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## What is Writing in Undergraduate Anthropology? An Activity Theory Analysis

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Graduate Program in Education

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree in Doctor of Philosophy

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What is writing in undergraduate anthropology? An activity theory analysis.

(Monograph)

by

Boba M. Samuels

Graduate Program in Education

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

The School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies  
The University of Western Ontario  
London, Ontario, Canada

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## **Abstract**

How students learn to write in the disciplines is a question of ongoing concern in writing studies, with practical implications for academia. This case study used ethnographic methods to explore undergraduate writing in two upper year anthropology courses at a Canadian university over one term (four months). Student and professor interviews, classroom field notes, surveys, and students' final papers were analysed using a framework drawn from activity theory and informed by genre theory. Four themes emerged from the data: anthropology as school; the familiar vs. unfamiliar; reading; and hidden rhetoric. Findings suggest students approach disciplinary work primarily as students rather than emerging professionals, and this role is adopted because it is familiar and few opportunities are provided to practice other professional activities. Extensive reading was seen as important by students and professors. Students demonstrated high skill levels in finding and using sources, but expressed frustration and resistance to the use of discipline-specific jargon, especially that of theoretical/sociocultural anthropology. While professors linked extensive reading with writing development, students did not make this connection. The rhetorical nature of literacy tasks was largely overlooked or hidden, and explicit instruction on disciplinary writing was infrequently provided to students, who felt they were expected to already know how to write research papers. Analysis of student papers showed a variety of rhetorical moves in their introductions, though familiar academic moves such as including a thesis statement were seen frequently while more sophisticated moves such as establishing ethos were little seen. Papers that used more sources and were longer received higher grades. Overall, students

demonstrated a range of levels of writing development and disciplinary enculturation. The activity theory framework used in this project was useful in providing a model to structure analysis. Its explanatory power, however, is limited unless an alternate conceptualization of activity (such as Ilyenkov's) is used that integrates the notion of genre as social action. In conclusion, adequate study of activities such as disciplinary writing requires theoretical and methodological complexity and is best conducted in research collaborations that include expertise in a variety of methods and from a variety of approaches.

**Keywords**

writing in the disciplines (WID), activity theory, genre, anthropology, academic writing, Ilyenkov, university education, ethnography

## **Dedication**

This work is dedicated in memory of my husband,

Noel Samuels,

and my father,

Richard Marcinowski.

They would have been so proud.

## Acknowledgments

The completion of this dissertation has been nothing like I thought and planned. That it is completed at all is testament to the generous support and encouragement I received from many people, some of whom I acknowledge here, and others who are no less appreciated though they are not named.

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## Chapter 1: The Problem

When university students write successfully in their disciplines – in anthropology, for instance – members of the academic community recognize this as a mark of membership, inferring that these students have adopted the valued academic practices and beliefs of these disciplines. Such practices reflect particular ways of thinking critically and communicating precisely, and include embracing the epistemological and ontological perspectives of the discipline. Practicing anthropologists, for example – those who conduct research, teach, and write in the field – demonstrate in their writing these valued ways of thinking and communicating. Students who enter university, however, rarely have a high degree of knowledge about the ways that anthropologists, or biologists or literary scholars or political scientists, think and write; yet by the time they graduate four years later, students are aware that such specific disciplinary expertise exists and are able to identify some characteristics of this expertise, even if they are not always successful in replicating it themselves. When successful, they are seen to be “doing” history (Beaufort, 2007; Beaufort & William, 2005) or “doing” anthropology.

Discipline-embedded writing and the associated ways of thinking and communicating that inform it have been the subject of increasing analysis through research in the field of writing studies over the past few decades (e.g., Artemeva, N., 2009; Beaufort, 2007; Beaufort & Williams, 2005; Coe, R.M., 2002; Geisler, 1994; Halliday, M.A.K., & Martin, J.R., 1993; Hyland, 2011; Joliffe, D.A., 1988; McDonald, S.P., 1994; Myers, G., 1990; Prior, P. 1998; Soliday, 2005; Wake, 2010; Wiemelt, 2001). These studies and others have examined writing from a variety of perspectives that include analysis of situational demands, social contexts, formal and grammatical

elements of written texts, views of writers, and audience/reader expectations. What, then, can we say disciplinary writing is, and how do the skills identified with disciplinary writing become mastered by students?

In this study, I investigated undergraduate anthropology and asked the question, “What is anthropology writing?” I explored students’ and professors’ views about what it means to write in anthropology and examined whether and how students’ written texts demonstrate these views. I used activity theory (AT), a sociocultural theory that has gained prominence in writing studies (Bazerman, 2004; Engeström, Y. 2009; Hayes, 2006; Russell, 1997, 2010), as the dominant theoretical and analytical framework for this study. By using activity theory to explore writing in this case study, I also hoped to gain insight into how productive AT is in explaining the complexities of writing within disciplinary contexts.

### **Historical Perspectives on Academic Writing**

Since the expansion of the writing-across-the-curriculum (WAC) movement in the 1980s, it is generally acknowledged that students’ academic writing development is best pursued in contexts in which such writing is most relevant, i.e., in their academic disciplines (Russell, 2002). The notion that academic writing is learned in specific contexts rather than as a general skill is not new, though it has had a long, and arguably ongoing, struggle for acceptance. David Russell (2002) argues convincingly in his history of American WAC that in the latter years of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the rise of mass education, the establishment of separate academic disciplines, the creation of a new professional and industrial class, and improvements in print technology combined to transform writing from one general and transferable skill, subservient to oral

communication and largely of the upper classes, into multiple, specialized forms of discourse for multiple purposes and audiences. The education system and the general public, however, continued to view writing primarily as a skill through which knowledge was demonstrated, i.e., that it was transparent, and required, at most, elementary instruction to achieve proficiency. Thus arose the notion that academic writing could be separated into distinct parts consisting of: 1) general, mostly mechanical “writing skills” which were expected to be learned early, once and for all, and applied widely, and 2) current, specific subject-matter knowledge or “content” that students were expected to learn, often over several years, in their subject-areas or disciplines. Similar views prevailed in England into the 1990s (Russell, Lea, Parker, Street & Donahue, 2009). In North America, prominent learning scientists at the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century are still claiming that the act of discussing content knowledge separately from reading and writing demonstrates that these literacy skills are context-independent – in other words, that they do not rely on context to be learned and applied (see Anderson, Reder & Simon, 1996, p. 6).

Russell (2002) shows how succeeding generations from the 1890s onward have, as a result, bemoaned students’ inability to write, producing reports continually “lamenting the ‘crisis’ in student writing” (p. 6). In response, the “problem” of student writing in America was addressed by establishing general composition courses for students entering university (Roen, Goggin & Clary-Lemon, 2008), a solution clearly founded on not only a desire to ensure all students acquire the ability to write, but also the belief that writing is transparent and generalizable. In these typically first-year classes, students were expected to learn “writing skills” which they would carry with them and

apply in all other courses (and presumably in the rest of their lives). This American solution was not widely taken up in Canada, though not because Canadian universities or academics opposed it on pedagogical grounds, but because university English departments more effectively resisted the move to enshrining such composition “service” courses among the literary curricula of their departments (Graves & Graves, 2006). Other more recent solutions – to embed writing instruction as an integral part of the disciplines, for instance – have met varying degrees of ongoing opposition. In Russell’s view, this opposition exists because academics take up positions along two axes of conflict: the first axis displays historical conflicts over the academy’s liberal mission and its regulation of admission to the academy and its discourse(s); e.g., is academia one encompassing discourse community or multiple individual communities? A second axis of conflict centres on competing views of writing: is it a basic, generalizable skill or a situated rhetorical activity embedded in specific contexts? Applied to writing, these axes explore whether there is a writing standard that is (or ought to be) universal to the academy and to what extent are individual disciplines or members able to construct their own acceptable discourses about writing. The diversity of positions taken by academics along these axes complicates many attempts to embed writing instruction within the disciplines, especially if there is lack of a strong academic or institutional imperative for departments or faculties to take responsibility for teaching students to write.

Several histories of academic writing have described the progression of Western 20<sup>th</sup> century writing research and corresponding phases of instruction (see Bazerman, Bonini & Figueiredo, 2009; Graves & Graves, 2006; Nystrand, 2006; Rogers, 2010; Russell, 2002). Broadly, these phases – traditional-mechanical approaches, cognitive-

developmental approaches, and sociocultural approaches – reflect different localizations on the axes of conflict that Russell proposed. It is perhaps illustrative of the new maturity of the field that current writing researchers are increasingly accepting and inclusive of contributions from varied perspectives (Nystrand, 2006). As Paul Rogers (2010) explains, “Defining writing development remains a difficult task, as writing is a complex-cognitive and situated-social activity. Writing development therefore must always be seen as highly contextual” (p. 374). It is this recognition of the context-specificity of writing development that allows for increasing acknowledgement that writing is best taught and learned within the disciplines.

One characteristic of disciplinary writing is its identification of relatively stable forms or *genres* common to that discipline. These genres form the text types that students master in much of the academic curriculum: laboratory reports, research papers, book reviews, case study reports, and research proposals, among many others. The concept of genre has proven extremely fruitful for writing studies since the mid-1900s (Freedman & Medway, 1994). In Australia, researchers and practitioners of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SLA) rely heavily on the description and teaching of genres as text types to empower students, particularly those who are English language learners (Christie & Swales, 2007; Macken-Horarik, 2002). Another prominent school of research, North American Rhetorical Genre Studies (RGS), which arose in the 1980s as the New Rhetoric (Freedman & Medway, 1994; Johns, 2002), focuses on the social purposes of genres, using them as a way to teach writing in the disciplines (see, for example, Giltrow, 2002); RGS is particularly strong in Canada. It takes as a guiding concept Carolyn Miller’s (1984) dictum that genres are not simply material forms, but

represent social actions that are undertaken for, respond to, and demonstrate recurring rhetorical purposes. Thus emerges the ongoing tension between characterizations of genre that focus on its textual, formal properties versus those that emphasize its sociorhetorical aspects. Looking to the future, the “promise and peril” of rhetorical genre theory, according to Catherine Schryer (2011), lies in its ability to “broker” this gap. I examine genre theory in more detail in Chapter 2 of this thesis, but for now I want to propose that the ability to recognize academic genres and participate in reproducing them is an important goal for students trying to write according to their discipline’s conventions.

How students identify and learn about the expectations and conventions of their disciplines and then act towards goals within these contexts has been examined by many researchers using an explanatory theoretical framework called Activity Theory (AT). AT was initially proposed by Lev Vygotsky in 1934 in a simple model that clearly identified the mediating role that cultural tools play in higher cognitive functions such as learning (Vygotsky, 1978). In AT, people are viewed as goal-oriented participants in a social realm or cultural context who use cultural tools to achieve their objectives. In its current expanded form (by Engeström, 1987), this process of mediated activity forms an “activity system” that interacts with other activity systems, forming a complex series or network of overlapping practices extending over space and time (Bazerman, 2006). For example, the activity system of students writing grant or scholarship proposals demonstrates some overlap with faculty grant-writing activity systems as well as institutional research development activity systems (Ding, 2008). AT also provides a framework for examining action *within* the activity system; for example, Russell and Yañez’s (2003)

study of the conflicting goals of teacher and students in a general education course. Some studies featuring AT also incorporate genre theory into their research, searching for relations between text forms and ongoing activity and the exigencies affecting these relations (e.g., Artemeva, 2008). We can, in fact, look to Evald Ilyenkov (2009) a pre-eminent Russian philosopher and mentor of Vygotsky's followers, to see that his views suggest support for a necessary integration of activity with genre: "the form of the thing created by man [sic], taken out of the process of social life-activity...turns out to be simply the material form of the thing, the physical shape of an external body and nothing more" (p. 192). In other words – extrapolating to writing – any text form exists only in a limited and impoverished sense outside of the social activity that creates and defines it.

Several researchers have suggested that AT is a promising framework for writing studies (Engeström, Y. 2009; Hayes, 2006; Russell, 1997), though some critics of AT claim that it leaves some of its concepts insufficiently examined or under-theorized (Engeström, R. 2009; Taylor, 2009), or omits other relevant concepts altogether (Roth, 2009). A more fundamental critique is that the concept of *activity* itself cannot be clearly specified in a research context, e.g., if all activities form part of overlapping activity systems, distinguishing between them is either arbitrary or resolved by appealing to some criteria outside of AT itself (Witte, 2005). In a comprehensive reflection, Bradhurst (2009) questions the value of AT as a methodological framework, noting that it provides little information about relationships between elements. In using AT as a framework for my dissertation case study, I examine how the activity of anthropology writing is demonstrated in relations among students and professors, goals and actions, texts and stated expectations. I assess AT for how well it serves to present this picture of writing

within anthropology and propose greater attention to the work of Ilyenkov as a way to resolve the theoretical-methodological limitations of AT.

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, as increasing levels of literacy are established globally, growth in the number and complexity of writing studies around the world coincides with the importance of understanding all the ways that language acts in the world (Bazerman, Bonini & Figueirido, 2009; Starke-Meyerring & Paré, 2011). By drawing from a number of theoretical perspectives, studies of writing that take into account this complexity are facilitated. Activity theory, genre theory, and writing-in-the-disciplines share a common foundation based in an interrogation of how learning happens. In my study, I brought these viewpoints together to provide insight into what writing means for participants who are learning academic writing within one particular discipline in one place. In the rest of this thesis I will explore this theme of learning to write and address some of the concerns introduced in this brief historical review of academic writing, with the caveat that I am necessarily omitting much from current research and perspectives on academic writing that is not directly relevant to this project.

### **My Research Questions**

This study focuses on one discipline, anthropology, aiming for a comprehensive analysis of writing within one university's undergraduate program. My central research questions are:

1) What is undergraduate anthropology writing? In other words, how is undergraduate writing in anthropology perceived, understood, produced, supported, and complicated?

Several further questions are entailed:

- a) What characterizes students' written assignments in undergraduate anthropology? What distinctive features and generic elements do these assignments exhibit?
  - b) How is undergraduate writing in anthropology described in terms of activity theory elements?
  - c) What relationships exist between these AT elements?
- 2) How useful a framework is activity theory for describing students' production of anthropology's written genres and how these genres are established and perpetuated?

### **Thesis Overview**

In Chapter 1, I have introduced the research problem and its historical context and established the study's research questions. In Chapter 2, I examine several theories applicable to academic writing, focusing on theories that have been most influential in my understanding of disciplinary writing. These include sociocultural theory, activity theory (AT), genre theory, and related explanatory frameworks, including Lave and Wenger's (1991) situated learning and academic literacies (Lea & Street, 2006). My aim is to show how these theoretical perspectives are complementary and provide insightful ways of looking at the case under study. In Chapter 3, I review a number of empirical studies, focusing on those that draw on genre theory or AT, and use these studies as a starting point for my project. Chapter 4 presents the methodology for this project, which is a case study using mixed and ethnographic methods. I include description of the three phases of the study, the types of data collected, the methods used to collect this data, and how analysis was carried out. Chapters 5 and 6 report my findings. In Chapter 5, I present findings in response to the first research questions, describing results seen in

student data, professor data, and assignment text data. In Chapter 6, I identify the major themes drawn from these findings. In Chapter 7, I interpret and discuss these findings and address their implications for the use of activity theory as an effective explanatory theoretical framework. I also identify some limitations of this work. In Chapter 8, I summarize my conclusions, consider their relevance to education, and look outward with some thoughts on future research directions.

## Chapter 2: Theoretical Perspectives

### Orientation

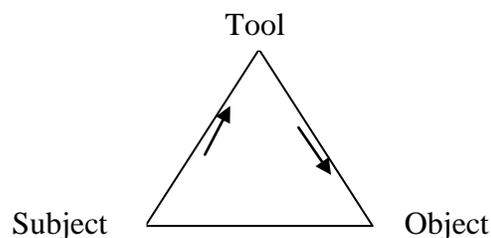
Writing research, situated at the nexus of research in multiple disciplines and fields, has no shortage of theoretical paradigms from which to draw. Two of the most prominent, genre theory and sociocultural theory, have been influenced by and have made contributions to approaches in rhetoric, composition, critical cultural studies, cognitive psychology, education, linguistics, sociology, anthropology, media studies, and more (Bazerman, Bonini, & Figueiredo, 2009; Lewis, Enciso, & Moje, 2007). I begin this chapter on theoretical perspectives with a discussion of sociocultural theory and its profound influence on writing research and practice. I introduce and describe three sociocultural models of learning— situated learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991), distributed cognition (Hutchins, 1995), and academic literacies (Lea & Street, 1998) – because these have relevance to specific segments of my work and are drawn upon later in the discussion of findings.

I then turn attention to activity theory (AT), exploring its origins as Vygotsky's (1978) cultural-historical psychology and its evolution into Leont'ev's (1978) cultural-historical activity theory (CHAT), Engeström's (1987) expanded AT and, most recently, its critical counterpart, critical sociocultural theory (Moje & Lewis, 2007). In addition to being the dominant theoretical framework for this project, AT is also used as this study's analytic framework, informing its methodology, an approach noted to be productive by several AT and genre researchers (Sannino, Daniels, & Gutiérrez, 2009; Russell, D.R., 2010; Schryer, 2011).

Finally, the concept of genre is central to this study and to my own perspective on writing. I conclude this chapter with an overview of genre theory and its connections to AT, showing how concepts from these two complementary theories form the theoretical basis for my project.

### **Sociocultural Approaches to Human Activity**

Sociocultural theories (SCT) take as their subject the interactions of people with the cultural tools they use to mediate their relationships and activities (Lantolf, 2006). SCT's simplest representation is seen in Lev Vygotsky's (1978) triangle: a subject who acts towards a goal or object via the mediating element of cultural tools (see Figure 1). James Lantolf (2006, p.69), paraphrasing Wertsch, called the model "persons-acting-with-mediational-means." Vygotsky's model was introduced as cultural-historical psychology (a precursor to AT), and was meant to explain how people expand their abilities (i.e., learn) through mediated action (Vygotsky, 1927/87). Tools are characterized by their ability to be used to mediate some activity between a subject and his/her object and include traditionally recognizable tools (e.g., pencil, hammer, wheel) as well as semiotic tools such as language and signs (Russell, 1995).



*Figure 1.* Vygotsky's mediated action.

This view of mediated human behaviour contrasts with other explanatory frameworks proposed in the 20th century: that of behaviourism, in which people act in response to

stimuli; or cognitive approaches, in which people act in accordance with mental representations and in response to mental constraints and affordances; or sociocognitive theory, in which people's cognitions and actions are affected directly by social constructs. Sociocultural theory, however, proposes that social influence is *indirectly* exerted on individuals via their cultural tools and artefacts, and that all human activities, from those of isolated individuals to those of groups interacting with each other, are situated within particular contexts and *improvised* in response to these contexts and society's cultural tools (Prior, 2006). In this view, cultural tools play a crucial role, and the exploration of these tools, what they are, who uses them, how they are used, and what effects they have, is undertaken by sociocultural researchers to shed light on how people are connected to their activities. Sociocultural theory thus provides a perspective for analysing people's actions and interactions that specifically takes into account the role of cultural artefacts or tools. In other words, it does not see culture merely as background to activity itself.

It is worth noting that Vygotsky's theory was based in a realist or materialist view that the social/material world exists in an external reality and can be perceived through the senses (Lantolf, 2006). This insistence on the material reality of the social world stands in contrast to social constructionism, which holds that "concepts, ideas, theories, the world, reality, and facts are all language constructs generated by knowledge communities" (Bruffee, 1986, p. 777). A diverse collection of sociocultural theories have emerged; according to Paul Prior (2006) they may be characterized by their orientation to, and privileging of, three broad, overlapping traditions: those that emphasize social/historical development or activity (as in Marx, Vygotsky), those that focus on phenomenology or subjective experience (Schutz, Bourdieu) and those that focus on

pragmatic practices and interactions of everyday life/with the local environment (Dewey). Despite the variety of shapes that sociocultural theory has taken, Prior claims there is an underlying coherence in the sociocultural approach, which is its focus on understanding the everyday, social world of people's practices and actions (p. 57).

This emphasis on practices and action gained prominence from different locales and over time: the first wave occurred in 1920s Russia, where Vygotsky and colleagues developed methods to explore learning by focusing on social action when addressing the challenges of teaching homeless or special-needs children (Sannino, Daniels, & Gutiérrez, 2009). The second wave was the so-called Social Turn in the 1970s and '80s during which the emphasis on cognitive explanations of behaviour which arose during the Cognitive Revolution of the 1950s-60s was supplanted by a refocusing on the role and importance of social context (Nystrand, 2006). This renewed interest in contextual factors affecting behaviour coincided with greater attention to research on literacy and writing, and this interest resulted in the publication of several key studies that applied sociocultural perspectives and ethnographic methods to language in use, such as Shirley Brice Heath's (1983) text on literacy activities in the US South, Lucille McCarthy's (1987) study of an undergraduate "stranger in strange lands" navigating his way through various course writing demands, and Anne Beaufort's (2007) study of an undergraduate's attempts to learn disciplinary writing over three years. It is notable that language, as the predominant human cultural tool, receives much attention from sociocultural theorists. Indeed, it could be argued that the diversity of sociocultural theories makes them particularly productive for studies of complex activities such as literacy. It is the

applications of sociocultural theory to language development and literate behaviour that my study draws upon.

### **Sociocultural Approaches to Language and Literacy**

Several prominent theorists of language-in-use emerged in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century; their views have had wide-ranging influence in fields such as education, linguistics, literary studies, sociology, and anthropology, among others. The most influential of these include J.L. Austin (1962) and his ideas about speech acts, Mikhail Bakhtin (1986) and the notion of speech genres, and Pierre Bourdieu (1977) and his concept of habitus. These theoretical concepts specify relations between speech, language, and action, and propose understandings of how particular types of language, discourse, or utterances gain acceptance and use within groups. Not only are these notions relevant to writing studies generally, but in relation to my study, they shaped the development of the major theories I use for this project, namely genre theory and activity theory.

More than 50 years ago, Austin introduced the idea of the performative aspect of language, noting that words not only *represent* things, but also actually *do* things. The classic example is that of a vow or promise, a particular type of utterance that, when uttered, constitutes the thing uttered; e.g., saying “I promise (to do x)” enacts or brings into being a promise (to do something). This is a language function that goes beyond mere representation of the speaker’s *ideas about* a promise to actually effect a new reality: the creation of a promise. Austin also identified the performative aspect of utterances to do multiple things. For instance, the statement, “The soup is hot” may act as a description, a warning, an invitation, a complaint, even a question. Austin introduced

the term “speech act” to refer to this performative quality of an utterance. Recognition of the performative aspect of language – speech as action – is important, and it was especially influential in later reconsiderations of genre and its definitions (Freedman & Medway, 1993).

Bakhtin (1986) considered the relations *between* utterances and proposed the terms *dialogism* and *monologism* to illustrate his view that all language is created by speakers in response to already existing or potential utterances (dialogism) or, more rarely, exists with little relation to other utterances (monologism). Moreover, a speaker’s utterances are produced in “various areas of human activity” (p. 60), an acknowledgment of the role of activity in language use. In Bakhtin’s view, the recurrence of social situations leads to typical or “relatively stable” responses – what he called “speech genres” (p.78). These genres can be relatively simple (primary genre) or more complex (secondary genre), and are subject to both internal and external social pressures to remain stable or to change. Secondary genres are often written, and may include multiple primary genres or combinations of primary and secondary genres. Bakhtin also introduced *heteroglossia* to explain the relation that utterances have to other language types and structures beyond the level of utterance (e.g., texts, jargons, cultures). Bakhtin’s many contributions enabled a re-consideration of the ways that language demonstrates its origins in social interactions and relationships and is inevitably tied to past and future language and cultural interactions.

Bourdieu (1977), in his *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, examined observers of social actions and concluded that the assumptions held and the interpretations made by these observers limit their ability to explain or understand actions or “practice” – what he

termed the accepted sets of behaviours possible in response to a situation. He claimed that distance was needed between what the participant in an action experienced and the observer's representation of that experience; in other words, "a second break [is needed] to question the presuppositions inherent in the position of an outside observer" (p.2).

This "second break" which allows insight into the perceptions, assumptions, and context of an observer is what Bourdieu claimed would bring about a theory of practice. He then introduced the term *habitus* to refer to the exigencies and social contexts that enable a person (or agent) to act or speak in a particular way out of all the possible ways that are available. As he put it "the habitus makes coherence and necessity out of accident and contingency" (p. 87). While not focused specifically on language, the concept of habitus can be readily applied to language because of its roots in sociocultural actions.

Bourdieu's ideas on action and habitus are important to keep in mind when considering Vygotsky's theory of mediated activity towards a goal because they remind us that the simple triangle model is anything but simple in practice, but exists within a habitus.

Bourdieu's notion of habitus provides a way of thinking about context beyond it simply "constituting the precondition for all objectification and apperception" (p. 86), a notion that leaves no room for subjectivity and the integration of individual and societal experiences. Instead, habitus "structures in terms of the structuring experiences that produced it," (p. 86) a recursive process that allows for the integration of individual and social experiences in the re-creation of habitus. This sense of context as being both shaping and shaped gets taken up again when we consider the concept of genre and improvisation.

Analysis of the role of language and literate behaviour using sociocultural theory has also been informed by the philosophy of hermeneutics and its concern with how people create understanding and make meaning through interpretative acts. Though hermeneutical approaches center on the interpretation of texts, most specifically scriptural exegesis – thus making them relevant to the study of writing – the process of interpretation itself is not bound to texts, but to the mental process of sharing understanding (Blaikie, 2007). Such understanding is inevitably tied to understanding the context that contributed to the creation of the text. One view of this process of the creation of understanding posits that it is underpinned and driven by the uniquely human capacity for cooperation (Tomasello, 2009). Cooperation depends upon the interpretation of symbols as well as the sharing of meanings about these symbols. An example is that of the white flag, a symbol that means “I/we surrender,” and which is mutually understood because of an interpretation that recognizes both the submission of one party and the cessation of aggression from the other party in a cooperative act acknowledged by both parties. Interpretation, such as that of a physical symbol like a flag, is integral to our use of language, a mental symbol and our primary tool of shared meaning-making.

One method of exploring meaning-making via literate activity is offered by James Paul Gee (2001) who introduced the concept of Discourses, or social ways of being. Discourses are identified by their particular use(s) of social languages as well as the actions and beliefs related to specific identities or situations (Gee, p.719). These Discourses thus form a representation of a group’s collective reality; for example, the Discourse of (way of being) a student is different in specific ways from that of being a teenager in North America, and notably different from that of being a factory worker.

Under this view, social languages can be analysed for particular grammatical, syntactic, and lexical elements that lead to their identification with different contexts or people. Gee, for instance, analysed a fragment of a science text to demonstrate how grammatical elements such as heavy subjects, nominalizations, and passive verbs interact with a classificatory format and language to produce text that is “scientific.” This process of language analysis recognizes the semiotics of language in use, connecting it to the history of interpretation seen in hermeneutics. This attention to text as a form of language that represents ways of being provides one rationale for including the study of texts in my project. In addition, the methods of discourse analysis link Discourses to genres and their identification, and, following Bakhtin, can be defined as typified linguistic responses to recurring situations, a concept we will return to later.

In sum, sociocultural theories of language emphasize the social contexts in which language and literacy develop and the ways these contexts and literacy practices shape, and are shaped by, people’s desire to accomplish functional, everyday goals. Sociocultural theories propose that people make meaning using cultural tools, especially language. The theories explain how differences in language use demonstrate different group cultural norms and expectations, as well as the particular relationships that exist because of language, and they propose that people’s activities are affected, in turn, by the language they use. Though my research project does not draw directly on the concepts discussed above, they are integral to an understanding of and use of the two main theoretical perspectives of this project, namely genre theory and activity theory.

## **Sociocultural Approaches to Learning**

In addition to using sociocultural theories as outlined above to explore language use, other sociocultural explanations specific to learning are also relevant to my study. Of particular relevance is the question of how people move from positions as novices knowing little about a field to positions as experts in that field. I introduce three theories that offer insights on this problem.

### **Situated learning**

Jean Lave and Étienne Wenger (1991) introduced *legitimate peripheral participation* as the means by which novices learn the activities of a group and move to positions of expertise within that group. In their formulation of a theory of situated learning, Lave and Wenger proposed that novices participate in *communities of practice* by observing, interacting with experts, and practicing common activities which move them from limited engagement in the community to full participation in it over time. The community of practice, then, is the context for learning, and it includes relations between activities and between people within and outside the group, as well as the assumptions, expectations, and conventions of the group. Enculturation of a novice into the community means passing these assumptions and conventions along to the novice through work in the community. The learning, in other words, is not itself the goal of the community of practice.

In contrast to situated learning, in which learning is a byproduct of community activity, we can think of purposeful learning, as described in the pedagogy of guided instruction (see Freedman & Adam, 1996), in which the goal of an activity is learning. Some views of situated learning liken it to a cognitive apprenticeship (Newell, 2006),

though other cognitive scientists have critiqued what they see as its over-emphasis on context-specificity in learning. Anderson, Reder, and Simon (1996) for instance, argue that rather than situated learning, a more sophisticated balance between context-dependent and context-independent learning is needed, and they call for more empirical research to determine the circumstances under which contexts should be broadened or narrowed to best support learning. In Lave and Wenger's legitimate peripheral participation model of situated learning, novices are active participants engaged in the activities of the group and not merely passive recipients of didactic instruction; they are recognized by the community as participants, and hence *legitimate*. For this reason, Lave and Wenger emphasize the social aspects of increased participation in communities of practice and see learning as incidental to this participation.

The community of practice model has proven relevant to research on academic and professional acculturation, particularly studies of how students move from academic to workplace writing (see Dias, Freedman, Medway & Paré, 1999). The theory of situated learning also has clear implications for exploring how novice students learn to become disciplinary experts. In particular, two notions from Lave and Wenger's model are drawn upon in my study: the concept of *participation* – novices' engagement in and performance of common activities undertaken by the group; and the concept of *legitimacy* – the recognition by “old-timers” of novices as authentic members of the group.

### **Distributed cognition**

Edwin Hutchins, in his seminal work, *Cognition in the Wild* (1995), proposed that expertise is not contained solely within an individual, but dispersed among (distributed

across) the group of individuals engaged in a common activity. His detailed ethnographic account of the navigating activities of navy personnel on board a ship demonstrates that the coordinated efforts of multiple individuals is what leads to the completion of a task or activity, and that these human efforts are supported by the use of various specially designed tools. Distributed cognition thus shifts cognition from its identification with individual personal characteristics to identifying cognition as a group activity undertaken to achieve a common goal. Under this view, it is possible to see written texts such as manuals, instruction sheets, and journals as tools that mediate the activity of the group, and also, importantly, as the physical remains of the processes undertaken by participants. In Hutchins' terms, genres may be "the operational residua of the process" of an activity, or "elements of representational structures that survive beyond the end of the task" (p. 373). It is these textual artefacts that remain, ready to be taken up and altered in the next social interaction. Hutchins' ideas about the ways that distributed learning happens in a group and how tools function as mediators of group activity are important to keep in mind as we discuss activity theory.

### **Academic literacies**

The concept of academic literacies proposes that reading and writing in the disciplines are social practices rather than skills that are developed or behaviours that students are socialized into (Lea & Street, 1998). Academic literacies are characterized as separate from, but inclusive of, other models of academic writing, which Lea and Street call the "study skills" model and the "academic socialization" model. The first is analogous to what we have called conventional/mechanical modes of instruction that focus on form and generalizable skills, while the second refers to instruction that focuses

on the situated, disciplinary and/or genre-specific characteristics of academic writing. In contrast, of central importance in academic literacies theory are notions of authorial identity and the existence of affective conflicts with institutional power and rules, both of which serve to complicate what may be seen as a straight-forward taking up of basic skills or academic conventions. In comparison to other theories of writing acquisition, academic literacies is perhaps the only sociocultural theory focused specifically on student academic writing rather than other genres (e.g., professional writing). It is introduced because it explicitly emphasizes the need to consider conflicts and convergences between elements when students write. These elements and the sites of conflict and convergence have been noted to exist in studies of academic writing using activity theory, so I include consideration of academic literacies as a concept of relevance to return to when discussing the findings of my study.

### **Activity Theory**

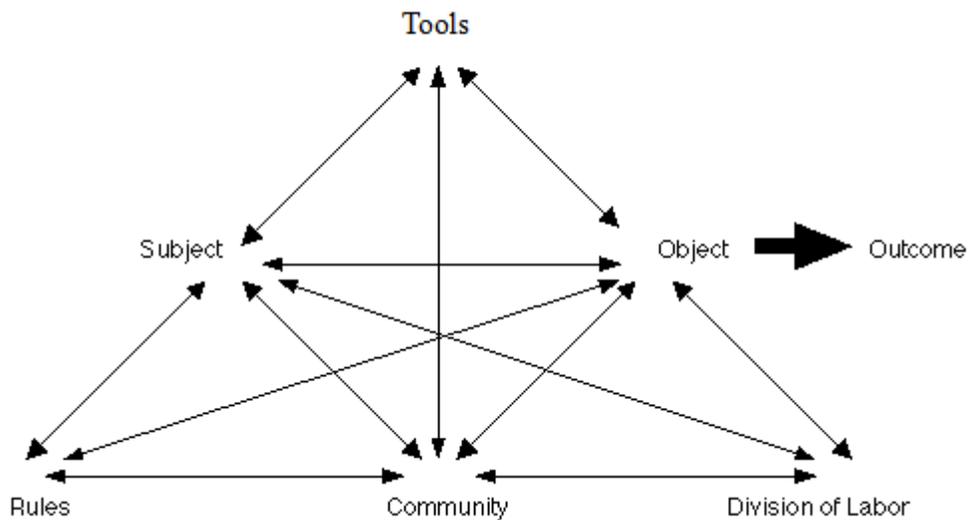
Vygotsky's work on the psychological processes of learning occurred in the early 20th century, at a time when Western psychology was newly embracing empirical approaches and exhibiting signs of crisis between realist and idealist perspectives (Vygotsky, 1927/87). In his short life (1896-1934), Vygotsky focused on the social interactions he observed in learning situations, particularly those with children. His identification of the central role of social scaffolding and cultural mediation via tools can be contrasted with that of his contemporary Jean Piaget, whose theories of development emphasized the child's attainment of intellectual stages that facilitate learning, largely disregarding the influence of other people or tools (Bazerman, 2009).

In Vygotsky's view, learning and the "higher psychological functions" (1978) are enabled by cultural mediation. Mediation in the form of *tools* links what he termed *externalization* processes (such as speaking, writing, representing) to *internalization* processes of individual perceiving, learning, and knowing. The effect of culture on human activity was thus characterized by Vygotsky not as one of traditional socialization of the individual to society, but of "gradual individualization" (Prior, 55), in which internal activities gradually become visible externally. In Vygotsky's view, cultural mediation enables individuals to develop to levels they would be unable to reach without cultural supports, thus enabling individual growth.

Vygotsky's work on the cultural mediation that occurs in the activity of human learning identifies tools as being either material or semiotic, with language viewed as "the most powerful of our mediational artifacts" (Lantolf, 2006, p. 71). In addition, Vygotsky's acknowledgment of individual activity means that his cultural-historical theory is particularly well suited to the study of writing because the process of writing has historically been seen as depending largely upon individual cognition and agency. It is this interaction between individual cognition and the production of a text that formed the foundation for later cognitive process approaches to writing. These approaches are exemplified in the seminal works of Flower and Hayes (1981) and Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987). What Vygotsky focused on as integral, however – the social culture or context – they failed to include except as a frame for the activity.

