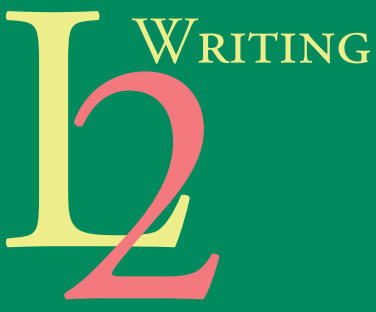
Graduate Studies in Second Language Writing



Edited by Kyle McIntosh,
Carolina Pelaez-Morales, &
Tony Silva

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GRADUATE STUDIES IN SECOND LANGUAGE WRITING

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Paul Kei Matsuda

"The Competitor in Chief," read the headline of a *New York Times* article (Kantor, 2012) that Dwight Atkinson had sent me. Underneath the subtitle, "Obama Plays to Win, in Politics and Everything Else," was an image of President Barack Obama doing push-ups, accompanied by a caption: "Presidential Zeal: Whether shooting pool, reading to children or working to raise his bowling scores, President Obama cannot contain his competitive nature." It had been a standing joke between Dwight and me that I, like President Obama, took everything seriously—from cooking and photography to Karaoke and playing *Just Dance 2* on Wii. Call me an overachiever. I prefer not to think of it as competitiveness, but I am fully aware of my own perfectionist inclination—something I have been trying very hard to overcome.

The comparison does not end there. I tend to thrive when I am challenged (but not in a competitive way); when someone says, "You wouldn't be able to do it," my response is: "Yes we can." I became serious about learning English as a high school student in Japan when I learned about the notion of the Critical Period Hypothesis—that it would be impossible to acquire a high level of proficiency in a second language after puberty. People told me that I would have to live in an English-speaking country in order to learn to speak English; I decided to become a proficient user of English while in Japan. People also said

I would not be able to learn to write without first learning to speak; I was determined to learn English primarily through reading and writing. I studied journalism as an undergraduate student and became a writing specialist partly because many people seemed to assume that nonnative English users would not be able to do it. Writing was considered the last language skill—the most challenging of all language skills. That's my kind of challenge.

This "can do" attitude was at least partially responsible for my decision to specialize in second language writing as well as my strong desire to contribute to field building. When I decided to pursue my master's degree and become a writing specialist, a practicing ESL teacher told me that there was no such thing as a writing specialist; I found a master's program in composition and rhetoric where I could specialize in writing. In the master's program, it seemed that few, if any, graduate students at my institution were paying attention to issues related to second language writers; I decided to argue the importance of paying attention. At the Conference on College Composition and Communication, sessions on second language issues were few and far between; at TESOL, there were some writing-related sessions and publications (e.g., Kroll, 1990; Leki, 1991), but it still seemed like a minor topic that only a small group of dedicated specialists pursued. "I have to change the situation," I thought to myself. And that is how it all started.

Learning from the Master

After finishing my master's degree, I went on to pursue my PhD studies at Purdue University. I chose Purdue primarily because of the presence of Tony Silva, who was engaging in the kind of field-building work that I wanted to be involved in. He had started the *Journal of Second Language Writing* with Ilona Leki (see Silva, 2012, for a story of the genesis of the journal), and was leading the effort to promote L2 writing at CCCC (Matsuda, 2012b). He also had authored a history of L2 writing pedagogy that resonated with my evolving understanding of the field (Silva, 1990). It was also important that he had started this line of work while he was a doctoral student. He was the kind of scholar and academic citizen I wanted to become. Before applying to Purdue, I visited his office and asked him where the field was going. "Up," he replied. His optimism undergirded by his broad knowledge

and his commitment to field building made me want to learn from the master and help build the field with him.

