities without oversight from an advising professor. With this general understanding of disciplinary enculturation at the fore, in the remainder of this chapter I seek to complicate productively both the practical and theoretical issues that shape our understanding of ESL graduate students' enculturation into academic discourse communities.

Literacy Activities and Disciplinary Enculturation

The existing literature reveals that disciplinary enculturation concerns a broad spectrum of activities, including writing, reading, talking, constructing interpersonal relationships, understanding literacy expectations, negotiating degree requirements, conducting and presenting research, and adopting the beliefs and value systems of target discourse communities. This study's focus on the intersections between learners, their literacy activities, and their interaction with established members of their discourse communities offers important insights into the ways socio-cultural relationships play into disciplinary enculturation processes. More specifically, the study uncovers how advisor/advisee relationships impacted learners' capacity to participate accurately and effectively in the literacy activities of their target discourse communities. Inquiring into socio-cultural interactions, the study probes the role of academic support networks in learner enculturation. However, while much of this chapter centers on the connections between literacy activities and social, cultural, rhetorical, and political contexts, I would

like to open with a brief discussion of the study's findings with regard to the role of writing in L2 learner enculturation.

Writing to Enculturate

In justifying my decision to recruit participants in the humanities, I argued that it would be illustrative to examine the enculturation processes of learners from disciplinary areas that placed a high premium on writing ability. Given that both L1 and L2 researchers have found that the quality of the texts learners produce is the primary gauge by which professors judge learners' academic fitness (Bartholomae, 1985; Casanave, 1992, 1995; Ivanic, 1998; Prior, 1998), I reasoned that enculturating into discourse communities in the humanities would require learners to demonstrate highly advanced writing skills, especially since researchers have found that, unlike in the sciences and technologies, in the humanities and social sciences writing is of pivotal importance even at the very beginning of the degree-seeking process (Casanave & Hubbard, 1992; Jenkins, Jordan, & Weiland, 1993). I drew further support for my decision to focus on learners in the humanities and social sciences from previous L2 compositionists who have found that the way that learners make the transition from apprentice to professional is by competently writing the genres of their fields in the form of seminar papers (Angelova & Riazantseva, 1999; Casanave, 1998; Connor and Mayberry, 1996; Prior, 1991); theses or dissertations (Allison, Cooley, Lewkowicz, & Nunan, 1998; Blakeslee, 1997; Cadman, 1997; Casanave, 1998; James, 1984; Scott, 2000); and the eventual publication of original research (Flowerdew, 2000; Gosden, 1995).

However, contrary to my assumptions, in this study writing ability was not the deciding variable in determining how successfully participants enculturated into target discourse communities. As is explored in detail in later sections of this chapter, the relationship between writing ability and enculturation was affected by how far learners had advanced in their degree programs and how effective their relationships were with their advisors. However, to contextualize these other factors it is useful first to examine participants' disciplinary writing experiences.

Although four of the five participants in this study had experienced considerable success in their academic writing in English, only two of them, Jenny and Inez, had reached stages in their graduate study where writing ability translated directly into professional discursive participation in the form of conference presentations or publications. Inez was able to write her way into a contribution to her target discourse community not only because she had finished her dissertation and devoted the entire following semester to revising a portion of it into an article, but also because she was able to integrate her advisor's guidance into the writing process. That is, in readying the article for publication, Inez's advisor, Dr. Crandall, edited drafts of the article, handled correspondence with journal editors, and suggested additional ways to analyze Inez's quantitative data set. Putting steady assistance from an established member of her target discourse community to good use, Inez successfully revised her work so that it would be suitable for publication.

Though Jenny was only entering her third year in the Ph.D. program in Department C, she too had already made several professional contributions to her field in the form of publications and conference presentations. However, as mentioned in the

previous chapter, unlike the other four participants in this study, Jenny was in a setting where dissertations consisted of compilations of articles that students co-published with their advisors as they completed lab research together. Further, in Dr. Lewis she had an advisor who vigorously pushed her to present her work at national conferences. Hence, while Jenny had not been at the university very long and still had two to three years to go on her degree (in Dr. Lewis's estimation), she had made significant progress in her enculturation not so much because she was a superior writer to the other participants in the study but because her advisor and program facilitated opportunities for her to begin participating professionally while she was still in graduate school.

While both Inez and Jenny turned out to be decent writers, what most separated them from the other participants in this study was that they had advanced to (or completed, in Inez's case) the dissertation stage of their doctoral programs and established relationships with advisors who supported their graduate students' efforts to participate professionally. Perhaps more importantly, both had developed a clear enough understanding of the codes and conventions of their target discourse communities to be able to profit from their advisors' support.

For Sangita, Yung-Li, and Hana, the three remaining participants, writing ability had not yet resulted in participation in the professional discourse community. None of the three had yet reached a point in her studies where professional participation was viable: Sangita was in her first year in a new academic discipline; Yung-Li had spent the final year and a half of her master's program trying to finish a thesis project with ineffective guidance from her advisor; and Hana was brand new to the university and during this study was focused on just getting comfortable with her graduate program. While writing

was important for all three, they simply were not yet ready to attempt to make professional contributions to their target discourse communities.

In fact, of the three, only Yung-Li was working on an original research project. Yet, whereas Inez and Jenny had been able to turn their research into professional contributions, Yung-Li was unable to do so. The reason for this appeared to have little to do with Yung-Li's writing ability; indeed, she had made straight As during her coursework and received largely positive evaluations of her writing. Rather, as is explored in detail in the following section, the issue for Yung-Li was that the thesis project itself had been compromised by ineffective collaboration and communication between Yung-Li and her advisor, Dr. Denardo.

Although writing can result in disciplinary enculturation when learners attempt to share their work with the professional discourse community, writing is nonetheless important throughout graduate study because it contributes to learners' ability to prove themselves to potential thesis/dissertation advisors. In her study of L2 graduate engineering students, Beer (2000) found, learners' educational survival depended on the success of their academic work as well as the impression they made on their professors. It is in this regard that writing ability contributes to students' capacity to enculturate. That is, when graduate students can write successfully in their coursework they are more likely to receive high grades and, as a result, to gain the support and interest of professors who might be willing to direct their theses or dissertations.

Casanave (2002) has argued that to demonstrate true grasp of a disciplinary area learners must display their knowledge publicly. While writing for coursework certainly constitutes a type of display, it is not public enough to result in disciplinary enculturation

because even the most competently written seminar paper does not reach the professional discourse community in its original form. Thus, as Inez's and Jenny's cases suggested, for disciplinary enculturation to occur learners must advance to a point where they are conducting and writing about research that will result in their gaining a public voice in the target discourse community. And, as discussed in the following section, one of the primary factors in learners' capacity to reach this point was the quality of the support they received from their advisors.

Constructing Academic Support Networks

In the literature review to this study I was critical of enculturation research that focused exclusively on written texts, arguing that to confine inquiry solely to learner texts is to run the risk of overlooking how contexts shape texts. Citing Street's (1993) writings on the ways social and conceptual frameworks shape all language use, I contended that to understand disciplinary enculturation processes L2 composition studies needed to integrate attention to L2 learner writing with consideration of the ways broad contextual forces influence literacy activities. The data from this study revealed that learners' ability to find and utilize quality academic support greatly enhanced their capacity to participate successfully in the discursive activities of their discourse communities.

Previous work in L2 composition studies has suggested that academic support networks are a vital part of L2 learners' capacity for academic success. For example, in her investigation of ESL graduate students' thesis/dissertation writing processes, Dong (1998) found that L2 learners were at a disadvantage to their native English-speaking peers because they often worked in isolation and did not have social networks that

supported them as they wrote extended pieces of scholarship. Similarly, Allison, Cooley, Lewkowicz, and Nunan (1998) found that L2 writers often lacked a rich support system as they worked on their dissertations. In their case study of an ESL master's student, Schneider and Fujishima (1995) concluded that one of the reasons that "Zhang," their participant, failed to meet the literacy demands of his professors was that he did not have "the resources to modify his approach to studying and writing academic discourse" (p.19), which included both sensitivity to the sociolinguistic norms of his academic department as well as facility with the linguistic conventions of his target discourse community. Ultimately, Zhang struggled to build relationships with people who could help him figure out how to decode and then meet his graduate program's discursive expectations and had to leave his graduate program.

Similarly, Flowerdew's (2000) research on the difficulties that "Oliver," a newly graduated L2 Ph.D. student, experienced when he tried to publish portions of his dissertation after returning to his native country indicated that part of what hampered Oliver's ability to produce a publishable article was that he was no longer in the U.S. where he had had a network of individuals who supported his academic efforts. Stepping outside of academic contexts, Norton and Toohey's (2001) article on the experiences of a Polish woman working in a restaurant reveals that the woman, "Eva," was able to increase her standing and gain additional responsibility in the restaurant only after she had successfully constructed a social network among her peers and supervisors. What these studies have in common is that they all suggest the importance of learners being able to build and then effectively use networks of support consisting of community insiders.

In general, this study affirmed these researchers' findings regarding the difficulties L2 learners face when they lack academic support networks. However, the data raise a fundamental question about the necessity of learners having what can properly be called a *network* of support. Of the five participants in this study, only Inez, the recently graduated Ph.D. in Human Resource Development, had an actual network of academic support, hers consisting of more than five individuals: her advisor Dr. Crandall, Dr. Washington, Peter, her husband, and the tutors in the Writing Center. Inez's success in constructing such a network reveals not only a great deal of personal initiative but it also suggests that Inez herself possessed very strong sociolinguistic skills, as evidenced by her ability to build multiple relationships with people who would go out of their way to assist her.

Although Inez unquestionably benefited from receiving so many people's input on her academic work, several of the participants who did not have anything close to a true network were experiencing similar levels of success in their literacy activities. As Jenny's relationship with Dr. Lewis illustrated, if learners are able to work effectively with their advisors, there may be no need to construct an extensive support network. In Jenny's case, Dr. Lewis was serving as a guide into the discourse community, and she was able to use his expertise to figure out how to maneuver through her difficulties with writing and public speaking, acquire needed research techniques, and participate in the professional community through presentation of her research at national conferences. As a result, Jenny was able to make progress towards enculturation into the professional community even though she did not have a true network of supportive relationships. Dr. Lewis obviated any need for an extensive network.

Jenny's relationship with Dr. Lewis also suggested that L2 students may not even perceive value in building an extensive network of support. As Jenny explained, "I have lots of rooted thoughts in my mind. In China the teacher is the most important person for you." Consequently, in her interactions with Dr. Lewis she felt that "What he said, it's the rule. It's truth. We are not encouraged to argue. It would be considered impolite." Given that Dr. Lewis was interested in helping Jenny with her writing, research, and public speaking skills—all activities that she needed to improve on to further her enculturation into the discourse community—and that she was experiencing success in the form of conference presentations and completed dissertation chapters, it is hardly surprising that Jenny did not look beyond Dr. Lewis for additional sources of support. Jenny appeared to be correct in believing that having Dr. Lewis's support would be enough for her to be successful throughout her graduate studies. In many ways, Jenny's reliance on Dr. Lewis alone was analogous to findings from studies of L2 writers' reluctance to incorporate feedback on their writing from anyone other than their professors (Nelson & Carson, 1998).