Activity theory, the term coined by Vygotsky's colleague Aleksei Leont'ev (1981), argues that the unit of analysis in cultural-historical theory is activity itself. Yrjö Engeström (1987) elaborated on Vygotsky's simple triangle (Figure 1) by adding the

elements of **community** (or social relations of the group), **rules** (or community conventions and practices) and **division of labour/roles** (the roles that participants take on in the activity). The **outcome** of the activity system, such as learning, is represented by an arrow out of the system, indicating a transformation as a result of the activity. See Figure 2 for a diagram of Engeström's (1987) expansion of Vygotsky's original activity system. Engeström's AT, particularly its relations and connections within activity systems, captures the complexity and interactive nature of human social behaviour, with many researchers recognizing it as a productive theoretical and analytic frame (Dias, Freedman, Medway & Paré, 1999; Engeström, 2009; Hayes, 2006; Lewis, Enciso & Moje, 2007; Russell, 2010).



*Figure 2.* Activity system by Engeström (1987, p. 78)

Current applications of activity theory in writing research have focused on activity systems and on exploring the ways that people engage in goal-directed activities that are situated in multiple interacting systems such as a network of related activity

systems (Bazerman, 2004). This interaction and embedding of activity systems emphasizes the complex social foundations of activity and leads to the analysis of areas of conflict and convergence both within and between related systems (see Russell 1995, Bazerman, 2006).

Some researchers identify the issue of change as a central feature of AT which differentiates it from other theories, and they identify the study of action developing over time, or “historically evolving collective activities,” as the core characteristic of AT (Sannino, Daniels, & Gutiérrez, 2009, p.9). Vygotsky, in fact, proposed the *genetic method*, i.e., studying the formation and development of activity over time (i.e., historically), to indicate that he saw activity as a complex interaction between an individual and his/her social context that evolves over time rather than being the result of any formulaic combination of nature plus nurture (Lantolf, 2006).

AT may provide a means of understanding learning by exploring in more detail the external-internal plane posited by Vygotsky. To illustrate, one element of writing behaviour which currently receives less attention than more socially oriented elements is that of the individual writer’s writing strategies. Internalized cognitive strategies may be thought of as patterns of behaviour that rely on both cognitive and physical activities, e.g., thinking about content and writing an outline, or writing an outline and then developing the content (see Torrance, Thomas & Robinson, 2000). It is not clear whether such strategies can be called “tools” in the activity theory model, though they appear to function as tools and are used to assist writers towards their goal of creating a written text. It may be, as Vygotsky suggested and many researchers have noted, that activity happens twice: once on the exterior plane and once on the interior. Research using

activity theory has tended to focus on the exterior use of tools, while cognitive research has limited its examination of social elements to the internalized use of tools such as strategies. AT may provide a method of exploring how outcomes of an activity occur through the transformation of internal-external activities.

The newly translated writings of another Russian philosopher following Vygotsky contribute another perspective on activity and transformations and deserve wider attention outside of philosophy, especially by researchers studying social actions such as writing. Evald Ilyenkov (2009) proposes a definition of the concept of the *ideal* as a thing that shapes and limits communal meaning of that thing; furthermore, he proposes that the ideal consists of an activity or process and a material form, and that these cannot be separated without fundamentally altering either the activity or the form. I explore Ilyenkov's notion of the ideal in more detail later, especially in the discussion of this study's implications.

One critique of activity theory is that its unit of analysis, activity, cannot be meaningfully analysed without either arbitrarily bounding the activity to identify it as an activity system *a priori*, or falling into a tautology of using activity theory to identify (and limit) the activity itself (Witte, 2005). In this study, in fact, I did both when I initially identified the activity and established its boundaries. First, my *a priori* decision to study *undergraduate anthropology at one university* artificially forms the frame for including and excluding elements related to this case (so, for example, students and professors are included, but program administrators and students' roommates and families are not); and second, the elements that are identified in AT (tools, rules, community, etc.) reflect not only the elements of the case chosen for inclusion in data

collection and analysis, but the omission of other elements, such as distribution of power (see Lewis, Encisco, & Moje, 2007). The solution to the unit of analysis problem, according to Witte, is to examine “mediational means” in order to understand the activity rather than trying to examine the activity directly. This shift in focus puts tools at the centre of AT. Witte’s solution can be taken up by exploring one of the most prominent of hypothesized mediators between writers and their written texts: genre.

### **Genre Theory**

Genre theory has been called the most developed and prominent of rhetorical theories applied to writing (Dias, Freedman, Medway & Paré, 1999). It focuses on the familiar concept of genre and both explains and complicates how genres function in language use. In the context of writing, genre theory uses the term *genre* to denote different *kinds* of writing created and engaged in by writers in response to particular rhetorical situations (Berkenkotter & Huckin, 1993). John Frow (2006) identifies genre as “a universal dimension of textuality” (p. 2) related to texts’ uses. In a seminal article, Carolyn Miller (1984) defined genres as socially motivated, typical, and repeated forms of action. These nuanced characterizations stand in contrast to common understandings of genre as a classification of text types, especially literary texts, for example romances, poetry, and novels (Freedman, & Medway, 1994).

According to Miller, however, genre is an enacted process, similar in some ways to Austin’s (1962) more limited notion of performative language. Students, for instance, participate in producing different academic genres in response to various rhetorical situations (class assignments) calling for research reports, argumentative essays, or book reviews. The act of reviewing a book, for example, is thus demonstrated in the writing

(performing) of the book review. This review fulfills a specific social purpose and follows a typified form that is recognized as *a review*, and the act of reviewing produces this typified form. As noted by Dias, Freedman, Medway and Paré, (1999), “Genre in this view has two aspects: social action and textual regularity” (p. 19). This is clearly a more complex and richer view of genre than one that sees it simply as a set of formal features to be taught or copied.

The social action embodied by genres depend upon social motives and the exigencies that affect these motives. For Miller (1994), exigencies are “a form of social knowledge” constructed mutually between an individual and others in his/her social context, making exigencies “an objectified social need” (p. 30) that enhance or limit action. Producing a genre therefore implies not only an awareness of conventionalized forms, but also an awareness of what is appropriate and what, in fact, is possible in the social situation. Miller puts this eloquently when she writes: “What we learn when we learn a genre is not just a pattern of forms or even a method of achieving our own ends. We learn, more importantly, what ends we may have” (p.38). This conceptualization of genre recalls Bourdieu’s notion of habitus and its ability to impact practice.

A recognition of the formal aspects of genre that nevertheless acknowledges its inception in action and its improvisational quality is evident in Schryer’s proposal that genres are “stabilized-for-now or stabilized enough” sites of action (1994, p.107). Under this view, the typified elements of a genre can be identified and form an expectation of the genre that is carried forward to future similar situations and adapted. Frow (2006), for instance, discusses genre in the arts as a typified action of evolving and active processes of imitation and identification; e.g., the genre of Western films both categorizes

films that demonstrate particular characteristics, and is an activity that constitutes or creates Westerns by its labeling of certain film characteristics deemed to be identified or associated with Westerns (p.138). In Frow's words, instances of a genre (e.g., *High Noon*, *Unforgiven*) "do not 'belong' to genres but are, rather, uses of them" (p. 2). Similarly, Frow writes, "A Western is not the genre of the same name...the textual event is not a member of a genre-class because it may have membership in many genres, and because it is never fully defined by 'its' genre" (p.23). This distinction recalls the philosophy and clear example advanced by Ilyenkov (2009) in distinguishing between the ideal and its material representation: "Ivan is a person, but a person is not Ivan. This is why under no circumstances is it permissible to define a general category through a description of one, albeit typical, case of 'ideality'"(p.150). Nevertheless, in order to describe particular cases, identifying the "regularities" present or absent in instances of genre is necessary. This identification of the repeated aspects of a genre may be done by a process of analysis in which structural, grammatical, lexical, syntactic, content, and contextual elements of a text or language episode are examined and related to elements seen in similar social situations (Paré & Smart, 1994).

The view of genre as social action can be contrasted with that presented in activity theory, where genre is most readily seen not as a repeated, socially-motivated form of action, but rather as a culturally-mediated tool *for* action. For example, the pre-existing genre of "book review" acts as a tool that mediates a student's review of a book and results in the production of a book review text. Under this view, genre (as a tool) and writing a review (activity) appear to be separable concepts under activity theory, whereas the view from genre theory suggests that genre may be both *tool* and *activity*. In yet

another perspective on tools and activity, genres may be viewed as the outcome of an activity, or “the operational residua of the process [of an activity]” (Hutchins, 1995, p. 373); as suggested earlier, the genre of “book review” is what remains from the activity of a student reviewing a book. Miller (1994, p. 69) calls this genre product a “cultural artefact.” Charles Bazerman (2009) proposed yet another perspective on genre, one that considers genres “tools of cognition” (p. 283), where genres are mental schema that support learning, though it appears this use – which harkens back to earlier cognitive perspectives – may be consistent with that of genre as a tool *for* action. For the purposes of analysis in this study, I treat genre primarily as a tool for action, not because this is more theoretically plausible, but because treating genre as a social action (at the level of activity) would substitute one term (genre) for another (activity) and muddy any distinction between them. I return to the problem of conceptualizing genre in Chapter 7’s discussion of the implications of this study.

In relation to pedagogy, genre has informed much student writing instruction at all educational levels (e.g., see Artemeva & Freedman, 2006; Derewianka, 1990; Freedman, 1995; and Johns, 2002). Three types of genre theories are generally recognized: those of the Sydney School, based in Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) and focused on the use of linguistic analysis of texts for pedagogical purposes (e.g. Eggins, 2004); English for Specific Purposes (ESP), which concentrates on pragmatic textual and discourse analyses, primarily in academic contexts such as second language classrooms and specific disciplines (e.g. Swales, 1990); and North American genre theory, also called the New Rhetoric or Rhetorical Genre Studies (RGS), which uses the concept of genre to conduct critical analyses of discourse and discourse community

practices (e.g. Artemeva & Freedman, 2006; Freedman & Medway, 1994). Boundaries between these theoretical subgroups are fuzzy, and debate continues between proponents of the different strands about what exactly genre consists of, how genres are categorized, and their functions in writing (see, for instance, Coe, Lingard & Teslenko, 2002; Grabe, 2002 and responses in Johns, 2002).

Several researchers have noted the complementarity of genre studies with sociocultural theories and with AT specifically (Artemeva, 2008; Dias, Freedman, Medway, & Paré, 1999; Russell, 2010; Schryer, 2011). In this project, I integrate concepts from these theories to conduct a case study of undergraduate anthropology writing with the goal of not only coming to a greater understanding of what anthropology writing is, but also of determining how productive is the theoretical framework provided by activity theory.

## **Chapter 3: Literature Review**

### **Orientation**

In this chapter, I explore how students learn to write in discipline-appropriate ways by reviewing two overlapping groups of studies. The first is the research literature on disciplinary genre acquisition, which is foundational to my project so I will describe these studies first. The second is research using Activity Theory (AT) as a framework. These studies suggest AT has been valuable in providing insight into writing in specific social contexts and that the AT framework has explanatory usefulness.

### **The Acquisition of Disciplinary Genres**

Research on disciplinary genre has resulted in a growing number of studies of students' written genre acquisition in several academic fields, especially those associated with professional programs, including history (Beaufort, 2004, 2007), biology (Geller, 2005), psychology and sociology (Faigley & Hansen, 1985), architecture (Dias, Freedman, Medway & Paré, 1999), financial analysis (Freedman, Adam & Smart, 1994), business (Nathan, 2013), engineering (Artemeva, 2008, 2009; Artemeva, Logie & St-Martin, 1999; Dannels, 2000), law (Freedman, 1987), medicine (Lingard, Schryer, Spafford, & Garwood, 2003), and veterinary studies (Schryer, 1993). In these studies a wide variety of data – assignments, classroom activities, writing instruction, social and institutional contexts, interviews with professors and students, and students' texts – are analysed in attempts to understand how learning to write in the disciplines happens. Researchers and practitioners examining writing across academic and workplace settings have increasingly acknowledged the importance of the contextual or situational factors in which genres are embedded (Christie & Martin, 1997; Devitt, 2004; Russell, 1997).

Supporting Miller's (1984) notion of genre as social action, students are seen to be learning disciplinary genres when they participate in the actions of the discipline and learn its conventions and expectations along with its content (Bazerman, 2012; Berkenkotter & Huckin, 1995).

In her seminal work, Anne Beaufort (2004, 2007) undertook a case study of one student's writing as he progressed through his undergraduate degree in a US university and for two years afterwards (1995-2000), analyzing interviews and writing from his first year composition class to his disciplinary writing in history and later, in engineering. Using this data, she proposed a model of the types of knowledge that students require for gaining academic writing expertise: content knowledge (subject matter), genre knowledge, writing process knowledge, rhetorical knowledge, and, encompassing these four types, discourse community knowledge. She noted that some of the problems her student, Tim, encountered in his writing were the result of mistakenly applying what he understood from one context to another context in which this knowledge was inappropriate. For instance, in first-year composition class, the genre of "essay" emphasized the development of one's own "voice" and opinion in writing (in the expressivist tradition), whereas in history classes, the essay genre was seen as a focused, linear argument. When Tim tried to apply his genre knowledge from composition to his writing in history, he was criticized for failing to attend to evidence and sources properly. He was, in other words, applying the conventions of one discourse community inappropriately to another discourse community. In addition, Beaufort noted that Tim's writing goals were school-based (i.e. writing for a grade) rather than discourse community-based (i.e. learning how to be a historian). These types of mismatches and

conflicts indicate that the participants involved in academic writing, i.e. the teacher and student, do not necessarily perceive tasks or genres in the same way, though Beaufort did not directly include the perspective of professors in her analysis.

Beaufort's findings reflect those of another ground-breaking study, Lucille McCarthy's (1987) analysis of one student learning to write in a southern American university. The first-year undergraduate student in her study, Dave, experienced difficulties similar to Tim's when writing in a variety of genres in poetry and biology; he was unable to apply what he learned in his composition class to help him learn the genres required in his other courses. Moreover, he appeared to have little understanding of the expectations behind these different genres and their integral connection to the disciplines in which they were situated. For Dave, learning disciplinary genres and shifting between disciplinary conventions was frustrating and opaque, as it was for Tim.

Difficulties in adapting what they know about genre expectations from one context to another are seen not only in students between disciplines, but within disciplines, particularly in courses that aim to introduce workplace exigencies to students. In their study of students learning workplace genres in a Canadian university, Anne Freedman, Christine Adam, and Graham Smart (1994) found students made distinctions between the assignments that simulated workplace tasks they were asked to do in class and their expectations for similar work in the "real world." The students had difficulty translating their knowledge from the academic context to that of the workplace. The assignments these students submitted were aligned to goals they held for academic work rather than workplace goals, despite the efforts of class instructors to induce a realistic professional context. The researchers concluded that the aims of the academic context

were incommensurable with those of the professional context, leading students to prioritize the immediate academic context and thus fail to effectively enact the desired professional genres.

Deanna Dannels (2000) reported similar findings in a case study of mechanical engineering students engaged in a yearlong capstone project to design a product for industry. As she recounts, a student in the class who was participating in a dress rehearsal for a pseudo-professional design team presentation began with the words, “If I were a real engineer, I would...” (p. 5). In other words, the student was making a clear and explicit distinction between his in-class activity as a student simulating being a professional and the act of actually being a professional. Dannels notes that students in the study did demonstrate some behaviours in line with professional expectations and identities, but that students ultimately were most influenced by the academic context in which the class was held, including adopting its academic goals and audiences, rather than the context of professional practice and the course’s identified professional goal: “to prepare student to be better able to handle their first engineering design assignments when they enter industry” (p.11). Dannels suggests that explicit acknowledgment of the differences between school and professional contexts would be helpful to students. She also provides suggestions for pedagogical improvements to assist students’ adoption of professional expectations. She did not collect data on professors’ perspectives in her study.

Taken together, this group of studies suggests that students do not readily learn to write according to disciplinary conventions and that they may be confused by shifts between disciplines or genres. Moreover, even as students do gain familiarity with and

expertise in producing to academic expectations as they progress in their programs, they may generalize these expectations inappropriately to classroom contexts in which alternate genre expectations, such as those of the workplace, are being introduced.

In an earlier study aimed at mapping disciplinary writing demands, Faigley and Hansen (1985) described efforts at their US university to provide a course for students to learn social science writing. They analysed students' assignment texts, attended class lectures, conducted student and teacher interviews, and talked to program administrators, department heads, and advisors. Their goal was to account for how students learned to write in two upper-year courses, in psychology and sociology, and to identify the purposes professors had for writing in these courses. They found that students exhibited differences in their ability to comprehend disciplinary expectations as laid out by their professors and implied that individual differences account for this variation. Most students in the psychology class, for instance, intended to continue to graduate work and were able to successfully incorporate the formal elements of APA style in their writing. The researchers noted one student, however, who had great difficulty in producing papers that conformed to APA conventions, and who showed a limited grasp of the expectations specified by the professor. They suggested that this student had failed to understand how the rules she was being taught were informed by the discipline's culture and epistemology, implying that her inability to take on disciplinary ways of thinking about sources negatively impacted her writing performance. Recognition of disciplinary and individual influences were also evident in the sociology class. One student's paper received contradictory evaluations: one from a sociology professor who rated her work as highly appropriate to the field and gave her an "A," and another from an English

professor who criticized the paper's structure, wordiness, and its lack of "the 'right' emphasis and proportions" (p. 147), giving her a "B-" grade. The researchers concluded that discipline-specific pedagogy for writing required professors who had appropriate disciplinary-insider expertise to provide writing instruction and text assessment that was appropriate and relevant. This study is particularly helpful as it was one of the first to document the difficulties writing instructors might encounter as they attempted to teach writing within the disciplines. Of particular relevance to my study is the methodology of Faigley and Hansen's project, which drew on text analyses, interviews with students and professors, in-class observations, and grades to create a description of writing in the social sciences.

Since students' knowledge of how to write in the genres of their disciplines is likely related to their disciplinary reading, Giovanni Parodi (2009) examined the texts students read in four disciplines: social work, psychology, engineering, and chemistry. The goal of his study was to analyse student readings in these programs and describe the academic and specialized discourses within them. From a corpus of almost 500 texts, Parodi found both cross-disciplinary and inter-disciplinary differences in genres which he identified along a continuum from highly discipline-specific to more generally instructive. He concluded that analysis of the language of the texts students read in their programs may be helpful in understanding how discourse conventions vary between disciplines. Other studies have also analyzed some of the textual features of published texts in academic disciplines (see Hyland, 1997 on science; McGrath & Kuteeva, 2012 on mathematics).

## **Studies Using Activity Theory**

A number of studies using AT provide insight into the activity systems of disciplinary writing. Russell (1997a, b), for instance, described how AT could be used to analyze the activity of any field, demonstrating how one hypothetical course in cell biology could be explored in terms of the interactions between subjects, communities, object/goals, genres, and outcomes. The interactions of these elements within this one course were depicted as components in a complex array of activity systems that connect and overlap at various points, creating a network of activity systems consisting of various partners such as university programs, research labs, and drug companies, and various writing activities, including course work, grant proposals, research summaries, and government reports. This application of AT to the teaching of biology shows how AT could be used to examine dynamic processes involved in complex human activities, such as those found in educational settings, by focusing on elements at which activity systems overlap.

Russell & Yañez (2003) used AT in conjunction with genre theory to explore how school genres function in a general education course in Irish history, arguing that philosophical contradictions inherent in the establishment of general versus specialized disciplinary courses in universities have led to conflicting expectations between students and teachers. These conflicts result in fragmented instruction from teachers of these general courses that is directed to, or has assumptions in, either specific disciplinary orientations that are not shared by all students, or generalized “critical thinking” goals that lack motivational relevance to students. Alienation and disengagement of students follows. The researchers used interviews with faculty and students to analyze how genres

in the course were perceived, i.e. whether subjects agreed on the goals and motives behind the genres or whether there were differences in their perceptions. They noted that genres are the site of struggle and contestation between the expectations and assumptions of the students and teachers, and these can be related to their respective disciplinary communities. By making these struggles and contradictions explicit, the authors posit that genres can be made negotiable and thus productive as a mediating tool for learning disciplinary writing.

Ding (2008) used AT to explore the activity system of grant writing by graduate students and how this particular activity system interacts with other activity systems in which graduate students participate as they become enculturated to their disciplines. Grant writing can be seen as one specific genre that some students first encounter during graduate studies and in which they must quickly develop expertise. The resources offered by the multiple activity systems in which students participate were seen to be of potential advantage to students as they learn grant-writing genre, and Ding suggests that raising awareness of the interactions between systems or, in her terms “the entire life cycle of the target genre” (p.43) can facilitate both the cognitive and social apprenticeships necessary for learning such specialized genres. This study demonstrates that activity systems not only have elements at which conflict occurs, but also have elements that reinforce or support other elements or outcomes.

Natasha Artemeva (2011) conducted a study of writing in engineering that used an integrated theoretical and methodological framework similar to my project. She examined the perspectives of one student, Rebecca, over six years from the time she took an Engineering Communications Course (ECC) as a struggling second-year student

through her first years on the job as a professional engineer. After completing the ECC, Rebecca felt it had not helped her improve her writing “at all” (p. 324). This negative view began to change the following term, when she reported that the concepts she learned in the ECC were proving “quite useful” in the new task of report writing. A year later, she claimed that the ECC had helped her in the “organization of long projects,” and then, when she graduated, she claimed that the great increase in writing expected in fourth year led her to appreciate the ECC, especially what she learned about group work strategies, oral presentations, and evaluating her peers’ work (326). Finally, after working as a junior engineer, Rebecca noted, “It would be very difficult for me to pick out one situation where I didn’t use writing...I use writing skills every single day, all day” (327) and “All the skills I’ve learned on the job have been practical applications of what I learned at school” (341). This profound change in her perspective demonstrates the ongoing effects of writing/communication instruction and how such knowledge of writing in engineering genres was drawn upon and adapted for years in increasingly more complex contexts. As Artemeva explains, students are unable “to see the course as a whole” until their course experience becomes contextualized in professional practice. Her conclusion is that students may benefit more from courses such as the ECC if they were offered later in a student’s program, after content knowledge and familiarity with the disciplinary context are gained. Regardless, the significant effects of the ECC on students’ identities and their ability to adapt their early learning to later situations remains an important outcome.

In an earlier report from the same research project, Artemeva (2008) proposes a “unified social theory of genre learning” and uses this integrated theory to explore

differences between two engineering students' ability to learn an academic genre. This unified theory combines rhetorical genre theory, activity theory, and situated learning to create what Artemeva suggests is a more responsive approach to analyzing genre uptake. This study is interesting because it uses a similar theoretical framework for examining student writing that I use in this project. It is also the study that comes closest to incorporating ideas about form and activity from Ilyenkov (2009), whose development of AT has not, to my knowledge, been taken up by writing researchers.

### **Summary of Research Literature**

While the number of ethnographically-based studies of disciplinary writing is growing, more studies are needed. Studies that describe the experience of a single student or a small group of students contribute to our understanding of student genre learning, yet studies that include more participants and a wider social context are needed, especially if pedagogical implications are sought. When such studies have been carried out, they draw attention to the complexity and variety within and across disciplinary writing, as noted by Faigley and Hansen (1985). As a result, some researchers have proposed, for instance, that for students to acquire genre expertise, explicit instruction in disciplinary genre is needed due to the complexity of these genres (Kelly & Bazerman, 2003; Williams & Colomb, 1993). Others, in the critical or Sydney school tradition, promote genre instruction as a method of overcoming the gate-keeping function of implicit genre knowledge that operates against some students, particularly those who are marginalized (Martin & Veel, 1998). Still others have argued that genres are too complex, subtle, and mutable to be explicitly taught yet they are nevertheless acquired (Freedman, 1987, 1993). The question of how students understand and acquire the genres

of different academic disciplines is slowly becoming better understood, and much is now known about how to teach for genre awareness (see Devitt, 2004; Giltrow, 2002).

My project builds on the methods and findings outlined in these studies in order to understand the activity of writing in anthropology and explore the extent to which undergraduate students and professors in anthropology have similar experiences to those described in these studies.

## Chapter 4: Methodology

### Orientation

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the methodological approaches and methods that informed the creation and conduct of my research project, a descriptive case study of writing practices in an undergraduate anthropology program. I begin with a rationale for integrating descriptive studies with interrogations of theory in what is known as a *retroductive* research strategy (Blaikie, 2007). I then introduce ethnographic methods and case study research, showing how these *approaches* (in the terminology of Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2005, p.17) can be used to create a deep understanding of the case under study here, namely undergraduate anthropology writing. I briefly present some criticisms and limitations of these approaches before introducing an overview of this study's design. I identify the three types of data collected and present a detailed description of the study's procedures and methods. I conclude with an account of the mixed-methods data analysis process.

### Methodological Approaches

I begin this description of my project's methodology by placing it within a constructionist epistemology. Constructionist approaches to social science research rest on the assumption that objects or phenomena of interest do not contain inherent meaning; instead, meanings are constructed by people. In the terms of Denzin and Lincoln (2000), there is no theory-free knowledge (p. 872). These meanings, however, are "constrained by the nature of the things themselves" (Blaikie, 2007, p. 19). Descriptive studies, according to Blaikie (2007), aim to depict the nature of things (e.g., social or natural phenomena) by describing their characteristics and regularities and often comprise the

first stage of research. This depiction of things, inasmuch as it includes the meanings ascribed to the phenomenon, is a construction informed by both the researcher and participants in the study, though it is not limited to these constructed meanings. Implicit in this definition of descriptive studies is the assumption that such empirical research depends upon systematically analysing observations free from experimental intervention, resulting in data-based descriptions of a phenomenon (Beach, 1992). Descriptive studies are particularly useful in drawing attention to the elements that constitute a phenomenon and identifying them; subsequent research may target these elements for further exploration using other approaches or methods that directly manipulate one or another such element to better understand the parameters of their behaviour.

The current study seeks to do more than create a descriptive observation of students writing in a particular academic context or identify elements involved in such writing, as previous studies have done (see Chapter 3). Instead, the goal of this study is to present a deep description of writing activity that integrates three components: (a) analyses of participants' perceptions about writing, (b) analyses of texts written, and (c) an assessment of the explanatory theory drawn upon to produce these analyses. The resulting theoretically-informed description of writing in context ("the complex interplay between texts and their social contexts," Freedman & Medway, 1994, p.8) is assessed for its contribution to writing theory and practice. This study therefore moves beyond description in which theory is peripheral or even foundational to one in which theory is a focus of study. This approach exemplifies what Blaikie (2007) labels a "retroductive strategy" for research (p. 82). Rather than depending on linear logic, retroductive strategies take a spiral or circular approach to empirical studies, starting with explanatory

theory and then using it to develop models to understand the mechanisms underlying a particular social phenomenon. These theoretical models imagine the operation of these mechanisms— which are not directly observable – and retroductive research strategies seek to identify, understand, and test hypothesized mechanisms to determine whether they are supported by observable data (p.83). If the empirical data do not substantiate these mechanisms, the explanatory theory from which the model was derived might be revised, leading to the creation of a new model and mechanisms that might better account for the data. In comparison, other research methods demonstrate a more linear approach; for instance, using deductive strategies to test hypotheses (derived from theories), inductive strategies to construct theories, or abductive strategies to develop participant-oriented understandings and theory (Blaikie, p. 8).

While all methodologies are theoretically informed (Nelson & Grote-Garcia, 2010), the recursive nature of retroductive research strategies specifically enables them to examine both a social phenomenon and its explanatory theory, making such strategies particularly suitable for explorations of complex social phenomena made up of elements not readily observed or feasibly disaggregated. In other words, this holistic approach operates in contrast to analytic approaches that may emphasize the examination of individual elements over the interaction of a constellation of elements. Rather than being limited to a preliminary or first stage of research, retroductive studies may function to critique or modify established theoretical models that have arisen from or been applied to a phenomenon in other studies. This characteristic distinguishes retroductive strategies from grounded theory approaches, which strive to use data to directly derive theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

Research using a retroductive strategy holds promise for writing studies because writing activity, and indeed texts themselves, are acknowledged to be sites of continuing contested conceptualizations (Nelson & Grote-Garcia, 2010). Writing concepts as seemingly simple as “what is a text” are increasingly recognized as complex, reflecting notions of intertextuality and communicative function, for instance (Nelson & Grote-Garcia, 2010, p. 407). Methodologies that are sensitive to detecting shifts in concepts are therefore likely to be most productive. The field has grown sufficiently over the past 40 years that multiple theories and methodologies have become established or have been applied to writing from related endeavours, and the evolution of these theoretically-informed methodologies continues in the field (see Schultz, 2006, for instance, for a historical review of the development of qualitative research methodology in writing studies, or Mercer, 2004, for a description of linguistics-informed methodologies). Research using such encompassing methodologies rather than conventional quantitative versus qualitative approaches promises to be particularly responsive to the demands of social science research and writing research in particular, especially because this type of research explores contexts as constitutive of writing rather than merely as peripheral elements to be included for study (Brodkey, 1987; Gee, 2000), as previous cognitive theories envisioned (e.g., Flower & Hayes, 1981).

Methodologies that include the study of texts and contexts have a strong history in the field of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and in Rhetorical Genre Studies (RGS) (see Johns, 2002). Flowerdew (2002), for instance, proposes that the central division in genre studies is between those from the ESP tradition who use linguistic approaches (applying Systemic Functional Linguistics and other rhetorico-grammatical

methods) versus those in the RGS tradition who take a more socially situated approach (often using ethnographic methods). Another encompassing methodology, Bourdieu's "social praxeology" has recently been identified by Catherine Schryer (2011) as a methodology for directing the study of texts' interactions with their contexts, using elements common to rhetorical genre studies (RGS). Bourdieu's methodology, Schryer claims, involves rich description focussed on close reading and analysis of texts, integrated with the collection of data from careful interviewing and observation of participants, like much work undertaken by researchers in rhetorical genre studies. According to Schryer, this substantive analysis of writing-in-context responds to the fundamental assertions of genre theory as initiated by Miller (1984) as well as methodological elements taken from rhetorical genre theory, and leads to a complex description of the social interaction of texts and participants. In Schryer's view, social praxeology is thus both promising and compatible with RGS because, in addition to its attention to contextual elements, it requires attention to textual analysis to confirm traces of the social and individual exigencies that affected the creation of these texts and remain visible in them. Social praxeology, then, may be seen as a retroductive methodological approach that assesses writing within a rhetorical genre theory framework.

### **Activity theory model**

Activity theory (AT) is a theoretical and analytic frame that is increasingly drawn upon in studies of writing-in-context, as seen in Chapters 2 and 3. Perhaps this is because AT enables similar types of expansive analysis and integration of social contexts as RGS. Originally developed to provide an explanation of "higher psychological functions" (Vygotsky, 1978) such as those involved in social learning, AT has since found wide

application within psychology and education and other social practice fields (Sannino, Daniels, & Gutiérrez, 2009). In writing studies, AT may have particular relevance by showing how a text can function in multiple different ways within an activity system; for instance, as a tool, an object, or a rule (Nelson & Grote-Garcia, 2010; Russell & Yañez, 2003). On the other hand, questions have been raised about the omission of relevant elements from AT (e.g., participants' *desire* as it affects the goals of activity) and the role of power in maintaining the activity system (Moje & Lewis, 2007). The question of how informative a theoretical framework AT is for writing studies is thus reasonable, especially given suggestions within the field that AT may have particular value for programs of writing research (Hayes, 2006). How informative AT is as a theoretical framework is also a question that retroductive research strategies are designed to answer.

The imagined model for analysis in this study was derived from AT. The AT framework, demonstrated in the familiar triangle based on the work of Vygotsky and Engeström (1987), suggests relationships between the elements, and these relationships are presumably supported by underlying mechanisms that create and constrain the activity itself (see Chapter 2 – Theory). The model used in this study: (a) specifies an initial tentative matching of AT concepts to elements of undergraduate anthropology writing, (b) suggests relationships between these elements, and (c) provides a theoretical as well as an analytic foundation for the study, with implications for appropriate data collection to explore these elements and their interactions. Table 1 shows the connection between AT concepts and elements of undergraduate anthropology used in this study. I first defined elements of undergraduate anthropology writing in terms of AT concepts then examined interactions between these elements. The proposed categorization of

concepts and elements does not presume to be exhaustive or suggest that other mappings are not possible. It merely provided a starting point for the analysis.

Table 1

*Activity Theory (AT) Concepts and Matching Elements of Undergraduate Anthropology*

<b>AT Concept</b>	<b>Undergraduate Anthropology Elements</b>
Subject(s)	students; professors
Tools	course readings; genres; course syllabus
Object/s (goal/s)	to write anthropology text/paper ; to learn/teach anthropology; to become an anthropologist; to earn grade/pass course; to prepare for further/graduate study
Rules	disciplinary conventions of anthropology; academic departmental rules
Community	academic (university/school) context; professional (disciplinary) context; home/family context
Labour/Roles	student; teacher; professional anthropologist (disciplinary expert); anthropology (disciplinary) apprentice/novice
Outcome	anthropology text/paper; anthropology expertise; writing expertise

As discussed in the literature review in Chapter 3, previous studies in academic settings have demonstrated that some AT concepts constitute areas of tension or conflict for subjects. For instance, Russell & Yañez (2003) found that goals (objects) were not necessarily the same for students and teachers in a general education history class, and that these differences were an underlying cause of tension that affected tool use and outcomes. These results suggest that rather than presenting an uncomplicated set of concepts and direct relationships between concepts, activity systems are open to influence by mechanisms that operate both within and between the concepts, with activity theory

providing a useful framework for their analysis. Additional description of these mechanisms and how they operate in undergraduate anthropology is a goal of this project.

### **Ethnographic methodologies**

Descriptive research of the types envisioned by Schryer (2011) and demonstrated by Russell and Yañez (2003) has benefitted from using methods associated with ethnographic studies since the mid 1980s (see Odell & Goswami, 1985), including for example, extensive data collection, conducting research in naturalistic settings, and inclusion of emic (insider) perspectives. Ethnographic strategies are appropriate for research that takes cultural practices into account when examining social phenomena; in fact, according to LeCompte & Schensul (1999), examination of the culture of a group is mandatory in ethnographies. In contrast to methodologies that seek precision of results by measuring characteristics that are narrowly operationalized and limit extraneous influences, ethnographic work is concerned with creating an ecologically valid representation of a phenomenon and assessing this representation through collection of multiple sets of data, a process that deliberately seeks to include, compare, and integrate many possible influences. Triangulation of data results in a deep, multi-faceted description of a social phenomenon that has less rigid boundaries than studies relying upon precisely controlled data. Exemplary work such as Shirley Brice Heath's (1983) study of "ways with words" in the southern United States, for instance, included multiple ethnographic methods undertaken through long-term immersion in the field to create a deep description of community literacy practices. Ethnographies of writing have long been proposed as integral to understanding communication and literacy *in situ* (Basso, 1974; Gumperz & Hymes, 1964; Schultz, 2006; Szwed, 1981).