For me, the best part of working with Tony was the opportunity to engage in real and meaningful professional activities. In his L2 writing seminar that I took during the first semester of my doctoral studies, he asked students to review a real manuscript submitted to the *JSLW*. He also asked us to write a book review; I published mine in *TESOL Quarterly* (Matsuda, 1997c). My seminar paper in that class, which extended my master's thesis, was also published in the *Journal of Second Language Writing* (Matsuda, 1997a). He also gave me a chance to write a five-year retrospective account of the journal (Matsuda, 1997b). Later, I served as Tony's editorial assistant for the *JSLW* and helped compile annotated bibliographies. He also listened to my ideas and helped me turn them into reality. One day, after a class discussion about professional conferences, I approached Tony and said we needed a conference for L2 writing specialists; a few years later, Tony and I organized the first Symposium on Second Language Writing to create a sense of identity as a field by bringing together L2 writing specialists who were often working in vastly different geographic, institutional and disciplinary contexts. We also edited two books that captured the historical development (Silva & Matsuda, 2001a) and the state of the art (Silva & Matsuda, 2001b). He also gave me opportunities to teach graduate-level practicum courses for first-time teachers of second language writing.

For my dissertation, I chose to conduct an historical study of L2 writing in North American higher education. My goal was two-fold: to give the field a sense of identity and to communicate the importance of L2 issues to mainstream rhetoric and composition specialists, who at the time seemed more receptive to humanities oriented scholarship than social scientific research. Choosing a historical study was not an easy decision because I was aware of how it would position me more in line with composition studies than with second language studies, which seemed to favor empirical research in a social scientific tradition. At that time, applied linguists seemed to regard history as mere chronological literature review or personal reminiscences only senior scholars were entitled to write (Matsuda, 2006). At the same time, it became increasingly clear to me that historical and theoretical studies were needed in order for L2 writing to establish its identity as a field. When I told Tony about my decision, he smiled encouragingly

and said that I was going to become the "first fulltime theorist and historian of second language writing." That reassurance gave me the courage to proceed. I also decided to balance my professional profile by pursuing some data-driven projects (e.g., Matsuda, 2001; 2002).

By the last year of my doctoral study, my career goal was firmly established in my mind—to teach in a doctoral program where I can teach the next generation of L2 writing specialists. I reaffirmed that goal at the TESOL convention in March 1999, where Terry Santos organized a colloquium entitled "On the future of second language writing." The colloquium was later published in the *JSLW* (Santos, Atkinson, Erickson, Matsuda, & Silva, 2000). In that colloquium, Dwight Atkinson suggested the field of second language writing was "dying before our eyes" (p. 2) because only a small number of L2 writing specialists were preparing the next generation. Although I did not believe the field was dying, I did see the need for more systematic reproduction of L2 writing specialists at the PhD level. At that moment, my mind was set: I must work at a doctoral-granting institution with strong PhD programs in rhetoric and composition, applied linguistics, or both.

The decision to be involved in the education of doctoral students intensified my will to publish. Although I was already driven to write for publication—not just to have published but to influence the ways in which L2 writing is conceived, studied and taught in various disciplinary contexts (see Matsuda, 2003)—I made extra efforts to place my work in high-profile publications in both composition studies and second language studies in order to develop a profile appropriate for a PhD advisor. In making the decision to focus on doctoral education, I also had to contend with my passion for teaching. Although I enjoyed both teaching and researching writing, I found balancing the demands of the two activities to be a real challenge because they seemed to stretch my intellectual and creative muscles in different ways. At some point, however, I made a conscious decision to focus on field building through research and teacher education rather than classroom writing instruction. If I taught writing courses, I reasoned, I would be able to help 15 to 20 students at a time; if I worked with teachers and researchers, I would be able to improve the conditions for a much larger number of L2 writers. I later realized that I would always be teaching writing even in working with graduate students and

professionals—as they learn to write articles, dissertations and other professional documents in various genres.