Sangita's early experiences with Dr. Collins revealed that L2 learners do not necessarily have to have true networks of academic support even when they are still in the early stages of their graduate study. For Sangita, Dr. Collins's guidance was enough to help her make an informed decision regarding which Ph.D. program to apply to after she finished her master's degree and, within the first year in her doctoral program, what general area she wanted to research. The one significant area where Sangita had struggled in her graduate study was during her master's program when she was accused of plagiarism. However, she did not appear to need an academic support network to help her

reconcile the differences between the way she had learned to write papers in India and the way her professors wanted her to write them in the U.S. Though two of her professors met with her regarding this issue, she did not become especially close to either of them. Rather, after listening to their explanations she was able to modify her understanding of research writing. Though these two professors supported her, they did not become a part of what could be rightly called Sangita's support network. Rather, she used their help to bring her understanding of research writing in line with their expectations and moved on.

As intimated above, the findings from this study indicated that although academic support networks may be ideal, they may not be absolutely necessary if L2 learners can work effectively with their advisors. However, for such one-on-one relationships to be able to take the place of extended networks, it appears important for students to be able to locate and work productively with advisors who are willing to help them negotiate linguistic and cultural differences.

Establishing Effective Relationships with Advisors

While having an extensive network of support may be ideal, Belcher's (1994) examination of L2 graduate students' relationships with their mentors suggests that it may be far more important for learners to establish effective partnerships with their advisors. Exploring interactions between three advisor/advisee pairs, Belcher (1994) found that the most successful relationship was between an advisor and advisee who had an egalitarian relationship. Belcher (1994) uses her data to suggest that collaborative advisor/advisee pairs that share decision-making responsibilities may be able to work more successfully than advisor/advisee pairs with hierarchical relationships.

In general, this study affirms Belcher's (1994) finding that effective advisor/advisee relationships are integral to learner enculturation. However, in contrast to Belcher's (1994) idea that egalitarian relationships between graduate students and their mentors may be preferable to hierarchical relationships, in this study the two learners who had begun to participate in their professional discourse communities had relationships with their advisors that were undeniably hierarchical. Belcher (1994) posits that the reason the two less successful learners in her study struggled was because they had limited confidence "in their advisors' judgment, particularly in their mentors' sense of their communities of practice" (p.31). However, as Inez's and Jenny's cases suggest, when learners have confidence in their advisors and when learners' and advisors' ideas about both their relationship and the direction of the student's research are in concert, hierarchical relationships can be quite effective.

In this study, only Inez, Jenny, and Yung-Li had reached a point in their graduate study where they had advisors. (Neither Hana nor Sangita had yet begun conducting original research under a professor's guidance.) In Inez's and Jenny's cases the present study uncovered two successful hierarchical advisor/advisee relationships. Both Dr. Crandall and Dr. Lewis maintained careful control over Inez's and Jenny's literacy activities respectively. For example, describing Dr. Crandall, Inez characterized him as "very directive . . . not the type of person that you can challenge. . . . Definitely that's my impression. He has a very strong personality. And he likes to tell what needs to be done." Although Inez felt that with Dr. Crandall "there was no challenging of [him as] the leader," she did not mind acquiescing to his judgment because she recognized his superior experience in the field, particularly when it came to her attempts to publish from

her dissertation: “He has been giving me guidance all the time. He has certainly more experience than me. He has published already so he knows. So that’s the way it works. He gives feedback and supervises and then we publish together.” Inez never felt she had to challenge him because she was so confident in his abilities as an advisor, believing that, “he has an aim in mind and he knows the process so well and he has so much experience. He has directed so many students that I think he was a good advisor.”

Dr. Lewis similarly oversaw Jenny’s literacy activities. He set the research agenda of the lab, secured funding for Jenny’s dissertation research, edited her writing, recommended texts for her to read, and handled correspondence duties with journal editors when Jenny sought to publish a chapter of her dissertation. Jenny thought very highly of and was extremely devoted to Dr. Lewis. In fact, throughout her studies a considerable portion of her motivation came from a desire to please him. For example, after giving a departmental presentation that reviewed recent scholarship on her lab’s research area, she explained that as a Chinese person the most important aspect of the presentation was that it satisfied Dr. Lewis:

E: After the presentation you said your advisor was happy. Is he the only person you needed to please?

J: Yeah. I think that, it’s for him, that’s the most important part. Because I have lots of rooted thoughts in my mind. In China the teacher is the most important person for you. Normally you cannot discuss with him. What he said—it’s the rule. It’s truth. We are not encouraged to argue. It would be considered impolite. So, I have a, I still have the same thing in my mind now.

Jenny indicated that part of the reason the relationship was hierarchical was that she, as a Chinese student, was not comfortable interacting with Dr. Lewis in any way other than how she had interacted with professors in China.

Although Belcher's (1994) description of collaborative advisor/advisee pairs demonstrates that such relationships can be very successful, Yung-Li's relationship with Dr. Denardo illustrates that even when advisors want to form collaborative relationships with their advisees, sociocultural distance between student and professor may complicate attempts to collaborate productively. For instance, Dr. Denardo entered into her relationship with Yung-Li wanting to be seen "as a fellow learner, as a collaborator," yet Yung-Li never saw her this way because, as she said, "I don't think I can expect any friendship or collaborate, that kind of stuff with a professor." At least part of the problem was that both women based their relationship on experiences they had previously had in similar contexts. That is, noting that in her experience "it's difficult for foreign students to get to that place where they do see themselves as much more of a contributor to my learning," Dr. Denardo said she tried to "understand and respect" the "cultural formalities and informalities" that separated her from her advisee. However, in actuality she appeared to define Yung-Li according to her preconception of how it was to work with students from Southeast Asia: "Chinese, Korean, Japanese students really have a difficult time with [my desire for an informal relationship]. *They* maintain the distance. I don't." Although Yung-Li did not believe that she could have a close relationship with Dr. Denardo, she never meant for her advisor to interpret this as an indication that she did not want to work closely with her. Yung-Li entered the relationship wanting Dr. Denardo to give her copious feedback while "directing [her] where to go."

One of the key ways Yung-Li differed from Inez and Jenny was that Yung-Li had never had her advisor for a class. In fact, Dr. Denardo had never met her future advisee prior to when Yung-Li e-mailed her and said, as Dr. Denardo remembered it, “my name is Yung-Li and I’m interested in this and would you be willing to [be my advisor]?” Dr. Denardo said she “hung back a little bit because I didn’t know her. I didn’t know anything about her.” Though she ultimately agreed to direct Yung-Li’s thesis, the two never became very close. In Yung-Li’s mind their lack of a close relationship was the primary reason why the thesis had not gone smoothly or in the direction that Yung-Li would have liked:

After this semester I realize that I didn’t have, we didn’t have enough opportunity to talk and to meet and to know each other. . . . I was just never confident to say “I wanted you to do this.” Or, “I need this from you.”

Without clear and open lines of communication running between Yung-Li and Dr. Denardo, the two were never able to collaborate effectively, resulting in Yung-Li’s ultimately dissatisfying experience with her thesis. The differences between Yung-Li’s and Jenny’s and Inez’s cases also suggests that one of the ways learners establish effective relationships with their advisors is by spending time getting to know one another—perhaps in a class setting—prior to actually beginning a formalized advisor/advisee relationship.

While Belcher (1994) found that egalitarian relationships between professors and their graduate students facilitated effective literacy participation, this study demonstrated both that not all L2 graduate students are comfortable with such equality and that

hierarchical relationships can effectively advance learners' enculturation. Further, while having extensive academic support networks of the kind described by Dong (1998), Allison, Cooley, Lewkowicz, and Nunan (1998), Schneider and Fujishima (1995) may be ideal, what appears to be far more important is that learners be able to establish successful partnerships with advisors who will carefully guide their enculturation into target discourse communities. In a six-year ethnography of undergraduate students at the City College of New York, Sternglass (1997) found that the critical factor in students' development was that they had opportunities to interact with interested and engaged teachers over time. Although Sternglass was not researching graduate advisor/advisee relationships, her work raises the idea that it is essential for L2 graduate students to be in relationships with advisors who are both vested in their progress and understanding of their cultural and linguistic differences, whether these relationships be egalitarian, hierarchical, or some combination of the two.

Interacting with Professors

The experiences of the two learners who had not yet begun conducting original research revealed that establishing effective relationships with professors depends on a number of factors. Over the course of this study Hana was unsuccessful in making a connection with Dr. Roberts, the professor she wanted to ask to direct her thesis. Part of the reason for this was that she was reluctant to approach her professors to ask for assistance while she was enrolled in their classes. In this regard Hana's experiences affirmed Angelova and Riazantseva's (1999) finding that ESL students in their first year of graduate study may have difficulty approaching their professors to ask for help, even

as they struggle to keep up with the workload. While Hana was aware that in order to cast herself in a positive light she needed to seek out opportunities to interact with Dr. Roberts outside of class, as discussed at length in the previous chapter, part of the problem she was experiencing was that she believed that she could not visit his office unless she had spent time preparing material that she could bring up in conversation. As she said, “I cannot say just ‘Hello.’ I have to have a topic to tell him about.”

Also at issue for Hana was that her focus was split on finding ways to keep up with her academic work and on making friends with her American peers in Department A. In each of our five interviews, she talked about how disappointed she was in her lack of connection to her peers. Thus, part of the reason Hana had difficulty building a relationship with Dr. Roberts was that additional factors appeared to be distracting her from the business of enculturation, including her newness to the program, reluctance to approach Dr. Roberts without preparing ahead of time, and being preoccupied by the need to find companionship in her department.

Unlike Hana, over the duration of this study Sangita was working successfully to solidify a relationship with the professor she wanted to direct her dissertation. In Sangita’s first course with Dr. Collins she had proved herself to be a diligent and interested student, receiving a solid A for the class. Building on her early contacts with him, during this study she began e-mailing back and forth with Dr. Collins to discuss possible research areas and attending the informal meetings about graduate program requirements that Dr. Collins held. As a result of positive experiences in their early contacts with one another Sangita felt “so comfortable with him” and believed that “his research and my interests would really match.” By the end of this study she had been able

to tap into his expertise to help her narrow down a research area (adult education programs). In her study of a doctoral student writing a dissertation in agricultural economics, Scott (2000) suggested that dissertations represent both the means by which learners enculturate into discourse communities as well as the “embodiment of the enculturation process” (p.155). Presumably, then, once Sangita began writing her dissertation under Dr. Collins’ guidance she would begin the work that could actually result in her future enculturation into the professional discourse community, much as Inez and Jenny had done as they wrote their dissertations.