Data collection methods central to ethnographic investigations traditionally include participant observation, informant interviews, and archival study, but may also include quantitative (e.g., surveys, text analysis) as well as related qualitative methodologies (e.g., discourse analysis, conversation analysis) that enable exploration of contextual elements (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999). Incorporating multiple methods of data collection and investigation may provide researchers an opportunity to explore a phenomenon from various perspectives in a way that encourages them to use description to create an empirically supported rendition of the phenomenon as well as an explanation of it that can be understood to be demonstrably authentic by participants and readers. As Schultz (2006) notes, the connection of ethnography to writing began in 1962 with Dell Hymes' proposal to explore writing within an "ethnography of communication" (p. 363). Calls to increase ethnographic research into academic writing continue to be made, notably for studies which examine the local contexts for negotiating academic literacies (MacNealy, 1999; Starfield, 2007). Ethnographic methods, therefore, are highly compatible with the descriptive goals of retroductive research strategies. In particular, ethnography is well-suited to research on writing because the cultural contexts of language-in-use influence not only writing activity but also written products (Moss, 1999) and ethnographic methods enable the examination of both these elements.

### **Limitations of ethnographic research**

The major drawback of traditional ethnography is the lengthy timeframe needed. Extensive immersion in the field, often as a participant along with those under study, is the gold standard for ethnography in order to present the *emic* perspective, i.e., that of the participants or "insiders" (Moss, 1999, p. 159). Such immersion experiences demand

levels of personal disruption and expense that can be difficult for researchers to accommodate. Another limitation of ethnographic work is that it is necessarily context-specific; it recognizes and embraces the characteristics and elements that are specific to the phenomenon-in-its-context that is under study and does not seek generalizability to other contexts or situations. This focus enables the deep description that is characteristic of ethnography, but necessarily limits how relevant such descriptions may be to other research scenarios.

Despite its strengths as a descriptive methodology, ethnographic research has been subject to a variety of criticisms. These include early complaints that those doing traditional ethnography wrongly suggested that researchers act as objective, unobtrusive recorders of activity (the crisis of representation; Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2005), and because such objectivity and invisibility are impossible, the methodology itself is suspect. Many researchers and critics, however, have acknowledged that all researchers are always interpreters of activity, and provide accounts that may privilege their own, or their participants', world views (Eisenhart, 2001). Ethnography is therefore no less valid a research methodology than research that uses quantitative methods. Nevertheless, the perception that ethnographic methods, like other qualitative methods, are more liable to subjective interpretation or bias has persisted, and has resulted in much attention to questions of validity and trustworthiness by social researchers (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2005). This increased attention has arguably strengthened the development of many qualitative methods including those of ethnography. For example, the methods of ethnographic research may be used to gather data to improve the ecological validity of qualitative studies that are designed for either shorter terms or narrower perspectives

(Schultz, 2006). Notably, critical ethnographers resist the traditional model of ethnographic research in favour of one that uses a “methodological toolkit [that] includes reflexive moves that push against [their] own assumptions, biases, and positionality vis-à-vis cultural communities” (Gutiérrez, 2007, p. 118). In doing so, critical ethnographies aim to increase the relevance and generalizability of their findings.

### **Case study methodology**

One manageable methodology hospitable to ethnographic methods, but typically focused at a smaller scope, is case study research (MacNealy, 1999). Case study methodology is used to describe and analyze a “bounded phenomenon, such as a program, an institution, a person, a process, or a social unit” (Merriam, 1998, p.xiii; see also Sturman, 1999). Kamberelis and Dimitriadis (2005) note that case studies, like ethnographies, are not meant to present “typified cases,” but rather are an attempt to create a partial representation of a complex situation (p. 83). Case studies are highly contextualized and detailed, making them useful in situations where there is little existing information that can be used to develop explanatory theory. Researchers in case studies may use grounded theory or draw on a number or variety of descriptive cases (“multisite case study”) for comprehensive theory building (Sturman, 1999). Because of their limited nature, however, case studies are also ideal scenarios for descriptive research that tests theoretical models.

Unlike ethnographies, in which cultural description is always prominent, case studies often include little description of the culture of the social group, focussing instead on processes and characteristics in the case (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999). This means that case studies do not necessarily require the extensive immersion and time

commitment required of ethnographic research. The other methods of conventional ethnography, however, including observations in the field, informant interviews, and document analysis, are common in case studies, so the resulting data is often of substantial depth. While not generalizable to the phenomenon of interest in the broadest sense, Sturman (1999) claims that the “salient features” of individual case studies can be useful to understanding other similar cases under study. A related method involves the creation of a “telling case” (Ellen, 1984 in Moje & Lewis, 2007, p. 26) in which recounting the analysis of one portion of a larger study examines only specific concepts or illustrates the use of particular methods rather than providing a complete ethnographic report.

### **Limitations of case study methodology**

Determining the boundaries of a case may be problematic and dependent upon discipline-specific decision making rather than obvious material or conceptual characteristics (Stark & Torrance, 2005). This introduces an element of possible arbitrariness into the identification and delimiting of the case. Second, although case studies are sometimes used in experimental research, because they lack generalizability (Stark & Torrance, 2005), their use in experimental paradigms is usually restricted to the preliminary stages of research. This association of case studies with preliminary research is one that is shared by descriptive research in general and, as noted earlier, it tends to reinforce the view that case studies are primarily descriptive studies.

### **Suitability of case study research**

Because the goal of this research is to create a partial representation of a complex academic writing situation, *undergraduate anthropology situated in one university*

formed the bounded phenomenon under study, or “the case.” Moreover, understanding the disciplinary culture of anthropology was likely to be an integral element in understanding the writing activity that occurs in this discipline, so methods that could explore culture were warranted (e.g., individual interviews and surveys, field observations). This project was therefore undertaken as a case study using ethnographic methods, rather than an ethnographic case study which might imply a deeper immersion in the disciplinary context than I actually undertook.

### **Study Design**

In this case study, I studied writing in two upper-year classes from two of the four subfields of anthropology. The decision to study writing in an undergraduate anthropology program was based on three considerations: (a) review of the writing research indicated little is known about writing in anthropology (see Chapter 2); (b) the existence of ontological differences within anthropology which reflect widely replicated divisions between the natural and social sciences in academia, and which provide an opportunity to explore how these differences and their epistemological conflicts may affect students and their writing, and (c) the geographic proximity and approachability of the anthropology department itself which made study of the department convenient and feasible. While the first and third considerations are self-explanatory, the second deserves closer attention.

As a discipline, anthropology has a history of intradisciplinary conflict between its subfields which reflects traditional differences between the “hard” or natural sciences and the “soft” or social sciences (dichotomized as “two cultures” by Snow, 1959). To simplify, these differences may be presented in terms of differing ontological and

epistemological assumptions. The ontological positions are identified by Blaikie (2007) as the opposition between realist and idealist theories, while he describes the three major epistemological perspectives as empiricism, rationalism, or constructionism (see Blaikie for an elaboration on these philosophical perspectives). The subfield of archaeology, for instance, relies heavily on realism and empiricism in its paradigmatic perception of the world as a place which has objective reality and can therefore be measured and assessed, according to Blaikie. Sociocultural anthropology, on the other hand, is a subfield that is more typically idealist and constructionist, viewing the world as a largely symbolic and interpretive space (Blaikie, p. 17). This perspective renders conventional quantitative measurement and generalizability criteria less appropriate than they would be in archaeology. Similarly, physical anthropology (e.g., paleoanthropology, primatology) is rooted in the biological sciences, and becomes aligned with archaeology, while linguistics is primarily related to cultural development and meaning-making, even while its object of study (language) is analysed using the objective perspectives common to physical anthropology. In addition, the four-field approach itself, while useful, may be contentious. Finally, despite widespread appreciation within anthropology for the multiple perspectives available across these subfields, the alignment of epistemologic views with subfields nevertheless remains evident. It is also worth noting that anthropology is not alone in these internal divisions – other disciplines, notably geography and education, demonstrate similar internal conflicts.

In addition to a quantitative-qualitative divide, research approaches among anthropologists have been influenced over time by prominent tensions within social research more generally, such as the *crisis of representation*, the *crisis of evaluation*, and

the *crisis of praxis* (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2005). Within anthropology, these crises arose partly out of contrasts in goals, methods, and interests across the subfields. As a result, the differing foundational epistemologies and subsequent methodologies conventional to these subfields might be expected to impact students new to the field – even if students have no substantive knowledge or awareness of these issues and tensions embedded in disciplinary discourses. Questions about how students navigate inconsistencies between subfields and what effect this navigation has on their academic lives are important to sociocultural studies of writing. The questions are particularly relevant to writing research because of the close relation of writing to meaning-making and critical thinking, academic goals which are often developed and assessed through writing assignments. If the conventional ways of thinking about knowledge, evidence, and meaning-making differ across subfields, how do students interpret and apply such conventions as they move to positions of increasing familiarity with the discipline and increasing specialization within one subfield?

For these reasons, I decided in this study to examine writing activity in two classes from different subfields of anthropology: one from sociocultural anthropology and one from physical anthropology. To ensure students were capable of responding to expectations from these subfields (i.e., that they had had the opportunity to encounter and respond to these expectations), third-year classes in anthropology were targeted for participation.

The decision to approach third-year anthropology classes was made for several reasons. Fourth-year classes were rejected as sites of study because they are usually quite small, which might have led to challenges in recruiting participants in sufficient number

to collect rich data given the anticipated limited time span of one academic term for data collection and the desire for an adequate number of texts for genre analysis. First- and second-year classes were rejected because students in these classes would not likely have been exposed to enough anthropology coursework or readings to be able to provide sufficient information about disciplinary expectations related to anthropology. As well, first-year students were unlikely to have had significant experience writing in response to *any* disciplinary expectations at the university level. Finally, and of most relevance, all students in the anthropology program at this university must take a mandatory, culminating course in anthropological theory in either their third or fourth year. This course brings together students from all subfields of anthropology, and anecdotal reports suggested that the class is usually challenging both for students and instructors because of the diversity of perspectives brought together. In other words, reports suggested that students' identification with a subfield is evident at this level.

The third-year "theory" class is focused largely on readings from sociocultural research meant to demonstrate theoretical shifts in the discipline. With its emphasis on reading seminal and representative texts, the third-year anthropology course introduces students to the prominence of theory within anthropology. It explores how theoretical stances are demonstrated in written texts. As a year-long course that attempts to provide students with an appreciation of the breadth of the discipline, and as a course targeted to students who have already have had some exposure to anthropological study, the third-year course was chosen as an ideal site for investigation.

## Summary of the study's three phases

The study was conducted over the fall term of 2008 and winter term 2009<sup>1</sup>. It was designed and conducted in three phases that overlapped in time. A summary of the phases is introduced here (see Table 2), and each phase's procedures are then described in detail under Methods.

Table 2

Study Design: Three Phases

Phase	Participants	Data	Timeline
1	Anthropology faculty	Email survey	October
2	All student participants Focus group students  Selected course professors  Researcher (me)	In-class survey Interview 1 Interview 2 - Discourse-based Interview 1 Interview 2 - Discourse-based Classroom field notes Research journal	January - May
3	n/a	Students' final papers Grades on final papers	April

In Phase one, data were gathered from faculty across the anthropology department to provide breadth against which to explore the views of the professors in the two participating classes. I sent an email survey to all faculty members teaching undergraduate anthropology courses that year. The purpose of the survey (see Appendix B) was to collect faculty responses about writing expectations and writing assignments in the department.

Phase two included multiple groups of participants and data, but focussed on students. Three activities took place in this phase: (a) participating students from two

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<sup>1</sup> Data for this project was collected in 2008-09, but due to an extended illness and death in my family, analysis and completion of the thesis was delayed.

classes in different subfields completed a brief in-class survey on writing which explored their perspectives on writing and anthropology; (b) field notes were taken in the two selected classes during one full term; and (c) individual semi-structured interviews were conducted with both professors and a subsample of students from each class at the beginning and at the end of term. These interviews explored students' and professors' understandings and views about writing in anthropology.

In Phase three, students' final assignment texts were collected and analysed for evidence of genre features and rhetorical elements. Marks on these papers and final course grades were also collected from the professors.

## **Methods**

### **Description of data**

As described earlier, this study assesses a model of academic writing drawn from activity theory. I first matched the observable or expected elements of this case to AT elements (see Table 1) to ensure that data collection would be directed to exploring each of these AT elements. Three types of data were identified as necessary: (a) responses from students and professors to surveys and interview questions about writing, (b) researcher's field notes from classroom observations during at least one school term (13 weeks), and (c) students' written final assignment texts. These data conform to the "basic types" of data sought in qualitative research, namely interview, observational, and archival data (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2005, p. 18).

The first type of data provided the most direct and richest evidence of participants' expectations, beliefs, and understandings of how meaning is made through writing in anthropology. The interviews and surveys enabled the inclusion of an emic

perspective into the analysis. Interviews using a semi-structured format and open-ended questions allowed me to probe participants' views on specific points identified in the literature and related to the research questions, while also encouraging participants to respond and digress as they wished (Patton, 1990). A second method of interviewing – discourse-based interviews (Odell, Goswami, & Herrington, 1983; Prior, 2004) – was also used to elicit responses about the texts produced by students in the study (see Appendix E for interview protocol). Discourse-based interviews are particularly notable for drawing out participants' implicitly held beliefs about writing by probing their explanations for how or why certain elements of a text may or may not be revised. Finally, in addition to oral responses in interviews, the written responses of students and teachers on surveys were drawn upon in analysis. Participant response data was used primarily to explore the AT concepts of goals/objects, roles, rules, and tools.

The second group of data were the written field notes from all classroom observations which I wrote to record social interactions and cultural elements that may have influenced students' and professors' writing activities and beliefs, such as common classroom practices, instruction, peer interactions, and departmental or university procedures. The practice of “making the familiar strange” (Atkinson, Coffey & Delamont, 2003, p. 16) is the basis for collecting and analysing this data. Students and professors may have had implicit awareness of these elements, yet not explicitly included them in their considerations, whereas an outside observer might notice their relevance. Field notes were necessary to understand the structure of activities in undergraduate anthropology classes and to consider the role of interpersonal interactions in class. In particular, what happens in the classroom represents the formal practice of knowledge

exchange and a novice's enculturation to a discipline. Observational data from field notes was used to gain understanding of the social and physical experiences of the participants in the university locale.

The third type of data collected was students' final written assignments from the two classes. These texts were analysed using mixed methods, including descriptive and correlational statistics, to identify the rhetorical features and notable textual elements they contained (Kelly, Bazerman, Skuaukaite, & Prothero, 2010) and to determine if these elements differed between the classes. In terms of AT concepts, this archival data was used to examine the concepts of tools, rules, and goals/objects.

### **Participants**

Participants in this study were students and faculty members of a large anthropology department at a comprehensive, research-based university in Canada having a total enrolment of about 30,000 students. The anthropology department is well-established and includes a graduate program (MA, MSc and PhD). In addition to attracting undergraduate students who identify anthropology as their major, introductory courses are popular with many students from various disciplines wanting to take electives. The four major anthropological subfields of sociocultural anthropology, archeology, physical anthropology, and linguistics are represented in course offerings and faculty expertise. In the academic year in which this study was carried out, the department included 21 full-time faculty members and 18 part-time or sessional faculty.

At the start of Phase 2 in the study, two professors from the department responded to my call for volunteers from among all instructors of third-year classes (n = 4). The classes they taught – one from the sociocultural subfield (Concepts of Society and

Culture, hereafter called the “Theory” or SC class) and one from the physical-biological subfield (Topics in Human Evolution, hereafter called the “Paleoanthro” or PA class) – were in line with the requirements for this study, as described earlier, so they were selected to participate.

There were 56 students enrolled in the Theory class; 32 agreed to participate in the study (57% participation rate). The Paleoanthro class consisted of 12 students, and 11 agreed to participate in the study (92% participation rate). Five participants were students in both classes. Two students from the PA class, and one student from the SC class dropped out of these courses and the study after two weeks. The total number of student participants was thus 35, 8 male and 27 female.

Almost all student participants identified themselves as being either third or fourth year undergraduates, though one student was in second year. Age was not requested; the vast majority of students in both classes appeared to be in their early 20s. Data on ethnic background of the students were not collected, though classes were composed of a majority of white students with the remaining students belonging to visible minority groups, which is fairly representative of this university as a whole. The professors teaching each class were both white, male, full-time faculty members who were experienced teachers in the department.

### **Procedure**

I applied for and received approval to conduct this study from the university’s Ethical Review Board (see Appendix A). Phase one began in the fall term 2008 and is described in detail below. The bulk of data collection (Phase two) began at the start of winter term in January 2009. At that time, the SC class, being a full-year course, had

already completed its first term; the PA class, however, was a one-term course offered only in the winter term. Both classes participated in the study for one complete term, and data collection, including the collection of field notes and interviews, continued through mid-April. At that time, Phase three – the collection of students' final research papers – was initiated. The second round of interviews was completed by mid-May, signalling the end of data collection. Data coding and analysis followed (see note on p. 72).

### **Phase one: Faculty survey**

During the fall term, all faculty members (n = 39) listed to teach any undergraduate anthropology course in that academic year (2008-2009) were sent an email survey (see Appendix B) to explore their perceptions of students' writing and the characteristics of writing assignments they required in their courses. Response to the survey was taken as indication of informed consent. The survey, though confidential, requested identifying information such as name, number of years spent teaching, and courses taught. It consisted of short answer questions, multi-choice checklists, and Likert-type questions. The purpose of the email survey was to get some idea of the expectations and writing assignments of anthropology professors from across the different courses offered within the department. These data were also used to evaluate the extent to which the two focus professors' assignments and expectations were similar to or different from their peers.

All email survey data were transferred to an Excel datafile and maintained on a secure laptop.

## **Phase two: Interviews with students and professors, student surveys, field notes**

The second phase began with the recruitment of two professors to volunteer their classes as participants in the study. In the year the study was conducted, four faculty members were assigned to teach third-year courses, so an email was sent to each, requesting their participation as a focus class. Two professors responded positively, and because their classes fulfilled the criterion of representing different subfields of anthropology, they were thus enlisted as the sites of study. Informed consent was received from both professors.

In order to recruit student participants, at the start of the winter term I attended the first lesson in both classes, described the study to students, and distributed information and consent forms. All students were asked to complete a brief, two-page survey on their writing processes, perceptions of their own writing abilities, and beliefs about writing in anthropology (see Appendix C). The two purposes of this survey were to (a) collect data on the writing experiences and beliefs of a wide group of upper year students, and (b) use these data as a point of comparison with the experiences of a smaller group of student informants. Consenting students' responses were kept ( $n = 38$ ), while all others were destroyed.

Each class met weekly for 12 weeks from January to April. The Theory class met for one 2-hour class every Tuesday, followed by a one-hour tutorial every Thursday. The class was divided in half, with each section expected to attend tutorial on alternate weeks only, though students were welcome to attend every tutorial if they so desired. The Paleoanthro class met once a week for three hours every Wednesday. I attended all classes and tutorials, using a digital recorder to audio record all classroom dialogue. I also

took observational field notes either by hand or on a laptop. These field notes were directed to observable events that could not be captured on the audio tape (such as the professors' notes on the blackboard), and were primarily focussed on recording the main issues and content brought up by the professor, the ways that these issues were presented to students, and notes pertaining to activity theory elements (e.g., participants' roles, classroom and disciplinary rules, goals, and tool use). All field notes were re-read and filled in when ambiguous, using the audiotape and my reflection notes and the course syllabus as necessary. Transcription of the handwritten field notes was not undertaken; analysis of the field note data was done by reading the original texts, flagging important points, and making notes. Field note data files were maintained on a secured laptop while the notebooks of handwritten field notes were stored in a secured cabinet.

Following completion of the classroom survey, students had an opportunity to express their interest in volunteering to take part in individual interviews at the beginning and end of the term. Students who agreed to participate were provided \$15 reimbursement for their time for each interview. A total of 15 students volunteered and were interviewed; five of these were students in both classes. Interviews ranged between 45 minutes and 90 minutes in length and took place in public coffee shops on campus. Interviews were semi-structured, and used primarily open-ended questions (see Appendix D).

For the second interview, held immediately after the end of term, discourse-based interviewing was used (Odell, Goswami, & Herrington, 1983; Prior, 2004). Rather than directly asking participants to provide their opinions about writing or to recall how they write, discourse-based interviews are used to bring forward participants' implicit

understandings about writing and to demonstrate how they make genre decisions when explicit options are presented to them. In this method, participants are provided with written texts that act as prompts to elicit their thoughts about writing conventions and expectations. Alternatives to parts of these texts are then introduced by the researcher and the responses of participants to these suggested changes can be taken as evidence of tacit knowledge of genre or other exigencies. In this study, students' final essays were used as the written texts: students' own essays were shown to them during the final individual interview, with sentences, phrases and words highlighted and possible revisions suggested. Students were then asked whether or not such changes were acceptable or not, and why. For instance, a student who included the subtitle, "Introduction" would see this highlighted and I would ask, "Is it acceptable to remove this subtitle?" During these interviews, I emphasized that these changes were not corrections, but alternate forms they could accept or reject.

The two professors in this study were also individually interviewed twice, once at the beginning of term and once after term had finished. Interviews took place in their offices. A semi-structured format was used (see Appendix E for the interview protocol). The second interview included discourse-based interviewing using student texts from their own classes as a prompt, as described above.

All interviews were audio-taped and were transcribed verbatim either by myself or a transcriptionist. Portions of the transcripts were reviewed using the audiotape to ensure accuracy; where necessary, my corrections of ambiguous passages were substituted. All audio files and transcripts were maintained on a secured laptop.

### **Phase three: Written texts**

Students in both classes were required to complete one major writing assignment, an end-of-term research paper. According to the course syllabi, in both cases this assignment consisted of at least two tasks nested within the major task. In the Theory class, an annotated bibliography was required of all students near mid-term; this was meant to encourage students to choose a topic, find appropriate sources for the final paper, and allow opportunity for feedback from the professor. Both the bibliography and subsequent research paper received separate marks. In the Paleoanthro course, submission of the major research paper was preceded by an oral presentation modelled on an academic conference format. As part of this presentation, all students were required to write an abstract of their paper one week prior to this in-class presentation. Questions from their classmates and feedback on the presentation were then meant to be used to inform the final revisions to the research paper, due the following week. Both the abstract/presentation and the paper received separate marks.

I asked all students participating in this study to send me by email an electronic copy of their final assignment in addition to supplying me with a paper copy of their work. Students' own texts were then used in their discourse-based interviews, as described above. In addition, the texts were analysed for evidence of genre, disciplinary, and linguistic characteristics. After the final interviews, the texts were collected and stored together in a secured cabinet. Finally, both instructors provided me with grades for all consented students on these assignments as well as their final course grade.

### **Data coding and analysis**

The process of coding and analysing data is recognized as an interpretive act rather than one which assumes “the extraction and conveyance of meaning that already exists in the data” (Grant-Davie, 1999, p. 273). Data analysis was conducted in stages, with different data sources analysed separately and then integrated as coding and data reduction proceeded. Since interview data provided the major evidence for participants’ self-descriptions and perceptions of writing and formed the largest proportion of data collected, it was used as the foundation upon which analyses of other data were integrated.

### **Coding: Interview data**

Coding of the first interview data began with the identification of coding categories to group the responses of students and professors regarding anthropology writing. These initial categories were drawn from two sources: (a) the AT concepts and their associated undergraduate anthropology elements as derived from the theoretical model for this study (described on page 62) and (b) the set of first interview questions, which provided an organizing structure for linking the initial coding categories to commonly recognized writing elements (e.g., participants’ identities, their writing processes, their self-assessments, and beliefs about writing). The initial 16 “conceptual” coding categories and 10 “question” organizing categories for student interviews are identified in Appendix G, and coding categories for professor interviews are in Appendix I. This method of coding is established on the notion of using a theoretical model “as a framework of elements and relations that [the researcher] suspects is important for a topic” (Hayes, 2006).

Once initial categories were determined, the transcripts of interviews with both students and professors were read and re-read to identify and code segments conforming to these categories. As coding progressed, new coding categories were added as needed. A qualitative data coding software, WEFT, was used to facilitate coding and analysis. A constant comparison method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) of cross-checking categories was used in the coding of data to ensure that segments were identified and marked consistently. The reliability of initial coding was checked by having a graduate student who was unfamiliar with this research project code a subset of 10% of the data to ensure adequate consistency, and this process resulted in negotiations to add to and integrate some coding categories.

The second , discourse-based interviews were analysed and coded using similar categories (i.e., those derived from AT concepts and those reflecting categories for the organizing structure provided by questions used in these second interviews) (see Appendices H and I).

### **Coding: Student assignment texts**

The next largest body of data was the students' assignment texts. Text analyses drew on genre theory and provided information on the genres that were produced by these undergraduate students in response to expectations in each class. Texts were therefore used to explore students' and professors' understandings of genre and disciplinary writing. Although the texts are the focus of analysis in this phase, it is the relation between the texts and the context in which they were written that is of primary interest because, as Schryer (2011) notes, "texts only have significance in relation to specific social contexts" (p. 33). Analysis of the texts, then, provided information about

the participants' construction of the context of undergraduate anthropology. Analysis of these written texts was undertaken using textual analytic methods primarily employed in other genre studies (Bazerman, 2006; Bruce, 2008; Swales, 1990). These included identifying rhetorical "moves" (such as making centrality claims) as proposed by Swales (1990) in his seminal exploration of research introductions. Other analyses assessed features such as length of the introduction, number of sources used, readability scores, assignment grade, and specific grammatical elements. These were analysed using descriptive and correlational statistics conducted in SPSS. In addition to rhetorical moves, formal, and linguistic elements, Toulmin's (1958) conceptualization of argumentation was used to identify and analyse students' use of claims, evidence, and rebuttals. In the interests of keeping the data analysis manageable, rather than an examination of the whole assignment text, the focus of analysis was directed to only one part of the text, a strategy common in studies on academic writing, especially as practiced by the researchers of English for Academic Purposes (EAP) (Bruce, 2008). The part chosen for analysis was the introduction of each paper, mimicking Swales' work, though each text was read completely and notable elements from elsewhere in the text were identified and coded into the analysis whenever it was felt particularly informative and appropriate.

### **Coding: Survey data and field notes**

Student and faculty survey data were entered into an SPSS database so summary data could be produced for integration with interview and text data. Field notes were read over and coded for relevant themes related to roles, rules, goals, and community, similar to those used for interview transcript data.

Once initial coding was complete, patterns of commonalities or contradictions within and between categories in the coded data were sought and tentative mechanisms underlying the relationships between elements or concepts were proposed. “Themes” emerged from the reading and re-reading of coded data (Patton, 1990) both within and across coding categories; for example, “negotiation of goals” was an action that seemed to happen early in the writing process and was hypothesized to consist of two common patterns that described the relation between students and assignment writing goals.

The third level of analysis sought to bring focus and coherence to the findings by identifying the major themes that were most prominent or frequent in the datasets (Creswell, 2007). Expansion and elaboration of these prominent themes occurred by integrating the codings from transcript, survey, field note, and assignment data. Themes were then examined to determine how well they “fit” the imagined AT model. In other words, whether the AT concepts and framework adequately represented the case of writing in anthropology or whether important elements in the data had been omitted.

Finally, findings from the analyses of all three data sources were compared and synthesized in a process of triangulation to confirm interpretations of data and to ensure the trustworthiness of the findings.

### **Reliability, Validity, and Confirmability**

Credibility in research that relies on interpretative methodologies or qualitative data often hinges on the “trustworthiness” (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p.114) of the procedures and findings. One of the most established means of addressing trustworthiness, including responding to questions about the validity, reliability, and generalizability (or transferability) of findings from qualitative data, is to follow a

process of triangulation (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). This process ensures that coding of data and analytic interpretations are well supported by multiple forms of evidence that converge to confer trustworthiness and confirmability on the findings (Creswell, 2007). This notion of *confirmability* (Creswell, 2002) relies upon the use of “detailed stories and quotes” taken from the data so that the interpretation assigned by the researcher can be assessed by the reader (p. ). To that end, I have included extracts and quotations from the data to illustrate and support my interpretations in Chapter 4 - Findings. By enabling the engagement of the reader in this process of interpretation, I acknowledge the claim that “because observation is interwoven with interpretation, what is observed depends on the concepts and theories through which the world is being seen” (Kaplan, 1999, p. 84). I respond to this claim by inviting multiple, diverse readers to “observe” the data themselves and confer validity on my interpretations.

Other measures for ensuring validity and reliability, including use of traditional criteria such as random sampling, control groups, large sample sizes, criterion-based validity, and inter-rater reliability, may be irrelevant or only partially applicable to research using cyclical or retroductive strategies that examine complex social phenomena. The lack of consensus about such criteria is not uncommon. Sample size is one example. Ryan & Bernard (2000), for instance, note that responses from six participants is the minimum number required “in studies where one is trying to understand the essence of experience” (p.780). Patton (1990), however, notes that “relatively” small samples are required and suggests that there are “no rules for sample size” in qualitative work (p. 169). Some types of text analyses, such as content analysis, require both interpretative analysis and quantitative data, often in large amounts, and thus

rely on sampling techniques to reduce data error (Franzosi, 2004). In contrast, Grant-Davie (1999), referring to inter-rater reliability, argues that although reliability tests may confer trustworthiness on the consistency of coding, they may also imply a level of “authority” that is “dangerous” because recognition of the inherent subjectivity of coding is obscured (p. 283). These contradictions and complexities mean that researchers must exercise care and diligence when demonstrating the trustworthiness of their analyses.

In this study I strove to strike a balance between acknowledging traditional realist criteria for validity and reliability while respecting the ontological principles of qualitative inquiry. My goal was to reconcile constructionist epistemology with empirical methods for describing observed phenomena. To that end, I conducted lengthy interviews at both the beginning and end of an academic term with more than six students (Ryan & Bernard’s minimum) from two different classes, as well as their two professors, resulting in a substantive dataset of transcripts collected across a range of participants and a five-month span of time. I derived themes from the views expressed in these interviews and use transcribed quotations and excerpts from the data to illustrate my interpretations. I employed inter-rater reliability checking of the initial coding of a subset of data to establish the credibility of the initial coding scheme, and read and re-read the records to develop deep understanding of the data. I acted as an observing participant by attending both classes for one full term. Finally, I identified and coded the generic, linguistic, and textual elements of students’ final assignments, including quantitative and statistical measures where possible. I asked students and professors to comment on written texts in interviews. Chin (1994) notes, “When prompted to reflect on their decisions and processes, writers often reveal to us what their texts do not” (p. 118). All of these

measures were taken to enhance the comprehensiveness and richness of the data, rather than to merely confirm the existence of a preconceived theoretical concept or to demonstrate methodological pluralism. In sum, the trustworthiness of my findings rests on whether the reader's and my interpretations of quotations and examples taken directly from the data are aligned and on the reader's evaluation of how effectively these data support this study's conclusions.

### **Summary**

Using a retroductive research strategy, I conducted a case study using ethnographic methods to study undergraduate anthropology writing in one Canadian university. The participants were 35 students taking a third-year anthropology class in either sociocultural anthropology and/or paleoanthropology, as well as the two professors teaching these classes. Methods included email surveys of the anthropology department faculty members, surveys of students in the two classes, interviews -- including discourse-based interviews -- with a sub-group of student informants, interviews with the two professors, classroom observation and field note collection, analysis of students' final assignment texts, and collection of students' grades. The data was coded and analysed using initial coding frameworks drawn from AT and genre theory. A multi-methods approach was used which including statistical significance testing of textual elements. Triangulation using these data ensured the trustworthiness of my interpretations and conclusions.

## **Chapter 5: Findings I**

### **Orientation**

The three phases of data collection resulted in a very large number of documents for analysis, necessitating the efficient grouping and reduction of data to ensure manageability. Analysis of separate sets of data— student data, professor data, and assignment text data – collected over the three phases of the project yield findings that are reported on in three sections in this chapter. This is followed by a final section in Chapter 6 – Findings II which identifies the major themes evident across analyses of all three datasets and describes dominant patterns among these themes. Please refer to Chapter 4 for details about the procedures for coding and analysis used.

First, I report on data gathered from in-depth interviews with students, establishing a foundation of information about student participants, incorporating findings from class field notes and student surveys wherever pertinent. In the second section, the same approach is taken with professor data. Analysis of assignment text data is reported in the third section, with interpretations supported by evidence gathered in the discourse-based interviews conducted with students and professors. I include descriptive and/or quantifiable characteristics of data wherever these are relevant and available.

Additional data are provided in appendices.

### **Student Data**

Each student in the subgroup that consented to be interviewed ( $n = 15$ ) was interviewed twice, once at the start of term and once at the end (except for one student, who participated only in the first interview). Student interview questions sought to establish students' disciplinary affiliation, examine their roles and communities, identify

their expectations and practices related to writing, explore their perceptions of academic reading and writing in anthropology, and examine their beliefs about writing and motivations to write in the context of the final assignment they wrote for their class. These interviews yielded 609 pages of transcripts. Findings taken from in-class surveys of all student participants across the two classes (n = 37) and the analysis of field notes written in these two classes are integrated where appropriate.

### **Student identities and affiliations**

The 15 students interviewed were third and fourth-year undergraduates, except for one student who was in second year. They identified themselves with three of the four disciplinary subfields: 6 identified sociocultural anthropology (SC) as their major interest, 5 identified archaeology, and 4 identified physical anthropology/paleoanthropology (PA) as their major; no students identified linguistics as their major or minor, though one student started in linguistics before transferring to SC. Although 13 of the 15 students were taking the mandatory SC concepts (theory) class at the time of the study, fewer than half (n = 6) claimed an interest in sociocultural anthropology. None of the 15 students expressed interest in learning about anthropology's theoretical foundations. Eight of the 13 students taking the SC course claimed that the SC course's mandatory status in the program was their only or primary reason for taking the course. Their feelings about this obligation were generally resigned or ambivalent; for example, "I don't like the sociocultural stuff. If I had the choice, I'd probably take this [course] over the [second-year theory course] I took last year just because it's more useful, but if I really had my choice I'd take another archeology course." (Anna). Others were more blunt: "The course? Because it's required." (David).

Students taking the paleoanthropology (PA) course, on the other hand, appeared to be more intrinsically motivated by the topic itself. The course, which was an elective (i.e., not mandatory in the program), was especially appealing to three of the seven students taking it. Suzanne, explaining her interest, claimed, “When I was a little girl I was really interested, like I was going to meet paleoanthropologists! And you know, everyone was going to be a ballerina and firefighter, and I was going to be a paleoanthropologist.” Even for those students whose primary disciplinary interest was not paleoanthropology, the PA course was still seen as desirable and relevant: “You had to apply for it, [the PA] class, so I applied for all of them that you could apply for and then I ended up getting into all them so I just accepted them. I figured they were good classes to have.” (Alexis).

Regarding their interest in anthropology itself, most students identified the discipline as an interest that grew for them following their arrival at university, typically after other initial interests waned or their progression in other programs was redirected. For instance, Cori claimed, “I was going to go into music, but I didn’t know what I wanted to do and... then I really liked the bio-arch... and I just, I really really enjoy finding out about, like, how we evolved into what we are...” Other students, like David, described how an indirect interest became centered on the discipline:

[I chose] anthropology because I have an interest, I guess, in other people and what makes them tick, so anthropology, sociology or psychology – all would have worked I guess, but, yea, that’s about as good as an answer I can give. I don’t know why I chose anthropology over any of the others other than it is a bit more of a fit – uh, looking at other societies and cultures specifically.

A small number of students, like Suzanne who always wanted to be a paleoanthropologist, provided evidence of a more purposeful engagement with the field. Maggie's response, for instance, was among the more passionate, signaling her commitment to the discipline, even though anthropology was not originally her first choice at university:

[I] saw a half credit in anthro, and I was like 'oh, that looks interesting.' Like I'm, I always say my passion is people, like that's just my thing. I love dealing with people, so I took it and by the end of the semester, I said 'That's it, this is what I'm doing for the rest of school,' and I never looked back.