When I went on the job market in 2000, the market was particularly strong in both applied linguistics and rhetoric and composition. Because of my dual specialization in the two booming fields, I was able to find over 60 positions for which I qualified—and that I would have accepted had an offer been extended—at a wide variety of institutions across the United States. My determination to be involved in graduate education must have been obvious; all of the campus interviews and job offers came from masters' and doctoral-level institutions.

Building My Own Nest

On The Tenure Track

My first tenure-track job was Assistant Professor of Composition and Linguistics at Miami University of Ohio, which had a well-established PhD program in Composition and Rhetoric. In addition to teaching undergraduate linguistics courses and writing courses, I taught a graduate seminar on linguistics and writing. The graduate course was my initial attempt to promote the integration of language and writing issues at Miami. The course enrolled only two students, both of them from the PhD program in composition and rhetoric. I was disappointed by the low enrollment, but the department was kind enough not to cancel my class—perhaps because it was my first year. In addition, Christina Ortmeier-Hooper, who was just beginning her doctoral study at the University of New Hampshire (UNH), participated in the course for independent study credits (see Ortmeier-Hooper, this volume). She participated in online discussion of readings and a chat session with Ken Hyland about his corpus-based research on disciplinary discourses. I also invited Ulla Connor as a guest speaker to discuss issues related to contrastive rhetoric.

While I taught my first graduate seminar at Miami, I was also applying for a position at UNH to be closer to my spouse. In the following year, I joined the faculty at UNH, teaching in a small PhD program in Composition Studies. UNH had a long-standing reputation as the cradle of the writing process, especially through the work of Donald Murray, Donald Graves and Thomas Newkirk. The program

went through some major transitions during my six-year tenure. My position was a replacement for Robert B. Connors, a renowned historian of composition who was killed in a motorcycle accident. A few years after my arrival, two of the core faculty members, Patricia A. Sullivan and Cinthia Gannett, moved to other institutions. Except for a few years when Jessica Enoch was with us, Tom and I were the only core faculty members.

Given the strength of the program and the availability of courses and teaching opportunities at UNH, I decided to focus on developing specialists in composition studies with an expertise in second language writing. When I arrived, there already were two students who were interested in second language writing: Christina Ortmeier-Hooper and Michelle Cox (see Ortmeier-Hooper, this volume). The program had always had a large pool of applicants, but after a few years, we began to see a growing number of applicants who were interested in L2 writing, including Steve Simpson and Elisabeth Kramer-Simpson. Since the program was relatively small, I was able to work closely with all students in various capacities. I provided additional mentoring for students specializing in L2 writing on an individual basis, collaborating with them on projects and encouraging them to play leadership roles at professional organizations and conferences. The process of mentoring while at UNH is described in Simpson and Matsuda (2008).

Teaching in a small program of a few faculty members and about a dozen PhD students had its advantages. Graduate classes were relatively small, enrolling 8 to 10 students. I was involved in the admission decision of every student, and I served on everyone's dissertation committee. Since I also taught most of the core courses—such as composition theory, history of composition and research methods—I was in close contact with all of the students. By the dissertation stage, all the students were well prepared by my standards. I was also able to create a dual-level (undergraduate/graduate) introductory survey course on second language writing theory, research and instruction, which was offered every other year with a healthy enrollment of students from undergraduate linguistics, MA in TESOL, PhD in education, and PhD in Composition Studies. (The course is now being taught by Christina.) Being in a small program also had its limitations. Although UNH offered a range of courses in rhetoric and composition as well as TESOL, the number of faculty members was small. The availability of teaching assistantships was also rather limited, and we

were able to admit only a few PhD students each year. UNH also did not offer a specialization in applied linguistics or TESOL at the doctoral level. The institution did not have a large number of second language writers, enrolling only about 600 international students and a small and unidentified population of resident students. It was a great place to establish my career, but by the time I went up for tenure at UNH, I was feeling I had outgrown this institutional context.