If disciplinary enculturation involves moving towards professional participation in an academic discourse community, Sangita’s case suggests that before students’ writing becomes a vital factor in their enculturation the student must first zero in on a research focus, a task that can be made easier with the assistance of an advising professor. As suggested in my earlier discussion of the role of writing in disciplinary enculturation, until learners find a research focus, the writing they do may contribute only indirectly to their enculturation into the professional discourse community. That is, prior to starting work on an original research project, writing may contribute to enculturation by helping learners acquire the literacy skills they will need once they begin conducting original research for the first time and by helping learners gain the interest and support of a potential advisor. Also, writing may be a useful way for learners to begin generating and exploring ideas that will later become part of their research areas.

Understanding Disciplinary Expectations

An important factor in participants' ability to enculturate was their capacity to understand the expectations of their target discourse communities. Previous researchers in L2 composition studies have explored how discourse communities communicate discursive expectations to newcomers. For example, in his case studies of students enrolled in graduate seminars, Prior (1998) found that professors relayed directions for research papers through a combination of both explicit and implicit instructions. Prior (1998) discovered that when learners were unable to understand both types of direction, they struggled to fulfill the requirements of the tasks set before them. This study contributes to our understanding of how both implicit and explicit expectations affect L2 learners' disciplinary enculturation. More specifically, the study points towards the difficulties ESL students face when entering discourse communities where discursive expectations remain tacit, unclear or, as Prior (1998) puts it, "practically invisible" (p.63).

Researchers have suggested that implicit literacy expectations leave L2 learners at a distinct disadvantage, as is illustrated in a comparison of L1 and L2 research into learners' literacy activities. In Berkenkotter, Huckin, and Ackerman's (1988) study of "Nate," a native English speaker, one of the reasons Nate was successful was that when he entered his graduate program he was already well versed in the values and norms of university study in the U.S. That is to say, although Nate was new to graduate school, he had in the past successfully written academic papers for native English-speaking professors and while studying in U.S. universities. Moreover, Nate was advantaged because he and his professors shared a common cultural background. While at times in his first year he struggled to figure out how to match the stylistics of the authors he was

reading, he did not undertake tasks where he was completely guessing what it was he should do nor was he ever relying on culturally distant understandings of discourse to guide his literacy activities. In short, as is demonstrated by the well-received papers Nate was producing by the end of his first year in graduate school, Nate was successful at picking up on both the explicit and implicit expectations of his discourse community.

In contrast to Nate's experiences, in Schneider and Fujishima's (1995) study, their research participant, "Zhang," was unable to maintain the grades he needed because he was unable to discern what it was that was expected of him, both linguistically and interpersonally. His only identifiable strategy being to "work harder," Zhang could not meet his community's expectations and had to leave the university. Similarly, in Flowerdew's (2000) study of a recent Ph.D. graduate's attempts to publish his work, "Oliver" had difficulty figuring out how to revise his work so that it would be suitable for publication in an English-language journal. One of the reasons Oliver struggled was that he did not know how to respond to the journal editors' critiques of his work. At least part of the problem for both Zhang and Oliver was that they did not understand their communities' expectations and consequently had to approach their literacy activities through trial and error, an approach that Casanave (2002) found to be common among L2 learners at undergraduate, graduate, and postgraduate levels whenever they encountered expectations they could not discern. The experiences of both Zhang and Oliver suggest that when L2 learners struggle in literacy contexts it may be because they are coming from educational contexts where they have not previously encountered such expectations. Further, it is significant that both Zhang and Oliver were working largely in isolation, without the benefit of support from discourse community insiders.

A number of researchers have suggested that the way to help L2 learners is simply to explain literacy expectations more clearly. For example, in her case studies of L2 learners' experiences in English-language universities, Fox (1994) is surprised that, unlike "U.S. 'mainstream' students," ESL learners

seemed oddly impervious to the repeated and careful explanations by their professors on how to improve their writing, despite the fact that many of these faculty members had worked extensively overseas and had been thesis advisers to graduate students from 'non western' backgrounds for fifteen or more years. (xiv)

Similarly, Cadman (1997) notes that ESL graduate students in the humanities and social sciences "face particular challenges in writing English language theses, and in my experiences often express these challenges negatively despite all the helpful explanations which they receive about our practices and conventions" (p.3). What neither Fox (1994) nor Cadman (1997) appears to consider is that the reason L2 learners may be "oddly impervious" to "helpful explanations" is that those explanations may not tap into anything with which L2 learners have previous literacy experience.

For instance, Sangita's "plagiarism experience," as she referred to it, demonstrated that what was intended as an explicit explanation of how to avoid plagiarism was in fact wholly ineffective for an L2 learner from a culturally different background. Explaining her professors' attempts to steer students away from plagiarism, Sangita reported that "almost every professor, the first thing they tell you is 'plagiarism is not acceptable blah blah blah blah blah.' And fine, I understand what you're saying. But unless someone looks at my paper and says, 'this is plagiarism,' I really don't know what

it looks like.” The issue for Sangita was clearly not that she was plagiarizing but rather that she did not understand how to bridge the rhetorical expectations of her home culture with the expectations of her professors in the U.S., even after they had spent class time explicitly defining plagiarism and telling students not to do it.

In their study of ESL graduate students’ writing during their first year of graduate school, Angelova and Riazantseva (1999) found established members of target discourse communities mistook L2 learners’ difficulties with writing in English for evidence that they did not know how to write. However, as the researchers point out, the real issue was that the study’s participants wrote (and thought) in ways that were different from what the target discourse communities expected. Sangita’s experience well illustrates how cultural distance between L2 learners’ values and those of English-language discourse communities can hamper L2 learners’ ability to meet literacy expectations. As Sangita said, she wrote her initial research papers in the U.S. in the same way that she had been taught to write them in India. Even though her professors had tried to explain what plagiarism was and how to avoid it, their explanations were ineffective because Sangita was coming from a culture where, as she explained it, “you never run into issues about plagiarism.”

Sangita’s experience with plagiarism affirms Deckert’s (1993) finding that admonitions to avoid plagiarism result in neither an increased understanding of plagiarism nor decreased instances of plagiarism. In his response to Deckert’s (1993) article, Pennycook (1994) writes that plagiarism should not be understood as a linguistic problem but rather as “an umbrella term for a complex set of different issues” (p.282). Sangita’s case illustrates that for ESL graduate students in the U.S., one of those issues is

that L2 learners may well come from educational environments where definitions of rhetorical effectiveness are considerably different than they are in the U.S. As a result, L2 learners may not be able to make use of what their professors consider to be explicit directions.

Sangita's case further demonstrates that when such culturally and rhetorically distant notions of appropriate literacy activities come into contact, it is important for professors to work more closely with L2 learners to ensure that rhetorical expectations are clearly and accurately understood, a task that, at least for Sangita, was only accomplished when her professors spent one-on-one time talking with her about her writing and the ways it did not align with their expectations for original research. In addition to expectations for in-class work, this study also holds implications for the difficulties L2 learners experienced in discerning interpersonal expectations. For example, when Dr. Roberts invited Hana to stop by his office some time, she interpreted his invitation as conditional on her performing preparatory research. As a result, she never stopped by, not understanding that one of the everyday practices of graduate school is for students go to their professors' offices, sometimes just to begin figuring out what questions they want to ask. Yung-Li's experience with Dr. Denardo also illustrated the importance of L2 learners being able to discern the implicit expectations of their advisors, as shown in Yung-Li's behavior when she traveled to South Korea to collect data for the cross-cultural study. Her actions indicated that she believed that Dr. Denardo had no reservations about the research design when in fact her advisor had felt all along that the cross-cultural study would not work but had at best only implied that she had reservations. In this way Yung-Li's experience lends support to the conclusion that if L2

learners cannot construct relationships with discourse community insiders such that tacit expectations are made explicit, where the codes and conventions of literacy practices are articulated clearly, they may be unable to participate in the discourse community in ways that move them away from the discursal periphery, even if they possess the strong linguistic skills.

Concluding Thoughts on Literacy Activities

To understand literacy activities in academic contexts, Prior (1998) argues convincingly that we must consider the “complex microhistories of situated action, perception, and evaluation” and “the strategic interpretive work that renders such histories typical, unexceptional, and practically invisible to participants” (p.63). Thus, to understand L2 learners’ literacy activities we must view their academic participation within the broader context of their past cultural, linguistic, and educational experiences. While literacy activities are at the center of any learners’ disciplinary enculturation, the salient point to be made is that for L2 learners to enculturate they must find a way to bridge the literacy activities that were acceptable in their home countries with those that appear to be expected in English-language discourse communities. The task becomes yet more difficult for learners who cannot rely on any previous experiences in similar discursive settings, as happened with Yung-Li, a learner who was not only new to graduate school but also to her subject area.

Furthermore, there appears to be a connection between disciplinary enculturation and learners’ ability to form and utilize supportive relationships. That is, as the participants in this study demonstrated, even major difficulties with writing and speaking

can be overcome if learners can acquire adequate support. However, if learners are unable to construct supportive relationships they are likely to face the linguistic, cultural, social, rhetorical, and political obstacles of graduate study on their own.

L2 Learner Subject Positioning

To answer my second research question I would like to begin by drawing a connection between *subject position* and previous composition researchers' formulations of *identity*. In many ways, *subject position* and *identity* reference the same basic concept: both concern the ways individuals perceive themselves and are perceived by others within specific contexts, suggesting that both terms have implications for individual access to power and privilege. And, in the context of this study, such access was integral to learners' capacity to move towards participation in professional discourse communities.

In her book on writing and identity in university settings, Ivanic (1998) writes that learners "participate in the construction of their discursive identities through selection (mainly subconscious) among the subject positions they feel socially mandated, willing, or daring enough to occupy" (p.32). Building on the idea that identities do not stem from innate qualities but are defined through events and experience, Ivanic's (1998) use of *subject position* foregrounds the ways that learners influence their standing in target discourse communities. That is, while *identity* and *subject position* have similar meanings, the former does not suggest as strongly that learners have a sizable role in shaping both the way they are perceived by others as well as how they perceive themselves in discourse communities.

Canagarajah (1993) has argued that in Western academic settings ESL learners frequently occupy negative subject positions, primarily because they are often unable to compete effectively with their native English-speaking peers and are also regularly interpreted as “other” to their L1 counterparts. In other words, ESL learners’ ability to take on positive subject positions may be hampered by the linguistic, cultural, and social distance between the educational contexts in their home countries and those that they encounter in English-language discourse communities. In many ways Canagarajah’s (1993) work is suggestive of Althusser’s (1971) observation that in institutional contexts powerful forces (institutional state apparatuses, for Althusser) will invariably position individuals according to their perceived deviance from institutional norms.