Students' emergent but perhaps shallow interest in anthropology was confirmed by their responses to the question of whether they intended to continue in the discipline by pursuing graduate studies or professional work in the field. Most students (9/15) identified alternate goals (e.g., teaching, medical school), no clear goal as yet, or a reluctance to commit effort to pursuing possible careers in anthropology. Barbara, for example, said, "If I could be guaranteed a job in anthropology in like biological anthropology or something... I would totally do it..., but it's just not, I don't know. It doesn't seem feasible, like a feasible job. Like how much demand is there for an anthropologist, really?" Students' responses on the in-class survey showed similar proportions: only 35% (13/37) claimed that anthropology was a career goal for them, while most identified it simply as their academic major or minor. Some students in the interview subgroup who did report a career goal in anthropology described vague, perhaps idealistic, aspirations: "Yeah, I'd like to get a Master's degree and then go out and do field research, ideally in paleoanthropology or archeology. And just do the travel

to some exotic location where I'd be working in the field and then when I'm ready to settle down, I'm looking at working in a museum of some sort" (Julie). Only two students had clearly articulated goals of working as a professional within anthropology: one as a paleoanthropologist and one as a professor. Overall, the picture that emerges of students' disposition to the discipline is one that is largely naïve, provisional, and situated, directed to pursuing academic rather than professional interests. Only a few students demonstrated deeply held engagement with or awareness of the professional nature of the discipline itself. Nevertheless, students did value anthropology as an academic endeavor because it allowed them to explore personal interests related to the discipline even if those interests were not identified with their future aspirations.

### **Student roles and communities**

Students' orientation to anthropology primarily as an academic interest was evident not only through their professed reasons for being in the program or in their future aspirations, but also through their behavior in class and their social interactions around class. In reading through my class field notes and my journal entries, it is clear that the students in the SC and PA classes behaved in a manner typical (stereotypical?) of undergraduate students: I made many references to students taking notes either by hand or on their laptops, looking through their textbooks and following the professors' points, raising hands for questions, watching /listening to the professor, examining artefacts, reading handouts, going up at break or after class to ask questions, silence or no response to professors' questions, animated response to professors' questions. There were also many field note references to students using their laptops to surf the Internet or read email, students sleeping, eating, drinking, checking their nails, looking bored, playing

video games, leaving class, talking, doing crossword puzzles, even reading novels during class. Conversations among students before and after class and during breaks often focused on clarifying course and assignment expectations (“When is it due? There’s a journal we have to do? If the paper is due this week, and the presentation is next week...”). Students also sought out details about and compared their progress (“Have you started... Did you finish... How many pages... What’s your topic?”). Sometimes they shared gossip or jokes about their professors (“He’s always covered in chalk dust”). I also heard comments about students’ perceived valuing and negotiation of academic work (“It’s only worth 10%? He gives you extra marks if you go see him. Just make it up.”). Most of these behaviours would not be surprising to anyone familiar with schooling in North America.

The diversity of behaviours – ranging from totally disengaged to enthusiastic – suggests students occupied a wide range of learner roles, some of which might be categorized as *novice learners*, while others might be identified as *expert* or *near-expert learners*. The novice/expert distinction is obviously proposed here on the basis of students’ demonstrable academic actions, not on the length of schooling, since all students belonged roughly to the same cohort. Tellingly, in a conversation with several classmates near the end of term, one student’s question about plans to continue to graduate school was answered by another student with a shrug and the comment “we’ve been in school since we were 4 or 5” (fieldnotes, April 8). This response indicates the speaker’s awareness of her long-standing student status and suggests anticipation of alternate role possibilities.

Another observation from my field notes about students' relationships within the academic community is that there were almost no documented conversations among students about course topics or concepts, either prior to class or afterwards. In other words, I observed no students outside of class continuing with a discussion or issue that was raised in class (though of course this does not mean such conversations did not take place outside of my hearing). An exception was a recount of a talk given by a visiting professor that was shared with me and several other students before the PA class one day. The student in this case demonstrated genuine enthusiasm and interest in the visiting professor's research, though it should be noted that this student was a member of the student society that helped organize this professor's visit. Further to this point, in my diary on the first day of the PA class, I wrote, "The class today was interesting because I'd forgotten that undergrad classes are so heavy on lecture format." This was a reference not only to the pedagogical format of the class, but an observation about the limited participation of students in discussions about anthropological content in class. These observations stand in contrast to students' stated interest in the discipline and its issues, suggesting a passive learner role was still common among students.

Finally, students' roles as participants in social communities with their peers was difficult to gauge from my perspective as a participant-observer in the two classes. Students often appeared to interact very little. For example, after a month of classes, the professor in the PA class asked for a volunteer to supply class notes to a student missing that day "who contacted me because she said she didn't know anyone in the class" (Rob, Feb 4). My field notes taken in this small PA class, which was held in a classroom big enough for 50 students, document how students often chose to sit far apart in separate

rows of desks, with only one or sometimes two clusters forming. In contrast, the SC class, which had a one-hour tutorial in addition to the lecture, involved many more students, and they were usually crowded into the classroom. The limited space in both the tutorial room and classroom, plus the greater number of people enrolled in the class, resulted in proximity and the promotion of interaction between students as well as between students and professor. My field notes document more lively exchanges in the tutorials than in the larger lecture classes.

Beyond the classroom, it was notable to me that during my interviews with the students, little mention was ever made of other students, with the exception of one instance when a student referred to a discussion with a classmate (also a participant in this study) about their assignment topics and cautiously mentioned his name. While this reticence likely reflects students' respect for confidentiality and may have been influenced by the formal research context of the study, it was nevertheless notable because it highlighted the strong sense of individualism that seemed to be the expected norm for student behaviour. Much was made, and noted by students, of the need to develop one's own opinions and avoid copying or plagiarizing others in their academic work, and this may have resulted in a reluctance for students to see each other as colleagues. In both classes, there were no group activities or opportunities to work with others. This individualism may have had repercussions on students' willingness to ask peers for feedback on their writing. Many students said they asked family members for feedback, but were reluctant to ask student colleagues. As Maggie explained, "I don't really know, like, really know people well in anthropology because, I mean, we go to

class and then we leave. We don't really have any groupwork" (Jan. 23). As experienced by the students, anthropology is an independent undertaking.

Two final points about students' community bear mentioning. The first concerns the role of students' families, which receives mention because students did acknowledge family members for providing advice and academic support, as well as being an external responsibility students needed to attend to. For instance, my field notes describe one student who came to class dressed in a formal suit because he was attending to a family obligation directly after class. Other examples include students who identified family members as editors of their writing assignments, or as trusted advisors who counseled them about study skills, or provided them with encouragement during exams. For many students, the physical distance that might exist between them and their families did not eliminate attention to family relationships, and students readily acknowledged their roles as family members. This contrasts with their reticence in mentioning classmates and peers.

The second point concerns the role played by a mock-conference in the PA class at the end of term that required students to present their research papers in class as if they were at an academic conference. The professor encouraged students to approach this assignment as a professional experience, and students largely responded in kind. Compared to their mostly solitary activity in the rest of the course (and in the SC course), students did find opportunity to interact with each other through this assignment. My field notes and interviews with students record how nervous they were to speak in public, how one student practiced oral pronunciation of difficult words, how they identified typographical errors in each other's presentations, how they coached each other in ways

to ask (or not ask) questions at the presentations, how they asked peers for signs to signal they were speaking clearly and were understood, and how they provided compliments to each other on their work. In contrast to field notes that described passive engagement in many previous PA classes, my descriptions of students during the class conference days identified not only higher levels of nervousness and uncertainty regarding how they were to behave, but also greater interaction, engagement, and more participation from a larger number of students. Their behavior more resembled that of graduate students than what they had exhibited at any prior point in class. When asked at the final interview about their impressions of the conference, students in the focus subgroup consistently gave it positive evaluations and spoke of it as an excellent learning opportunity despite their nervousness. Anna, echoing others' comments, said, "I've never been to a conference, so I wasn't sure what was going on. Now, I think that I've got it down... And if I were to do it again, I'd be even more comfortable, obviously. Since this was the first time that I'm doing it, it's going to be very stressful even if it was a presentation on my most favourite thing in the whole world. This is a very stressful experience." As an experience that was unusual in comparison to their typical academic routines, the conference provided an opportunity for students to talk with each other and with their professor in alternate ways and in alternate roles, and to see each other performing a different repertoire of academic behaviours. For both students and professors, the conference provided a chance to role play as colleagues responding to each others' work. Students claimed it helped to improve their academic and oral skills, and based on their interview comments they were clearly aware of the different expectations and benefits related to enacting these professional academic behaviours.

## **Student writing self-assessment**

When asked whether they felt confident as writers in anthropology, half the focus group students (8/15) claimed a high degree of confidence, citing their ability to adapt to disciplinary demands and respond to feedback they had received. Three other students claimed a moderate level of confidence, acknowledging that their level of interest in a topic affected their performance; their answers suggested that humility or self-imposed high expectations might also have influenced their confidence assessments downward. Most students, then, were confident that they could write well in the discipline. On the other hand, the perception that writing is difficult, not only as a process but also as a finished textual product, led four students to report feeling little or no confidence as writers, regardless of how positively their writing had been assessed previously. David reported, “I don’t feel like I deserve any of them [previous good marks]. I write too slow, I don’t like what I write. It takes me a long time. It takes me a long time to research it. I really struggle at it. If I was smart I wouldn’t have to struggle and I wouldn’t have to work so hard at it.” Similarly, Mia said “I struggle with writing. I’m not a great writer. I think it’s ‘cause I’m so used to – like when I write in business it doesn’t even look remotely like what I write here. And so what I base my papers on are usually a little bit different. Like the ones I’ve had to write with theory in them usually end up just terrible.”

When students’ self-assessments were compared with the marks they later received on their course papers, however, two of the four students who had little/no confidence in their writing ability received marks of 88% and 80%, and two of the three students claiming moderate levels of confidence took home grades of 92% and 90% on

their papers. These discrepancies indicate that some students' modest or negative perceptions of their own writing abilities were not in line with their current writing abilities or achievements in the discipline, providing some support for the view that these students were either overly modest or unaware of how their writing would compare to academic expectations. For the remaining two students with little confidence though, their perceived difficulties were reflected to some extent in the marks they subsequently received: e.g., of the two students who reported no confidence, one failed to hand in the final paper, and the other student received a mark of 75% (or B)—note that the lowest assignment mark was 70%. The third student who reported moderate confidence levels received both a high B and a low B on papers for each class.

In contrast, of the eight students who claimed high levels of confidence in writing, more than half received high or relatively high marks on their final papers: three received A's (with one student receiving the highest mark given in either class, 94%), two received both an A and a B for papers in the two classes (in each case with a spread of 12 or more percentage points between the marks, with the higher mark reflecting their major), while three students received mid to high B's. These findings suggest that students generally rated their writing abilities fairly accurately: those who were confident about their writing tended to produce texts that received evaluations supporting those positive perceptions, whereas the minority who reported little confidence in their writing ability tended to be unreliable judges of their own work, producing in some cases texts that were not of much lower quality than those of their peers who claimed greater confidence in writing.

## **Student writing processes**

A series of interview questions were directed to analyzing the practices undertaken by students when they write, including their expectations and perceptions about writing in anthropology. When asked to identify how they wrote in response to their assignment, most students described similar approaches and steps. Two elements, however, – choosing a topic and revision – were discussed in ways that demonstrated conflicting and qualitatively different approaches by groups of students. These elements are presented first.

Analysis indicated that choosing a topic for their major research assignment was a site of negotiation for students – although they did not label it as such – and their descriptions demonstrated this negotiating process to be one that required balancing the demands of the professor and their own demands/needs, which often included personal interests. For some students, these assignment demands presented few conflicts and were easily resolved: “He provided us with a list [of topics]. I mean you could come up with anything you wanted, but there was one there I wanted to do, so I just picked it” (Maggie). The intersection of her interests with that of the professor meant that Maggie saw the negotiation of topic as a straight-forward exchange. Other students, however, found the negotiation less simple. Nina, for instance, stated: “Right now I’m just trying to find a topic that I can deal with and can find enough information on, and then after that, I got to find out a plan.” For Nina, personal interest was not identified as a possible basis for topic choice. Instead, in addition to anticipating a search for source materials, she admitted to “trying to find a topic that I can deal with” which appears to refer not simply to a selection criterion, but also to an acknowledgement of unnamed limitations

that affect her choice. Other students indicated what these factors might be that they “deal with” that serve to limit their choices when choosing a topic. Leah said,

Most of the time I go into my professor’s office and I - I’m one of those people who are really hesitant to write about something if I don’t know really where I’m going with it. And also, I’m very, I can’t think of the word right now, at the beginning I’m not confident when I start writing my stuff. So I’m very unsure of myself, and I don’t know if my topic is correct, or, you know, if I should be looking at something else.

This academic insecurity, both in writing about their views and about subject matter, led some students, as it did Leah, to request help from their professors. Seeking resolution from the professor, however, was not without its own complications. Anna noted, “So [the prof] will say, ‘I don’t know about *this*, it would be interesting to do your paper about this,’ and you don’t have to, but you’ll know you might have something that they want to read in it [if you do accept the professor’s advice].” In this case, as the student suggested, a professor’s naming of a possible topic may offer a hint identifying what he/she may want to read about in students’ papers. This hint presents a strong incentive for the student to select that topic in an attempt to please the professor, providing yet another factor to consider in the negotiation. Choosing a topic to write on, then, can be seen as a point at which multiple expectations meet, and most students I interviewed responded by seeking some resolution that satisfied both their personal and academic needs.

For a smaller proportion of students (20%), however, choosing a topic was not negotiated on the basis of competing personal and academic demands, but of converging

demands. These students' choice of topic was undertaken on the assumption that their selection would inherently integrate personal interests with disciplinary interests. This was typically demonstrated in comments that showed students selecting topics by deeply engaging the field via readings in a way that suggested their personal interests were tacitly understood to be valid, their professor's interest was assumed, and other concerns (such as the unnamed ones that Nina sought "to deal with") were non-existent or irrelevant. In other words, their negotiation was approached from a position that suggested they were engaged with the disciplinary value of the topic and their own anticipated response to it. In describing how he chose a topic, Aaron stated, "I tend to think I guess. Maybe I write in my head, I don't know. I'll sit and I'll read and I'll flip through journal articles and I'll read this and then I'll read that and then I sit back and I'll think. This goes on for maybe two weeks or so." He continued later, "It took me a long time to come up with a paper topic. It's because if you don't really have a grasp of some of the ideas, how are you ever going to come up with some sort of comment on the idea? You have to be able to grasp the idea in the first place." This assumption that his thoughtful commentary on a topic was desirable stands in contrast to that of Nina above, whose primary concern was not about her own contribution to a disciplinary conversation, but about identifying a topic whose content she was capable of addressing adequately.

For this second group of students, a deep engagement or level of thinking was built into their approach to the course, and sometimes included a process for keeping track of the ideas generated from their reading, enabling them to link these ideas to both academic and disciplinary interests. Lily described how she came up with a topic:

Well, usually during the course when I'm doing the reading, if I get an idea in my head I would just write it down on the side and then when I have something coming up, for example the annotated bibliography is due on Tuesday, so I have to go home and look at my readings and look at the side notes and see what, what I was thinking at that time. And then I narrow down kind of the focus of whatever, what I want to write about.

Denise also described a process of extended thinking linked with reading prior to choosing her topic: "First I research. I have to figure out my topic. And then I get all my research and I write notes... And then after that I just read it all over again, and then think of what it says because then I have a sense." For Denise, the process of extensive reading and thinking about the literature provides the site for engaging with a topic. In other words, she describes a process of thinking that leads to greater engagement in order to then be able to write about her topic.

So, while both groups of students identified choosing a topic as a site of attention and contention, the larger group appeared to perceive topic choice as an obstacle, one which required that they bridge personal interests with academic concerns: they saw topic choosing as a hurdle to overcome to bring these concerns into alignment. The smaller group, however, saw topic selection as an opportunity to develop and contribute their own opinion on a topic, an opportunity they identified through reflection and reading.

Likewise, revision served as a site of negotiation and some contention for students. For the majority, revision was seen as an integral and important part of their writing process, though revision processes themselves varied widely. Interview comments indicated that some students revised as they wrote, others revised and

proofread after writing; some wrote multiple drafts, or re-wrote completely, or revised continuously, or asked others to “edit” for them. Denise stated, “I’m very hard on my own writing, and honestly, I’ll write a rough copy a week in advance and edit it like every single day, changing it completely.” Maggie was less confident about her revision strategies: “Something I need to work on is sometimes I just need to, like, write the whole thing and then go back and change as much as I want, because sometimes I try and revise as I’m going along and that just totally messes me up because then I forget what my point was.” As demonstrated by these comments, students tended to view revision – no matter how they did it – largely as a self-reflexive practice, one of making the text conform to their expectations. As Aaron noted, “Then I guess the self doubt comes in and I’m really critical, I write it and then I’m, you know, I’m just, I feel so good because I’m done and then I look at it and it’s like ‘this isn’t really that good.’ So then I fiddle with it and fiddle, and I’ll fiddle with it until about an hour before it’s due.”

This back-and-forth negotiation between most students and their texts was resisted, however, by about 25% of the students. These students demonstrated ambivalence towards, or lack of awareness about, their revision activities, as revealed in Julie’s comment: “I don’t really do a lot of revision. I go through it a couple times just to make sure it makes sense, to make sure that I haven’t got any word, spelling errors and the like but [that’s all].” Interestingly, despite her recognition that she was engaged in some negotiation of meanings with her text (“just to make sure it makes sense”), Julie minimized the importance of this activity and instead stressed the superficial elements of her revising (“spelling errors and the like”). Other students resisted revision more actively. Leah remarked, “I find that once I write something, I write something. Like,

I'll type it all up and then I don't really move things around very much. I don't even, I barely even proofread my essays, which is a good thing that I'm a good speller."

Sometimes resistance was even more forceful:

David: I do not proof read, it's not my thing. I don't like it and I don't care.

Boba: Do you revise a lot?

D: Yes. I do revise a lot and I read it as I write it, so that's sort of where my proofreading lies, and once I've written it I, I do not read it again, ever.

These students' comments suggest contradictory impulses – on the one hand, similar to the renegotiation of meaning that was undertaken by the larger group of students during revision, they made some effort to address concerns that their texts conform to their own expectations, albeit mostly at a superficial level. On the other hand, they actively resisted this negotiation, minimized it, and passively or actively refused to acknowledge their participation in the practice. It is unclear from their comments why these students resisted revision in this way.

While choosing a topic and revising can be seen as sites of negotiation that a majority of students approached in one way while a minority approached in a distinctly different way, the other elements identified by students as constituting their writing process showed diversity within a limited range of activities (as did the variety of revision strategies outlined above), but no strong distinctions between groups of students regarding these elements. All students, for instance, identified the intervening steps between choosing a topic and revising as some variation on activities that included

finding and reading sources, note-taking, organizing information, and drafting. These are described next.

The first step after choosing a topic was, for almost all students, gathering source materials and reading them. Students identified a range of practices for identifying and gathering information, from database searches, to going to the library, seeing their professors, and reading scholarly books, general books, journal articles, textbooks, and course texts (both within and beyond the course in question). Students demonstrated awareness of a multitude of academic and other sources available to them and seemed comfortable in talking about accessing these resources. Reflecting perhaps their status as upper year students, they approached the collection of source materials by drawing on important skills such as library searching and citation tracking that they appeared, to a good extent, to have mastered. The reading of source materials and students' interactions with texts arose as a significant theme in the data analysis, so this is now discussed in detail.

## **Reading**

Students were required to read extensively in preparation for both SC and PA classes every week. The texts they read consisted of peer-reviewed journal articles, chapters, and books written by both leading figures in anthropology's history and current researchers. University-printed course packs that compiled many of the required readings were available for each class. A summary describing all reading texts is listed in Appendix J. There was no overlap between the texts read in the SC or PA classes. In addition to course texts, students read other texts of their own choosing for their research papers.

Most prominently, students' perceptions of the texts they read were shaped by their identities as students; i.e., their responses suggested that they saw these texts as vehicles for transmitting information they were required to master in the discipline. This mastery, however, was not perceived as a simple memorization of information, but a more critical engagement with the material. Julie, for instance, claimed, "...what the authors that I'm reading are doing is basically developing their own theories based on the information that they have, and the types of things the professors are looking for out of us is to be able to think critically about the material and draw our own conclusions." Students were very aware of the variety of perspectives and expert opinions demonstrated in these texts and recognized that they were expected not only to become familiar with the positions that were represented, but also to assess and evaluate these positions and sources. Julie explained her critical evaluation process by stating, "Well, I just go through, I guess, and evaluate my sources in terms of how clear they are, how recent they are, and how useful they are, and just drop what I can. Drop ten [sources] and take the best of the material that I have" (Jan 21).

In order to engage critically, however, many students struggled with what they saw as discipline-specific characteristics, most notably language. Cori noted,

With the scholarly stuff that I read, they use a lot of jargon. That stuff's a lot of what makes it difficult to do the readings because the anthropologist or whoever is doing the reading, they'll like make up their own word for something that they've seen, or a concept – they'll just throw it in there and they'll slightly define it and then you have to be like okay, what are they really trying to get at? Why did they use that word when they could just use something more simple that I

would understand more easily and be able to apply it? But they use these specific words that they've made up for their essays or their articles.

According to Cori, the terms used to identify concepts or an anthropologist's experiences appear to be idiosyncratic or created haphazardly, serving to obscure meaning rather than enhance it. These words seem to be "made up" to serve individuals' needs rather than to emerge in any systematic way, suggesting that some students may see anthropology as a field driven by individuals rather than as a communally driven enterprise of making meaning.

The struggle with terminology and discipline-specific language was particularly difficult for those students who identified with the science subfields but were taking the mandatory sociocultural theory class for their degree. Cori claimed, "If I'm doing, like, a bioarch essay I won't find a lot of jargon in those articles, whereas if I'm doing something for cultural, like for my 400 level class, you could get articles that would be filled with jargon that you wouldn't necessarily, like, I wouldn't understand, and I might need someone to help me clarify the concepts in the paper because of that." Aaron, a top student in paleoanthropology, felt as though he needed a translator for his SC readings: "...the way they lay it out, it's really complicated, like they don't just come out and say it. Going to class is great because usually teachers will tell you what the guy is trying to say in the paper and you go, 'oh, that's what he was trying to say' and then you look back at it and you go, 'oh, so now I sort of get it.'" Students therefore not only struggled with the jargon of their texts, but also saw themselves as newcomers to this language, with others (such as anthropology researchers) able to create the words and rules, and professors acting as interpreters or translators.

Interestingly, despite the frequent, highly specialized scientific nomenclature in the paleoanthropology course, no student complained about understanding or using Latin or anatomical terminology. One reason for this may be that few students came to the physical anthropology courses without any science background, whereas most students had had little exposure to the language of academic theorizing prior to this year. As Cori explained, “If I [hadn’t taken] the skeletal biology class, a lot of the stuff that they discuss would have went right over my head, and I found with my, when I was in second year, my primate evolution class, and my psych 200 level, bio 200 level, like a lot of that stuff kind of went over my head just because I didn’t know what it was.” The implication is clearly that her exposure to specialized terminology in earlier courses was similarly difficult at the time, and that it was early exposure to anatomical jargon that enabled Cori to better understand her current PA content.

Using teachers as translators was not the only strategy students employed to overcome their unfamiliarity when reading disciplinary language; for example, “...as I’m going through if there are words that I don’t understand I underline them and I write them on the side, and I go home and I search the dictionary, and I have to write down the definition ‘cause otherwise I don’t know what I’m talking about.” (Mia). Such conscious attention to identifying and understanding new words was not uncommon. Denise stated, “I know there’s a lot of kinship terms that [Microsoft] Word documents don’t think are actual words. I do find that there’s a lot of words that the professor would say and I’d swear that I wrote it down phonetically and it doesn’t come up anywhere and I’ll look in, like, Wikipedia and yes, it is a word and then I’ll recognize it.” Most students noted

similar problems with vocabulary in understanding the texts they were reading and struggled to become familiar with abstract terminologies.

In contrast to voicing their difficulties with the lexicon, some students focused on their knowledge of how to find and use texts, which was seen as a strength. These students spoke confidently about their uses of texts:

I look for my resources is one [step]. I finish an article. I look for the citings, like if I find something really really interesting or that will be really really helpful, I highlight it and I look for the citings around it and go to the end and find the article that is cited at the end of the article and find that article and see if that one will help me. (Mia)

Students demonstrated skills not only in using sources to expand the number of relevant sources to read, but also in synthesizing information from them and thus engaging critically and expansively with the topics of the papers on which they wrote:

I read each article, and then after, because I read the articles from class and the books, every time I finished reading an article I would think like what would it connect with, so I would write down like on the side, on the back of the paper, the article I would write down the first thing, okay, so this one connects with Mary Douglas and what she said about purity, or disconnects with Basso and what he said about language. (Nina)

Students' facility with sources and their use of strategies to make connections between sources draw attention to the varying levels of expertise in reading behaviours that these students were able to demonstrate, on the one hand showing increasing expertise in a generalizable academic skills (finding and using source material), yet on the other hand

showing themselves as relative novices in comprehending and using the language of a specific field as used in these sources.

A sizable minority of students (6/15), however, discussed finding and/or using sources as a problem area for them. For these students, the difficulty was not simply an inability to find sources, but rather one of selecting the most appropriate source material. Mia noted, “If you don’t have the right information you just can’t write as well. I find that’s what usually, I find that’s one of the things that usually happens to me. I just don’t have the information – cause I’m not a good researcher, cause I was never taught that.” Julie, despite her structured process of critical assessment, explained her difficulty with source material: “So basically what winds up happening is I get into the topic, I start reading, I keep reading, I turn around and I’ve got 24 pages of notes for a 10 page paper.” Daniel identified his biggest writing concern as “It’s probably me getting a grasp on all the examples to make sure I can use them all. Cause sometimes I feel like, um, to give an example you need to give context, but you don’t necessarily have space for context, so it’s like, do you stick with one example and use it throughout, or is that even possible?” As these excerpts demonstrate, many students struggle with complex concerns about source use – identifying important information from sources, limiting source materials, and integrating source material effectively – even after basic searching skills are mastered. These concerns may reflect students’ greater awareness of the power of source materials and growing recognition that they need to attend more carefully to the ways they use such sources within the field.

This more complex view of source use extends to conventional citation practices, which were increasingly internalized by students. Lily demonstrated in her comments

the development of a mature approach to citation: “I used to use just MLA, but when [the professor] gave us this style to use, I’ve been using this style, just because in anthropology it’s really important to know the year of the publication that you’re citing. And then the in-text citation goes with year and page number, so I think I’ve been using it since he said to...In the lower levels...they just kind of say, use whatever style that you like” (April 29). As evident in Lily’s words, these upper year students were becoming increasingly familiar with and understanding of the academic conventions that apply to anthropology. This growing understanding reflected some awareness of the epistemological foundations influencing source use within the discipline, i.e., why it might be important to include year of publication in anthropology when it is less important in fields that use Modern Languages Association style for source citation.

In addition to demonstrating that finding, reading, and citing texts were prominent in the development of their research skills, several students discussed using professional texts as models that informed their own writing. Nina, whose first language was not English, explicitly used course texts to improve her written work: “I try to make [my texts] similar to the journals and my writing is starting to evolve more and more.” Julie took a similarly direct approach: “Style wise I was trying to model [my paper] after the journal articles that I’ve read, that were published in anthropological journals.” Some students, like Leah, found that readings helped her gain knowledge about appropriate text structures: “Also, I think the main structure comes from just, you know, reading a lot of academic material now, where I know they all have a discussion section at the end, and I’m like, maybe I should do that too. I don’t know...I just took the format of the other

stuff that I was reading” (Jan 23). Daniel also viewed the texts he read as models for writing:

...if we’re going to study it, then it must be professional anthropologists writing correctly, otherwise why would we be studying them? So yeah, I think it’s a little bit of imitation, maybe it will take me a couple of years to develop my own style as far as writing in anthropology goes.

Lily took a similar, though more philosophical perspective:

Maybe [I do] not emulate it, but kind of, if you like somebody’s style of writing, it’s helpful to kind of see how they’re writing and how they’re bringing the point across, and that informs your own writing. I don’t try to copy what they’re doing but I do see at the end how things sound like, a little bit like what I’ve read.

Though these students showed some awareness of the influence of the texts they read on their writing, most students, however, did not acknowledge using the texts they read as models for their own writing. Only a few students acknowledged that reading improved their writing in anthropology. Responses on the survey, for instance, suggested that most students attributed their writing improvement to increased practice with *writing* as they progressed through their undergraduate program; only two students identified doing more reading as having a positive effect on their writing.

Many students had difficulty describing similarities between their own academic writing and professional anthropology writing. When asked whether their texts were similar to those written by professional anthropologists, some students claimed that the difficulty in writing texts similar to those they read were more practical than cognitive or stylistic: according to Barbara, “...it seems like [anthropologists] take a lot more time on

what they do, they write their paper and it takes them like a year to write it, or it takes like a couple years; like, I have a month to write a paper.” Other students identified professional authors’ personal characteristics as contributing to quality differences that could not (in their views) be bridged. Cori noted the relevance of an individual’s wider experience and age: “I wouldn’t have a lot of experience to put into an article if I were to write one. Like, I have my own experiences in undergrad, where he has his experience out in the field and he has his experience as a professor at university.” Such beliefs and perceptions limited the extent to which students felt the texts they read were appropriate models for their own writing. These views suggest that despite professors’ emphasis on encouraging students to take a stand on course-relevant issues, many students recognized a clear distinction between their own ability to contribute compared to that of professional anthropologists.

One way the perceived gap between professional and student writing may have been diminished is if students recognized genre characteristics of the texts they read as ones they themselves were increasingly able to reproduce. Few students, however, were able to identify specific genre characteristics of the published texts they read. Some superficial elements of form and general characteristics of published works were noted, such as the greater length, the obvious benefits of professional editing, and the “more organized” nature of professional writing. One student who took both classes, when asked to describe a characteristic of anthropology texts, claimed, “...[in professional texts] there’s a lot of cat-fighting and people who just go after one person and say no, your ideas are wrong...I feel like at this point that I am really well-prepared to work at an anthropology journal and just write reviews of other people’s articles” (Anna).

According to Anna, harsh critique appeared to be a characteristic, and even a goal, of anthropology writing, and she felt she was prepared to participate in this activity because of her experiences reading and writing in the discipline. Another student, Daniel, claimed this same feature of professional texts was one he felt reluctant to attempt: “I feel like it’s hard for me as a person to make critical comments about another person’s work. So like if I was writing a paper it would be harder for me to be really critical of another author, which a lot of people do.” This perception of a field in which critique is prominent was supported by a student who commented in his in-class survey that anthropology writing was characterized by being “maybe a bit polemic and blunt.”

Other characteristics of anthropology texts that students sometimes noticed were the extensive use of sources to provide examples and support for an argument, as well as the use of specific formatting (e.g., sections in lab reports, use of subheadings and citations in papers) or types of content (e.g., direct quotations and detailed anecdotes in ethnographies). This suggests students had minimal but growing awareness of or experience with identifying generic elements of texts.

Much of students’ genre awareness, however, was superficial, vague, and not deeply understood. Leah, for instance, claimed, “Some of the TAs said that [my assignment responses] were very, well, what I think they look for is sciency kind of stuff where you add a lot of detail and lots of data, and they did say that I have that going for me in my reports” (Jan. 23). Students were occasionally aware of the ways that disciplinary expectations impact written genres. Maggie, for instance, said, “I feel like [anthropology texts are] a little bit of a story. Well, they’re not just stories. It’s really, it’s just more descriptive compared to other pieces of writing.” Students’ implicit genre

knowledge was explored through the second, discourse-based interview that focused on students' own texts. These findings are discussed later with the analysis of texts.

Finally, perceived differences between anthropology subfields' texts played a role in how some students were able to use readings as models not only for writing, but for thinking: "In archaeology, I try to organize my thoughts like the readings I do, so I think in that sense, you know, in archaeology... [but] socioanthropology, I don't think I could ever even conceptualize something like that" (Leah). For Leah, the connection between reading and thinking was clear in archaeology, but it was not easy to transfer the strategies she used to make sense of and think about her readings in archaeology to readings in SC anthropology. For Aaron, it was not the concepts or textual formats of the field that were problematic in reading SC texts, but what he termed *style*: "It's not, I guess it's not the format, it's the style, it's just the way they write [in SC]. It's the way they select their words and they use fancy language and they go on and on and on and you don't know what they're saying." The different and unfamiliar ways that meaning is made in the anthropology subfields are thus perceived by students as an obstacle not only to their comprehension of the subfield, but to their implicit acceptance of its legitimacy.

In conclusion, reading figured prominently as a disciplinary activity among students in this study. As upper year students, they demonstrated some awareness of the role of reading as a vehicle for gaining insider knowledge of the field, and they demonstrated notable strengths especially in their ability to find and use readings as sources for their assignments. Despite some recognition that the reading of anthropology texts could influence their writing, students' explicit awareness of few generic features of these texts or the rhetorical purposes of these features in the discipline suggests that text

readings exerted limited explicit influence on students' own writing development. More extensive genre awareness might be expected if students consciously used texts as models for their own writing. One characteristic of their reading texts that drew wide attention from students was the use of discipline-specific and unfamiliar language, which served as a prominent obstacle to be overcome by students.

**Other writing process steps: note-taking, organizing, outlining, drafting**

In survey responses, only 16% (6/37) of students claimed no or little familiarity with the writing process (defined as planning, producing text, revising). On the other hand, most students acknowledged following individualized steps in the writing process, with these steps varying from loose and minimal to methodical and elaborate. The actions of note-taking, organizing material, outlining, and writing an initial draft demonstrated no consistent patterns of variability between students; in other words, a variety of actions were undertaken by students to carry out each of these steps. The primary differences noted were in the level of engagement and recursion as evident within and between steps.

Note-taking and organizing, for instance, were described by many students as activities that they carried out to provide order and structure prior to writing. Maggie, for instance, provides a description of how she moves from reading sources to writing:

Maggie: Well, this is probably an inefficient way to write papers, but I take all of [my source notes] and put them in piles, so here's one, here's one source, here's another.

Boba: So you make piles by source?

M: Yup. And so my floor is covered in papers everywhere and I start highlighting

and each colour has to do with a different subtopic and so then that way when I sit down to write it, I just sit in the middle of my floor and go, okay, green – here's the first subtopic and then boom boom boom boom put it all together.

B: So how do you know which subtopic to talk about first?

M: Uh, I don't really know. I just kind of...sometimes I just kind of have a feel for what they are after, just reading all the different sources. Cause you just have common points, right?...

B: So do you work at all with an outline?

M: Yes, there's an outline...there's a rough outline before the piles, and normally by the time I'm done the piles, the outline has changed a fair amount. Like just in how things need to be ordered and stuff.

This approach of categorizing source materials and then physically moving them around into separate sections was not uncommon. Re-ordering notes based on some holistic evaluation of interest or logic was also seen in other students, such as Mia:

Well, right before I put [my paper] together I kind of made out, well, pretty much an outline of what my headings are now. So it was just kind of like the things that I wanted to touch upon, so I had, you know, there's my general concept, but here's um, this topic, and then I have to hit this topic, I have to hit this topic, I have to hit – so if the information fell under a given topic then I'd put it there, and if it didn't then I kind of held back on it and then figured out if it belonged and, if so, where? Or if I needed to add an extra topic or something.