The New Frontier

As I continued to build my professional profile, I began to receive recruitment offers. In September 2006, just after I was tenured at UNH, I received a phone call from Neal Lester, who at the time was the chair of the English department at Arizona State University (ASU). "How would you like to spend a few years in the desert?" he asked. As he explained, it was a strategic hire to upgrade and further strengthen the PhD program in Rhetoric, Composition and Linguistics. ASU already had a strong reputation in the field of rhetoric and composition, and it was also in the process of creating an interdisciplinary PhD program in Applied Linguistics. ASU also had a concentration of students and faculty engaging in cutting-edge research on various topics in applied linguistics, literacy, rhetoric and composition, and TESOL. It also offered teaching and internship opportunities in first-year composition as well as a robust intensive English program. ASU is also rich in linguistic diversity, enrolling numerous users of Spanish and Native American languages as well as one of the largest groups of international students in US higher education. Doctoral students would be able to specialize in second language writing in several disciplinary contexts and to engage in various research projects. The opportunity was too good to pass up. I decided to make the move but offered to continue to work with UNH students as a committee member and informal mentor. To my relief, UNH hired Christina to replace some of my functions and to add a stronger emphasis on literacy at various educational levels (see Ortmeier-Hooper, this volume).

Building an L2 writing community at ASU went much more smoothly than I had expected. ASU already had a track record of producing PhDs who had written dissertations on L2 writing (see Tannacito, this volume), and when I arrived in 2007, several students were already interested in second language writing. Tanita Saenkhum was

one of them (see Saenkhum, this volume). Also teaching at ASU was Mark A. James, a former student of Alister Cumming's whose research interests included learning transfer from the L2 first-year composition course to other writing contexts (James, 2008, 2009, 2010). The number of students interested in second language writing grew rapidly. I now supervise over a dozen doctoral students who are working on various topics related to L2 writing in two doctoral programs: Applied Linguistics, and Rhetoric, Composition and Linguistics. (In 2014, the plan was approved to reconfigure these programs into Writing, Rhetorics, and Literacies, and Linguistics and Applied Linguistics.) In addition, an increasing number of students who do not see themselves as specialists are opting to take L2 writing courses to expand their repertoires. There have also been a growing number of master's students in TESOL with an interest in writing research and instruction. Each year, I also sponsor several visiting scholars who bring to the community their interest, experience and expertise in L2 writing.

Having a critical mass of students and colleagues with various levels of interest in L2 writing has created some opportunities for curricular innovations. I started with a catchall graduate-level L2 writing course similar to the one I taught at UNH, but it quickly became apparent that the demand was larger than what a single course could accommodate. To meet the diverse needs of graduate students at different levels, I decided to develop three separate courses—an introductory course focusing on teaching, a practicum for first-time teachers of L2 writing courses, and an advanced course focusing on theory and research. The introductory course is offered every year. The practicum, which is required for first-time L2 writing teachers at ASU, is offered every semester. The advanced course is offered at least every other year with different topics to allow all PhD students to have a chance to take it at least once, if not twice, during the course of study. I have also sponsored group independent studies on topics that are important to my students. In addition, there is a course called cross-cultural discourses; I have taught it with a focus on writing, integrating insights from contrastive or intercultural rhetoric, comparative rhetoric, and genre studies, among other areas.

One of the advantages of a large program is the ability to create a local community of L2 writing specialists. In addition to individual advising—by email, via Skype, and in person—I schedule regular meetings with small groups of students who are at the same stage of

professional development. To foster a sense of community, I host potluck dinners at the beginning and at the end of each academic year, and a few additional gatherings in between. These events are primarily for my advisees, visiting scholars and, occasionally, prospective students. They are sometimes combined with workshops on topics such as proposal writing and finding a research topic. During a semester when I was not able to offer L2 writing-related courses, I asked Tanita to organize a monthly reading group, which was open to a larger community of graduate students. Students also seem to have developed their own support network as well—they get together regularly to play tennis, go hiking, and socialize over food and drinks. I also try to visit countries some of my students come from and meet up with them to understand the contexts in which they grew up, worked or will be working in the future.