To try to understand L2 learners’ conception of their subject positions, Casanave (2002) explored the ways her research participants appeared to change as a result of the literacy experiences they had. Contrary to Canagarajah’s (1993) assertion that L2 learners occupy predominantly negative subject positions, Casanave (2002) found that L2 learners took on a broad spectrum of subject positions (she uses the term “identities”) that could not be broadly categorized as negative or positive. Further, Casanave (2002) found that identities “are always in the process of reconstructing themselves, always in the process of transition particularly in settings where people are learning to participate in practices that are not yet routine to them” (p.264).

Supporting Casanave’s (2002) presentation of identities as impermanent and fluid are numerous studies that show ESL graduate students in a broad range of subject positions. To gain a sense of the possible subject positions available to L2 learners, I would like to briefly sketch the opposite ends of the spectrum of subject positions L2

learners might occupy. In Schneider and Fujishima's (1995) study, Zhang was unable to meet both the sociolinguistic and linguistic expectations of his discourse community and as a result was unable to maintain the grades he needed to remain at the university. Similarly, in Blakeslee's (1997) study of "Bouzida," an ESL doctoral student trying to publish an article with his advisor, the student's inability to meet his advising professor's expectations for sound written scholarship caused him eventually to abandon the project and forego the opportunity to add his voice to the professional discourse community. In the end, Bouzida's professor appropriated his writing and published the article by himself. In both of the above studies, the L2 learners did not have the linguistic and sociolinguistic resources that their discourse communities privileged and as a result found that the only subject positions available were predominantly negative or marginal. Their discourse communities did not offer space for learners who did not conform to the dominant literacy practices.

Learners' subject positioning not only stems from their abilities and behaviors but also from their self-perceptions. Fox (1994) writes of a graduate student from Sri Lanka who, as a result of her difficulties writing in English, began to wonder "if people knew that I had a culture of my own, or that there are even any worthy people in my society. I even wondered what people here must think of Buddhists" (p.3). Feeling unready for academic writing in the U.S., the woman began to question the ways her linguistic ability colored native English speakers' view of her cultural and religious identity. Though Fox tells us little about what the woman's peers and professors thought of her, it does appear that the woman's perception of how others viewed her contributed to her adoption of a negative, outsider subject position.

The literature also contains examples of learners who occupy more advantageous subject positions. Of particular interest is Belcher's (1997) study of two female ESL graduate students working on extended pieces of scholarship. Belcher (1997) found that both women, "Hiroko" and "Yi-Ying," were able to effect positive change on their target discourse communities by turning their cultural and rhetorical differences to their advantage. Hiroko, a master's student in art education, was able to overcome her advisor's resistance to her idea for her master's thesis on how Japanese art critics discuss art by educating him about the difference between Japanese and Western aesthetics. Yi-Ying, a doctoral student in education who was studying a specific curricular approach in public education, chose not to write a traditional thesis-driven dissertation because she recognized that a more powerful way to articulate her findings was by narrating three teacher's experiences with the curricular approach under study. Her willingness to take a divergent approach to her dissertation, coupled with what Belcher (1997) described as her "very proactive construction of a nonadversarial committee" (p.16) that supported "qualitative research and innovative approaches to research writing" (p.14) allowed her to assume a positive subject position in her discourse community, one where she was able to overcome conventional dissertation models that would have limited her academic progress. In both cases, the L2 learner was able to take on a positive subject position by using her cultural and linguistic distance from discursive norms to carve out space from which to contribute to the target discourse community.

The contrast between Belcher's (1997) two research participants and those in the studies by Schneider and Fujishima (1995), Blakeslee (1997), and Fox (1994) shows the range of subject positions available to ESL graduate students. Moreover, these studies

also reveal that L2 learner subject positions are intricately connected to learners' ability to stay in control of their academic activity. Schneider and Fujishima's (1995) Zhang, Blakeslee's (1997) Bouzida, and Fox's (1994) research participant were less successful in controlling both the way they were being perceived as well as their own negotiation of linguistic and sociolinguistic norms and as a result found themselves disempowered and in ultimately negative subject positions. Conversely, in Belcher's (1997) study both Hiroko and Yi-Ying had the ability and space to resist their discourse communities' traditional literacy practices and as a result were able to gain control over their projects, in the process occupying positive subject positions and gaining power in the discourse community.

Another important factor in L2 learners' ability to take on positive subject positions is whether or not they possess the linguistic and sociolinguistic skills that their discourse communities will value. For example, while Blakeslee's (1997) Bouzida had the intellectual ability to design and carry out the research for a publishable study, his competence was ultimately determined by his inability to write the genre his professor expected. Although he certainly had some of the skills necessary for working productively in his discourse community, his writing abilities were so at odds with discursive expectations that he was not able to gain enough of his professor's support to see him through the difficulties he had with the writing process. However, in Belcher's (1997) study, both Hiroko and Yi-Ying, though they were taking divergent approaches to their communities' expectations, were able to demonstrate enough linguistic and sociolinguistic acumen to gain the confidence of discourse community insiders. As a result, both were permitted to carry out studies that otherwise might have been deemed

too far outside of the discursive mainstream, in the process garnering positive subject positions for themselves.

To try to understand what sorts of subject positions my own research participants occupied I followed Casanave's (2002) lead in examining how learners appeared to change as a result of their literacy activities. Additionally, in keeping with this study's focus on interactive contexts, I assessed subject position by examining how effectively learners were able to work with established discourse community members, an idea that came from Beer's (2000) argument that "students' path to acquiring the new genres they must learn depends fundamentally on positioning or stance—their own decisions about what, and whom, they will be involved with or remain independent from" (p.64).

In general, the data reveal that participants' subject positions were fluid. Of the five participants, only Hana's position had not changed while in her graduate program, though in part this may be because the duration of the study was too short to follow her through any significant change. Hana began her graduate study in an essentially negative subject position on the margins of her academic department. For instance, she was unable to make friends with her classmates, work as a tutor in the Writing Center, or establish a connection with the professor she wanted to direct her thesis. Further, Hana also began to struggle with her writing once she began taking literature courses during her second semester. As she said, "My situation is totally contrasted with my expectation." In a very real sense, the change Hana had in fact undergone was from the positive subject position she had enjoyed as a graduate student in South Korea to the negative position she occupied in the U.S. After all, while a student in her home country not only did she have numerous friends among her classmates but she also had successfully written a master's

thesis and published a portion of it. Once in the U.S., these previous aspects of her identity had little positive bearing on whom she perceived herself to be. Additionally, Hana saw her status as an ESL student as an impediment to her gaining a positive position in the discourse community. As she explained at the midpoint of the semester: “I’m getting tired to tell I’m a different person with other students: ‘I’m an ESL student. So I have some kind of problems so please understand me.’ I don’t want to say like that.” It was important to her that she be treated the same as her American peers, a desire that virtually ensured that she would struggle to measure up.

The other four participants in this study had been in the U.S. long enough to undergo considerable change as they pursued graduate degrees. For all four of them, these changes—whether they were from negative to positive or positive to negative subject positions—were intricately wrapped up in socio-cultural interactions with discourse community insiders. However, whereas for Inez, Jenny, and Yung-Li change came out of a combination of the effectiveness of their long-term relationships with advisors as well as their sociolinguistic and linguistic competencies, for Sangita change was primarily a function of her growing competence in the rhetorical and linguistic tasks of her graduate program. That is, although early on in her master’s program Sangita was accused of plagiarizing her papers, after her professors spent some time showing her how her work did not conform to their expectations, she was able to rework her approach to academic writing, an accomplishment that left her feeling like “since then it’s been a wonderful journey.” By the time she finished her master’s program she was confident in herself as a writer and performed admirably on her comprehensive exams.

Sangita was able to assume a positive subject position because she possessed strong verbal skills, as revealed in her reflection on an oral presentation she did with a woman from China during her first semester:

Her English, I guess she was not as confident about her English as I was. . . . When it came time to present in front of the class . . . I had to kind of step in sometime to help her out. And it made me feel good because I knew I did that without stepping on her toes. . . . I knew she wanted a little bit of help without making it very obvious to everybody.

Sangita's command of spoken English thus allowed her to present herself both as a competent public speaker and as someone who was capable of discretely assisting her peer. While she may have struggled initially with her writing, she always had her strong oral abilities to help her garner a positive position in her community. At the time of this study, Sangita appeared to be in good shape as she began her doctoral program. She was feeling confident in her abilities, had begun to make a connection with her future dissertation advisor, and was comfortable interacting with the other students in her program.

Yung-Li's subject position changed dramatically during her master's program. Initially, her difficulties in the Child Development Lab where none of her co-workers appeared to want to get to know her left her feeling like "an outsider." However, once she left that environment, she enjoyed a positive subject position as a competent student who earned As in her courses and was confident in herself as a writer because, as she put it, she could "beat most of Americans in writing." Prior to beginning work on her thesis, Yung-Li's positive subject position was based on how successful she was able to be in

her interpersonal and academic activities. However, once she began working with Dr. Denardo she found that the ineffectiveness of their relationship in many ways trumped the discursive effectiveness she had displayed during her coursework, leaving her confused, angry, and often discouraged. For Yung-Li, the lack of effective interaction with her advisor thwarted her ability to bring her proven literacy skills to bear on her project, resulting in her spending months laboring to complete a thesis without clear direction from an advisor. As examined in greater detail in the previous chapter, by the time the thesis project was finished Yung-Li's overriding impression was that her own inability to tell Dr. Denardo what she needed from her as an advisor was the reason the thesis had been such a time-consuming and ultimately frustrating experience. For Yung-Li, once she was in a formal advisor/advisee relationship her subject position hinged on how productively she was able to work within the confines of that relationship, rather than on previously demonstrated literacy successes in English. And, part of the reason Yung-Li struggled in her work with Dr. Denardo was that her literacy experiences in South Korea had not prepared her to work collaboratively with her professors.

In reflecting on her graduate study, Jenny, the Ph.D. student in Department C, never appeared to have felt as though her linguistic and cultural differences positioned her negatively. For example, though she did not have friends among her peers, she did not feel she was an outsider because she had never believed that it was possible for her and the American students in her program to establish close relationships: "I think it's difficult to have close friendship with people, between people from different cultures. We can get very well along with each other. But, because of difference in culture, sometimes we cannot understand what the others thought." Unlike Hana, Jenny was not disappointed

by her lack of connection to her peers: “We have different in culture and we [people from China] are very conservative. It’s not bad.”