In contrast to earlier steps, such as choosing a topic and finding sources, and later steps, such as revising, these middle process steps included strong physical components for

many students. Actions figured prominently, such as making piles of notes, highlighting or underlining text, attaching sticky notes, typing quotations, cutting and pasting into computer files. Students generally put less emphasis on the cognitive processes involved in the middle steps than they did on the physical actions they carried out.

Finally, the writing of an initial draft seemed to be approached by students in two main ways: 1) holistically, by sitting down and beginning to write, or 2) partially, by building up specific sections from bullet points or sentences to complete paragraphs.

Suzanne explains how she writes a first draft:

I don't know, I just kind of sit down and write... I just start writing in my paper what I want to argue and then use the references that are there... Sometimes I do, like, intro through to conclusions. Other times I'll write my body and then the intro, conclusion. Sometimes I just write down like two or three sentences at the beginning that's the main idea of my thesis, my argument, and then just write based upon that.

In contrast to this holistic approach, Anna describes a more disjointed approach:

When I go to write my paper I take my outline and my notes and I just kind of take the chunks of notes and put them into my outline where I think they would support the points. And then I just change the points to sentences – it's a very convoluted way of doing it, but I make sure that I get all my sources in... Then I end up deleting some of what I've got and I end up getting more sources while I'm writing it, so it is a bit convoluted, but I mean it works for me. That's how I've written the last six of my papers.

Anna's approach is similar to that of Mia (see above) who used an outline to structure her

work and then incorporated source material as needed to fill out the various sections.

The ways that students approached the middle steps of the writing process revealed a variety of strategies and different approaches. The findings suggest that students saw these steps as opportunities for action – physical action, as opposed to mental activity. They approached these steps with strategies they had improvised for themselves, revealing that they had individualized the writing process in ways that they recognized as possibly inefficient, but nevertheless productive for themselves.

### **Student expectations/goals**

In addition to questions about the process of writing, students were asked about their motivations for writing. When discussing their writing goals, students demonstrated a desire to stake out personal academic and disciplinary claims, which suggests that they were developing a disciplinary or professional approach to their academic work. Several students noted goals of mastering content and related this to a sense of personal and professional satisfaction: “I just want to learn more about [the topic] and I want to do a good job, I want to be proud of whatever it is that I’m handing in” (Denise). Lily stated that “I try to be really clear, and I try to say things in a creative way and that people can remember,” while Barbara said “I want to write an interesting paper, like something that I don’t know if he’d find it interesting, but something that I would like to read.” Though some students admitted that marks were a significant priority, even these students had goals related to developing their own writing or disciplinary expertise. Leah, who said she wanted to “just get through it, and hopefully pull off a 75” also claimed she wanted “to be really in depth, to be very concise...and become an expert in that, you know. I

really, I enjoy essays like that where you have the opportunity to be really thorough and I like that.”

This sense of professionalism, however, of “doing a good job,” for most students did not extend to any awareness of or desire for wider disciplinary participation beyond demonstrating mastery of content for academic purposes. In other words, students wrote primarily with the goal of doing well in school. For many students, the professor was still seen as the primary audience and judge of their work, and thus their goals of making personal claims arose in response to expectations from their professors: “It’s not so much the opinion, but the interpretation that you are going to give it and if you can sustain that interpretation. That’s what *they* [emphasis mine] want to see” (Maggie). Wider participation in disciplinary debates and knowledge building was not always explicitly acknowledged as being a goal of even the most accomplished students: Aaron claimed, “My goal in anthropology, cultural anthropology, is to do really well because I want to get good marks so I can go on [to graduate school]” which led him to admit,

I tell them what I’m supposed to tell them as opposed to what I really think of things... I know teachers will say, ‘well you’ve got a good idea and you present your thing, we’ll judge it objectively,’ but I don’t know, it’s simpler, I think, to [present their idea].

This decision not to risk a good mark by making a potentially controversial claim was not, however, the approach Aaron took in his paleoanthropology major, where he felt comfortable taking an argumentative stance:

If I think I have a perspective on, say, a skull and I think this skull is from this species, and some other guy thinks it’s not, I can just point out all the reasons why

I can draw my conclusion and usually I have a really good argument. [But in] this one [sociocultural topic], it's sort of more mushy, there's no really right or wrong, there's so many interpretations, so you sit around and you outline all the interpretations, and use lots of big words because it's a big-word field.”

It is clear in Aaron's response that the epistemological perspectives of his major are comfortable for him, leading him to believe he could contribute his voice to active participation in the discipline. On the other hand, his discomfort with the language and perspectives put forward by sociocultural frameworks led him to discount its practices and disengage from active participation, ceding his voice willingly to the perceived expectations of the teacher.

Although in their interviews professors said they hoped students would develop confidence enough to participate in the conversations and debates of the discipline, several students were reluctant to believe that they had the necessary knowledge or level of writing ability to make an appropriate contribution. Lack of confidence in their writing was sometimes responsible for this reluctance to consider meaningful engagement in the field beyond the course professor. Anna stated, “I'm not trying to bash my own writing, but like, I just, I don't, I wouldn't feel secure putting something in [to a journal] that other people could read and judge maybe.” According to Mia, “I assume that everything needs to sound like the journal articles we have to read in class, and I know that mine's never going to sound like that.” Comments like these draw attention to students' perceived status as disciplinary novices.

Perceived subfield differences in SC and PA may account for the contradictory views students expressed about the level of subjectivity allowed in writing. Many

students, in both interviews and surveys, commented positively on feeling comfortable including their own opinions, interpretations, and experiences in their writing; for example, “it’s a lot of interpretation, personal interpretation” (Nina); “it can be personal, and use personal pronouns” (survey response), and “Profs so far have encouraged using first person and expressing our own ideas, while in other [disciplines] I have experienced that our own ideas are not to be stressed” (survey response). On the other hand, a few students commented negatively on the impersonal nature of anthropology writing: “Personal feelings and stuff like that, you don’t, you can’t really do that in anthropology very much. It’s all very clinical” (David). A student doing a double major commented on her survey: “...in Anthropology you write and formulate your ideas based on the ideas or theories of others, at least at our level. Accounting writing is more [your own] interpretation of data.” These comments suggest that students vary in their perception of the level of agency allowed to them in their anthropology writing. Some students see the need to interpret secondary source material and their ability to use personal pronouns as evidence that their opinions are sought, while other students identify agency as something more complex. For some students, the need to present their ideas within pre-existing frameworks and theories is seen as a way in which their agency is restricted. How these differences between perceptions of agency are impacted by subfield differences and students’ observed resistance to theoretical thinking is unclear.

### **Professor Data**

The two professors in this study were interviewed twice, once at the beginning and once at the end of term, for a total of about six hours. Interviews sought to examine professors’ roles, identify their expectations for student writing, and explore their views

on disciplinary reading and writing in anthropology. The interviews yielded 100 pages of transcripts. Findings related to professors from the faculty survey and analysis of class field notes are integrated where appropriate.

### **Professor identities and roles**

Both professors were generous in the amount of time they spent talking to me and seemed open in discussing their expectations for writing, student learning, disciplinary practices, and their own experiences. What was notable in contrast to students' reluctance to discuss their peers or mention other students' names was that professors demonstrated no such reticence. Mike, the SC professor, in particular recounted many anecdotes and examples of students to illustrate points he was making. It is unclear whether professors' openness is because they felt their roles as teachers gave them leave to discuss students freely or because they felt comfortable within a formal research setting where they knew confidentiality would be maintained.

Both professors drew on their personal experiences as teachers and researchers and even their own student experiences to explain their perspectives on anthropology and its subfields. Not unexpectedly given their levels of experience, they demonstrated comfort and familiarity with the field and discussed its characteristics with apparent directness and even humour. Rob, the PA professor, joked that at conferences, "sociocultural anthropologists when they 'read a paper', they'll literally read a paper...It's very odd. Physical anthropologists and archaeologists show a lot of pictures and talk in the dark" (Feb. 2). Mike, as a more senior academic, easily slipped into stories about the changes in the field and the university over time to explain what he saw as current problems and limitations in anthropology. He opined, for example, that some

trends, including “the hypertrophy of theory, I mean theory has become a marketing device in some sense” (Jan 26) were having negative effects on students who, in his view, uncritically absorb and repeat questionable theoretical stances. He saw it as part of his role to develop students’ abilities to consider alternate perspectives and conclusions: “It’s really important to look at [the issue]...But I’m really interested in getting people to pay close attention, especially if they become anthropologists or even if they don’t, especially when they’re looking at a situation, to avoid the temptation to jump to a foregone conclusion” (Jan 26). While the goal of learning to withhold judgment may have been recognized by many students, Mike’s critique of the field’s uses of theory, however, was not noted by students, despite the fact that many of them voiced similar disenfranchisement with theory. There is no evidence in my field notes, for instance, that students questioned sociocultural theoretical frameworks explicitly in class. Any critiques or controversies that were broached tended to involve conventional discussion and evaluation of the day’s assigned topic or reading, i.e., discussions were directed at the micro level of content rather than at a meta level of conceptual critique. This is not to suggest, however, that Mike did not mean students to infer such a critique from the positioning and development of topics across the course.

### **Professor expectations**

Both professors spoke assuredly about their expectations for student writing. They expressed the belief that practice and repeated exposure to multiple models were necessary for the development of discipline-specific writing. For them, practice and exposure seemed to refer primarily to reading extensively. Said Mike (1476): “my own sense of it and it’s kind of how I was taught, I suppose, is that the best way to learn how

to write is first of all to read a lot and second of all, to write a lot. So, the more often you do it the better you get at it.” Students’ survey responses and interviews suggested that they failed to internalize completely these professors’ expectations regarding the importance of wide reading in the development of writing expertise. As stated in the section on student reading (above), students generally recognized writing practice but not wide reading as factors contributing to their writing improvement. This is perhaps not surprising given that neither professor made it explicit to students that reading was expected to help them learn to write, and they devoted little class time to explicating good reading practices that students could draw on to improve their writing (see genre, below). Their expectation seemed to be that requiring students to read disciplinary texts and then discussing them in class would enable students to learn how to read and write such texts at increasingly advanced levels.

Both professors described expectations for writing that would garner additional recognition and marks in student papers, though it was unclear how explicitly these expectations were conveyed to students. Mike noted (May 7), in explaining why a student received a high mark on her paper, that:

She is covering an area that we actually didn’t deal with in class much, okay? So she was flying almost entirely on autopilot on this one, and that is something that I give people credit for. As opposed to somebody who is writing on a topic that is very close to what the lecture material involved...so part of it is the degree of difficulty assessment.

Rob described how a student would meet and then exceed expectations for use of sources: “I guess the expectation of [students] using current literature goes hand in hand

with them framing the topic of the paper in such a way that they are going to find current and recent literature that relates to that” (Feb 2). At the final interview, he elaborated:

[Students] will get sources turn up [that I am not familiar with], which I guess would be a reflection of students who are coming to grips with knowing how to use the reference search tools, and yeah, so that sort of is something that ends up working to their advantage...what I would take from that – when I’m seeing things that I didn’t know were out there – is that they’ve really delved into the literature and that they’ve swum around and explored the literature. They haven’t just gone with easy-to-find stuff.

Rob’s recognition of and desire for advanced levels of source use from students was built upon an expectation that students in the PA class needed to find and use sources effectively. This expectation was reinforced by Mike’s requirement that students use consistent, accurate citation style that reflects disciplinary expectations: “I often point students towards the reference list of the text that was used for a particular course. That would generally be a good model to follow.”

As evident in these statements, both professors identified proficient levels of academic literacy as an expectation they had for their students. Not only did they expect students to be able to search for, locate, use, and cite sources, they expected them to do so in ways that were increasingly professional, e.g., “framing the topic in such a way that [they need] recent literature” and “covering an area that we [didn’t address in class].” This expectation for disciplinary or professional ways of thinking and working was described explicitly by Rob (May 24):

To connect with – well, actually that would really be expected of them by third year – that they sort of get a heavy dose of anthropology theory by third year.

Making a connection between what the theory stuff represents and what it is that anthropologists do, what it is that you're reading, yeah, that can be a task or a hurdle [for students].

Both professors, in other words, identified their expectations as encompassing both a foundational level of minimal skill that was largely literacy-based as well as an advanced level of performance that included shifts in thinking about the field and its practices – a level that they recognized was a stretch for students.

### **Reading**

Recall that reading anthropology was treated by many students in this study as a classroom expectation (i.e., reading assignment) and not one that they linked to their own writing improvement. This association of reading with the classroom may be because the amount of weekly reading that professors expected of students in the SC and PA classes was high. Appendix K shows that the SC professor assigned approximately 1403 pages of readings (primarily books) over the course of the year, for an average of about 117 pages every week. The PA professor assigned approximately 679 pages of readings (primarily journal articles) over the term, for an average of about 57 pages per week. In other words, students spent a large amount of time reading for class. It may be that, despite professors' beliefs and intentions, most students associated reading with weekly classroom demands rather than with their own writing.

In contrast to the discrepancy between professors' and students' views on readings' effects, professors echoed students' perspectives on the importance of critical

reading and engagement with texts, with comments that not only repeated the emphasis on critical reading of source materials, but also identified the high bar professors themselves set for critical reading. Mike, for instance, used one course-assigned book “like a litmus test” (Jan 26) to identify how critically astute students were. He claimed that two-thirds of students respond to the challenge and recognize that this book is “not written like all the other stuff they’re used to reading” while the remaining third think it makes no sense. Rob (May 24) stated his view that expertise in critical reading develops over time, and that while upper-level undergraduate students were beginning to read critically, he noticed more improvement in students taking a graduate seminar: “This group that I’ve been working with this term, they gave [an article] a really good critical reading and they were like, ‘how could they put this [poorly written article] in to submission?’” Professors, therefore, conveyed their expectations about critical reading to their students primarily through reading assignments, explicit direction to include their views, and class discussion, so that students recognized their demands for critical reading of texts, though student responses suggest a variety of levels of response to professors’ expectations.

Professors echoed students’ concerns about using discipline-specific language or terminology, but with a twist: whereas students noted and often criticized the prominent use of jargon, they nevertheless viewed specialized terms as something common to professional anthropology writing and desirable/necessary to learn. Professors, on the other hand, were more concerned with the misuse of everyday rather than discipline-specific vocabulary. The professor in the SC class admitted that his greatest concern in student writing was the “haphazard” use of common logical connectors and transition

words (e.g., because, therefore, however, thus). In addition, Mike claimed that he preferred “plain vocabulary, not buzz words” both in student and professional writing. At the same time, he acknowledged that his familiarity with the discipline’s lexicon obscured his ability to identify language that might be problematic for students. When I identified jargon in one student’s essay, for example, Mike noted, “I wouldn’t have recognized it [‘homogenization’ as jargon]; in fact, it wouldn’t have even registered on my screen as something outside of the normal range of talk. But of course it is.” (Jan 26). Despite his stated opposition to jargon, it is not clear that students understood that the use of jargon in their own writing was not expected by this professor, especially given the frequency with which students commented on the presence of confusing jargon in the SC readings and their attention to it. In addition, it is difficult to see how students could readily distinguish between the types of jargon to avoid (“buzz words”) and the type that are so embedded in the discipline that professors don’t recognize the words as jargon.

Professors also commented on sentence-level grammar, syntax, and punctuation errors, especially at the beginning of our interviews, suggesting that their first orientation to writing is at the level of grammatical and formal correctness. Their comments suggested that they expected students to attend to these language issues, and they expressed some frustration especially at students’ sloppy proof-reading for the final papers (e.g., inconsistent spelling, errors in references).

## **Genre**

Both professors recognized that students need guidance to write effective genres. They readily recognized reading as a source for this guidance. Mike, for instance, claimed that “it’s very difficult to write well, especially in any particular genre, unless

you've actually read a lot of the stuff. And so I really try to get people to read a lot" (Jan 26). Beyond encouraging greater reading, some guidance in identifying the formal characteristics of these reading texts was also recognized as necessary. Rob described the expectation that PA readings would serve as models for writing, primarily for the organizational structure of the text:

I actually did direct the students towards the way the chapters are laid out as being a good model for how you typically see an anthropology paper laid out, regardless of what subdiscipline it was. Yeah, using section headings as an example of what you might find, a lot of students if they're writing history papers or poli sci papers or an English paper, the use of headings is something that they're not doing. So when I say this is how you structure it, they're like "I need my transitional statement" or flowing text (laughs) and I say, no, you don't. You just say what you want to say and then put in a new heading and that's, you know, the next section. It's actually a nice flexible way of structuring your paper.

Mike concurred with Rob's perspective, claiming, "I like subheadings. I tell people that. Sometimes I know in other courses they are sometimes discouraged from that [but] I think it's very useful because it gives structure and order to the paper. I think it helps [students] to think about if it helps the reader" (May 7). In their survey responses, students corroborated these views about the formal aspects of genre. Though many students were unable to identify rhetorical features of anthropology's genres (as discussed in student findings), they did identify section headings as a genre characteristic of disciplinary texts.

When asked about the purposes of his class's research paper assignment, Rob (May 24) stated:

Their research paper shouldn't just be a descriptive coverage of the topic or problem, but they want to be choosing topics where there's difference of opinion or there's an opportunity to weigh different interpretations. And take sides. ...By writing for that problem-oriented viewpoint, they can interject their own points in the discussion. They can become active on the topic rather than sitting on the sidelines.

Rob's desire for students to participate actively in the arguments of the field was reinforced by his framing of the field as a community in which members hold a variety of perspectives and conflicting interpretations of evidence. This finding will be explored further under "Community," below.

Some evidence that professors were aware of other genre characteristics, even if these were not explicitly brought to students' attention, was seen. Mike noted that one student received a poor mark on his paper because of his lack of task understanding, especially his failure to adopt values Mike identified as disciplinary:

I don't think he understood Durkheim the way anthropologists generally do. This is actually much more like a sociology paper... there is virtually no ethnographic data in here ... society appears with a capital "S" and sometimes couched in terms of North American culture, but there's no sense of...interpreting the kind of cultural and social world that most anthropologists are concerned about. ...His understanding of the task wasn't what I wanted.

These two passages indicates that both broad and specific features are recognized by professors as contributing to the disciplinary appropriateness of anthropology genres. While Mike doesn't identify how an anthropologist would understand Durkheim, he does describe features that he as an anthropologist expects to see present in the student's paper but are not: ethnographic data, correct use of jargon, avoidance of perspectival errors, evidence of cultural interpretation. The student's errors in these features mark him as an outsider or novice to anthropology, with the professor's clear expectation that at this level of study the student should have mastered these genre elements.

### **Community**

Classroom observation suggested to me two general approaches that the participating professors exhibited in presenting their field to students. The PA professor, Rob, appeared to view anthropology through the lens of family or social community. His lectures often included mention of arguments, discussions, debates, or funny stories related to the researchers or findings being considered. This apparently extraneous information seemed to be included to humanize the field and to make anthropologists more relatable to students, i.e., "see, anthropologists have problems and do strange things, just like other people!" As mentioned earlier, it was not always clear that students perceived and reacted to these anecdotes in the way the professor intended.

In contrast, the SC professor, Mike, presented anthropology not by using the metaphor of a familial community, but that of a long-standing discipline – a sociohistorical movement made up of interactions between pivotal players and events. He frequently positioned authors of class readings as representative of cultural or methodological trends, or he used personal stories of his own experiences to illustrate

such trends at particular times. Compared to the PA professor, who sought to personalize anthropological content, the SC professor's goal seemed to be to de-personalize anthropology by emphasizing its historical breadth and theoretical development as a discipline.

There was no evidence in the comments of either professor of any disparagement or criticism of the subfields (apart from the self-directed joke mentioned at the beginning of this section). This stands in stark contrast to the resistance and criticism of SC anthropology's theoretical features seen from many students.

To summarize, professors appeared comfortable in their roles as both professional anthropologists and as teachers, and showed no evidence of tension between the subfields. They expressed confidence in their understanding that student writing develops through extensive reading as well as writing practice and appeared to assume that exposure to the fields' texts rather than direct instruction and extended practice enables students to improve their reading and writing skills. They demonstrated two levels of expectations for students: a level of basic literacy skills as well as an advanced level of critical reflection and understanding of the discipline's epistemology. They were aware that they were pushing students to achieve at this higher level. Though they acknowledged students' difficulties with the jargon of the discipline, they were more concerned with general academic language use and showed some minor tendencies to focusing on sentence-level grammar and punctuation errors.

### **Assignment Text Data**

Final assignment texts were requested from all students in the interview subgroup (n = 15), including five who were students in both classes. One student failed to hand in

the final paper, and one student did not send me the final paper for one of the two classes, bringing the total number of texts analysed to 18. See Table 3 for a summary of the initial characteristics analyzed in these texts. Descriptive statistics and correlational analyses are provided for all comparisons, but small sample sizes, the overlap in students across the two classes, and the substantial difference in number of participants between the two classes prevent reliable testing using inferential statistics on all data.

Table 3

*Characteristics of Student Final Papers: Length, Sources, and Grades*

Text Number	Class	Required Number of Pages (excluding references <sup>a</sup> )	Required Number of Sources	Number of pages Submitted (excluding references <sup>b</sup> )	Number of Sources in Submitted text	Grade Assigned to Text
1				15	17	75
2				0	n/a	n/a
3a				13	13	75
4a				15.5	14	84
5				18	16	94
6				13	16	88
7a	SC	13-18	12	11	12	75
8				13.5	13	78
9				15.5	18	90
10				15	19	88
11				22.25	29	92
14a				12.5	14	79
15				11.25	11	84
3b				14.5	14	79
4b				12.5	7	73
7b				11	12	78.5
12	PA	15	15	10.5	16	80
13				15	30	86
14b				12.5	7	70
15b				n/a	n/a	70

*Notes:*

<sup>a</sup> SC essay requirement was for 15-20 pages inclusive of references. The majority of students included 2 pages of references, so I subtracted this number to arrive at the total pages expected exclusive of references.

<sup>b</sup> exclusive of title page, if provided

## **Text characteristics**

The assignments in both classes required students to write a research paper on a topic of their own choosing, using academic sources. The course syllabi stated that the SC assignments should be between 15-20 pages long including references, with a minimum of 12 sources required. The PA assignment specified 15 pages maximum excluding references. While no minimum number of sources was set for the PA paper, 15 sources were suggested in the assignment description handout provided to all students as the expectation for a “B” or “A” level paper. The length and source requirements were therefore similar for the two classes.

The texts that students submitted ranged from 11-22 double-spaced pages in length, excluding references. The average paper was 12.67 pages long in the PA class and 14.63 pages long in the SC class. Markedly more students in the PA class (5/6 or 83%) submitted fewer pages than required than did students in the SC class (3/12 or 25%). According to their reference lists, students cited between 7-30 sources in their papers. The number of sources used was similar across both classes except for two students in the PA class who used the lowest number of sources (seven). The average number of sources used by students in both classes when the lowest and highest outliers were removed was 14.

Grades on student assignments ranged from a low of 70 to a high of 94. Grades ranges were slightly lower in the PA class (from 70-86) than in the SC class (75-94). In comparing the grades of the study participants to the whole class, the average grade of papers for all students in the PA class was 76.67%, while the average grade for the seven PA participants in this study was almost identical at 76.64%. In the SC class, the average

grade of all students' papers was 79.25%, while the average grade for SC participants in this study was 83.50%. In other words, for student participants in the study, but not for students overall, there was a letter grade difference in assignment average marks between the two classes, i.e., PA average grade was a B while the SC average grade was an A.

To determine whether length of paper was related to grade received, all values were graphed into a scatter plot (see Figure 3) and analysed using Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients. The correlation between length of paper and grade was significantly positive,  $r(16) = .648$ ,  $p < .01$ , with a  $R^2 = .420$ , indicating that longer papers were more likely to receive higher marks. Length of paper accounted for a large degree in variance seen in grades, about 42%. Pearson correlation was also calculated for the relation between grades and number of sources used and was found to be similarly positive,  $r(16) = .658$ ,  $p < .01$ , with a  $R^2 = .433$ , indicating that papers referencing more sources received higher marks, and that 43% of the variance in marks could be attributed to number of sources used.

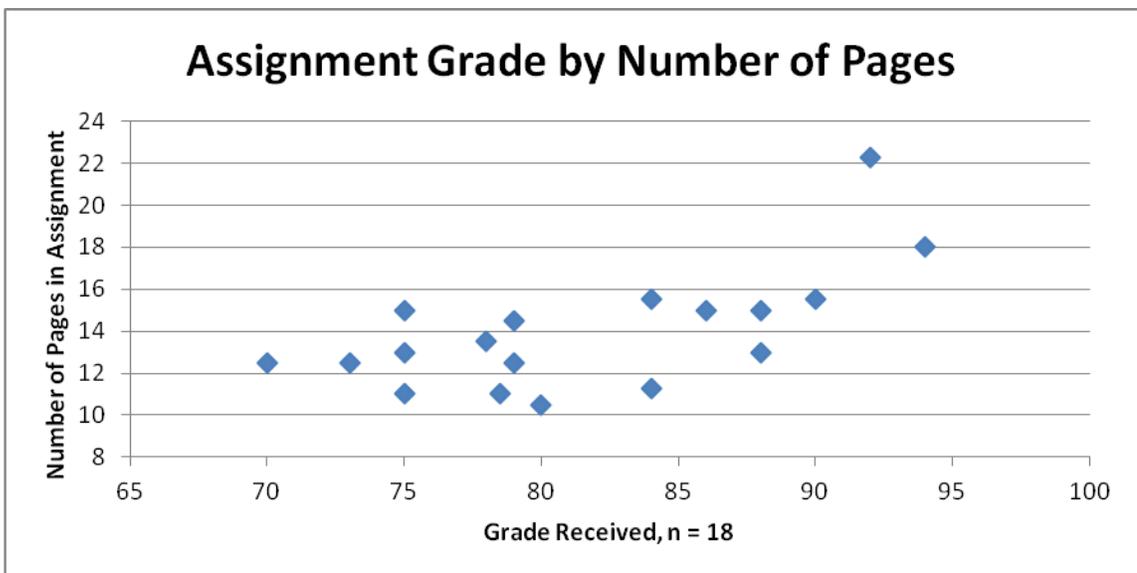


Figure 3. Scatter plot of grade received by number of pages in assignment.

## Linguistic analysis

Several linguistic measures were included in the genre analysis of students' texts, including word length of the introduction and Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level, a readability measure. In addition, the use (or not) of first person pronouns was identified in the texts because such use is a strong marker of voice and stance, shows variability within and between disciplines, and draws predictable debate on use among writers. See Table 4 for a summary of the linguistic and genre analysis of the 18 texts' introductions.

Table 4

### *Linguistic and Genre Analysis of Student Assignment Introductions*

Text Number	Class	Length of Introduction (# words)	Use of 1 <sup>st</sup> Person Pronoun	Inclusion/Order of Genre Elements <sup>a</sup>	Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level	Grade Assigned to Text
1		428	no	2 1 3 5 8	13.3	75
3a		338	no	2 6 11 7	14.1	75
4a		262	yes	2 7 12	17.0	84
5		363	yes	2 9 5 7 6 8 10	20.4	94
6		419	yes	2 7 12 8	16.4	88
7a	SC	215	no	2 3 8	17.7	75
8		169	no	2 (12) 10 8	13.9	78
9		488	no	2 10 3 12 6 8	12.1	90
10		134	no	1 2 8	17.5	88
11		547	no	1 3 2 6 11 8	18	92
14a		160	yes	2 6 3 7	15.5	79
15		303	yes	2 12 3 7	15.5	84
3b		360	yes	2 6 7 11 8	18.1	79
4b		590	no	2 3 7 8	15.0	73
7b	PA	369	no	1 2 7 3 8	21.0	78.5
12		405	yes	1 4 2 9 8	16.4	80
13		279	yes	(1) 2 3 7 8	12.4	86
14b		153	yes	1 2 6 5	15.8	70

*Note:*

<sup>a</sup> Genre elements identified are: (1) centrality claim, (2) topic generalization, (3) review/citing of literature, (4) identifying gap, (5) continuing a tradition, (6) stating research question(s), (7) identifying goals of research paper/study, (8) stating thesis statement, (9) appeal to ethos, (10) appeal to pathos, (11) appeal to logos, (12) providing a definition. Numbers enclosed in brackets signify elements that are tentatively identified/weak examples of the element.

To analyse the introduction section for word count, Microsoft Word's word count feature was used. The abstract was excluded as well as any section that identified a subheading besides "Introduction." For instance, several papers introduced terms or concepts that were then defined. If these definitions were contained not within the general body of the introduction itself but in a section subtitled "Definitions" or the name of the concept, such sections were deemed to signal the end of the introduction and the start of a new section.

Students' introductions ranged in length from 134 to 590 words. Both the SC and the PA papers showed a similar variety in length of introduction: PA papers had a range between 153-590 words (average 359.33 words), and SC papers had a range between 134-547 words (average 318.83 words). Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients were calculated to analyse the relation between length of introduction and length of the paper as a whole. A strongly positive correlation was seen only for the SC class,  $r(10) = .739, p < .01$ , while for the PA class,  $r(4) = -.234, ns$ , indicating no relation between length of introduction and length of paper. There was no clear evidence from either class that papers with longer introductions received significantly higher grades: PA class  $r(16) = -.012$  and SC class  $r(10) = .427$  (see Figure 4).

Besides length of introduction, another text characteristic that might be expected to show a relationship with how a text is valued is its readability. The Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level score is a measure of readability that uses sentence length and syllables per word to calculate a score that corresponds to estimated school grade level, e.g., a score of 8 reflects a Grade 8 level of text readability. The range of Flesch-Kincaid levels seen across the two classes was from 12.1 - 21.0. The average Flesch-Kincaid level was

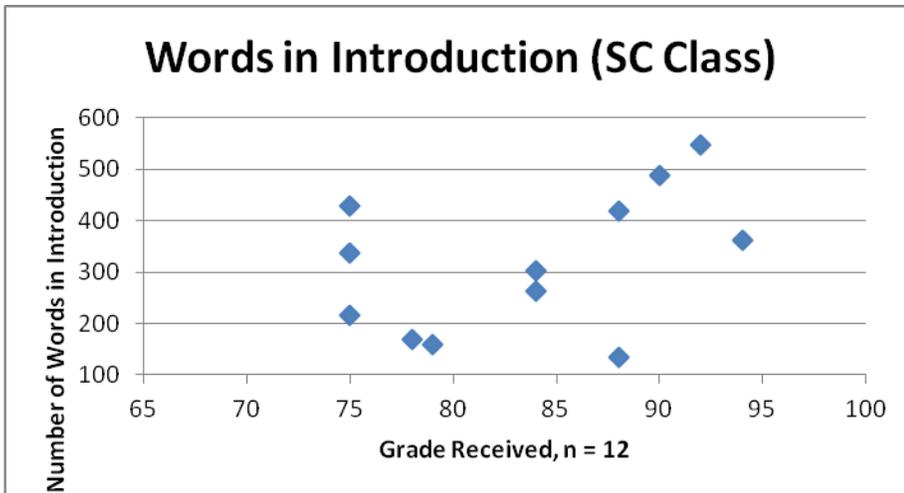
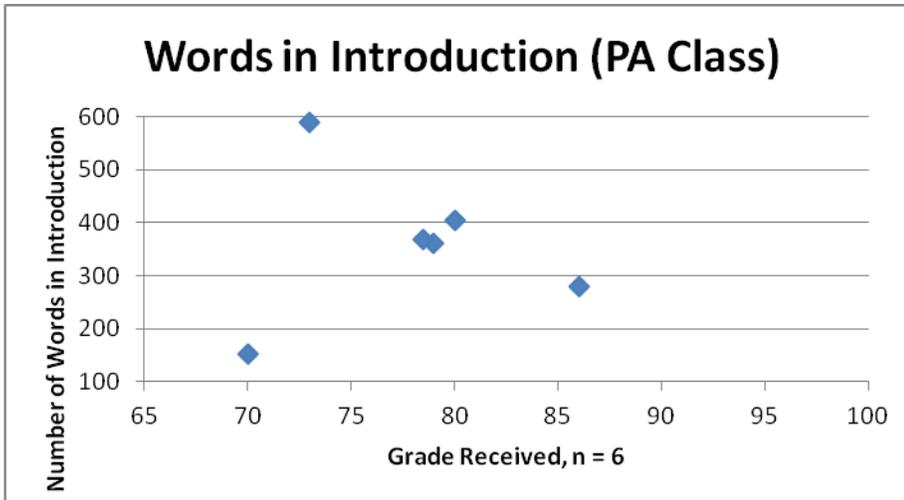


Figure 4. Scatter plots of assignment grade received by number of words in introduction.

similar across both classes: 16.45 in the PA class, and 15.95 in the SC class. While the paper with the highest grade (94%) did, in fact, have the second-highest Flesch-Kincaid level (20.4), the lowest level of 12.1 corresponded to an assignment grade of 90%, suggesting that readability scores are not highly correlated with assignment marks.

Statistical analysis using Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients bears this out, with  $r(16) = .196, ns$ , indicating no clear relation between readability and higher marks, as Figure 5 demonstrates.

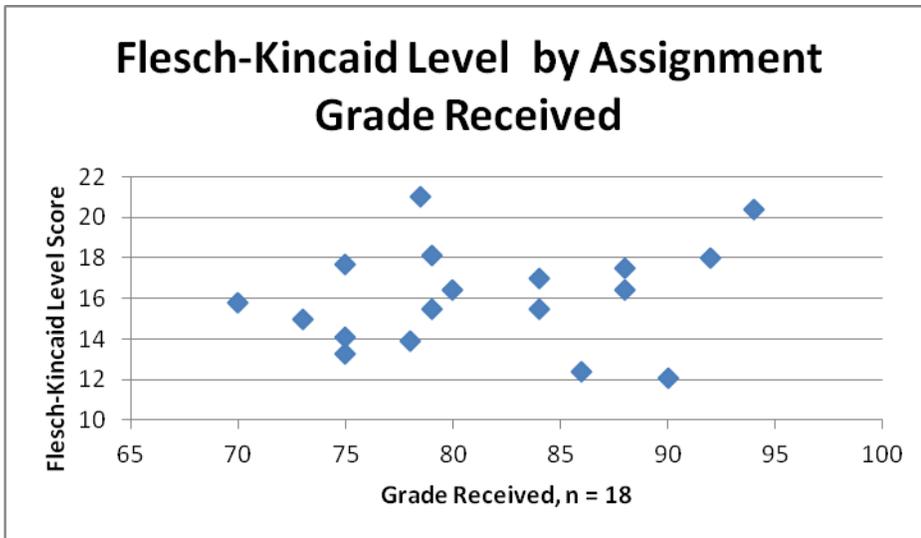


Figure 5. Scatter plot of assignment grade received by Flesch-Kincaid readability levels.

### Genre analysis

To limit data analysis to a reasonable amount of text, a decision was taken to conduct a detailed genre analysis of only the introduction of the students’ assignment texts. As mentioned when discussing this study’s methodology, identifying a limited scope for analysis is common in linguistic and genre studies (see, for example, John Swales’ seminal 1990 work). The genre analysis I undertook focused on identifying elements that have long been recognized as generic features of research-based texts, namely several of the “moves” identified by John Swales (1990) in his analysis of the introduction of published research articles: 1) making centrality claims, 2) making topic generalizations, 3) reviewing items of previous research, 4) identifying a gap in the research literature, 5) continuing a research tradition, 6) stating research questions. Other rhetorical moves typical of academic research and characteristic of classical rhetoric were also included in the analysis, namely: 7) identifying the goals of the research paper, 8) stating a thesis, 9) making an appeal to ethos, 10) making an appeal to pathos, 11)

making an appeal to logos, 12) providing a definition. These genre elements and the order in which they appear in each text is presented in Table 4 above.