An Approach to Mentoring

My approach to mentoring combines my interest in applying situated learning theories (Simpson & Matsuda, 2008) as well as my own experience as a graduate student (Matsuda, 2003), both of which I articulate explicitly and share with my advisees at the beginning of the mentoring relationship. I have also been influenced by my own mentors, especially Tony Silva and Janice Lauer. Both of them provided valuable opportunities, support and advice at various points of my own professional development, but they also represented two very different approaches—almost two different ends of the spectrum. Tony was a hands-off mentor, which I appreciated very much because, like Tony, I am an autonomous learner—I don't like to be told what to do. Whenever I met with him, he would ask me what I was working on at the time. I explained my projects, and then he would give me words of encouragement and suggestions, and send me on my way. As I mentioned earlier, he provided opportunities for professional engagement, but he gave me plenty of elbowroom. Still, he took the time to read most of what I wrote while at Purdue and provided encouraging comments and a few pointed pieces of advice as well as editing suggestions. In contrast, Janice was a highly systematic and hands-on mentor. Every course, every reading and every activity had a clear and specific purpose, and I could feel the direction towards which she was

steering me. At the same time, she was warm and encouraging. She genuinely cared about her students and the field of rhetoric and composition. Although I was not used to her directive mentoring style, I learned much because I trusted and respected her deep and personal knowledge of the field of rhetoric and composition as well as her commitment to mentoring her students.

Having experienced and appreciated both approaches to mentoring, I have tried to incorporate these approaches into my own mentoring, varying my strategies depending on individual student needs and stages of professional development. In general, my approach to mentoring can be summarized with four keywords: *Exemplify, expose*, *engage* and *encourage*.

Exemplify

A good first step toward mentoring is to have your own house in order—to establish your own career and to continue engaging in the kind of activities that I want to encourage my students to participate in. Although I collaborate with my students regularly, I also try to engage in my own individual research and publication efforts. Keeping up with my own research and other professional activities is also important so I can carve out opportunities for my students to take part in. Thinking about my own possible research projects also helps as I suggest possible topics for my students.

To help students gain a situated understanding of professional practices, I often use my own examples, both the process and product. I also encourage them to share theirs with one another. I have created a password-protected Web space for my advisees, where I post various documents that I produce, including conference proposals, presentation slides, handouts, human subject protocols, as well as manuscripts under development, under consideration and in press. I also share rejection letters for my manuscripts and proposals—as well as my honest reactions to them. For students who are on the job market, I share my own examples of job application materials, teaching portfolio, and tenure and promotion documents.

I also use blogs and social media to share my own activities, such as having written a manuscript, being stuck in the drafting process, meeting or not meeting deadlines, and so on. I also share my personal life—stories and photos of food, places I visit, and other activities—

to remind others (and myself) that it is important to have a balance in life. This is something that was completely missing when I was a graduate student; I focused almost exclusively on my academic life. Although I do not regret that part of my life—in fact, I still miss being a graduate student when I was able to focus on my own work without having to worry about anything else—I try to set a positive yet realistic example by sharing my attempts to have a life outside academia, including some failed attempts.

I am aware that the example I set can sometimes be intimidating, as a number of students have mentioned to me. Although I set the bar high for myself, I try to be realistic about my expectations for my students. It is quality, not quantity that matters. A related issue is that of identity construction in an interdisciplinary field like second language writing. My goal has always been to position myself as a *bona fide* member of multiple fields, including applied linguistics, rhetoric and composition, and TESOL, among others. That kind of multidisciplinary positioning was important for my own agenda—to help build the field of second language writing. I do recognize, however, that it is not necessary for everyone who works in the field. Indeed, some of my students identify themselves primarily as applied linguists while others situate themselves in rhetoric and composition. What I try to facilitate is an awareness of various identity positions that are available for second language writing specialists, each with its own potential and limitations. I also try to encourage students to continue to branch out even while grounding themselves firmly in one of the disciplines they can call home.