Although when Jenny arrived she did not feel confident in her abilities in the lab or in writing, she benefited from Dr. Lewis’s close oversight of her progress. He met with her weekly about her research and helped her develop the skills she would need to begin contributing to the professional discourse community. As a result, Jenny’s subject position appeared to be positively inflected throughout her graduate study. Though she felt that she sometimes made what she referred to as “very stupid mistakes” in her writing and her research, she was happy that Dr. Lewis was “always patient” as he worked with her. For example, although she was dissatisfied with a departmental presentation she gave during this study, she was not upset with herself because Dr. Lewis “was satisfied.” She seemed to hold a view of herself as an apprentice who for whom mistakes were just a part of the process, as she explained when reflecting on her writing: “I cannot say I’m a qualified writer. But I’m learning from practice, I think.”

Jenny’s progression through her program suggests that the reason she did not feel inadequate or frustrated in the ways that Hana and Yung-Li both did was that she was able to work effectively with her advisor, a task that was made easier by her advisor’s belief in Jenny and willingness to support her efforts. Hence, Jenny positioned herself positively as a developing apprentice, a position Dr. Lewis seemed to support in his favorable assessment of Jenny’s progress: “She has moved from being a student who needed others to a student who is now a resource for others in the lab. And that’s the expected progression. That’s how it works.”

Finally, Jenny appeared to position herself according to her perception of other people from her culture, particularly in regard to the difficulties she experienced with her spoken English skills. As she explained, “Chinese students are not encouraged to speak in public. That’s why it’s very difficult for me to speak in public, especially using second language.” In Jenny’s case, being from a culture that had not required her to voice her ideas publicly appeared to help her create space for accepting her difficulties presenting her ideas orally in English. That is, she positioned herself as a complete newcomer to oral presentations and, as a result, it was understandable if she struggled.

Inez’s subject position had changed considerably during her graduate study. When she started out, she struggled to produce writing that conformed to her professor’s expectations. Consequently, Dr. Washington, initially interpreted Inez as someone who lacked ability, as is evident in her recollection of her thoughts after reading Inez’s first paper: ““Oh my God! It’s like the woman can’t write!’ I mean, it was just awful!” In fact, Inez’s writing left Dr. Washington puzzling how Inez even got into graduate school. Interestingly, Inez never felt that her difficulties positioned her quite so negatively: “What I was writing, it was not so crazy or out of context. The problem was the English.” Accepting that at times she would struggle with her English, Inez did not respond to linguistic difficulties in a way that suggests they negatively impacted her self-concept, as is evident in her recollection of her response to Dr. Washington’s reaction to her first paper:

I didn’t panic. I didn’t cry. I didn’t think about quitting . . . I just wait and see, and say, “I think she might be right.” . . . From that moment until I finished, I never panic or get depressed or get discouraged. Just wait and

see and work. And say, probably, “I know that it’s not good but I know I can work it out.”

When she struggled to fulfill the expectations of her discourse community, Inez maintained a positive subject position by defining herself as a learner who was capable of overcoming obstacles. Also, like Jenny, Inez viewed herself as an apprentice learner, one for whom linguistic difficulties were an inevitable part of the process.

By the time this study began Inez had taken on a predominantly positive position, both in her own eyes and the eyes of others. For example, at Dead Thesis Society meetings other graduate students leaned towards her and took notes as she talked about her experiences. Her subject position took on an added positive dimension when she became a successfully published scholar. Having completed her Ph.D. and added her voice to the discourse from her field, Inez had moved from a learner who others positioned negatively to one who was perceived as an accomplished contributor to her field. Inez’s positive movement also stemmed from her ability to construct and effectively utilize an academic support network. Receiving prolonged assistance from Dr. Crandall, Dr. Washington, Peter, the tutors in the Writing Center, and her husband, Inez was able to overcome the literacy obstacles in her path and begin contributing professionally to her discourse community.

At times, the L2 learners in this study were positioned by others according to essentialized understandings of cultural difference. For example, even before the two got to know one another Dr. Denardo believed that Yung-Li would struggle with Dr. Denardo’s preference for an informal relationship. For example, as quoted earlier, Dr. Denardo believed that, “Chinese, Korean, Japanese students really have a difficult time

with [my desire for an informal relationship]. *They* maintain the distance. I don't."

Similarly, in her recollection of an interaction with one of the professors who accused her of plagiarism, Sangita quoted the professor as telling her, "okay, I know that people from India are good at—you have your thoughts, you have your ideas, but it's just the way that you present it here is not what is expected, and this is not the way we do it." The issue here is that the professor clearly lumped Sangita together with all the other Indian students he had had. As a result, Sangita became yet another confirmation that Indian students invariably struggle to write accurate research papers in the U.S. In other words, the subject position the professor put Sangita in was the same one into which he had put previous Indian students.

Concluding Thoughts on L2 Learner Subject Positioning

Contrary to Canagarajah's (1993) assertion that L2 learners occupy negative subject positions in English-language discourse communities, the L2 learners participating in this study actually occupied a broad range of subject positions. As Inez, Sangita, Yung-Li, and Jenny all demonstrated, at times positive subject positions were available to ESL students. Significantly, those learners who were able to maintain positive positions over time—Inez and Jenny—did so largely as a result of their ability both to understand the discursive expectations of their discourse communities and to build constructive relationships with discourse community insiders. Yung-Li's experiences well illustrate the role of socio-cultural relationships in L2 learner subject positioning. Early in her studies Yung-Li perceived herself as being in an advantageous position as a result of her strong linguistic abilities. However, while working with the

other teachers in the child development lab and, later, while interacting with an advisor who did not effectively support her literacy activities, her positive position was undermined.

For those participants whose subject position was not positive, part of the issue seemed to be that they were positioned by others according to their perceived distance from the norms of the target discourse community. For example, Dr. Denardo entered into her relationship Yung-Li believing that her new advisee would struggle with the egalitarian relationship Dr. Denardo preferred. Although Yung-Li never saw her cultural difference as a reason for her negative experience with Dr. Denardo, she did believe that the reason her co-workers in the child development lab did not want to know her was because they were “not ready to listen to the other people if they don’t speak English very well or have different culture.” As a result, while she was in the child development lab Yung-Li questioned her value to contribute productively. In this way Yung-Li’s case illustrates that negative subject positions can stem in part from learner perceptions of the ways they are perceived by others.

Conversely, participants were able to occupy positive subject positions when they could decrease the distance between themselves and target discourse community norms, as Jenny did when she used her advisor’s guidance to help her understand how to revise her approach to the literacy task under question so that she was not offering “too basic a discussion to be had.” Although linguistic and sociolinguistic distance had the potential to result in participants occupying negative subject positions, they could re-formulate those positions as positive, as part of the natural progression of graduate school, particularly when they were able to make use of the discourse community insiders with

whom they interacted, as Inez did when she used Peter's and later Dr. Crandall's linguistic expertise to improve her writing throughout doctoral studies.

Also, participants could positively influence their position in the discourse community by using their cultural distance from their native English-speaking peers to offer perspectives or insights that were new to the discourse community. For example, when Inez was trying to come up with a research area she had the idea to combine her advisor's longstanding research interest on job stress with her knowledge of Hispanic language and culture. Arguing that focused research on Hispanic workers was lacking in her field, Inez concentrated exclusively on factors affecting Hispanic workers' job stress, in the process gaining her advisor's support for an idea he knew very little about and establishing a research niche for herself that was unoccupied in the literature from her field. Additionally, Inez was able to bring her own cultural and linguistic background into play as she conducted and wrote about her research, activities which affirmed her positive subject position in the discourse community as a developing Hispanic academic.

Chapter Conclusion

In her review and analysis of case study research on L2 writers, Casanave (2002) argues that disciplinary enculturation "is a highly complex process involving much more than the acquisition of literacy skills" (p.27). She holds that enculturation is "ongoing, layered, and necessarily always incomplete" and is typified by "particularity and layered complexity" (p.27). As a result of this complexity and fluidity, Casanave (2002) further contends that researchers ought to understand disciplinary enculturation "as a fluid and fuzzy, rather than unambiguously definable notion" (xviii).

Casanave's (2002) characterization of disciplinary enculturation rightly suggests that enculturation processes are individualized, protean, and frequently indistinct. Nevertheless, in what follows I would like to delineate a set of conditions that seem to be integral to L2 learners' successful disciplinary enculturation. I do not mean to imply here that the process discussed below is the only way for ESL graduate students to enculturate into English-language discourse communities. In fact, the participants in this study do not all conform to the basic progression I describe here. What I am offering, then, is an articulation of the ways this study's participants point towards the existence of a logical progression through disciplinary enculturation processes.

Findings from this study suggest that participants were more likely to enculturate into target discourse communities if they undertook a basic series of tasks. If learners did not complete enough of the tasks, skipped some of them, or completed them out of order their capacity to begin participating in professional discourse communities without oversight from an advising professor seemed to have been compromised. Figure 1 offers a graphic representation of the sequence of tasks that appear to be integral for successful disciplinary enculturation.

As is evident, writing genre-appropriate texts is but one part of a complex process, surfacing only in stages 1, 5, and 6. For the participants in this study who had progressed to the point of conducting original research in the form of theses or dissertations, what was of crucial importance was that they decrease the linguistic and sociolinguistic distance between themselves and discourse community norms. Students' ability to bridge this distance was shaped by their capacity to form effective relationships with their discourse community insiders. For Inez and Jenny, the two learners whose