Analysis indicated differences between the two classes on use of personal pronouns (e.g., I, we). About 42% of SC papers and 67% of PA papers included use of personal pronouns. Other differences between the two classes were also evident. SC students used a slightly wider variety of strategies in their introductions, drawing from 11 of the 12 elements, while PA students incorporated 10 of these elements. Students in the PA class included no appeals to pathos (#10), or definitions (#12) in their introductions, while SC students included no moves to identify a gap (#4) in the research.

Looking at the moves that were included, appeals to ethos (#9) – establishing a person’s credibility, character, or expertise – were the least common rhetorical move, seen only once in papers from each class. Cori, a PA student, used the appeal not to build up her own credibility, but to criticize the apparent biases of opposing researchers in the field: “There exists no definite agreement...and each side is so strongly rooted in the fossil hominid of their choice that it appears the main concern is to further their own agenda instead of properly assessing the fossil evidence” (p.1). In this example, by suggesting that these researchers demonstrate bias and therefore lack credibility, Cori positions her own paper as a credible correction of their failed analysis of the fossil evidence. Similarly, only one SC student used this move, positioning the appeal near the beginning of her introduction by stating, “Whatever debates and crises are current within the discipline, it is my contention – by haphazard ‘fieldwork’ of asking individuals at random – that (when people are even aware of what anthropology is) it is conceptualized as the study of ‘culture’” (Lily, p.2). By positioning herself as someone who has

undertaken anthropological “fieldwork,” but acknowledging that attempt as haphazard, Lily not only alludes to her novice status in a way that lends her efforts credibility, but contrasts and builds upon this paradoxical humility by confidently introducing a resulting claim as “my contention.” This sophisticated use of diction and voice to establish her own ethos set the tone for the remainder of her paper, which is a dynamic argument about which her professor said, “[s]he’s, um, always in your face. And she’s always pushing you... I disagree with a lot of what she says, but I think she’s really good because she’s thoughtful and she works with the ideas, she tries to do something with them” (Mike, p.20).

Another infrequently used rhetorical strategy in students’ introductions was an appeal to pathos – using emotion to persuade the reader (#10). Three SC students included such appeals in their work. The most extensive example is seen in Barbara’s paper, whose first paragraph of introduction starts with a question aimed to arouse the reader’s curiosity and reads almost like a joke: “What do a peacock’s tail, a leopard’s spots and an antelope’s speed have in common?” (p.1). She continues by reminding readers about human weaknesses and limitations, arousing perhaps our dismay or chagrin: “Human beings, however, are not particularly large or fast or ferocious. They do not have lovely tails, sharp claws and teeth or camouflaged coats of fur. Compared to most animals, humans are weak and should be easy targets for natural selection to eliminate.” By appealing to our sense of humour and tweaking readers’ sense of identity or superiority, Barbara arouses goodwill and willingness to engage with her argument. Another student, Maggie, uses word choice, especially adverbs and adjectives, to imply appeals to emotion. She refers to environmentalism as “[a] global cause, for which so

many people valiantly fight” (p. 2). Then she challenges Western readers by using aggressive language to claim our dominant Western perspective “largely ignores the hypocrisy with which the First world speaks of environmentalism while acting in an incongruous fashion.” Next, she aims to chastise and perhaps shame the reader by scaling back her strong word choices, claiming that “for Indigenous people of the Fourth world to have meaningful gains...the First world...must realize the flaws in their assumptions and make a meaningful effort to understand and respect the people of the Fourth world.” Here Maggie’s word choice engages the reader by calling up feelings of responsibility and obligation.

Like appeals to pathos, appeals to logos (#11) were seen in few students’ introductions, with only 17% of PA papers and 17% of SC papers including them. In her PA paper, Anna makes a long chain of contingent claims by beginning: “Despite the lack of Neanderthal material in the human genome, it is improbable that there was absolutely no genetic contact between Neanderthals and groups of modern humans emigrating from Africa, especially considering the amount of time for which the two species are seen to have coexisted” (p.2). Choosing words that indicate contrast (*despite*), probability vs certainty (*improbable*), and qualifiers (*considering the amount of*), as well as words in subsequent sentences that indicate relations between claims (*however, furthermore, in addition*) signal to readers the development of a logical argument. In another example, Aaron uses a theoretical concept (positionality) in his SC paper about primate conservation to categorize participants in the discussion. This leads to identifying a gap between positions, which he uses to develop a thesis statement suggesting action to fill that gap. In this introduction, the systematic development and incremental application of

a concept is the key identifier of an appeal to logos.

The identification of a research tradition (#5) was observed to be another genre characteristic little seen in students' introductions. In Swales' (1990) model, this move referred to authorial action that situates one's own research as a continuation of the research traditions and findings of others. While half of the students' texts (9/18) included citations of other researchers in their introductions in a standard literature review style (i.e., in parenthetical citations following a claim; #3), only three students explicitly commented on their decision to draw on the work of one or more researchers as a foundation for their own project. In other words, it appears that students limited their use of sources to functional uses in which backing was needed for claims made or evidence introduced, rather than for more expansive rhetorical purposes such as identifying or situating oneself within a research tradition.

Just as evidence that students used sources to identify a research tradition was little seen, there was only one instance of a student identifying a gap in the research literature. Cori, in her PA introduction, wrote, "The fossil evidence is not complete in either case, opening up room for questions concerning whether or not these specimens contain the hallmark hominin traits" (p.1). She then proceeded in her paper to carefully describe and compare the available evidence so she could build support for her thesis.

Finally, definitions (#12) were included in introductions from five students in the SC class (42%), but by no students in the PA class. Such definitions took the form, "For the purpose of this paper, I define ethnicity as..." (Julie, p.1) or "For the purposes of this paper, culture will be defined as..." (Barbara, p.1). Another student cited a definition by a prominent expert in her introduction: "In his book he clearly defines the term nation

as...” (Alexis, p.1). Finally, weak or failed rhetorical use of definition was demonstrated by one student who claimed, “The term ‘environmentalism’ and all that it entails is relatively new,” but then failed to define the term (Maggie, p.1). Given the frequent use of concepts and theoretical terminology in the SC class, it is perhaps expected that SC students would clarify their understanding of such concepts by including definitions in their work. It is not clear why PA students, who arguably use a more extensive vocabulary of highly specific terms, do not also include definitions in their papers. It may be that the strict rules for naming species and the scientifically regularized terminologies of biology, anatomy, genetics, etc. mean that the jargon of PA is more accessible to students, as well as more familiar because of their course prerequisites that included topics in biology and other sciences.

Compared to the infrequently seen genre features described thus far which were little used by students in either class, the most commonly used features in both classes’ assignments were topic generalizations (#2) and thesis statements (#8). Topic generalizations were included in all 18 assignment introductions while thesis statements were the second most common feature, seen in 12 of the 18 texts’ introductions.

Topic generalizations are statements about what is known, understood, or experienced about a topic or issue , e.g., “All organisms must be well adapted to their environments or else they will not survive and go extinct” (Barbara, 1) or “Fairy tales have been the first stories that children hear as they are growing up for generations” (Nina, 1). In almost all students’ texts, topic generalizations were either the first or second rhetorical move undertaken in the introduction to establish the topic of the paper. An alternate first or second move was making a centrality claim, used by seven students.

In centrality claims, the prominence or popularity of a topic or concept is established, e.g., “The reason for the disappearance of the Neandertals, within as little as ten thousand years upon the arrival of early modern humans from Africa, is a highly debated topic in paleoanthropology today” (Leah,1) or “The concept of secrecy is an integral part of many cultures, particularly those of Papua New Guinea, Indigenous Australia, and West Africa” (Denise,1). Twice as many PA students used centrality claims as their opening move than did SC students, and a majority of opening moves in PA introductions (67%) were centrality claims while the majority of SC introductions (83%) had topic generalizations as opening moves.

After topic generalizations, the next most common rhetorical move in students’ introductions was inclusion of a thesis statement (#8). As might be expected, this feature was typically seen near the end of the introduction, in contrast to topic generalizations and centrality claims which were seen near the beginning of the introduction. In the SC class , 67% of students included a thesis statement, while in the PA class the number of students who included thesis statements rose to 83%. Most thesis statements followed the well-known pattern of presenting a debatable, focused claim and providing some indication of how this claim will be argued in the remainder of the paper. Thesis statements took the form of one or more sentences, and their quality was variable. Nina, for instance, argued that “Folklorists and anthropologists study fairy tales from different perspectives. However, they still would follow certain patterns that Levi-Strauss implied through his studies of structuralism and studying culture through linguistic scientific method” (p. 2). While arguable and providing some sense of the direction the argument will take, this thesis is demonstrably vague, its language imprecise, and its significance

questionable. Showing similar limitations in a much briefer single sentence thesis, Mia writes, “Because of the continuity mindset of cultural anthropologists, these developments [in Pentecostal beliefs] are overlooked or inadequately presented.”

Students who did not include thesis statements in their introductions tended to describe their research intentions without identifying any significant conclusion to be developed in the paper. For example, Julie writes, “In this paper, I will examine the different influences that can affect the way in which immigrants to North America identify themselves ethnically. Each of these influences is very important, although some, such as religion and generation, tend to have more of a direct influence than others, such as home nationality.” In another example, Anna proposes, “Using examples of the Chumas, Zuni, and Hopi Indians of North America, the prehistoric Andean civilizations, and also a hotly debated subjects [sic] of human evolution from the past century, Piltown Man, an understanding can be gained if not to the absolute answer of who owns the past, then certainly to the nature of anthropological study and why its practice is so expert at inviting debates such as these” (p.3). Identifying the goals of the research (#7) replaced the thesis statement as the concluding element in 17% of students’ introductions.

In contrast, examples of thesis statements that conformed more closely to standard expectations were noted. Leah wrote, “This paper argues that the attribution of witches with negative capitalist qualities (hoarding, selfishness), and witchfinding (the condemnation of capitalism), are not a historical remnant of traditional culture, but a new and unique transformation of that society in response to suspicions regarding the opacity of globalization” (p.1). In another example, Barbara wrote, “Overall, it is the goal of this paper to show that, at times, culture is both adaptive and maladaptive concerning disease,

depending on the disease and the set of cultural circumstances that surrounds it” (p.2). Finally, in her paper, Suzanne wrote, “In addition to genetics, arguments of anatomy, biology, and culture are presented in support of Neandertals having the capacity to speak. In this paper, I will argue in favour of Neandertals having the ability to produce language” (p.1). While the quality of the thesis statements students wrote may be improved upon, the widespread inclusion of thesis statements and explicit research goals in their assignment introductions indicate that students are aware of the need to articulate a research goal and develop an argument.

A related generic move, stating a research question (#6), was included in a large minority of both SC and PA students’ introductions: 42% of SC students wrote an explicit research question, as did 33% of PA students. Examples again demonstrate the varying degrees to which students are able to execute this rhetorical move. Aaron writes, “A major issue in primate conservation is the question of whether both goals can actually be accomplished. Can primates be conserved, and can poverty be alleviated simultaneously, or does one have to choose one over the other?” (p.3). Barbara includes an implicit question in her introduction: “It is the goal of this paper to examine whether or not culture is in fact adaptive in the face of one specific aspect of natural selection: disease” (p.2). While practice and expertise may play a role in how well students were able to demonstrate particular rhetorical moves such as identifying a research question, personal style may also have influenced students’ written texts, as seen in this example of two texts from Anna, one from her SC class and one from her PA class:

- 1) Fundamental debates of privacy, interference, and obligations have yet to be settled to any satisfactory degree. Who owns the past? Who has the right to speak

about it? What happens when anthropological and local accounts are at odds with each other? (p.2)

2) In the more recent years of Neanderthal research, several questions have arisen regarding the place of Neanderthals in the genus *Homo*. Are Neanderthals ancestors of modern *Homo sapiens*? What is the nature of the genetic relationship between Neanderthals and *Homo sapiens*? Can one assume that there was some degree of genetic transfer between the two groups? Did Neanderthals and humans cohabitate the same regions and, if so, what was the nature of their relationship?

As these samples from the same student show, students may not only repeat a repertoire of rhetorical strategies, but also execute them in similar ways across different contexts.

To summarize, students' texts showed some differences between the two classes. The PA papers received slightly lower grades than those of SC, while they also included personal pronouns more often in their introductions but included no definitions or appeals to pathos. SC papers were notable for their lack identifying a gap in the literature that the author's research would address. For both classes, greater length and greater number of sources in papers were related to higher grades. Readability scores, however, showed no relation with grade received. Papers in both classes made extensive use of topic generalizations and thesis statements in their introductions; few papers included appeals to ethos. In general, the papers demonstrated students' attention to following rules they had been given for the assignment as well as a reliance on strategies with which they had likely had previous practice, i.e., writing thesis statements and generalizing statements about their topic. More sophisticated rhetorical moves, such as appeals to ethos and to identifying and addressing a gap in the literature were rarely seen.

## **Chapter 6: Findings II**

### **Orientation**

In the previous chapter, findings from the analysis of student data, professor data, and assignment text data were described. By identifying and integrating common patterns among the data, a set of themes emerged. In this chapter, I present these major themes which became prominent as analysis proceeded and data were read and re-read. Four themes were selected that provided synthesis and coherence across all the data. Echoing Moje and Lewis (2007), I “chose the most deeply saturated points to put forward in the final written product” (p.28). In the Discussion chapter following, I explore the connection and relevance of these themes and the previous chapter’s findings to the activity theory framework.

### **Major Themes**

The first of the four themes centres on the academic context as a major influence in this case study, especially on the perspectives and actions of students. I label this theme, “Anthropology as school.” The second theme, “The familiar,” describes the tension between what is expected and what is unexpected, especially for students acculturating to the discipline. Third, “Reading” figures as a prominent theme for both professors and students. Finally, “Hidden rhetoric” identifies the largely unacknowledged role of rhetoric and rhetorical exigencies that influence writing in undergraduate anthropology.

### **Theme 1: Anthropology as school**

While it is perhaps not surprising that participants in this study view anthropology as school, alternate frameworks or contexts are, of course, possible: the context of

anthropology as an international discipline; the institutional/political context of one department within a large university faculty; the research context of the field and its subfields and practitioners; the social context of young adults among their peers, etc. While all of these contexts were evident to some extent in the data, the expectations and constraints of Western-style schooling were predominant. Most notably, this academic context specified the roles/positions available to and taken up by students and professors and the expectations each group had for the other. It reinforced the available identities of learner and teacher, novice and expert, and minimized other possible identities (e.g., as researcher, employee, reviewer, colleague, etc.) and their associated activities. In interview data, Lily described her views on some of the possibilities open to students: “There are field work courses you can take in archaeology...but these are archaeological digs. So for the archaeology [students] there’s a lot of professors looking for students to do the dirty work for them, so it’s more like you have the opportunity to go out in the field and then you have to write a lab report, I think,...and you still have to do readings” (Jan 21). Lily’s comment encapsulates several of the themes voiced by students: opportunities tied to specific subfields, opportunities defined by the structure of academic courses and programs, recognition of their status as novices, emphasis on traditional academic activities of discipline-specific reading and writing. Maggie also connected students’ status and identity as undergraduates to the activities that were available to them:

I think in undergrad you need to, you need to build a base and kind of understand what anthropology is all about and kind of learn about what other anthropologists have done, so that way if you wanted to continue, if you actually wanted to go do

your own research, you know how to do it properly and you're not, like, making the same mistakes other people did and, you know, re-doing people's work. (Jan 23)

For students like Maggie, the notion of learning is not readily connected to activities for increasing professionalization or authentic experiences of anthropological work, but to conventional, indirect academic activities that are expected to prepare them to “actually” undertake such work “if [they] wanted to continue” in the future when they are no longer undergraduates. She also voices an assumption that there is a “proper” way of doing research in anthropology and that this can be or should be learned by students before they participate in the work of the field. This *learner* or *novice* perspective was readily assumed by students, who seemed to view it as non-negotiable and accepted it as a stage in an established academic process, even taking pride in it as a step towards a possible professional identity, as evident in Nina's comment: “The year goes by, I'm learning more and more and yeah, I would say, like, you turn into being an anthropologist.” Few students, however, identified *themselves* as anthropologists, but it is notable that many recognized and willingly engaged in the process of learning to become anthropologists.

Students' academic identities were reinforced by the perceived boundaries of an academic context that encouraged some ways of acting and limited others. For instance, most students did not identify the work they were doing in class – including their research assignments – as research similar to that done by anthropologists. Nina, for instance, when asked about opportunities for students to conduct research, said, “Oh no, we can't do that. Because we are undergraduate students and we are not allowed to do that yet” (Jan 19). Lily voiced similar views: “...we don't really have the training to go

out and conduct kind of what you're doing, talk to people and do all that stuff. We are really only expected to do that in our graduate work" (Jan 21). As these comments suggest, the perception that their status as undergraduate students prevented students from conducting research was reinforced by programming that emphasized conventional reading-and-writing work and neglected to connect such work to broader research activities or to provide students with sufficient opportunities to develop wider-ranging skills. These limitations meant that students had little experience of anthropology as a practice in the world and instead encouraged students into conventional academic "observer" roles by limiting them to extensive reading about such experiences.

Perhaps as a result of these limitations, students demonstrated strong attachment to instrumental views of school in their approaches to anthropology. Attention to marks was a prominent feature of this view. Students valued marks as an important outcome of their work, and weighed impact on grades against other elements when making decisions about their work. Daniel, for instance, said, "I don't know if I am ready to take, like, a step like that, of a critical thinker yet... it's not that I don't have the ideas, it's just I worry about presenting the ideas in a paper which will be marked by my professor and ultimately could lower my mark if I disagree with someone" (Feb 4). Daniel's comment suggests he may equate disagreeing with "someone" with being wrong, so he prefers to safeguard his mark. Aaron voiced similar concerns but clearly decided to exclude his opinion not because he was concerned about being wrong, but to avoid engaging in controversy: "I tell them what I'm supposed to tell them as opposed to what I really think of things... because I want to get a good mark and usually I do get a good mark, and the easiest way is just to present [that view], because it's more risky [to present your own

idea]” (Jan 29). In response to what goal she had when writing her paper, Julie replied, “Well, the main purpose of the paper was to pass the course, but it was mostly just an exploration of a topic that I found interesting.” Julie’s comment reveals an awareness that *her* primary purpose (getting a passing mark on the paper in order to pass the course) was at odds with the professor’s goal (for students to explore an interesting topic). Similarly, Alexis acknowledged, “I usually just tend to think about marks. I mean, I’m always proud of myself when I write like a really good essay that I think is, like, one I’m proud of. That always feels good. But for the most part, I just want a really good mark.”

Students’ attention to marks was not limited simply to one dimension. In addition to seeing marks as tokens to be collected on their way to passing the course or receiving a degree, students also recognized marks as indicators of success in anthropology.

Commenting on her introduction, Leah noted that, “[the professor] made us do a little write-up with the annotated bibliography, and my introduction is pretty much that same write-up. And you know, I got a 92% on my annotated bibliography so I was like, okay, this must be right, so I just kept it going” (Apr 23). For Leah, as for many other students, marks were the main source of feedback on her work, and she relied on this feedback to determine how she should respond and proceed. The common use of marks as feedback for individual development serves to reinforce the perception of anthropology as school.

The judgments implied by marks were not accepted unconditionally, however. Mia, in her end-of-term interview with me, reported that she had written a paper for another course on the same topic as her SC paper. In her view, the other paper was the better one, but she received a mark of 88 for the SC paper and just 68 for the other. She was unable to explain the wide difference in marks and, although frustrated, resigned

herself to concluding that marks are haphazard. Other students also recognized marks as a locus for problems. Barbara, who received a grade of 90 on her paper, found her mark surprising: “I started laughing, like out loud... because I don’t deserve it. I don’t feel I deserve that mark... Because I wrote it in a day” (May 6). Suzanne expressed frustration at not knowing clearly what a mark represented: “I got a paper back in another class. I only got a B on it...so, we don’t know the [number] grade... At the end he said, ‘oh if you would have tied in your conclusion with the author’s conclusion better it would have further supported your argument.’ That’s it. And *that’s* why I got a B? ‘Cause my conclusion was weak? I’m sorry, I just— that frustrated me. ‘Cause there was no other feedback” (April 29). Students thus recognized marks as tokens exchanged in relationships of power with their professors, conceding to a position of powerlessness in comparison to professors they viewed as holding power to arbitrarily confer or revoke marks and thus academic acceptance and recognition.

The major role that marks played in maintaining the context of anthropology as school was demonstrated not only by students, but by professors, who wondered whether students’ concerns about grades may have increased over time to become more prominent in current students. Professor Mike noted, “For about the first five or six years I was teaching I don’t think I ever heard anybody say ‘will this be on the exam?’ or ‘how many marks is this going to be worth?’ or any of that kind of stuff. What they wanted to know is where are we going next? It was a completely different attitude” (Jan 26). While the better quality of students in years past might be arguable, Mike continued by noting a common observation among teachers: “I found out that, you know, if there [are] no marks attached, [students] don’t do it. And sometimes if there are marks attached they

don't do it. The trick I found though, is that the amount of marks makes very little difference, so I can attach miniscule marks to things and that will actually motivate people, even though it's not going to fundamentally alter their final mark in the course" (Jan 25) For Mike, marks served both evaluative and motivating functions, and he drew on his experience as a teacher to manipulate the allocation of marks to maximize student motivation and minimize undesirable impact on course outcome.

In contrast to Mike, Rob commented little on the motivating function of marks, focusing instead on their use as feedback to students. Describing his own allocation of marks and the process he used to ensure fair summative evaluation of assignments, he claimed: "I'd say it's sort of equal weight [between students framing their topic and their conclusion], I think. I guess it would come back partly to the marking of papers being a bit of an art rather than a science, you know" (Feb 2). Perhaps because of this perception of subjectivity or art in marking, Rob acknowledged the need for taking time and effort to justify the marks given: "I find that papers that are poorly written, poorly constructed, are the ones that take the longest time to mark. And those are also the papers that I end up giving the most comments on because they end up getting poorer grades, so you want to sort of buttress your grade conclusion, give them feedback" (Feb 2). It is notable that the desire to provide feedback is framed not in terms of helping students' development as writers, but to provide them with a rationale to forestall confusion or complaints regarding the mark they received.

While professors willingly discussed how they approached marking, it was their identities as teachers that most significantly affected their behaviour with students and contributed to the context of anthropology as school. Although both professors discussed

other contexts – their professional memberships in anthropology societies, their own research interests, the historical evolution of the field of anthropology, and institutional politics – it was their commitment to teaching that was most evident in their interview responses and in the record of my observances in their classes. The two professors taught using obviously different methods that were well-planned to support their particular content and epistemological orientations. Mike favoured story-telling and writing only key points on the blackboard, and in my personal reflections I noted that my initial perceptions of the class were that it was heavily oriented towards contextualizing course content within the broad sweep of time. Rob, on the other hand, favoured passing around material artefacts (e.g., casts of skulls, bones), giving detailed lectures, and showing powerpoint slides containing multiple images, maps, and graphs. About his classes, I noted the opportunity to engage multiple senses and a sense of the eclipsing of time so that events of thousands of years ago seemed relevant and current. Mike emphasized the breadth and development of the discipline, while Rob drew on brief anecdotes and field-based rivalries to stoke interest.

Students commented relatively openly in interviews about their preferences for either professor's style, and both drew positive and negative reviews, with the majority being favourable. In their appraisal of teachers, however, students seemed to interject a level of professional restraint that recognized their professors' expertise and standing in the field instead of focusing primarily on their own personal like or dislike of the professor, as novice students are wont to do. Students acknowledged with appreciation their professor's willingness to provide individual support, even if they professed reluctance to use that support. On the whole, students' approaches to their professors

were consistent with Cori's stated goals to "show him that I actually come to class, I paid attention, that I respect him as a teacher, and to actually give him a good enough paper to show that I like what I'm learning, and that I've done the research, and that I've done the work and that I've gained something from the class." While Cori's is clearly an impassioned view, other students voiced similar ideas in which striving to please their professors and demonstrating their emerging competence in the discipline were prominent. Suzanne, for instance, claimed, "He doesn't want a summary of what we did in the readings and what we discussed. He wants your opinion and your argument. He wants you to really say what you think and feel, and it doesn't matter if everyone else is against you for that." This perception that professors encourage students' critical thinking and personal commitment to the field was clear across student survey and interview data, and recognized as a key learning goal by the professors themselves. These aspects of advanced disciplinary thinking and writing appeared to mark the transition point at which both students and professors recognized a shift from conventional school-based approaches towards authentic disciplinary work as done by professionals in the field.

## **Theme 2: The familiar**

The theme of what is familiar and what is strange—a theme that is foundational to anthropology-- kept recurring as all participants in the study, including me, reflected on our participation in anthropology.

Students' and professors' familiarity with academic contexts arguably enabled "school" to effectively shape how they experienced anthropology. Students approached anthropology primarily as an academic activity in which they understood from long

personal experience how to participate as learners. Professors also demonstrated familiarity and confidence in their academic roles as teachers. Participants' views, actions, and understandings were those of an academic insider faced with familiar school-based identities and trappings (teachers and students, desks, lessons, tests, assignments, grades, etc.). Students' academic identity as learners was reinforced by their limited breadth and depth of content knowledge about anthropology, which they proceeded to build upon, as well as by their unfamiliarity with other possible roles for themselves within anthropology, which were largely withheld from them. As upper year students, they demonstrated familiarity and comfort with conventional academic roles available to themselves and expressed some surprise at and even dismissal of the idea of taking on professional roles that were less familiar to them (see Nina's and Lily's statements about acceptable undergraduate student activities, above).

Although they seemed to embrace familiar roles, student interviews suggested that students nevertheless had some critical thoughts about being limited to familiar kinds of passive academic activity; Barbara's comment implied as much: "There's not a lot of primary research in anthropology [for students]. It's mostly, like, read these books and learn this stuff, write your essay on this book...and here are some questions about the book and generate an essay on it and answer the questions in your essay" (Jan 26). When students were given the opportunity to engage in activities beyond traditional classroom work, even in laboratory settings, the excitement was obvious. Cori said,

[The lab] was, like, hands on, and I could see what I was learning about and I could engage with the material... it was a really difficult class and I worked hard, learning about everything, and when I had the field course, like, it was just

exciting that I was actually there! I could excavate and do what I know anthropologists are doing. (Jan 29)

Cori's comment suggests that students were not inherently resistant to taking on unfamiliar academic tasks, but the tone of these comments clearly indicates that such tasks were not part of their regular experience in the program. As described in the previous chapter, the mock-conference in the PA class was another of these unfamiliar and engaging activities that students clearly recognized as different from their usual academic work.

This is not to suggest that students found all aspects of the conventional academic tasks they were assigned overly familiar and not engaging. In fact, it is notable that many students recognized some changes in the familiar expectations of professors and even in their own expectations as they progressed in their classes. As reported in the professors' findings, professors recognized the difficulty that their increasing expectations held for some students. In fact, these new demands – or perhaps the unfamiliarity of these demands – led to anxiety for some students. Responding to professors' perceived expectations, Leah said,

Sure, we're in university, but that doesn't mean that we know what *you* know.

Like, I really liked high school where they would hand you a sheet and say, "hey, these are headings that you should have," and I want to see this...most of my essays for anthro this year, there was never even a sheet that we got for it...there was structure, but they didn't tell you what it was they wanted. (Jan 23).

It is obvious in Leah's comment that a return to the familiar routines of high school would be a welcome relief from what she sees as a frustrating exercise in deciphering

new expectations. It should also be noted that Leah was a student in both the PA and SC classes and that both professors handed out an assignment information sheet during the term that did provide some of these specifications, though these handouts did not give students the level of direction Leah seemed to want. This does not, of course, entirely counter students' perceptions that what professors want is not clearly communicated to them.

Most students recognized that they were increasingly being exposed to alternative views of the field through their courses, leading them to question their own familiar understandings and become more comfortable with the unfamiliar. Many students, in fact, recognized this as a goal set out for them by their professors. Nina noted how writing was included in this development: "Each year we learn more and more of how to write in anthropology and how to see things objectively and what's the differences in seeing something subjectively and something objectively." Like many students, she is vague about what she is learning about anthropology writing, making it sound relatively straight-forward. She then focuses on one element regarding disciplinary approach that was challenging for herself. While perhaps this demonstrates an overly simplistic interpretation of a disciplinary goal, the shifts in thinking – from familiar ways of seeing the world to unfamiliar ways – were sometimes difficult and unsettling for students.

To further demonstrate how the theme of familiarity is evident in the data, we can look at how the two professors framed anthropology as a field to students in their classes. In comparison to students, who used their knowledge of schooling as an accessible reference point to make sense of the field, professors looked outside of academia to make connections to the field. The PA professor drew heavily on the familiar theme of a social

community – a family, perhaps – in which discussion, debate, anecdotes and stories are shared among members. Rob often made reference in class to the social roots of a debate or interpreted the thinly veiled critiques in journal articles as evidence of long-standing disciplinary feuds similar to fights between rival families. While understandable and perhaps commendable, such attempts sometimes led students to feel more like outsiders than members of the community. Leah noted, “Maybe in a textbook...with all the information [the author] will put in his own two cents, so he’s got room for his own opinion, to be funny or whatever, yet he still has to be formal. So then, [the professor] will say ‘ha ha, that’s funny’ and I’m, like, if I read through that I would not have picked up on any kind of humour.” (Jan 23). In contrast, Daniel followed the model of his professor and included in his final assignment a recount of an amusing incident related to a major find in paleoanthropology. When I asked during the discourse-based interview if the incident could be removed from his paper, he responded,

It’s pretty funny so I wanted to include it because I like it, and I think it’s a good fact. If I was submitting this paper to a journal, I would not have included that... I mean, its pretty informal to include something like that,... its kind of like a little piece of trivial knowledge that [the professor] might get a kick out of.. Yea, if it were more formal, well, it’s already pretty formal, but yea, if I was not directing it towards my professor, who I know reasonably well, then I would never have put it in.

These comments, and particularly Daniel’s sophisticated mingling of the exigencies driving him, suggest that students recognize and are attempting to adapt to new academic expectations in their program, juggling what they know about the discipline and the

professor, as well as their own needs, when called upon to demonstrate their knowledge in writing. Some students, such as Leah, may demonstrate more difficulty in adapting to a perspective that sees anthropology and its players as social actors. In my field notes, I commented on how much I enjoyed hearing Rob's "inside" stories and trivia about the field, reflecting perhaps as a doctoral student my increasing awareness of disciplines as social communities as well as academic ones.

The SC professor, Mike, characterized anthropology as a series of social movements that respond to social or cultural imperatives, presenting SC anthropology similarly to a sweeping historical perspective of long periods of time that defy simple description and explanation. His goal was to complicate students' views of anthropology, forcing them to confront unfamiliar perspectives rather than rely on simpler views rooted in familiar narratives: "I'm really interested in getting people to pay close attention, especially if they become anthropologists or even if they don't. Especially when they're looking at a situation, to avoid the temptation to jump to a foregone conclusion" (Jan 26). For Mike, it was important that students challenge their familiar beliefs and understandings, and he presented course content in ways that drew attention to the value of seeking out alternate perspectives.

This framing of anthropology using metaphors of external situations and time suggests that professors may be overlooking the prominent role that familiarity with school plays for students. Professors may assume that students' expertise in academic conventions and behaviours are not as motivating or informative to them as are other frames from outside academia, a view that suggests a devaluing of students' expertise at schooling, a failure to recognize students' investment in their familiar identity as

students, or – more positively – a desire to deliberately expand students’ frame of reference outside of academia.

### **Theme 3: Reading**

The theme of “Reading” was a strong focus for all participants and received as much, if not more, attention than writing. The value placed on reading by professors and students differed, but it was recognized by all participants as an activity to which attention needed to be given. Similarly, attention to language and especially how language use differed between the two subfields figured prominently in this study. It was notable, for instance, that jargon related to sociocultural theories was prominent in the SC class, widely frustrating students who actively resisted this theoretical language, whereas jargon in the PA class focused on anatomical terminology and Linnean labeling of species, which raised no concerns from students. Professors, on the other hand, focused their language concerns on “everyday” language, including the avoidance of current “buzz words” and the correct use of cohesive devices, causal terms, and spelling rather than disciplinary jargon.

Professors clearly acknowledged and appreciated the role played by reading in disciplinary activities, but students were more likely to see reading as an unavoidable chore. The low status of reading as a disciplinary activity was explained by Lily, who explained how reading dominated other activities that were seen as more directly related to anthropology: “[students] really are just looking at readings, and really understanding the readings, really understanding what the discipline is about, as opposed to going out and actually doing anthropology” (Jan 21). For Lily, the work of disciplinary reading was separate from “actually doing anthropology.” In contrast, the PA professor, Rob,

noted the integral relation between reading and the discipline and how this relation may be new to students: “Well, actually [understanding theory] would really be expected of them by third year, that they sort of get a heavy dose of anthropology theory by third year. Making a connection between what the theory stuff represents and what it is that anthropologists do, what it is you’re reading – yeah, that can be a task or a hurdle [for students].” In this comment, Rob notes the shift that is required for students to move from reading for content and conceptual understanding (“what the theory stuff represents”) to reading for professional purposes and practices (“what it is that anthropologists do”). Despite this recognition of the importance of making connections through reading, neither professor included instruction or explicit guidance on advanced reading strategies in their classes. It could be argued, of course, that some of their in-class discussion of the assigned readings constituted modeling or guidance in analytical reading. Nevertheless, professors’ expectations seemed to be that students would develop these skills through increased practice with reading, especially extensive reading in the discipline.

Reading was thus fraught with multiple concerns. On the one hand, it was a recognized task in anthropology in which both professors and students participated, and it was an area of strength for many students who recognized their ability to find reading materials to use as sources for their assignments. For some students, lack of knowledge about the social contexts behind their readings reinforced to them their status as novices in the field (see Leah’s comment on her inability to see anything funny in a reading before it was pointed out to her by the professor). Such episodes also draw attention to differences in reading practices among students and between students and disciplinary

professionals, as Rob noted above. The need to do reading as an increasingly separate activity from the classroom was also new to some students: "...he seems to not really cover much in class, and I'm like, it must be all in the readings" said Leah (Jan 23). In sum, the theme of reading as it emerged in this study draws attention to the ways that conventional school literacy activities develop and change as students move increasingly out of familiar academic settings towards advanced-level or professional activities. These changes in reading (and writing) are fraught with challenges for students, leading them to respond with resistance or motivation to achieve. To a large extent, students address these challenges individually with some classroom support but little in-class instruction.

#### **Theme 4: Hidden rhetoric**

Genre and rhetoric were notable for how little explicit attention was given them and yet how pervasive was their influence. For example, despite recognition by professors and students that the final assignment was primarily rhetorical (i.e., students were expected to take a position and promote/defend it), my field notes record almost no discussion about rhetoric or genre expectations in class. The audience for students' assignments was clearly the instructor. Professors seemed to assume that students would infer rhetorical expectations from class lectures and their responses to student questions (though these were few), or remember guidelines from previous classes. Rob noted how he takes a long-term view of establishing expectations: "Sometimes I'll get [students] in that first-year course. I'll try to get them to have a really solid discussion section of their paper, where they kind of take a reflexive perspective on whatever the topic is they're writing about." When asked to clarify how he promotes this expectation in his upper-year classes, he responded, "I'll highlight it in class when I outline the course requirements.