Expose

As I share my own work, I also try to explain the back-stage stories. One of the major obstacles for beginning graduate students and early-career professionals is the wide array of tacit assumptions and practices in academia that are passed down from one generation to the next without explicit instruction or even explanation. While many graduate programs and mentors are getting better at providing orientations and occasional workshops to demystify graduate school and academic careers, graduate students are still expected to figure out the rules of the game mostly by trial and error. Just as some people find it helpful to have some aspects of language and genre described and explained

explicitly, many students and early-career professionals seem to find it helpful to hear explicit discussion of various assumptions, practices and strategies that are often tacitly passed down from one generation of academics to another.

While figuring out the tacit assumptions and practices is hard for all students, they are especially inaccessible to those who come from non-dominant linguistic, cultural and educational backgrounds. The real significance of this point is often lost on those who have never been marginalized in society in significant and sustained ways. As a first-generation college graduate and nonnative English user from Asia in Anglophone dominated academia, I have faced many of the challenges that some of my students face as they seek to enter the academic community. Fortunately, I have been able to figure out many of those assumptions and practices through my experience and observations, by reading various books and articles about the academic profession, and with the help of my mentors. I consider it my mission to make those insights (and more) available to the next generation of L2 writing specialists. Some of my publications reflect this belief (Matsuda, 2003; Silva & Matsuda, 2005; Simpson & Matsuda, 2008). The piece you are reading right now is another example.

I also make a conscious effort to tell the stories behind my own work. They are not all success stories. In fact, I make a point of sharing my own narratives of frustration, failed attempts and negotiations as well as my honest reactions to these experiences and coping strategies. I strongly believe these behind-the-scenes stories are important as a way of contextualizing and complicating the neat and clean appearance of published works, which only tells a small part of the real story (see Matsuda & Silva, 2005). I also encourage advanced graduate students to share their documents and talk about their experiences, not only for the benefit of others but also as a way of gaining experience in mentoring.

I constantly tell my students that I have very high standards but will provide strategies to help them meet those standards. I try to expose the assumptions, practices and strategies of academia both in and out of class: when I explain assignments, when I provide feedback on student projects, when I engage in conversations about conferences, when I collaborate with my students, and when I have social gatherings with my students. Sometimes I conduct workshops focusing on specific aspects of professional development, such as finding research

topics and writing conference proposals. I also try to make some of the information available beyond the community of my advisees. To this end, I keep a blog that provides unsolicited advice on various professional matters. If I were a magician, I would be labeled a rogue magician for revealing the secrets of the trade. But I am no magician, and I am not worried about competition. I strongly believe that the field will be better off when everyone has access to metadisciplinary knowledge.

Engage

One of the most effective ways I know of mentoring graduate students is to engage them in real professional activities that I am involved in. As I have described in Simpson and Matsuda (2008), I am constantly looking for ways to carve out collaboration opportunities with my advisees from my own ongoing professional activities. Depending on the level of experience, students engage at different levels and in different ways. When the task is a challenging one, I may take the lead and ask my advisees to play supporting roles. At an early stage of development, students may mostly watch what I do: as I talk through a plan, draft and revise the text, respond to feedback, and so on. As they gain more experience, I gradually try to shift the responsibility to students in order to give them more agency. The transition is not always predictable. Sometimes I start by talking through the aim and scope of the project, outlining key components, and identifying key sources before sending students off to develop a draft. In many cases, I ask students to draft a text and then I ask them to watch me as I revise or completely rewrite each sentence and each paragraph, explaining my rationale every step of the way. For more advanced students or colleagues, I may ask them to take charge as I monitor their progress and provide feedback along the way.