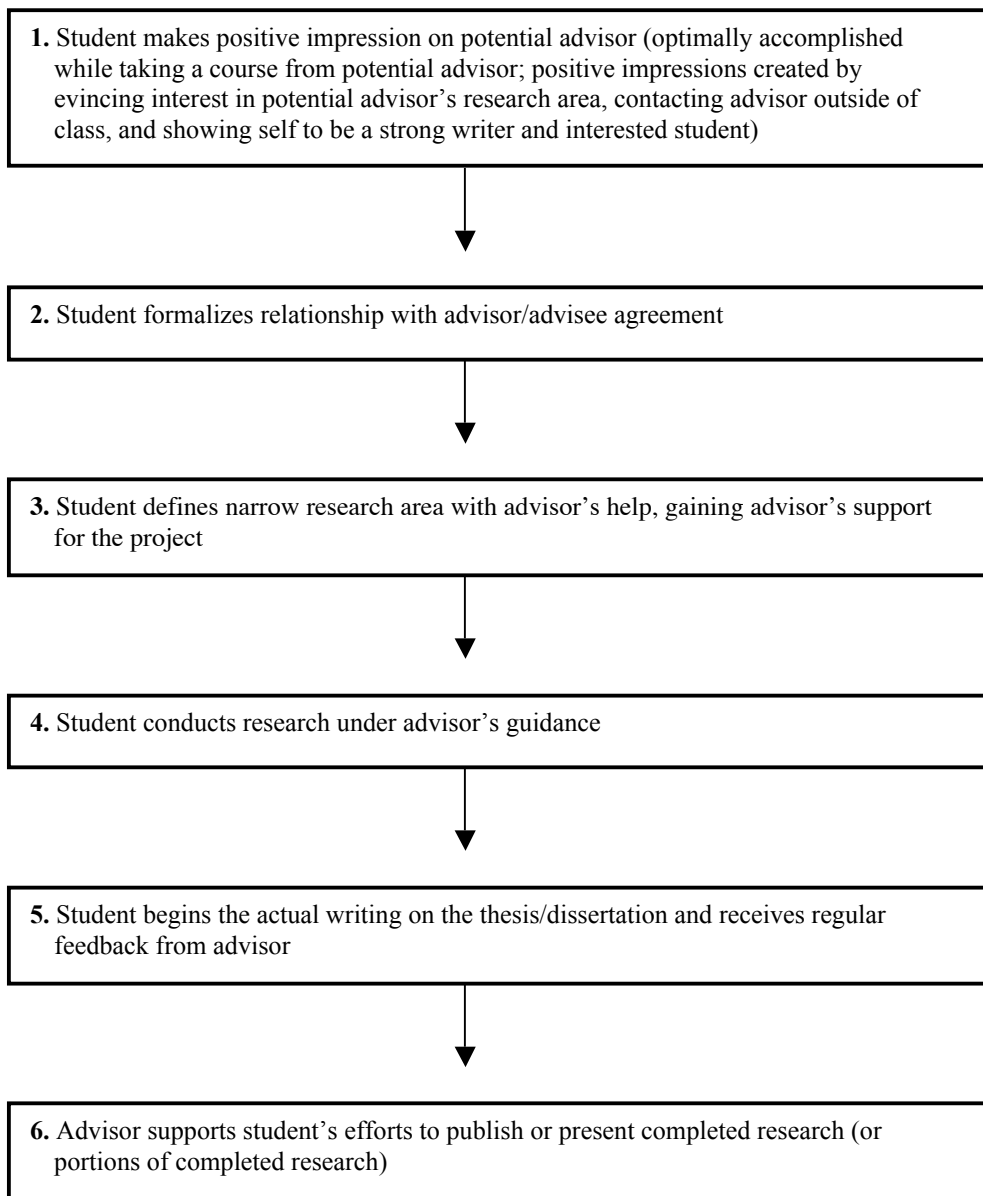


Figure 1. Enculturation Sequence.

disciplinary enculturation had been the most successful, such relationships came about relatively early in graduate school. As a result, both took advantage of close guidance and ample support as they developed literacy skills in English, defined research areas, conducted research, and wrote their dissertations. By contrast, Yung-Li, the other participant who was working on an extended research project, did not make contact with her advisor until after she had what she thought was a solid research topic. As a result, not only could Yung-Li not take advantage of insights from a discourse community insider as she worked to shape her research interests into a workable topic, but more importantly she was unable to continue the literacy successes she had enjoyed earlier in her graduate study.

Although Sangita was less advanced in her graduate study, she appeared to be following the same path that had lead to Inez's and Jenny's successful enculturation. She had determined where her literacy background was at odds with the expectations of her professors and had learned how to produce the genres that her professors expected. Further, she had gotten to know her future advisor through her coursework and used his guidance to help her define a research area. Though this study was not long enough in duration to determine how successful Sangita would be as she began conducting original research in her graduate program, the data suggested that Sangita was so far following a course that had led other learners toward making professional contributions to target discourse communities.

For Hana, it is difficult to say how successfully she will enculturate during her master's program, especially given that at the time of this study she was still so new to graduate study in the U.S. Initially it appeared that Hana was struggling to establish a

connection to Dr. Roberts, even after taking a course from him and receiving invitations to speak with him in his office. Also, though the master's degree Hana earned in South Korea had given her experience in her area of interest—twentieth century American drama—she was so far not able to use her past experience in her discipline to help put herself into an advantageous position in her discourse community.

Although some of the participants in this study had enculturated further than others, in reality none had fully enculturated into their target discourse communities. Such an accomplishment is only possible once learners begin participating without close support from an advisor. While in graduate school, the best learners may be able to do is to put themselves in positions where they can gain a supported entrance into the conversations of their discourse community, a task that appears to require L2 learners to bring their past literacy experiences and abilities in line with the discursive expectations of English language discourse communities. And, as several of the participants in this study demonstrated, accomplishing this task was much easier when the learner was able to take advantage of guidance from an established expert in the target discourse community.

CHAPTER VI: CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

In the conclusion to their investigation of the intersections between academic writing and L2 learner identities, Ramanathan and Atkinson (1999) rightly point out that “research itself . . . presupposes some sort of extension of its products—it is an activity deriving its value largely (if not completely) from what it indicates, however indirectly, beyond itself” (p.55). In this final chapter I examine the logical extensions of this project, what it suggests beyond itself. In order to contextualize the areas into which this research extends, I open with a concise articulation of this project’s central contributions to L2 composition studies’ understanding of disciplinary enculturation. I then offer a brief discussion of the project’s limitations followed by some additional research questions the study raises. I then conclude with an examination of the study’s wider implications for L2 composition studies.

Review of Findings

I would like to begin here by stressing that these findings are not meant to be generalizable to the wider population of ESL graduate students. Rather, the explanatory power of this study resides in its creation of what Strauss and Corbin (1998) refer to as “substantive theory,” by which they mean theory “developed from the study of one small area of investigation and from one specific population” (267). Strauss and Corbin (1998) maintain that the value of substantive theory “lies in its ability to speak specifically for the populations from which it was derived and to apply back to them” (267). In a cross-sectional study like this one, such substantive theory works to describe some of the major

issues in participants' enculturation in the hope that more finely pointed qualitative research can trace out the particularities of each of the developmental stages revealed by the cross-section.

As explored in the previous chapter, this study makes four key contributions to our understanding of ESL graduate student enculturation. First, the study revealed that academic writing ability by itself did not determine how successfully or deeply learners enculturated into target discourse communities. Although writing was important for each of the participants in this study, its connection to enculturation was enmeshed in learners' socio-academic relationships with discourse community insiders. In this way writing ability appeared to advance enculturation only after learners began working on original research projects under the guidance of discourse community insiders. Prior to conducting such research, writing was related to enculturation only insofar as it gave participants an opportunity to practice and develop the discursive skills they would later need.

Secondly, the study also found that disciplinary enculturation was a highly social process. That is, participants' capacities to participate in the professional conversations of their target discourse communities were inflected by the types of relationships learners had with discourse community insiders. While previous research has found that L2 learners are often at a disadvantage because they lack true networks of support (Allison, Cooley, Lewkowicz, & Nunan, 1998; Dong, 1998), this study described the experiences of participants who were having considerable success even though they did not have what could rightly be called networks of support. For some of participants in this study just

having an effective working relationship with an advising professor made it possible to be successful without having a network of support from multiple individuals.

Also, complicating the picture of advisor/advisee relationships that exists in the L2 literature, the study suggested that effective advisor/advisee relationships could take on many forms, ranging from egalitarian to hierarchical. The primary issue in determining how successfully participants worked within socio-academic relationships with discourse community insiders was their ability to gain clear understandings of discursive expectations. The learners who moved steadily towards being able to contribute professionally to their discourse communities either had advisors who were conscientious about explaining expectations or were assertive and comfortable enough in the advisor/advisee relationship to negotiate and check their understandings repeatedly.

A third key finding from this study concerned the ways participants' linguistic, sociolinguistic, and cultural distance from target discourse communities played into their enculturation experiences. That is, as revealed in Sangita's "plagiarism experience," Hana's reluctance to approach her professor without conducting research ahead of time, Yung-Li's difficulties with her advisor, and Jenny's culturally inflected respect for her advisor, participants' linguistic, sociolinguistic, and cultural backgrounds affected their decisions about how to participate in their discourse communities in ways that were different from usual practices. Also, of particular interest was Inez's decision to turn her linguistic and cultural distance from her target discourse community to her advantage, using her "outsider" perspective to help her graft her own interest in Hispanic workers onto her advisor's research area. Though Inez was extraordinarily successful in using her linguistic and cultural background to create a research niche for herself, some of the other

participants struggled to find ways to bridge the distance between themselves and target discourse communities. The primary reason for their difficulties in both academic writing and social interactions was that they were operating with understandings of academic literacy and academic relationships that were at odds with the discursive expectations of their new discourse communities.

Finally, the study revealed that L2 learners occupied a range of subject positions as they participated in English-language discourse communities. The primary factor that determined what sorts of subject positions participants occupied concerned how swiftly they were able to decrease the linguistic, sociolinguistic, and cultural distance between themselves and context-dependent norms. Thus, learners' subject positions depended greatly on their ability to figure out the expectations of target discourse communities, a task made easier when learners were able to make use of support from discourse community insiders. Additionally, learners' subject positions were fluid and multiple, changing according to both specific literacy contexts as well as individual learner development, as exemplified in Inez's advancement as a writer and Yung-Li's contrasting experiences as a teacher in the child development lab, as a student in her coursework, and as an advisee working under her advisor, Dr. Denardo.

Limitations

Although this study successfully answered its research questions, the project faced two limitations. First, as with any research methodology, the cross-sectional design presented limitations even as it enabled productive inquiry. As detailed in chapter three, cross-sectional research designs call for participants to be at different developmental

stages so that the researcher can gain an informed overview of the phenomenon under study (Baltes, Reese, & Nesselroade, 1988; Creswell, 1994). While in itself the design was effective, because the approach called for participants to be at diverse stages it was not consistently possible to analyze the cases alongside one another. Thus, though there were some commonalities among the five participants, at times the study uncovered only single examples of a given experience, attitude, or activity. As a result, it was not feasible to judge how usual the participants' enculturation-related activities were, suggesting that subsequent cross-sectional studies may well help us to develop additional insights into the enculturation-related experiences of L2 graduate students. However, I believe these limitations were balanced by the design's access to the specifics of individual cases that were very different from one another. In this way the cross-sectional design created an opportunity to gain a detailed overview of intricacies of a complex and highly individualized developmental process.

Secondly, the study was limited by how much access I had to each participant. For example, as described in chapter three, there were instances when participants were reluctant to have me observe their interactions with other members of their department. Additionally, the study's scope was lessened when Jenny, the Ph.D. student in Department C, was unable to meet me for a final interview where I could check my interpretations and conclusions. Although these conditions resulted in my not having an opportunity to gather additional data, the rich store of data that I was able to obtain helped to offset these limitations.