I'll spotlight the paper [assignment], and tell them that it's not an essay, it's a research paper, so they have to be critically analysing, weighing different perspectives" (Feb 2). In other words, he presents his instruction on rhetorical expectations within the context of the introduction to the class and in relation to the skills and abilities the course is designed to promote. He also provided students with a separate lengthy handout – the same one that he distributes to first-year students – that provides guidelines for writing a research paper.

In contrast to Rob's analytic approach in which the paper's structure and style elements featured prominently, Mike emphasized a more general approach in which language use and "pet peeves" were prominently tied to his desire "to see that [students] have given the topic some thought. That they recognize complexity. They should definitely leave out the notion...that there is a choice made between A and B. That shows me that you've not understood...It isn't that I value complexity for complexity's sake. More that I am suspicious of simplicity" (Jan 26). Though he argued that students need to develop a perspective that accommodates complexity, he also claimed, "I want students to use plain vocabulary and not buzz words" (Jan 26). The directive to "use plain vocabulary" might appear to students to contradict the edict to embrace complexity and avoid "simplicity."

Professors were perceived by students as being unwilling to consider, or perhaps unaware, that students might be reluctant to admit they don't know how to address their professor's expectations for advanced writing. According to Lily:

You're kind of expected at this level to know how to write an essay and to know how to do it well, and they sort of say, you know, there's office hours...but I

don't think that they waste too much time on actually telling you about writing, just because you're expected to know at this point. But sometimes in the outline they will have specifications, you know, 1200 words, 12 point whatever font, ... They don't go into a lot of depth about what they expect because you're supposed to either know or know when to ask for help. (Jan 21)

Students' assumption that professors perceive them to already know about writing expectations, along with the paucity of explicit instruction and practice for writing for different purposes, suggest a hierarchy of academic values, with rhetorical values disconnected from the value of disciplinary content and material form. Rhetoric, in addition to being separate, thus becomes simply unseen or transparent.

Another complication is the question of distinguishing between expectations for student and professional writing. While students may perceive that they are expected to write like anthropologists, SC professor Mike noted, "Well, [the goal of disciplinary writing] is different for students than it is for other folks. Because at least as far as I'm concerned, I don't have an expectation that they'll all become professional anthropologists, right?" Mike identified students' essays as "very evidently class papers" (May 7). When asked to explain what characteristics identified these as student papers he said:

They don't have a sufficient awareness of what the current state of play in the discipline is on these questions... It doesn't mean it's bad, it just means that you wouldn't have any professional interest in [these questions] these days...it's not the students' fault... you have to be up to speed on the state of play on any particular question.

On the other hand, in response to my question of whether the kinds of writing students do in preparing a literature review was similar to what professionals might write, the PA professor, Rob, claimed, “Yeah, I think in terms of approaching a research topic, it could be very similar. You’re identifying, ideally what they’re identifying is an area of interest, why it’s of interest, and then some particular issue within that area and what’s been said in regards to that issue, what sort of explanations are out there.” For Rob, the expectation *was* for students to approach a similar level of rhetoric to that of practicing anthropologists. Students may thus perceive conflicting messages about their need to practice and demonstrate rhetorical strategies.

To identify writing expectations and learn about the rhetorical demands of their assignment and topic, students recognized that speaking directly to the professor was the most efficient way of getting help. Interviews with professors and students indicated that some students did, in fact, visit their professors during office hours or emailed them. At the same time, students claimed the most common means by which professors identify their expectations for writing is by providing feedback on assignments. While not all professors provide extensive or meaningful feedback, many students acknowledge they do use this feedback to better understand the formal and rhetorical expectations for disciplinary writing. Students’ experiences with written assignments suggest that it is not provision or lack of feedback that is problematic for students, but the lack of opportunity to revise using those comments. According to Barbara, “A lot of times in anthro you just write one essay in the course and then you get, like, there’s no chance for you to improve, like you get your comments and then you’re like, okay. I don’t [really] need comments.” The writing assignments in the PA and SC courses were of this one-shot, final paper type,

though both professors built in some opportunities for comments and feedback prior to the due date at the end of the course (a topic statement and an annotated bibliography were required in the SC course and an abstract and a conference presentation in the PA course).

Neglecting the role played by rhetorical knowledge in writing development does not appear limited to anthropology. Denise, in comparing her knowledge of anthropology writing to that of an elective course she was taking in philosophy said, “[In anthropology] as long as you kind of think it through, you make sure it’s well-edited, it makes sense to you, and you defend your point, you can get a pretty good mark...[In philosophy] I’m not too sure. I think it’s the same. [The professor] said as long as you defend it, but I’m not really sure what constitutes this defending, so I’m a little nervous” (Jan 27). Similar to the explanations provided by anthropology professors, the philosophy professor’s instruction to students neglected to include the connection between rhetorical demands, writing strategies, and practice that would have provided clarity to students.

While students’ good marks and the positive comments on their papers suggest that students do learn the rhetorical and genre knowledge they need to write in anthropology, evidence from the second set of discourse interviews with students suggest this knowledge is not strong. When asked to comment upon sections of their papers and to explain their assignments’ generic elements, students showed limited awareness of the rhetorical properties of the assignments they wrote. The most common elements included in students’ research paper introductions were those that had likely been practiced for some time, e.g., a thesis statement. The more nuanced and sophisticated rhetorical moves, such as making appeals to ethos, were rarely used. The data analysis of assignment texts

thus suggest that students are able to implement a variety of strategies for rhetorical and genre-appropriate writing in anthropology, but it is unclear that they have developed the ability to draw on and manipulate these strategies at advanced or professional levels.

### **Patterns in themes**

This study's findings center on the themes of anthropology's school context, on the tension between the familiar and unfamiliar, on reading, and on transparent rhetorical and genre knowledge, all of which show up across multiple sets of data. These themes interact with, conflict with, and reinforce each other. For example, the theme of "anthropology as school" draws on a familiar school context for most students. This context reinforces anthropology's framing theme of the familiar vs. the unfamiliar, which is introduced to students as a typical approach in the discipline for analyzing and making sense of sociocultural experience. The irony, perhaps, is that while students are learning to apply this frame in their readings about other cultures and groups, they appear to be unaware of the extent to which their own current experience is one of transformation from the familiar (school-based ways of thinking) to the unfamiliar (discipline-based thinking). Similarly, the theme of the invisibility of rhetoric is evident not only in the paucity of instruction on reading and writing, but also in students' lack of recognition for the influence of disciplinary reading on their writing development. Students and professors both demonstrate that they have some implicit knowledge and insights related to their experiences of reading anthropological genres, but these insights and awareness are not explored in class to affect learning about reading and literacy practices in anthropology. Moreover, for students, becoming enculturated to the discipline is a process that proceeds largely through academic observation via reading (which is

familiar) rather than direct experience (which is unfamiliar), reinforcing the perception that students are removed from the active practice of the discipline.

## **Chapter 7: Discussion and Implications**

### **Orientation**

In this chapter I provide a synthesis of the analysed data, interpreting the findings in light of relevant scholarship. I look back to the research questions that drove this study and consider what responses the findings allow. The research questions posed were:

- 1) What is undergraduate anthropology writing, and how is it perceived, understood, produced, supported, and complicated?
- 2) What distinctive features and generic elements do students' writing assignments exhibit?
- 3) How is undergraduate anthropology writing described in activity theory terms?
- 4) How useful a framework is AT for describing students' production of anthropology genres and how these genres are established and perpetuated?

### **What is Undergraduate Anthropology Writing?**

Students in this study – in the final two years of their undergraduate anthropology program – demonstrate that they are experiencing a shift in their approach to the field and to their academic work. This shift is one that can be characterized by their enactment of familiar student academic identities at the same time that they are responding to demands for higher level literacy skills and demonstrating their growing expertise in the discipline's conventions, including those applied to writing. Overall, students retain predominantly school-based approaches to their work even as they recognize and respond to professors' goals for them to expand their thinking in discipline-specific ways. Other researchers have noted similar student attention to school-based rather than professional goals (Artemeva, 2008; Beaufort, 2007; Dannels, 2000; Greene, 2001). Students' school-

based motivations are most visible in their attention to grades, not only because grades affirm their academic skills in a familiar way, but also because grades serve as an evaluation from students' most relevant authority (the professor) of the degree to which they are "doing" anthropology. Students' attention to grades may therefore be seen not as evidence that they are failing to adapt to more professional-level demands, but that perhaps they are demonstrating something more complex, i.e., they are maintaining one value system (familiar school values) in a university context that operates with two value systems (school values, unfamiliar disciplinary values). Students appear to be trying to adapt to these unfamiliar values while still clinging to more familiar values. For students, grades appear to be a link between these two sets of values and represent disciplinary acceptance and expertise more than do their own limited experiences and perceptions of disciplinary actions.

Given the lack of curricular opportunities to demonstrate and affirm students' nascent disciplinary expertise, it is not surprising that students focus on grades as the tangible proof of their emerging identities as anthropologists. In contrast, research with science students and faculty advisors demonstrates the overwhelming effects of authentic research experiences on undergraduate students' perceptions of "becoming a scientist" (Hunter, Laursen & Seymour, 2006). Students in this study participated in an undergraduate apprenticeship on an authentic science research project, which led almost all faculty and students to recognize specific gains due to involvement in the project. For students, these gains were identified as increases in their intellectual and personal development, while faculty noticed increases in professional socialization into the discipline. As described in my findings, anthropology students in my study commented

positively about their involvement in hands-on labs, field classes, and other active experiences, so it is reasonable to conclude that a lack of such experiences limits the likelihood that students will develop positive disciplinary identities.

The transition between membership in a general academic community and a discipline-specific community was also evident in students' attention to issues of language. Some of the strongest views and opinions voiced by students in interviews related to their frustration and difficulties with adapting to the language of anthropology's subfields, specifically its theoretical and sociocultural language. No negative comments were heard about taxonomic categories and the scientific language of paleoanthropology, whereas many students commented on the inaccessibility of language and jargon used in the SC class. Even more significantly, these negative views of the language influenced their perspective on the subfield itself, and it is perhaps telling that no student claimed a primary interest in anthropology theory. Royer (1995), writing about invention and language, noted that "cultural and linguistic factors...limit, shape, and make possible new understanding... Language refers symbolically to prior moments in experience, eliciting feelings about the world and luring or promoting in others certain possibilities in experience" (p. 171). Applied to students' frustration with the language of theory in anthropology, Royer's claims suggest that students' inability to access the language of theory limits their ability to develop disciplinary understanding and, in fact, is predictable given students' lack of experience in practices that would make this language relevant and accessible to them.

Students writing practices demonstrated that students participating at the same level of a program are likely to demonstrate notable differences in position along a

developmental continuum between novice anthropology student and disciplinary expert. A number of differences in behavior and attitude were identified with such positions. A small number of students, for instance, used topic selection for their course assignment as an opportunity to engage meaningfully with the field on a topic of interest to themselves. For a larger number of students, however, topic selection was a primarily a negotiating activity involving the balancing of academic elements such as the professor's interests and the availability of source materials. Similarly, differences were seen in students' approaches to revision of their papers, with some students maintaining a reluctant stance to participating in the process of re-visioning their contributions on a topic, while a majority saw revision as an opportunity to ensure their texts represented their thoughts effectively. This evidence suggests that students may move through stages of disciplinary enculturation, similar to the model proposed by Prior (1998) for describing graduate student trajectories of disciplinary participation: passing, procedural display, and deep participation. While there is no evidence in this study to support a claim that anthropology students move through developmental stages, their participation at different levels provides some support for the notion of disciplinary apprenticeship as described in Lave and Wenger's (1991) model of legitimate peripheral participation. Students, for instance, may demonstrate different levels of ability and engagement with disciplinary writing as they become aware of and mimic the work of experienced members of the disciplinary community, including more advanced student peers, their professors, and the texts written by professionals. In this study, and at this stage in their undergraduate careers, however, it was not clear that students did have a distinct disciplinary community that they participated in as members, apart from the general academic community of

university. The loose or vague nature of a new disciplinary community thus limits students' ability to participate and thus affects their transition from novice to expert positions. Students in the upper undergraduate years, such as those in this study, are demonstrating exactly this transition from general to discipline-specific academic participation, with varying degrees of awareness and engagement.

The four themes identified in this study suggest that anthropology relies heavily on reading practices to enculturate students to the discipline and its writing practices. The professors in this study affirmed their beliefs that reading is important to writing. In their survey responses, however, students corroborated only part of professors' perceptions about the importance of extended practice in reading and writing. Students volunteered that their experiences with the large amount of writing required in the anthropology program led them to perceive improvement in their own writing, while they omitted to attribute to reading any improvements in their writing. A handful of students did mention the importance of reading extensively in preparation for writing their assignments, but for most students, reading anthropology was treated as a classroom expectation. This focus on reading for the classroom may exist because of the large amount of weekly assigned reading expected of students in both SC and PA classes. Despite this amount of reading, most students failed to connect reading to their own writing development. Students are not the only ones who overlook the connection of advanced reading to writing development. While there has been extensive interest in student reading at primary and elementary levels, to date little attention has been given to university students' reading development. An exception is growing interest from pedagogically oriented researchers

on the connection between reading and writing, especially the use/misuse of source materials, i.e., plagiarism (Moore Howard, Serviss & Rorigue, 2010).

The findings of this study indicate that the provision of instruction or guidance on writing was lacking in the two classes studied, suggesting that disciplinary rhetorical demands were insufficiently addressed. Rhetorical exigencies and strategies were introduced as “thinking” tools (e.g., critical thinking) rather than writing tools. In other words, the goals outlined by professors, and those identified by students as disciplinary goals, are associated with ways of thinking – about situations, about concepts, about arguments, about evidence – in ways that anthropologists would think about them, but these are connected only implicitly to writing practice. Undergraduate anthropology writing, then, is expected to develop towards the characteristics of texts that students read and the ways of thinking that anthropologists demonstrate; this implicit adoption of literacy expectations has long been identified in writing studies (see Freedman, 1987, 1993).

Students in this study perceived their writing development as arising from their own repeated writing practice rather than any guidance or instruction received in the discipline. Professors, however, indicated in their remarks that they believed they were providing guidance to students on appropriate writing expectations. These types of mismatches and conflicts indicate that the participants involved in academic writing, e.g., the teacher and student, do not necessarily perceive tasks or genre in the same way. Teachers, for example, see assigned reading as a way to encourage and develop students’ writing, whereas students do not recognize this as a purpose for their reading. Discrepancies between teachers’ and students’ perceptions of tasks or goals are also seen

in other research studies (see Russell & Yañez, 2003). Taken together, these findings suggest that addressing writing assumptions through raising awareness of rhetorical exigencies and strategies in class may minimize misperceptions and improve students' development of appropriate disciplinary conventions..

In considering why different patterns of behaviour were undertaken by student writers at two points in the writing process (i.e., when choosing topics; when approaching revision), the results of Torrance, Thomas and Robinson (2000) are helpful to consider. In their longitudinal study, they found that undergraduate writers tended to use similar strategies across multiple essay writing tasks. Use of these strategies was also relatively stable across three years. The researchers concluded that students used many strategies in adaptive ways in response to demands such as time constraints, content understanding, and task demands. It is this ability of students to vary their strategy use in response to context that the researchers identify as “writing expertise” (p. 198). In other words, students who adapt to the increasing demands of the discipline by practicing strategies that address these demands exhibit greater writing expertise than do those students who continue to apply well-practiced but ineffective strategies and who resist adapting to the increasing demands. Applied in conjunction with the findings in my study of anthropology students, it seems clear that pedagogy addressed to specific points in the writing process may be helpful for students.

### **Features and Generic Elements of Students' Writing Assignments**

Students' final research papers showed characteristics that would be expected in advanced level student research texts. The number of sources used and length of the paper were correlated to the mark received, indicating that finding and including

appropriate source material were highly valued by professors in this task. The types of source material included in students' text depended upon the subfield, with SC papers including ethnographic data and PA papers including observations and results from anatomical, archeologic, and laboratory data. Regardless of subfield, secondary data were used by all students; no primary data were included by students. Students did include a large number of rhetorical moves in their introductions, indicating a growing confidence and comfort with academic expectations for third and fourth year students.

Students texts, however, did not uniformly demonstrate obvious progression towards advanced writing. Though a large number of rhetorical moves were used by students, the more complex moves were rarely seen. For example, students rarely situated their research papers within a tradition of research. Given that students in this study were reviewing published sources to inform their research papers i.e., searching for content and background rather than a foundation for conducting their own primary research, it is perhaps not surprising that few attempts were made to use Swales' (1990) move of "continue a research tradition." Similarly, students rarely tried to use the rhetorical strategy of establishing ethos, relying instead on more familiar strategies such as use of a thesis statement to identify their central argument.

It is notable that the means by which students are acculturated to anthropology writing share some similarities with those of Communities of Practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Professors (as oldtimers) act as models for the novice students, demonstrating to them the appropriate ways of thinking and talking about concepts and situations in the discipline. The teachers in this study, however, did not model to students how they themselves wrote, nor were there opportunities for students to see each other's writing.

The only move towards expanding audience was the end-of-year mock conference in the PA class. Applying the Communities of Practice model suggests that professors would recognize students as legitimate participants in the work of the community, though this work is not entirely authentic, but contrived to mimic some elements of the work done by professionals in the field. Students in this study were not required, for instance, to conduct any primary research and, in fact, as noted in students' comments, they were unable to do so except under limited circumstances.

### **Undergraduate Anthropology Writing in Activity Theory Terms**

Using AT elements to explore undergraduate anthropology yields a detailed account of several elements: students' and professors' roles in the courses under study, how subjects interact in class towards a goal/s, a description of the mediating element of genre and an account of how participation in these genres reinforces participants' familiar academic roles. Similarly, AT enables a portrayal of the context of university education – an undergraduate program in one discipline – in terms of the community and conventions in which the activity takes place. Each of these elements has been described in detail in the findings chapters of this report. What is less clear is how AT can be used to explain the activities it has identified and described. Almost a decade ago John Hayes (2006) suggested that AT would eventually prove useful:

"[A]ctivity theory has not had much time to prove itself in the field of writing research. Presumably, much more data will be collected in the near future that can give us a better idea of how much predictive power activity theory can bring to the study of writing." ( p. 39)

In this study, a good deal of data was collected and analysed, but the notion of “predictive power” remains elusive. A more appropriate term better suited to qualitative empirical research might be “explanatory power.” Even using this terminology, the findings that emerged in this study are not directly seen as being explained through the AT framework, though the framework allowed for a systematic and comprehensive description of the activity. This evaluation of the limited explanatory power of AT was raised clearly by Bakhurst (2009) when he described two streams of AT – one that is primarily theoretical and one that is methodological. In his view, the shortcomings of the methodological approach (“what we have here is a universal, but generally vacuous schema that turns out to be a useful heuristic in reference to certain kinds of activities,” pp.206-207) are not solved by a return to the theoretical stream. The conclusion that seems most reasonable is that the elements of activity are readily identified and described using AT, but the explanation of this activity requires another theory to be applied.

### **AT as a Framework for Students’ Production of Anthropology Genres**

While the familiar triangle form of AT was helpful in this study for methodological purposes, it suggested that genre be seen as a tool that mediates between a subject and his/her goal. Other researchers (see Artemeva’s 2011 integration of AT and genre) have also drawn on the connection between activity and genre theories, particularly this notion of genre as a tool.

While not discounting this view, another possibility for understanding the relation between activity and genre exists. A recent Levant (2012) translation of Evald Ilyenkov’s discussion of the concept of the *ideal*, published in 2009, provides a new way of looking at the role of AT in understanding academic genre production.

In Ilyenkov's writings, the connection of the ideal to the notion of genre is obvious. Ilyenkov identified the ideal with "'things,' which have a certain meaning for any mind, as well as the power to limit [any mind's] individual whims" (p. 153). These characteristics of universality of meaning and the ability of the ideal to limit meanings are exemplified in Plato's prototype-patterns, according to Ilyenkov. The ideal exists, he claims, in a "peculiar category of phenomena" of "normative patterns" not synonymous with just "any mental phenomena" (p. 153). The ideal, he claims, exists in a category separate from the material or the mental. His description comes very close to one we might make of genre as social action: a pattern of normative action which carries certain specific meanings and limits the actions and meanings available.

This description simultaneously allows a rethinking of genre. By looking at genre not as a *tool* in activity theory, but as the activity itself, in the category of the ideal, it is possible to more firmly reject the static view of genre as a form into which purpose or action is poured. In Ilyenkov's words:

Ideality constantly slips away from the metaphysically single-valued theoretical establishment. As soon as it is established as the "form of the thing" it begins to tease the theoretician with its "immateriality," its "functional" character, and appears only as a form of "pure activity," only as *actus purus*. On the other hand, as soon as one attempts to establish it "as such," as purified of all the traces of palpable corporeality, it turns out that this attempt is fundamentally doomed to failure, that after such a purification there will be nothing but transparent emptiness, an indefinable vacuum. (p. 176-77)

A realignment of the notion of activity with that of the ideal and tying this to genre suggests that it is not possible to separate a genre from its activity. As Ilyenkov states:

“Ideality” as such exists only in the constant transformation of these two forms of its “external incarnation” and does not coincide with either of them taken separately. It exists only through the unceasing process of the transformation of the form of activity into the form of a thing and back – the form of a thing into the form of activity (of social man, of course). (p. 192)

An example from this study’s data may illustrate this point. Recall that several students identified the ability to criticize anthropologists’ texts and the inclusion of such critique (“cat-fighting”) as a defining feature of professional research articles in anthropology. For one student, participating in this critique was understood to be a largely negative action which she nevertheless achieved with some sense of accomplishment. For another, a negative interpretation was also perceived but the action was rejected because the student felt uncomfortable or inadequate to the task. Professors, however, saw the ability to engage in critique (albeit not limited solely to negative criticism) as a goal which students should strive to reach. Moreover, the resulting text – a critical review of the literature – is held up as a defining example of a disciplinary genre which (to make matters even more complex) is widely expected of university students. The limited/varied ability of students to write in the appropriately critical form is therefore tied to their identity as non-professionals in the discipline and to their dominant goals as students, namely academic goals related to pleasing and deferring to the expert (professor) rather than engaging in the activity of critique to achieve professional goals. The *activity* of writing a critical review – the *genre* or *ideal* – is thus tied up in the constant

transformation between the material form(s) of the critical review and the form of activity and back in an iterative process. Neither activity nor form can exist without the other: “try to identify the ‘ideal’ with any one of these two forms of its immediate existence – and it no longer exists. All you have left is the ‘substantial’, entirely material body and its bodily functioning” (Ilyenkov, p. 192).

Seen from this perspective, activity theory may take on a more subtle and more sophisticated explanatory function. It does not merely provide a schematic upon which to locate areas of conflict or convergence. It does not primarily situate relations between elements. Instead, it raises the level of analysis from that of the purely empirical to that of the representational. It provides a semiotic framework upon which to consider how the material aspects of an activity are integrally related to how this activity is represented both externally and mentally by the subject. The notion of representation seems overlooked in many uses of activity theory, which tend to focus on material actions and traces (perceptions) of actions. I have been unable to locate other writing researchers who have used Ilyenkov’s ideas in their work with AT.

Refocusing AT on the ongoing transformation of activity/form also brings the theory back to its roots in Vygotsky’s simple triangle. While the additions of Leontiev and Engeström were important in their time for expanding the notions of learning and activity, it is fair now to question how many additional elements can be incorporated (and bases added?) onto the model to account for the shortcomings mentioned by AT’s recent critics. Another concern is the depiction of an “outcome” of the activity, indicating that this is separate from the activity itself. An alternative may be to go back to Vygotsky’s original and reconsider its claims and concepts from another perspective, that of

representations of the ideal. The opportunity to examine activity holistically as representational rather than material suggests that AT is, in fact, a theory that holds much promise for ongoing and future research endeavours in writing studies and beyond.

### **Activity Theory as a Research Framework**

According to Hayes (2006):

"[I]f activity theory is successful, it will be because it provides a basis for organizing programs of research. Judging by the large number of researchers interested in activity theory, I think there is a good possibility that it will provide a convenient framework for research programs." ( p. 39)

In contrast to my suggestion above that AT may hold promise as an explanatory framework by exploring the representational nature of activity as genre, Hayes seems to emphasize its organizing potential. By this I assume he means programs of research based on the various elements identified as focal points in activity theory, or the relationships between and within these elements. These are, of course, relevant and necessary, and this was the approach I began with in this study. But as I suggested above, the explanatory potential of AT using this approach to and conceptualization of activity appears limited.

As discussed in the methodology chapter introducing retroductive research strategies, one research concern is to describe a phenomenon using “the logic of discovery.” In my view, AT enables this logic by providing a framework for discovery and description of relevant elements and structures. Blaikie (2007), however, notes that ““The central problem for the Retroductive RS is how to arrive at the structures and mechanisms that are postulated to explain observed regularities?” (p. 83). In order to be

able to analyse the “structures and mechanisms” identified by AT, the identified elements need to be theorized adequately. The integration of genre theory with AT, as noted earlier, has been used by other researchers. What this study adds to these developments is to suggest a shift from the examination of tools to the consideration of how best to theorize activity itself. By integrating the theory of genre with activity, AT may realize its explanatory potential.

### **Limitations**

A limitation shared by this case study and other ethnographic studies is the arguably subjective nature of its qualitative analysis and the conclusions subsequently derived. Acknowledging, however, that all researchers interpret data (not just those who gather qualitative data, but all researchers engaged in empirical studies, including researchers engaged in experimental studies) suggests that ethnographic methods, by reason of their situated nature and context-dependent data, are inherently no less valid than other methods of study.

Stronger challenges to ethnography have come from the rise of frameworks that privilege critical perspectives, including those that focus on identifying issues of power inequities, gender, and ethnicity (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000). These challenges might equally apply to case studies, and are centred on the view that power differences between researchers and the ones researched have important effects on the way data is interpreted and even the type of data that is collected. Such perspectives highlight the difficulties social researchers face when trying to understand and write about any cultural activity – always there is the epistemic problem: deciding which knowledge counts, whose standpoint is included, and how best to represent the target phenomenon using this

knowledge in a way that is worthy of trust, given that there can never be an entirely neutral or complete way of representing the world. As a researcher in an academic context studying other academics, I believe the power differential between me and the students and professors in this study is limited, especially since I am a student myself. In addition, I have tried to mitigate the concern regarding data interpretation by including extensive quotations from the students and professors in this study, so that the reader can evaluate my interpretations for him/herself and entertain alternate conclusions.

Eisenhart (2001) argues that one solution to the problem of representation, especially as it applies to ethnography, is to acknowledge that universal conclusions are unlikely and that an altered methodology, “multisite ethnography,” as coined by George Marcus, may allow trustworthy connections and conclusions to emerge from investigations of multiple sites that make up particular social practices. This suggestion approaches the notion of replication in experimental research, in which findings from any one study are rarely deemed conclusive unless replicated by other researchers at other sites. Practically, however, the notion that researchers undertake studies at other sites may not always be feasible and, recognizing this, researchers are simply well advised to consider carefully before attempting generalizations outside of the context studied in one site. This is what I have tried to do in this study, though I hope anthropology researchers, professors, and students at other universities find common experiences in my account. In addition, I have tried to show how the findings of this study support or differ from findings of similar studies in academia conducted by other researchers.

An important point in various approaches to ethnographic methodologies is that contextual variables always impact the social practices under study, and these contexts

need to be actively included in social research. In relation to my project, critiques that suggest an ethnographic analysis of this one site of undergraduate writing practices will provide only partial information about anthropology writing in general are recognized and integral to the understanding of this case. Moreover, the diversity of academic and disciplinary contexts in universities ensures that any insight from this study may contribute to an understanding of writing practices in other disciplines and institutions only in part. To offset this limitation, the study of other anthropology departments as well as other academic disciplines would contribute greatly to the confidence with which anthropology writing practices in general can be explained and theorized.

This study relies in part on the use of retrospective accounts from the students and professors about the final assignments written. It has been argued that retrospective accounts may be suspect because of memory shortcomings, the nature of reconstructed memories which may vary from the actual experience being recounted, and the possibility of misinterpretation when requesting and/or providing accounts from memory (Greene & Higgins, 1994). Solutions to these problems include collecting accounts soon after the activity in question, focussing on critical incidents rather than generalities, and identifying to the participants the purposes for requesting the recounts so they can become active participants. In my study I followed each of these suggestions: I conducted discourse-based (retrospective) interviews with students and professors within a few weeks after the end of the course and submission of the final assignment; by using a discourse-based interview I focussed on specific critical elements rather than generalities of writing, and all focus group students and professors were familiar with me and the study through classroom interactions all term and in the first phases of the project. In

addition, I provided explicit explanations to participants about the study and my goals prior to the interviews so they were aware why their perspectives were being requested.

Finally, a methodological criticism may be the lack of lexicogrammatical analysis of student texts in my study. Detailed analyses of this type are common in linguistics research and genre analysis, particularly from the perspective of Sydney School researchers such as J.R. Martin. However, several researchers have concluded that the primary differences among genres are related to contextual factors and sociorhetorical purposes – as might be expected from Miller’s 1984 definition – rather than language-specific characteristics (Biber, 1989, p. 39; Gardner & Nesi, 2013; Paltridge, 1997). This suggests that, while they can be illuminating, detailed grammatical analyses are not mandatory for genre studies. In my study, I acknowledge that further analysis of grammatical elements in students’ texts could have been undertaken and would have identified other characteristics of undergraduates’ writing. The focus of this study, however, was not primarily on the characteristics of students’ writing, but on the activity of anthropology writing. As such, the actions and perceptions of the participants seemed more likely to me to provide relevant information than extended grammatical analyses might offer.

## **Chapter 8: Conclusions and Future Directions**

### **Orientation**

In this chapter, I summarize the key findings of this study and articulate the conclusions I have drawn. I briefly reflect on how these findings may contribute to the theoretical literatures and, finally, consider future research possibilities related to this work.

### **Summary of Key Findings**

1) Undergraduate anthropology can be understood as an activity which serves primarily to initiate novices into positions as potential, rather than actual, members in the discipline. Students encounter minimal opportunities for authentic engagement in actions that practicing anthropologists would carry out (e.g., primary research activities). At the same time, students are provided multiple opportunities to develop the reading and writing habits familiar to anthropologists, though most students identify these as academic activities rather than opportunities for engagement at professional levels of the discipline. Students often fail to internalize the values that anthropologists place on these literacy activities. They present themselves in anthropology in the familiar role of students/learners, demonstrate confidence in specific academic tasks such as using sources, and frequently reject unfamiliar views of themselves as agents capable of carrying out authentic work in the discipline.

2) The assignments written by students in anthropology demonstrate characteristics consistent with writing that is in the process of change from simpler academic forms to more sophisticated texts. There is a significant correlation between number of sources used and grade received, as well as length of paper and grade received. Increasing

complexity is also evident in the number of rhetorical moves used by students in their introductions. The prevalence of familiar rhetorical moves (such as inclusion of a thesis statement) over unfamiliar moves (establishing ethos) suggests that students are uneven in their development of writing abilities appropriate to the upper level of university.

There is little evidence that professors teach advanced literacy skills in class, and students' lack of awareness regarding their use of rhetorical strategies in writing suggests that both students and professors may be unfamiliar with how anthropology content is connected to its rhetorical nature.

3) The methodological framework of AT is useful for capturing, structuring, and organizing the identification, collection, and analysis of appropriate data, particularly the large amounts of data in case studies such as this project. AT provides a useful theoretical model for organizing writing research programs.

4) The usefulness of AT as an explanatory framework for anthropology writing is not obvious. A re-reading of AT using Ilyenkov's ideas about form to integrate the concept of genre is suggested as a way to address AT's limitations for research purposes; such a theoretical revisioning would reconnect current AT to other relevant theoretical interpretations developed by followers of Vygotsky's original model.

### **Reflections on Activity Theory and Genre Theory**

When I started this study I was skeptical about the usefulness of activity theory. It was, in my view, a "kitchen sink" theory – everything but the kitchen sink is in there. Or, as Witte (2005) more elegantly puts it, "In short, everything human is in some sense related in some way to activity" (p. 139). My appraisal put emphasis on a perhaps overly negative view, while Witte's emphasizes its positive aspect. AT suggests that there are

relations between the elements making up the focal points of AT, and that areas of conflict and convergence can be located between or within elements. This seemed unsurprising to me and, to tell the truth, it still seems so. That does not mean, of course, that applying AT to specific social situations is not helpful for clarifying relationships and enabling rich description. What this use of AT provides, then, is a framework that conceptualizes activity for descriptive purposes but has limited explanatory function.

What I hadn't expected when I began this study was that the representation of activity theory I was using, and that I had adopted from much of the literature on AT, had overlooked what may be the most significant feature of the theory. The notion of mediational means – the use of tools to achieve an objective – while important, may not be AT's most important contribution, I now think. What is most compelling is the concept of activity itself and its unstated connection to the concept of genre, in particular genre as social action. Integrating genre into activity, i.e., activity now becomes synonymous with genre, provides a unit of analysis that consists of both material/physical and conceptual/mental components. These components, moreover, are inseparable in a way that the concept of activity and its constituent elements never was. This provides both a limit to what “activity” can be and an expansion of how that activity can be interpreted.

### **Writing Studies and Education**

For more than a century, as described in the introduction to this thesis, the emerging field of writing studies has evolved in response to social imperatives, changing its approaches to writing and writing instruction. The tradition of explicitly separating written texts from the actors and actions that give them meaning has given way to

practices that attempt to integrate writing within the social contexts and historical relations from which it arises. This thesis project contributes to the ongoing research on academic writing in a disciplinary context by exploring how an integrated approach that combines genre theory and activity theory to study writing is not only useful, but arguably necessary to avoid fossilizing both genre and activity.

This study's conclusions extend theoretical conceptualizing of writing to formally integrate elements of complementary theories. This proposed integration occurs in a period of increasingly sophisticated views about writing and its ability to represent and act. Building on previous studies that used AT to identify conflicts and convergences between participants in an activity and between activity systems, this study reinforces the importance of attending to participants' internal representations and meaning-making activity. These internal activities are central to those of us who teach. Bazerman (2012), calling to mind Vygotsky, makes this a practical point for writing educators when he suggests that teachers' goals are to "help students internalize disciplinary concepts and externalize disciplined thoughts" (p. 270). As this study's participants demonstrate, navigating through these actions of internalizing/externalizing requires patience and dedication and a recognition of differences in development across individuals. Moreover, this dedicated practice needs to draw on effective strategies that address the areas identified as posing particular difficulties for learners.

The question for future researchers in writing studies and education is how to design research that will capture the breadth and the detail involved in human literacy activity given the complexity involved. As Catherine Schryer (2011) notes,

Investigating texts in their social contexts often means creating two large data sets: one dedicated to analyzing a set of texts, and the other focused on analyzing interview data. These two different kinds of demands mean that such projects can be lengthy and expensive and can require combinations of expertise that exceed the typical humanities' style research project...such projects often require an interdisciplinary team in order to provide the insider knowledge needed to understand the 'logic of practice' (p. 46).

This thesis study demonstrates exactly this challenge and suggests its potential rewards.