Unanswered Questions

The study raised several additional research questions regarding ESL graduate student enculturation. For example, the project focused on learners who were in disciplines where writing was an important part of the curriculum throughout the degree-seeking process. As mentioned in the discussion chapter of this project, for all of the participants the need to produce written work was an ever-present backdrop to their graduate study, coloring both their literacy activities and their interactions with discourse community insiders. A line of inquiry that could be paired with this study's findings concerns enculturation experiences for L2 graduate students in disciplines that do not emphasize writing. That is, we might ask how disciplinary enculturation differs for learners from academic disciplines where writing is a less important part of the graduate curriculum. Along the same lines, it would be instructive to determine how socio-academic relationships with discourse community insiders differ in disciplines that do not emphasize writing. Finally, we might investigate the kinds of support advisors in non-writing intensive disciplines provide to their L2 graduate students and how the effectiveness of that support is shaped by linguistic, socio-linguistic, and cultural distance between advisors and students.

Further, this study raises questions about the intricacies of the different stages of disciplinary enculturation. While the project's cross-sectional design contributed to an understanding of some of the major issues in L2 learner enculturation processes, it would be constructive to probe more deeply into the experiences of groups of learners who were all at the same stage in their graduate study, whether they be in the initial transitional period to university study or learners as far along as working to make their first

professional contributions to target discourse communities. Such research into multiple learners at common stages would lead to a richer contextualization of the specific experiences of ESL graduate students as they negotiate each stage of the enculturation process. Indeed, the logical step after a cross-sectional study is to go back and conduct research into the developmental stages opened up by the cross-section.

Although earlier in this chapter I noted that this study is not meant to be generalizable, one of the benefits to the project is that it raises questions about ways that ESL learners and their advisors might work together productively. That is, the narratives in this study suggest that one of the key facets of successful advisor/advisee relationships is clear communication between both parties. Advisors can facilitate this clarity by being intentional about communicating their expectations to their L2 advisees, both at the micro-level of individual tasks and at the macro-level of their general mode of working with graduate students. Further, advisors can create space for their L2 advisees to communicate their own expectations, a task about which advisors may need to be intentional given the linguistic and cultural barriers that may separate advisors from their L2 advisees. When expectations are clearly articulated by both parties, not only does the potential for there to be misunderstandings diminish, but also the possibility for L2 learners to bring their previous knowledge and experience to bear increases. The findings from this study can be illustrative to both groups, demonstrating successful and unsuccessful examples of ESL student/advisor pairs.

Theoretical Implications

In concert with Ramanathan and Atkinson's (1999) position that all research must be relevant to larger issues, I would like to conclude this study by examining what I see as the project's theoretical implications. In the critical introduction to this study I explored postmodern understandings of communication and learning, contending that advantageous socio-political positioning depends on accurate linguistic participation as well as competent sociolinguistic negotiation, both of which hinge on understandings of context-specific expectations. I further contended that context-specific expectations were governed by power structures that often remain invisible to the individual.

Addressing connections between power and L2 learner literacy acquisition, Fox (1994) has maintained that an important question that needs to be asked is why the university culture gets to demand that non-native English speakers change to fit its expectations. Or, to phrase it another way, we ought to inquire into the reasons why the onus for change is not distributed more equitably between L2 learners and the universities that accept them. In what follows I turn my attention to these questions.

This study revealed that ESL graduate students' advancement in English-language discourse communities is tempered by institutional willingness to accept linguistic and sociolinguistic interactions that diverge from culturally specific norms. That is, as was demonstrated repeatedly in the experiences of this study's participants, L2 learners bring with them literacy backgrounds that differ from institutionally accepted codes and conventions. However, in this study the most common institutional response to the differences L2 learners represented was to encourage (or, in some cases, demand) conformity to established norms. Although all educational endeavors involve change on

the part of the learner, the salient issue here is that the change that L2 learners may be expected to make is one that does not always recognize or value the literacies they have developed prior to entering U.S. institutions.

The larger issue that gets covered up by such a response is that L2 learners represent an opportunity for institutional enrichment because they enter academic institutions with resources and perspectives that are lacking in the native English-speaking student population. In this way the linguistic and cultural backgrounds of L2 learners not only give form to their own access to English-language discourse communities, but they also offer points of access through which discourse communities can enrich themselves. Yet, the multiple literacies that ESL learners embody can contribute meaningfully to the educational context only when institutions create space for perspectives and ideas that may not readily mesh with privileged discursive modes. I do not mean to suggest here that L2 learners should be exempt from acquiring the conventions and codes of their target discourse communities. Rather, I am arguing for a more expansive understanding of academic literacy, one that not only recognizes value in linguistic and cultural diversity, but more importantly creates space for linguistically and culturally distant learners to make informed decisions about how they might be able to integrate their literacy backgrounds into target English-language discourse communities.

Arguing that the pursuit of literacy is always enmeshed in power structures, Street (1993) holds that “An understanding of literacy requires detailed, in-depth accounts of actual practice in different cultural settings” (p.430). However, Street (1993) warns that “It is not sufficient . . . to extol simply the richness and variety of literacy practices made accessible through such ethnographic detail: we also need bold theoretical models that

recognize the central role of power relations in literacy practices” (p.430). Street (1993) responds to this need with his formulation of “ideological literacy,” a model he uses “to view literacy practices as inextricably linked to cultural and power structures in society and to recognize the variety of cultural practices associated with reading and writing in different contexts” (p.433-434).

The present study’s concentration on the ways ESL graduate students worked to bridge cultural, linguistic, and sociolinguistic distances into target discourse communities pushes the implications of Street’s (1993) ideological literacy model. That is, Street’s (1993) model represents an attempt to get at the ways literacy activities are inevitably governed by both culturally and institutionally regulated norms. However, we must also consider the implications for institutional enrichment that arise as ESL graduate students enculturate into target discourse communities, as their literacy histories and practices come into contact with established discursive conventions. When we do so we see that what Street refers to as the “variety of cultural practices associated with reading and writing in different contexts” (p.434) extends well beyond the culture of English-language discourse communities to include educational contexts and cultures in ESL learners’ home countries. By remembering that educational contexts cross over linguistic, cultural, and political boundaries, we can more readily recognize the powerful discursive force that L2 learners can exert when they are able to import culturally diverse perspectives into English-language educational contexts.

Studies such as this one are of pivotal importance to our understanding of the stakes of institutional accommodation of L2 learners. Extolling the virtues of ethnographic research, Brodkey (1987) contends that “To stop telling stories about

experience would be tantamount to abandoning one another to the very intellectual, social, cultural, and political boundaries that ethnographic narratives labor, however awkwardly and tenuously, to dismantle” (p.48). Though it has not been my conscious attempt to take down the boundaries that shape L2 learner enculturation, I do hope to have contributed to our understanding of both the characteristics of those boundaries and how L2 learners negotiate them as they move towards enculturation into professional academic discourse communities.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A. Letter to Potential Participants

Dear participant's name,

I am writing to ask for your help. Earlier this summer I contacted your department seeking to learn if there were any ESL graduate students currently working toward a degree in your program. The secretary gave me your name, which is why I am contacting you today. I am currently writing a dissertation in the English department, and my study is looking at ESL graduate students' academic literacy experiences. Specifically, I am interested in talking to ESL graduate students who are working in the humanities and social sciences.

As a graduate student in participant's department, you may fit the criteria of my ideal research participant. I would very much like to speak with you about your experiences with academic literacy, both in the past in your native language and at present in English. I'm very interested in learning about your experiences with academic English in higher education.

Do you think you would have some time to meet me at your convenience? My schedule is flexible, and I could meet with you at the place and time of your choosing. I anticipate our meeting taking about 45 minutes. I would greatly appreciate your help, and you would be doing a lot to help a fellow graduate student get through the PhD process. I look forward to your reply.

Sincerely,
Ethan Krase
Department of English

Appendix B. First Interview Guide—Background Information

1. Name:
2. Age:
3. Home country:
4. Educational History (degrees obtained, institutions attended):
5. Educational Present (degree pursued, progress):
6. Known Languages (other than English):
 - a. Writing ability in known languages?
 - b. Educational experiences in known languages?
7. Work Experience:
8. Academic/career goals:
9. Duration of stay in the U.S.:
10. Reason for studying in the U.S.:
11. Schedule for current semester (to be used to determine convenient interview times)
12. Living situation in the U.S. (where do you live? with whom? for how long? where else have you lived?):
13. Family in the U.S?
14. How did you select this university?

Appendix C. Second Interview Guide—Participants as Writers

1. How do you feel about writing? In English? In your native language?
2. How do you feel about yourself as a writer?
3. Tell me about an important writing assignment you are currently working on or have recently finished. What was the project? How did it go? What was challenging about it? Was anything easy?
4. Tell me about an important writing project from your first year in graduate school in the U.S. What was the project? How did it go? What was challenging about it? Was anything easy?
5. How important is writing to your academic major?
6. What are the different kinds of writing projects a person in your academic area has to know how to do? How well can you do them?
7. What sorts of writing projects do you anticipate having to do in the future?
8. What sorts of feedback have you received on your writing? From whom?
9. Do you ever revise your writing? (If answer is “no,” ask why not.) How do you revise it? What comes of the revision?
10. Does anyone ever help you with your writing? Has anyone helped you in the past?

Appendix D. Third Interview Guide—Academic Relationships

1. Tell about your first year at the university. What was your dominant impression of that year?
2. Thinking back on your first year, how do you think your professors would have described you?
3. What was your relationship like with professors during your first year?
4. What was your relationship like with your peers during your first year? How might they have described you? How would you have described them?

(Ask #5–9 only if participant has an advisor. If participant does not have an advisor, go to #10.)

5. Tell about how you met your advisor.
6. How would you characterize your relationship with your advisor?
7. What sorts of things does your advisor do for you? How does he or she advise you?
8. What do you expect out of your advisor?
9. In the time you have known your advisor, has your relationship with him/her changed? If so how?

Questions about peers

10. How do you get along with your peers?
11. What sorts of interactions do you have with them?

Question about others

12. Are there people you have not yet talked about who are important to your academic progress at the university? If so, who are they and how are they important?

Appendix E. Sample of Written Summary of Data

The following outline is a copy of the one I shared with Inez for our final interview.

Inez, 5/6/03—checking research conclusions

Observations and Interpretations

1. Academic and communicative strengths

- a. You were academically accomplished when you entered the university. You were raised in a family that prized education. You liked to write in your native language and had already published two articles in Mexico. You had a master's degree in counseling and had written a master's as well as an undergraduate thesis.
- b. You are also a strong verbal communicator. You are a fluent and quick in conversation and speak with clarity and insight on your research, your profession, graduate school processes, and academic relationships.
- c. You are a strong reader, comprehending nearly 100% of the material you read. While taking courses, you compensated for what you might not understand in class by reading the material ahead of time.