Future research could follow a collaborative group model such as that more often seen in the sciences and in some programs of writing study (e.g., Dias, Freedman, Medway, & Paré, 1999; Kelly, Bazerman, Skukauskaite, & Prothero, 2010; Schryer, Campbell, Spafford, & Lingard, 2006; Spafford, Lingard, Schryer, & Hrynchak, 2004). Along the same vein, and adding to the complexity, Jay Lemke (2000) notes the limitations of studying human activity in one timescale rather than the many timescales seen in complex systems – systems that demonstrate persisting patterns as well as emerging patterns, much as the conceptualization of genre as activity exemplifies. To accommodate longer timeframes, his conclusion – similar to that of Schryer – is that it may take a village to study a village (p. 288). I look forward to future collaborative work in the village.

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# Appendices

## Appendix A - Ethics Approval

### APPROVAL OF PhD THESIS PROPOSAL

Form A

If the proposed research does not involve human subjects or the direct use of their written records, video-tapes, recordings, tests, etc., this signature form, along with ONE copy of the research proposal should be delivered directly to the Graduate Education Office for final approval.	If the proposed research involves human subjects, this signature form, along with ONE copy of the research proposal and THREE copies of the Ethical Review Form must be submitted to the Chair of the Ethical Review Committee, Graduate Office, Faculty of Education.
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IT IS THE STUDENT'S RESPONSIBILITY TO PROVIDE A COPY OF THE RESEARCH PROPOSAL (INCLUDING REVISIONS) TO THE THESIS SUPERVISOR AND ALL MEMBERS OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE.

Student's Name: Soba Samuels  
TITLE OF THESIS: What is undergraduate anthropology writing? An activity theory analysis.

DOES THIS RESEARCH INVOLVE THE USE OF HUMAN SUBJECTS: YES  NO

Name of Thesis Supervisor: Perry Klein

Name(s) of Members of the Thesis Advisory Committee: Regna Darnell  
Rosamund Stokke

#### APPROVAL SIGNATURES:

Graduate Student: 

Thesis Supervisor: 

Advisory Committee: 

Ethical Review Clearance: 

Review #: 0812-4 Date: Dec 11/08.

Chair of Graduate Education:  Date: 11/12/08

A STUDENT MAY PROCEED WITH RESEARCH WHEN A COPY OF THIS FORM CONTAINING ALL APPROVAL SIGNATURES HAS BEEN RECEIVED.

A COPY OF THIS PROPOSAL MAY BE MADE PUBLIC AND KEPT ON A TWO-HOUR RESERVE IN THE EDUCATION LIBRARY.

## Appendix B - Faculty Email Survey

To all anthropology teachers:

Note: All information collected in this survey will be treated as confidential; no identifying information will be released.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of years teaching experience: \_\_\_\_\_

1. How many writing assignments do you give students in each course you teach this year?  

Course 1 _____	# of Assignments: _____
Course 2 _____	# of Assignments: _____
Course 3 _____	# of Assignments: _____
  
2. Do you distribute handouts to students providing details about writing assignments in your class? If so, could you please attach a copy of these handouts to this questionnaire.  

Yes (file attached)       No
  
3. a) Do you mark student writing assignments using a formal marking scheme or rubric? If so, could you please attach a copy of the rubric to this questionnaire.  

Yes (file attached)       No

b) Do you provide students with this rubric before they hand in their assignment?  
 Yes       No
  
4. What do you think is the most common difficulty/error when students write in anthropology?  

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b) What is the goal you have for students regarding this major writing assignment in course 1? That students become able:

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> to argue for an opinion or position     | <input type="checkbox"/> to relay steps in a procedure                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> to summarize research literature        | <input type="checkbox"/> to practice writing                               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> to narrate an event/anecdote            | <input type="checkbox"/> to demonstrate understanding of assigned readings |
| <input type="checkbox"/> to learn a style or genre of writing    | <input type="checkbox"/> to explain a process                              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> to describe an object/phenomenon        | <input type="checkbox"/> to learn how to integrate sources                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> to learn how to cite, paraphrase, quote | <input type="checkbox"/> to record observations                            |

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

9. What is the most important feature that students should include in this major assignment (i.e. what is the main thing that you are looking for?)

\_\_\_\_\_

10. What aspect of the major assignment are most students able to do well?

\_\_\_\_\_

11. What aspect of the major assignment do students have trouble with?

\_\_\_\_\_

12. Do you (or your TA) provide feedback to students on this major writing assignment:

	Yes	No	by TA
Class peer review (before final copy due)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Response to an outline/proposal that is handed in before due date	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mandatory office visit/in-class conference	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Comments on final copy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other: _____			

13. How important are each of the following goals for the major writing assignment in course 1?

	Not important	Moderately important	Very important
Improve students' writing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Promote learning of specific content	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Enculturate students to anthropology	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Prepare students for graduate school	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Prepare students for writing on the job	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other: _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Same questions repeated for Course 2 and Course 3.

### Appendix C - Student Classroom Survey

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Yr: \_\_\_\_\_

1. How confident are you about your writing abilities?  
Not confident    Somewhat confident    Fairly confident    Very confident
  
2. What prior experience do you have in anthropology (before this course)?  
 2 previous courses    3-4 courses    5 or more courses    Other: \_\_\_\_\_
  
3. Do you expect anthropology to be your (check one or more):  
 major    minor    an elective    a career
  
4. What is your approximate grade average in anthropology courses to date?  
 A or A+ (80% or above)    B (70-79%)    C (60-69%)    D (50-59%)
  
5. What is your approximate grade average on anthropology writing assignments and essays in previous courses?  
 A or A+ (80% or above)    B (70-79%)    C (60-69%)    D (50-59%)
  
6. Do you identify yourself with any particular perspective in anthropology?     
Yes    No  
  
If so, which one?  
  
Sociocultural   Bio-archeological    Linguistic    Other: \_\_\_\_\_
  
7. Has writing in anthropology helped you write better in other areas or courses?  
Yes    No    Don't know  
If yes, how?  
  
\_\_\_\_\_  
  
\_\_\_\_\_  
  
\_\_\_\_\_

8. Is there anything distinctive about writing in anthropology? If so, what is it?

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9. Do you think your writing in anthropology has improved since your first year?

- Yes             No

What influenced this improvement? \_\_\_\_\_

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10. How satisfied are you usually with your anthropology writing assignments when you have completed them?

- Not satisfied       Somewhat satisfied       Fairly satisfied       Very satisfied

11. How satisfied are you usually with the feedback you receive on your anthropology writing assignments?

- Not satisfied       Somewhat satisfied       Fairly satisfied       Very satisfied

12. How familiar are you with writing using the writing process (planning, producing text, revising)?

- Not at all familiar       Not very familiar       Somewhat familiar       Very familiar

13. How important are these actions to your assignment writing in anthropology?

	Never do it	Sometimes do it	Always do it
Planning:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Creating an outline(s):	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Getting feedback from others	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Proofreading:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Revising:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

14. If you have any additional comments you would like to make about writing in anthropology, please do so here:

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## Appendix D - Student First Interview Protocol

For initial interview at beginning of term:

1. Why did you take this anthropology course?
2. How would you rate your abilities as a writer in anthropology?
3. Is anthropology writing generally different from writing in other disciplines? If so, how?
4. Compared to other subjects, how is your writing in anthropology different/similar?
5. In anthropology, what is the difference between a good anthropology paper and a poor one?
6. What is the biggest difficulty for you in writing for anthropology?
7. What kinds of writing do you do in your anthropology courses?
8. Do you think the kinds of writing you do in your courses is similar to the writing that anthropologists do in their work?
9. What kinds of things or information need to be included in written assignments for anthropology?
10. In this course, what kinds of things will you make sure you include in your anthropology assignments? Things you'll make sure you leave out?
11. How do you go about writing for anthropology? For instance, for assignment X?
12. What is your goal for the major writing assignment in this course?
13. What do you think is the teacher's goal in giving this writing assignment?
14. Do you ever get other people to read your writing and give you feedback? Why/why not?
15. Do you expect to continue in anthropology? Do you see it as a career option?

## Appendix E - Student Second Interview Protocol

1. Tell me about how you wrote this paper.
2. Do you think this paper will get an A? a C? Why?
3. a) How did you structure this paper? What was your plan?  
b) Why did you choose this structure?
4. Did you model this paper after any other writing you have done or texts you have seen or read?
5. What is the main point you wanted to make in your paper? Do you think you made it?
6. Can you identify the parts of your paper?
7. How did you link or connect the parts of your paper together?
8. If I were to move this paragraph from here to there, would it matter? Why/why not?
9. You wrote: “ [thesis statement, statement of rhetorical or generic purpose] ” here in your introductory paragraph. Could this statement be moved to later in the text, like in this (body) paragraph or be deleted?
10. If I rephrased the sentence: “ [add/remove orienting theme, conjunction] ” into “yyy” would this improve the text? Why/why not?
11. If I changed this word “ [personal pronoun, nominalization] ” into “ yyy ” would this be better? Why/why not?
12. You used a question here: “ xxx ”. Does it matter if I change it into a statement? Why/why not?
13. Could you have written this assignment as a [lab report or a narrative]? Would that have been acceptable to the prof?

## **Appendix F - Professor First Interview Protocol**

1. In anthropology (as a discipline), what is the goal of writing?
2. Is there a genre or type of writing that you identify as most representative of anthropology?
3. How do student assignments differ from professional anthropology writing? How are these assignments similar to professional writing?
4. What difficulties do students encounter in learning to “become an anthropologist”?
5. What do you want students to learn from writing assignments in anthropology?
6. Why did you choose the writing assignments you assigned? For example, assignment #1, #2, etc.?
7. What is the genre of the major writing assignment in your course?
8. In your anthropology course, how do students support their claims?
9. What types of things do you think are important for students to include in their essays/reports?
10. Do you provide students with examples of good written assignments? Why/why not?
11. What are you looking for when you mark students’ assignments?

## Appendix G - Professor Second Interview Protocol

1. Why is this an “A” (or a “C”) paper?
2. What do you think the student was trying to do (what goal he/she had) in writing this paper?
3. Can you identify the parts of this paper?
4. This student writes: “[thesis statement, statement of rhetorical purpose] ” in his introductory paragraph. Could this statement have come later in the text, like in this (body) paragraph, or be deleted?
5. If I were to move this/these paragraph(s) from here to there, would it matter? Why/why not?
6. If I rephrased this sentence: “ [xxxx ]” into “ [remove reference to previous lit, remove cohesive element, remove/add citation]” would this improve the text? Why/why not?
7. Would it be alright to delete this sentence/clause “ [evidence, warrant, orienting theme, statement of rhetorical or generic purpose] ”? Why/why not?
8. If I changed this word “[personal pronoun, nominalization, concrete subject] ” into “[passive construction, multi-word description, abstraction]” would this be better? Why/why not?
9. The student uses a question here: “ xxx ”. Does it matter if I change it into a statement? Why?
10. Could this paper be re-written as a [lab report, narrative] and be acceptable to you?

**Appendix H - Initial and emergent coding categories for student data**

<b>Initial Coding Categories -from AT</b>	<b>Initial codes – First pass</b>	<b>First interview questions- aligned to Coding Category</b>			<b>Codes-emergent</b>
Roles	Student				
	Teacher				
	Anthropologist (expert)				Researcher
	Anthropology novice		Self-assessment: Question 2 (How would you rate your anthro writing ability?)	Discrimination: Question 5 (Is the writing you do in courses similar to anthropologists' writing?)	Writer
Tools	Course texts - readings				Resource use
	Genre		Identification: Question 6 (What kinds of things/info need to be included?)		
	Syllabus				
Goals	For assignment		Question 8 (What is your goal for this assignment?)	Obstacles: Question 4 (What is your biggest writing difficulty in anthro?)	
	To learn/teach anthropology	Motivation: Question 1 (Why did you take the SC/PA course?)			
	To become an anthropologist		Question 10 (Do you expect to continue in		

			anthro?)		
	To go to grad school/further study				Field work/trip
Rules	Disciplinary conventions		Discrimination: Question 3 (Is anthro writing different?)		
	Academic conventions/rules		Writing process: Question 7 (How do you write for anthro?)	Writing process: Question 9 (Do you get feedback from others?)	Reading
Community	School/university				Library
	Professional/disciplinary				
	Home/family				

**Appendix I - Coding categories for student data, #2**

<b>Coding Categories -from AT</b>	<b>Codes – initial pass</b>	<b>Coding Category – aligned to interview #2 questions</b>			<b>Codes - emergent</b>
Roles	Student				
	Teacher				
	Anthropologist/researcher (expert)	Question 12: Do you feel like an anthropologist?			
	Anthropology/research novice				Writer
Tools	Writing process	Question 1: How did you plan/structure your paper?			
	Genre	Question 2: Why did you structure your paper this way?	Question 3: Did you follow a model?	Question 4: Can you identify parts of your paper?	
			Question 12: Could you write this paper as [another genre]?		
Library				Reading	
Goals	Academic goals				
	Disciplinary goals				Field work/trip
	Expectations				
Rules	Disciplinary conventions	Questions 5-10: Thesis, subheading, pronouns, references, metadiscourse			
	Academic conventions/rules				
Community	School/university				
	Professional/disciplinary				Conferences Publication
	Home/family				

**Appendix J - Coding categories for professor interviews/transcript data**

**Interview 1:**

<b>Coding Categories -from AT</b>	<b>Codes -initial pass</b>	<b>Coding Category – aligned to first interview questions</b>			<b>Codes - emergent</b>
Roles	Students				
	Teacher				
	Anthropologist/re searcher (expert)				
	Anthropology/res earch novice				
Tools	Writing process				Reading
	Genre	Question 2: What genre is representative of anthro?	Question 3: Are student assignments similar to professional anthro texts?	Question 9: What do students need to include in their papers?	
Goals	Academic goals	Question 1: What is the goal of anthropology writing?	Question 5: What do you want students to learn from writing?	Question 6: Why did you choose these writing assignments?	
	Disciplinary goals				
	Expectations		Question 11: What are you looking for when you mark?		
Rules	Disciplinary conventions	Use of sources Question 8: How do students support their claims?	Question 4: What difficulties do students encounter in anthropology?		Technologies
	Academic conventions/rules				
Community	School/university				
	Professional/disciplinary				Conferences Publication
	Home/family				

## Interview 2

<b>Coding Categories -from AT</b>	<b>Codes -initial pass</b>	<b>Coding Category alignment with second interview questions</b>			<b>Codes - emergent</b>
Roles	Students				
	Teacher				
	Anthropologist/researcher (expert)				
	Anthropology/research novice				
Tools	Writing process				Reading
	Genre	Questions 3-7: Structure, thesis, coherence, lexicon, citation			
Goals	Academic goals				
	Disciplinary goals				
	Expectations	Question 1: Why was this an A paper?			
Rules	Disciplinary conventions				Technologies
	Academic conventions/rules				
Community	School/university				
	Professional/disciplinary				Conferences Publication
	Home/family				

### Appendix K - Required Course Readings by Source/Text Type

Source	Theory Class (SC)			Paleoanthropology Class (PA)		
	Author(s)/Journal	Date	Pgs to read	Author(s)/Journal	Date	Pgs to read
Books	Douglas, M.	1966	219	Conroy, G.C. (2 <sup>nd</sup> ed)	2005	~500
	Hatch, E.	1973	277	Chptrs 1-7		
	Sahlins, M.	1981	84	Chptrs 9-10		
	Tsing, A.	1993	296	Chptrs 12-13		
Readings/Chapter (provided in course pack)	Gay y Blasco, Paloma & Huon Wardle	2007	21	Tattersall	2006	1
	Boas, F.	1896	8	“Basic concepts”		8
	Rivers, W.H.R.	1906	17	Willermet & Clark	1995	
	Malinowski, B.	1922	25	Nelson, et al.	2003	
	Radcliffe-Brown, A.	1924	15	“Origin of hominids”		
	Evans-Pritchard, E.	1937	14	“Early homo”		
	Bateson, G.	1940	14	“Origin of modern...”		12
	Steward, J.	1955	12			
	Sahlins, M.	1966	39			
	Rappaport, R.	1967	13			
	Sahlins, M.	1968	13			
	Levi-Strauss, C.	1945	15			
	Giddens, A.	1979	24			
	Fabian, J.	1981	16			
	Ardener, E.	1977	13			
	Tsing, A.	2003	45			
	Tsing, A.	1999	41			
Journal articles (pdf via library )	Amer.Anthropologist	1954	20	Nature – 23 articles	1995-2007	73
	Compar.Studies in...	1963	18	Science – 22 articles	2000-2008	34
	J.Economic History	1959	12	J. Human Evolution	2002	7
	Amer.Anthropologist	1955	18	J. Human Evolution	2008	4
	Proceedings of RAI	1966	10	J. Human Evolution	2009	4
	Compar.Studies in...	1984	40	Proceedings of NAS	2000	3
	Man	1966	22	Proceedings of NAS	2006	5
	Amer. Ethnologist	1980	13	Anatomical Record	2006	11
	Amer. Ethnologist	1988	14	Amer. J. Phys. Anth.	2001	3
	Amer.Anthropologist	1999	9	PLoS Biology	2004	4
	Theory,Culture & Soc.	1990	31	PLoS Biology	2006	3
	Current Anthropology	2000	23	PLoS Genetics	2006	7
<b>Approx. Total</b>			<b>1403</b>			<b>679</b>

## Curriculum Vitae

### Boba M. Samuels

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#### Credentials

- Ph.D. (Education Studies) 2014 University of Western Ontario, Faculty of Education  
Thesis: What is undergraduate anthropology writing? An activity theory analysis.  
Supervisor: Rosamund Stooke, Ph.D.
- M.Ed. (Educational Psychology) University of Western Ontario, Faculty of Education  
Supervisor: Perry Klein, Ph.D.  
(partial completion)
- Honors B.A. (Psychology) 2004 University of Western Ontario  
Thesis: The relation between writing ability and academic achievement.  
Supervisor: John B. Mitchell, Ph.D.
- 

#### Current Position

Manager May, 2013 Writing Centre, Wilfrid Laurier University; Waterloo, Ontario

#### Previous Position

Writing Consultant 2010-13 Writing Centre, Wilfrid Laurier University; Waterloo, Ontario

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#### Research Experience

- Principal Investigator (local) 2013-2014 Discipline-specific writing: An analysis of writing assignments in the Faculty of Science  
SSHRC-funded multi-site, cross-Canada project  
Principal investigator: Roger Graves, Ph.D.  
University of Alberta
- Principal Investigator 2011-2013 Writing Instruction Using an Online Assignment Planner  
Co-investigator: Emmy Misser, M.A.  
Writing Centre, Wilfrid Laurier University

Co-investigator	2006-2009	Writing Through the Curriculum: UWO Writing Project Principal Investigator: Roger Graves, Ph.D. Co-investigator: Theresa Hyland, Ph.D. Faculty of Arts, and Huron College, UWO
Research Assistant	2007-2008	The role of Subjective Group Dynamics, implicit attitudes and explicit attitudes in younger and older children's acceptance of in-group and out-group peers. Principal Investigator: Elizabeth Nowicki, Ph.D. Faculty of Education, UWO
Research Assistant	2004-07	Teaching students to use writing as a learning tool (3 year SSHRC project) Student strategies for decoding new words (1 year project) Principal Investigator: Perry Klein, Ph.D. Faculty of Education, UWO
Program/Research Assistant	2000-2003	Leadership and Mentorship Program (LAMP) Centre for New Students, UWO Supervisor: Susan Rodger, Ph.D.

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### Research Funding Received

2011-13	Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario (HEQCO)	\$36,000	external research funding
2008-09	Ontario Graduate Scholarship	\$15,000	doctoral student award
	Faculty of Education, UWO	\$900	internal travel grant
	American Psychological Association	\$500	travel grant
2007-08	Faculty of Education, UWO	\$400	internal travel grant
	Teaching Support Centre, UWO	\$2,417	internal research award

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### Program Funding Received

2014	Focus for Ethnic Women	\$3063	financial literacy project funding
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## Teaching Experience

Lecturer	2010-14	Wilfrid Laurier University
Instructor	2009-10	Modern Languages Department; King's University College, UWO
Lecturer	2008-10 2004-06	The Write Place, King's University College, UWO
Instructor	2005-06	Modern Languages Department; King's University College, UWO
Instructor	2004-05	Teaching Support Centre, UWO
Writing Tutor	2003-2005	The Write Place; King's University College, UWO ESL Writing Counselor
Writing Tutor	2001-2004	The Effective Writing Centre, Student Development Centre: UWO
Teaching Assistant	2003-2004	Faculty of Arts, UWO
Instructor	2002-03,'05	Summer Academic Writing Program (transition program For high school students): UWO

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## Publications, Peer-reviewed (\*authors listed in alphabetic order)

\*Garbati, J. F., & **Samuels, B.M.** (2013). Publishing in educational research journals: Are graduate students participating? *Journal of Scholarly Publishing* (July), 44 (4), 355-372.

\*Graves, R., Hyland, T. & **Samuels, B.M.** (2010). Syllabi analysis: Undergraduate writing assignments at one Canadian university. *Written Communication* 27(3), 293-317.  
[http://resolver.scholarsportal.info/resolve/07410883/v27i0003/293\\_uwaaaosaoc](http://resolver.scholarsportal.info/resolve/07410883/v27i0003/293_uwaaaosaoc)

Klein, P.D. & **Samuels, B.** (2010). Does teaching argumentation enhance writing to learn? *Alberta Journal of Education* 56(2),196-217.

**Samuels, B.M.** (2009). Can the differences between education and neuroscience be overcome by Mind, Brain, and Education? *Mind, Brain, and Education* 3(1), 45-55.  
[www.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1751-228X.2008.01052.x/pdf](http://www.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1751-228X.2008.01052.x/pdf)

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## Publications, Other

**Samuels, B.M.**, McDonald, K., & Misser, E. (2013). Writing instruction using an online Assignment Planner. Toronto: Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario.  
[www.heqco.ca/en-CA/Research/Research%20Publications/Pages/Home.aspx](http://www.heqco.ca/en-CA/Research/Research%20Publications/Pages/Home.aspx)

Garbati, J. & **Samuels, B.M.** (2012). Reflections on mentorship. *University Affairs*; August 22.  
[www.universityaffairs.ca/reflections-on-mentorship.aspx](http://www.universityaffairs.ca/reflections-on-mentorship.aspx)

## Books, Published

**Samuels, B.M.** & Misser, E. (under contract, for publication 2015) *Mastering academic writing in university*. London, UK: Sage.

## Book Chapters

**Samuels, B.M.** & Hyland, T. (under contract, for publication 2015) Cross-talk and crossed boundaries: Resistance and change when faculty and writing researchers converse. In R. Graves (Ed.), *Assignment genres across the disciplines: Expectations and change*. Inkshed Publications.

**Samuels, B.M.** & McDonald, K. (under contract, for publication 2015). Encouraging changes to science curricula through syllabi analysis. In R. Graves (Ed.), *Assignment genres across the disciplines: Expectations and change*. Inkshed Publications.

Nowicki, E.A. & **Samuels, B.** (2010). Facilitating positive perceptions of exceptional students. In A. L. Edmunds & B. Macmillan, (Eds.), *Leadership for inclusion: A practical guide*. Boston, MA: Sense Publishers.

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## Media Attention

2012 Evans, M. Texting and writing in university. (Interview) *The Cord*, Wilfrid Laurier Student Publication; September 19.

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## Conference Presentations (\*authors listed in alphabetic order)

Garbati, J.F., **Samuels, B.M.**, & Lawrence, H. (2014, May 28). *Beep! Beep! Technology coming through (the Writing Centre)!* Paper presented at Inkshed Conference, Canadian Association for the Study of Language and Learning (CASLL), Waterloo, ON.

Graves, R., Williams, A., Hyland, T., Jewinski, J., Parker, A., **Samuels, B.**, McKeown, M., Slomp, D. (2014, May 24). *Assignments and curricular change: Implications from 7*

- institutions*. Panel presentation at the Canadian Association for Studies in Discourse and Writing conference (CASDW), St. Catharines, ON.
- Samuels, B.M.** & Garbati, J.F. (2014, May 24). *Writing initiatives extending beyond the Writing Centre*. Paper presented at the Canadian Association for Studies in Discourse and Writing conference (CASDW), St. Catharines, ON.
- Samuels, B.M.** & Garbati, J.F. (2014, May 23). *Breaking down walls: Moving the Writing Centre beyond its walls*. Paper presented at Canadian Writing Centres Association (CWCA) annual conference, St. Catharines, ON.
- Kreller-Vanderkooy, J., **Samuels, B.M.**, & Guinel, F. (2014, May 9). *Integrating reading and writing to develop critical thinking in biology*. Paper presented at Integrated and Engaged Learning Conference, Wilfrid Laurier University, Waterloo, ON.
- Samuels, B.M.** & Garbati, J.F. (2014, May 8). *Technology coming through the Writing Centre. Strategies for engaged communication*. Paper presented at Integrated and Engaged Learning Conference, Wilfrid Laurier University, Waterloo, ON.
- Garbati, J.F., Khimasia, T., & **Samuels, B.M.** (2014, Feb. 22). *Welcome to the Write Place! Narrative autoethnography*. Paper presented to the International Writing Research Across Borders conference (IWRAB), Paris, France.
- Graves, R., Hyland, T., Jewinski, J., & **Samuels, B.M.** (2014, Feb. 20). *Studying assignments as catalysts for curricular change in Canadian universities*. Panel presentation at the International Writing Research Across Borders conference (IWRAB), Paris, France.
- Samuels, B.M.**, McDonald, K., & Misser, E. (2013, June 2). *University students' perceptions and use of an online Assignment Planner*. Paper presented at the Canadian Association for Studies in Discourse and Writing conference (CASDW), Victoria, BC.
- Samuels, B.M.** (2012, March 21). *Writing and reading texts in a Canadian anthropology department: students' tentative movement between the boundaries*. Workshop presentation at College Conference on Composition and Communication (CCCC). St. Louis, Missouri.
- Misser, E., **Samuels, B.M.** & Troeung, Y.D. (2011, May 30). *Research grant proposal writing: The development of a student workshop series*. Paper presented at the Canadian Association for Studies in Discourse and Writing conference (CASDW), Fredericton, NB.
- \***Samuels, B.M.** & Garbati, J.F. (2011, April 11). *An investigation of authorship in education research journals*. Paper presented at the American Educational Research Association (AERA) conference, New Orleans, LA.

- Graves, R., Hyland, T., MacDonald, B., Proctor, M., **Samuels, B.M.** (2010, May 21). *North of the border: Canadian writing in the disciplines*. Panel presentation at Writing Across the Curriculum conference, Bloomington, IN.
- \*Garbati, J.F. & **Samuels, B.M.** (2010, May 29). *Publishing in educational research journals. Are graduate students participating?* Paper presented at Canadian Education Researchers Association conference (CSSE), Montreal, QB.
- Samuels, B.M.** (2010, May 29). *Are students' writing beliefs related to their perceptions of the disciplinary texts they read?* Paper presented at Canadian Association for Studies in Discourse and Writing conference (CASDW), Montreal, QB.
- Samuels, B.M.** & Nowicki, E.A. (2010, June 1). *Facilitating positive perceptions of students with exceptionalities*. Symposium on Inclusive Education: Panel presentation at Canadian Association for Educational Psychology conference (CSSE), Montreal, QB.
- \*Garbati, J.F. & **Samuels, B.M.** (2009, September 25). *Collaboration and graduate student coauthorship in academic publishing*. Paper presented at the conference Landscapes of Learning: A transdisciplinary conversation in contemporary education, Wilfred Laurier University, Brantford-Waterloo, ON.
- Samuels, B.M.** (2009, August 4). *Obstacles to MBE: views from one Canadian university*. Invited paper presented at the International School for Mind, Brain and Education at the Ettore Majorano Centre for Scientific Culture, in Erice, Sicily
- Nowicki, E.A. & **Samuels, B.** (2009, May 23). *Encouraging the social acceptance of children and adolescents with exceptionalities: A primer for educators and administrators*. Paper presented at Canadian Association of Educational Psychology conference, Ottawa (CSSE), ON.
- \*Graves, R. & **Samuels, B.** (2008, August 27). *Huron University College writing project: writing assignments across disciplines*. Paper presented at Annual Teaching Day Conference, Wilfred Laurier University, Waterloo, ON.
- \*Ansari, D., Cordy, M., Georgallidis, E., Kotsopoulos, D., & **Samuels, B.** (2008, July 3). *Mind, brain, and education: The integration of neuroscience and education*. Panel presentation at Provoking Research proVoking Communities Conference, University of Windsor, ON.
- \*Graves, R., Hyland, T., & **Samuels, B.** (2008, April 24). *Writing expectations across disciplines: a study of one college*. Paper presented at the Research on Teaching Conference, University of Western Ontario, London, ON.
- Samuels, B.** (2008, March 27). Can the differences between education and neuroscience be overcome by MBE? Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (AERA), New York, NY.

- Samuels, B.** & Klein, P.D. (2008, February 23). Elementary students' Approaches to Writing Paper presented at Third Annual Writing Conference: Research Across Borders, University of California at Santa Barbara, CA.
- Klein, P.D. & **Samuels, B.** (2007, April 11). *Teaching argumentation to enhance writing to learn*. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (AERA), Chicago, IL.
- Samuels, B.**, Piacente-Cimini, S., & Klein, P.D. (2006, May 30) *Student strategies for decoding unfamiliar words*. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Canadian Society for the Study of Education (CSSE), York University, ON.
- Samuels, B.** & Mitchell, J.B. (2006, May 29). *The relation between writing ability and academic achievement*. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Canadian Society for the Study of Education (CSSE), York University, ON.

### **Conference Papers – contributing author**

- Graves, R., Hyland, T. & **Samuels, B.** (2009, January 27). *Writing throughout the curriculum: How much writing is assigned in undergraduate arts and social science courses?* Poster presentation at Festival of Teaching, University of Alberta, Edmonton, AB.
- Klein, P.D., **Samuels, B.**, & Kirkpatrick, L.C. (2008, June 3). *Teaching junior students to use writing as a tool for learning*. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Canadian Society for the Study of Education (CSSE), University of British Columbia, Vancouver, BC.
- Klein, P.D. & **Samuels, B.** (2008, February 24). *Building students' capacity for writing to learn: A design experiment*. Paper presented at Third Annual Writing Conference: Research Across Borders, University of California at Santa Barbara, Santa Barbara, CA.

### **Other Conference/Workshop Participation**

- 2013 Defining and measuring student success: A higher education policy research symposium  
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE), Toronto, ON; November 22
- Writing Centre Professionals Group (Southwestern Ontario chapter) Inaugural meeting, University of Waterloo, ON; November 8
- Opportunities and new developments conference – Centre for Teaching Excellence  
University of Waterloo, Waterloo, ON; April 25
- Educational Developers Caucus Conference – Crossing boundaries, building capacity  
Wilfrid Laurier University, Waterloo, ON; February 20-22

- 2012 Perspectives on academic freedom.  
University of Waterloo, Wilfrid Laurier University, and Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada: Waterloo, ON; September 6
- Genre 2012--Rethinking genre twenty years later: An international conference on Genre Studies  
Carleton University, Ottawa, ON; June 26-29
- 2011 REImagine: The role and future of universities in a changing world  
Wilfrid Laurier University, Waterloo, ON; October 20, 2011
- Research projects: Large-class teaching group  
Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario, Toronto, ON; September 8
- Writing Research Across Borders II  
George Mason University, Washington, DC; February 17-20
- 2010 Research on Teaching and Learning: Integrating practices - conference.  
McMaster University, Hamilton, ON; December 9
- 2008 Selected participant to the doctoral student Summer Research Seminar  
American Psychological Association (APA), Boston, MA; August 13-17
- Interprofessional collaboration: Where do we go from here?  
University of Western Ontario, London, ON; May 12
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### **Advanced Training and Professional Development**

- 2010 NVivo: Qualitative data analysis training. Canadian Educational Research Association; Montreal, QC; May 28.
- 2009 Invited participant to the Fourth Course in the International School for Mind, Brain and Education: Educational neurosciences and ethics.  
The Ettore Majorano Centre for Scientific Culture; Erice, Sicily; August 1-5
- 2009 Summer program in data analysis (SPIDA): linear and non-linear multilevel models.  
York University, ON; June 4-11.
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### **Certifications, Program Participation**

- 2013 Tri-Council Certificate: Ethical conduct for research involving humans – Course on Research Ethics (TCPS 2: CORE)

- 2006 Certificate, Graduate Studies 500: The theory and practice of university teaching; UWO (non-credit full-term course)
- 2005 First Steps Writing Program; training for teachers of writing
- 2004 Teaching Assistant Training Program Certificate; UWO

## Academic Service

### Committee Work:

2014	Vice-President and Program Chair	Canadian Association for the Study of Discourse and Writing (CASDW)
2014	Conference planning committee	Canadian Association for Studies in Language and Learning (CASLL) – Inkshed Waterloo, Ontario
2013-14	Founding member	Writing Centre Professionals Group Southwestern Ontario Chapter
2012-14	Member, Inaugural steering committee	Common Reading Program Faculty of Arts, Wilfrid Laurier University
2011-12	Local organizing committee	Congress of the Humanities and Social Sciences for Canadian Association for Studies in Discourse and Writing (CASDW)
2011	Membership committee	Canadian Association for the Study of Discourse and Writing (CASDW)
2010	Member, Inaugural organizing committee	Graduate Student Research Symposium Faculty of Education, UWO
2009- 2010	Graduate student representative	Information Services Committee Faculty of Education, UWO
2008- 2009	Graduate student representative	Special Graduate Studies Subcommittee, Faculty of Education, UWO
2007- 2008	Graduate student representative	Faculty Appointments Committee, Faculty of Education, UWO
	Graduate student member	Art Selection Committee, Renovation

**Other Faculty and Community Service:**

2014	Reviewer	Integrated and Engaged Learning Conference, Wilfrid Laurier
2013	Reviewer	Canadian Association for Studies in Discourse and Writing
2010	Reviewer	Mind, Brain, and Education Journal
2009	Reviewer	Canadian Society for Studies in Education (CSSE): Mentorship Award
	Reviewer	Language and Literacy Researchers of Canada: Pre-conference
2007-2009	Founding organizer	Transdisciplinary Research Seminar, Faculty of Education, UWO
2006-2008	Co-chair	Ph.D. Study Group, Faculty of Education, UWO
2005-2006	Co-chair	Club Ed - Graduate students' club, Faculty of Education, UWO
2002-2004	Guest speaker	Lifelong Learning Association, UWO Program Director: Donna Moore, M.Ed., Centre for New Students
1991-2002	Various roles	London District Catholic School Board <u>Positions held:</u> Chair, Vice-Chair, various Committee Chairs, and community member on elementary and secondary School Councils.

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**Awards, Recognition**

2013	Merit Award – Employee Achievement, Wilfrid Laurier University
2009, 2008 2007, 2006	Western Graduate Research Scholarship; UWO
2006	Dean's Honor Roll of Teaching Excellence; King's University College, UWO
2004	Lifelong Learning Award; London Council for Adult Education
2003 2001	Dean's Honor List, Faculty of Social Sciences, UWO

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## **Memberships**

American Education Research Association (AERA)	- member 2006- 2012
Canadian Association for Studies in Discourse and Writing (CASDW)	- member 2009- present
Canadian Association for Studies in Language and Learning (CASLL) - Inkshed	- member 2013-present
Canadian Educational Researchers' Association	- student member, 2009- 2013
National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE)	- member, 2011- present
American Psychological Association (APA)	- student member, 2008-2012
Canadian Association for Educational Psychology (CAEP)	- student member, 2005-2013
Canadian Committee of Students in Education (CCSE)	- student member, 2005-2012
Canadian Society for the Study of Education (CSSE)	- student member, 2005-2012