2. Interacting with others

- a. Interpersonally, your speaking and listening skills are more than adequate to accomplish everything you needed to do. Although there were times when you struggled with your written work, you never struggled in interpersonal interactions.
- b. Part of the reason for this is that you have what I would call a “winning” personality. You are a good listener, a thoughtful conversationalist, and an empathetic person. Looking over transcripts of our interviews I find numerous instances where other people (e.g., Dr. Washington, Dr. Crandall, Peter) responded to you in ways that suggest they had become invested in you and your academic progress.
- c. You said that your master's in Mexico in counseling helped you as you interacted with professors and peers in the U.S. You had, as you put it in one of our interviews, “training in interviews and interpersonal communication before. So, I think that helped me in building relationships, in making sure that people hear you, knew that you were here, establishing links. Although I think I had some of those abilities naturally, my master's degree helped me understand the importance of that.”
- d. You formed four key relationships while at the university. You were able to use each of these relationships to help you move through various aspects of your program with greater accuracy and effectiveness. In part, I think your strong verbal skills, enjoyable personality, and focused work ethic help to explain how you were able to form so many relationships. Each of these four people took an interest in your movement through graduate school.

- i. Dr. Crandall (academic support, dissertation advisor, co-publisher)
- ii. Dr. Washington (academic support, dissertation committee member, Dead Thesis Society leader)
- iii. Peter (writing tutor via Dr. Washington)
- iv. Husband (relationship obviously different than the others, but still made contributions to your academic progress, e.g., giving you opportunity to speak English all the time, sharing his knowledge of graduate school culture and procedures, practicing interview techniques, etc.)

3. Linguistic difficulties

- a. Early in your graduate program you experienced what sound like some pretty serious difficulties with your academic writing. They were serious enough to cause Dr. Washington to doubt if you had the ability to succeed in graduate school. Dr. Washington put you in touch with Peter, who then worked with you at length to improve your papers, both in Dr. Washington's class and in your other classes during your first year.
- b. To my mind, this is a critical period in your movement into your academic field. Your writing difficulties could have spelled real and lasting trouble, but instead you used them as a learning experience. On multiple occasions it was clear to me that your ego was not wrapped up in your academic performance, and I believe this helped you get through difficulty.
 - i. What I mean by the "ego comment" is that when you struggled with your writing, you did not judge yourself harshly or, as you put it in our interview on the subject, "jump to conclusions." Instead, you pursued a solution to the problem in a professional and focused manner without letting your performance control your sense of self-worth or self-assessments of your ability.
 - ii. When you began graduate study in the U.S. you recognized that linguistically you would face some difficulties.
 - 1. e.g. When you experienced difficulty/received negative feedback: "For instance, when Camilla told me that my first paper was terrible, I didn't panic. I didn't cry. I didn't think about quitting. I didn't think she was bad to me, she didn't like me. I didn't rush to those conclusions that probably I could have done. I just wait and see. And say, "I think she might be right. There must be something that she thinks that I am not doing." I think I listened to that message. And I didn't rush into something based on my assumptions. I think that helped me in that moment. And I think that same attitude, that's the one that I kept through all my studies. From that moment until I finished, I never, I try not to, panic or get depressed or get discouraged. Just wait and see and work. And say, probably I know that it's not good but I know I can work it out."

4. Contributing to the professional conversation

- a. Near the end of your studies, you began to contribute to the professional literature in your field.
- b. Evidence of this in your attempts to publish your research. In our interview about your research area you talked about yourself as a participant in the professional conversations of your field rather than as a student in the degree process.
- c. As indicated in our fourth interview, you understand the research niche your own work fills and are forthright in your attempts to contribute to the profession.
- d. One way you carved out a niche for your work was by connecting your advisor's interest in job stress to your own understanding of and ability to gain access to Hispanic culture and language, conducting a study of factors affecting Hispanic workers' job stress.

5. Enculturation in Department D—(how you moved towards professional participation)

- a. Students establish individual connections with advisors, form their own research agenda (smart students will graft upon advisor's area), and then try to develop their voice in the academic community. You were successful in this not solely because of your writing skills but because of your ability to read Dr. Crandall and design a research project that he would find interesting. Also, it was significant that you designed a project that let you tap into your own linguistic and cultural knowledge.
- b. All four of the relationships described above helped you because, I believe, all four people came to care for you, extending help to you and taking an interest in your academic achievement.
- c. The culture of Department D really is single student/advisor oriented. With only two professors who can direct dissertations (Dr. Crandall and Dr. Wansley), students have to be able to work effectively with one of them if they want to be supported as they complete their research studies.
- d. You benefited greatly from your friendship with Dr. Washington and your participation in the Dead Thesis Society. Also, your work with Peter on writing and with your husband helped you to take advantage of the opportunities before you in the Ph.D. program.

6. Final observations:

- a. I think in terms of disciplinary enculturation, you have been successful. You moved steadily through your degree and have become conversant in the intricacies of the content of your field and the specifics of conducting academic research. Your language-related difficulties seemed to take place early in your graduate career. You were able to negotiate these in three ways:

- i. forming relationships with Peter and Camilla Washington; both of these individuals became integral to your ability to stay afloat linguistically during the first semester or year;
 - ii. meeting (and later marrying) your husband; his knowledge of the language, culture, and graduate studies helped you get through some of the difficult stages of the degree process;
 - iii. finding an advisor with whom you were comfortable and building a relationship with him that would support your efforts to enter the professional conversation even after your formal studies had concluded.
- b. So, to conclude, enculturation for you has involved attaching to an advisor, building a good working relationship with him, finding individuals who would help you negotiate writing difficulties during your early semesters (until you were in command of them yourself), and then as the dissertation concluded thinking about yourself as a professional, having a definite career objective (professorship) and a plan for getting it accomplished (publish articles while your husband finishes his degree and then conduct your job search).

Appendix F. Letter to Professor/Advisor Requesting an Interview

Dear professor's name,

I am writing to ask for your help. I am a doctoral student in the English department and am currently collecting data for my dissertation, a project that examines the academic literacy experiences of graduate students for whom English is a second language. In my field, much is known about the ways American students learn to negotiate the advanced academic literacy demands of graduate school; however, relatively little is known about the different needs and experiences of English as a second language students pursuing graduate study in institutions where English is the medium of instruction. Using qualitative research methodologies, I have spent the past three months working with a small group of participants in an effort to understand the ways their experiences here at UT have been shaped by linguistic and cultural differences.

I am contacting you because participant's name is one of the participants in the study. I have already interviewed her several times regarding her experiences in her graduate program. Recently, I have come to see that the study, though moving in an interesting and worthwhile direction, would benefit greatly if it included the perspectives of some of the participants' professors. I would very much like to interview you regarding your experiences working with participant. Also, I am interested in talking with you about your working relationship with graduate students in general. I have contacted participant to make sure that she is comfortable with me approaching you to discuss this topic. Additionally, I have obtained Human Subjects approval for this research project. Do you think you would have some time to meet me for an interview? I anticipate our interview taking between 45 and 60 minutes. I would greatly appreciate your assistance with this project. If you have questions, I can be reached at ekrase@utk.edu, 974-3847. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,
Ethan Krase
Department of English

Appendix G. Interview Guide—Professor/Advisor Interview

1. How long at UT? How many graduate students working under you? What are your responsibilities as far as graduate program?
2. How do you define your role when it comes to working with graduate students? What sort of relationships do you generally try to have with graduate students? How do you want them to see you?
3. Describe the culture of your department. What's it like? [Collegiality? Professor/graduate student relations? Type of interaction? Formality? Hierarchy?]
4. Turn attention to your work with insert participant. When did you first meet student? What were your early impressions?
5. How would you describe student? (Probe for strengths and weaknesses.)
6. What obstacles does she face? Anything special you do to try to address them?
7. What should graduate students come out this program able to do? How is participant doing so far?
8. Academically speaking, in your opinion what does the future hold for student? What leads you to think this?

Appendix H. Excerpts from Field Notes

Date: January 25, Inez's "Dead Thesis Society Meeting."
Border's Bookstore, 9:00 a.m.—very cold, snowy Saturday morning

Attending: Inez, Dr. Camilla Washington, three M.A. students from Department D

Topic: 9:00 a.m.

Camilla asks Inez about her job search. Inez explains that she's feeling optimistic, but that so far she hasn't had success. Camilla encourages her, cites a future bilingual opening at a nearby university that she thinks Inez could get.

Comment

Camilla seems to really care about Inez. She's so attentive and warm. She's clearly concerned for Inez's welfare—not just as a student but as a person.

Topic: 9:10 a.m.

Camilla explains to the attendees that "If I can get you last ones through, the Dead Thesis Society will fade into the sunset." Camilla says she no longer has time.

Comment

The DTS is disbanding? It's clear that the group has held together because of Camilla's commitment. She dispenses most of the advice and support and sets up the meetings.

Topic: 9:25 a.m.

Camilla and Inez begin to advise the M.A. students about what it's like to work with Dr. Crandall and another professor in the department. Camilla explains how their styles contrast, particularly in their work on graduate thesis/dissertation committees. She advises them to "cite Dr. Crandall! He's very forgiving if he sees his name. It will get you mucho brownie points, so work it in there somehow." Inez tells the other students about her experiences working with Dr. Crandall. She is careful to qualify her remarks with phrases like "in my situation" and "for me." She advises them to think through their methodology very carefully, telling them it is better to be too specific than not specific enough.

Comment

It's interesting. The other students lean towards Inez when she talks just as much as they lean toward Camilla when she talks. They take notes on what Inez says to them. They clearly respect her and defer to her as a more experienced student. I think what I'm seeing here is Inez in a position as an insider; she's enculturated and knows the things that her M.A. colleagues want to know.

Appendix I. Sample E-mail Correspondence

E: Hi Sangita. I hope you have been well and enjoying the brilliant fall weather. I wanted to just check-in with you regarding your recent activities. How has your work been coming these last couple weeks? What significant experiences have you had recently? In addition to those two questions, I also wanted to ask you about something that occurred to me as I was re-reading the transcript of our latest interview. I never asked you how you got interested in your research area. I'd be very curious to know how this came to be an area of interest for you.

best,
--Ethan

S: Hello Ethan. Sorry for the delayed reply. Regarding your question, I am not sure if I mentioned it. But the topic was a new area of research interest for my professor and he suggested it to me as a "possible" area of interest. As for me, I am looking favorably toward it for my broad area of interest with my field is transition to work issues.

I haven't been doing much in that direction yet. Just concentrating on my classes. I keep e-mailing with Dr. Collins to get a clearer scope of welfare to work issues. I will be away in India from Dec.6–Jan.14 for vacation and shall get back to track when I am back.

Regards,
Sangita

VITA

Ethan Krase earned a bachelor's degree in English Education from Illinois State University in Normal, IL in 1994. After teaching high school English for two years in northern Illinois he returned to his alma mater to pursue a master's degree in English, which he completed in 1998. He then continued his studies at the University of Tennessee, where he completed his Ph.D. in 2003. His research interests include second language writing, politics and power in literacy development, sociolinguistics, socio-cultural theories of communication and learning, and qualitative research methods.