Delegation has not always been my strong suit, but with experience, I have become better at trusting my student-collaborators, especially those who are more advanced and accomplished. In putting together *Second Language Writing in the Composition Classroom* (2006), I asked two of my advisees, Michelle Cox and Christina Ortmeier-Hooper, to be co-editors. I also asked Jay Jordan, then a graduate student at another institution, to join the team. One of my motives was to expose Jay to the discourse of second language writing. Although he was already incredibly well versed in the literature for someone who was

studying at an institution without an L2 writing specialist, I felt that he would benefit from the socialization experience that his interactions with Michelle and Christina would provide. At the same time, I wanted to give Michelle and Christina an opportunity to be exposed to the discourse outside the local university community.

My role in this project was to conceptualize the overall aim of the project and the framework, and to propose and negotiate the project idea with the publisher. I also provided feedback on the selection of articles for inclusion and on drafts of the overall introduction and section introductions. Although I had my own ideas about articles to include in this collection, and although I did provide guidance in developing the categories, I tried not to play a central role in choosing the readings. Instead, I asked each of my collaborators to be responsible for a few sections and to develop a list of readings for each of the sections, which we would then discuss as a group. My primary intention in asking them to take charge was to encourage more autonomy. At the same time, however, I was hoping to get fresh perspectives on the issues that I was becoming too close to. The collaborative effort resulted in a much more diverse and well-rounded collection than what I would have been able to put together by myself. The success of this project helped me become better at controlling my own impulse to take charge and to let my students and collaborators work at their own pace, while monitoring progress and providing guidance along the way.

In addition to research and publication projects, I have also been seeking ways to carve out opportunities to gain administrative experience. At ASU, I have been able to create the title of Assistant Director of Second Language Writing for graduate students who wish to gain some administrative experience. While this is not a paid position (at the time of drafting this piece), it provides opportunities to engage in various projects for doctoral students who are interested in writing program administration or those who wish to obtain additional professional experience with first-year composition. Tanita Saenkhum, who specialized in L2 writing program administration, was the first to hold this position, and she worked on improving the placement practices for L2 writers in the first-year composition program (see Saenkhum, this volume). The Symposium on Second Language Writing also provides additional opportunities for professional development, allowing students to gain hands-on experience in planning and organizing a conference.

Encourage

Encouragement is something I struggle with the most. I have extremely high expectations—for myself and for my students—and I let my students know that from the beginning of the mentoring relationship. Although I do believe that encouragement is important, I do not like to give or receive empty praise. I tend to be rather straightforward in describing issues and concerns in students' work, but I try to provide a sense of direction and resources to help them move forward. I also tend to provide a large amount of feedback, which I know can be overwhelming. I do expect graduate students to develop a thick skin that can withstand the challenges of manuscript reviews, and tenure and promotion reviews. In providing my critique and suggestions, however, I consciously try to separate the quality of work from the person who created it.

I do provide positive feedback when it seems appropriate. On a regular basis, I try to verbalize my students' strengths and accomplishments when I see them, however big or small they may be. Beyond those positive observations, I often visualize the distribution of my encouragement as an arc, much like the narrative arc, which starts by setting the stage, developing the plot, reaching the climax, and ending with a resolution. I use this principle in writing courses as well: The beginning of the semester sets the tone for the course, with a bit of anxiety and excitement for what is to come. The story unfolds with each class meeting and assignments, each challenging students in small ways but providing resources and encouragement to move on to the next stage. Then comes the climax—the most challenging assignment for the semester—and the semester ends with a sense of accomplishment, resolution and satisfaction. My praise for student work is strategically placed along this arc of encouragement. This principle also works for each writing project as well.

For graduate students, the arc of encouragement plays out differently. Unlike undergraduate students in writing courses, graduate students have bigger goals and longer-term relationships with me and with their colleagues. The main arc is the entire degree program, not just a semester or a project. In providing feedback on course projects, for example, I do not necessarily seek to provide a sense of resolution or accomplishment (unless it is deserved) beyond the satisfaction of having completed the assignment sufficiently and on time. Instead,

my feedback often leaves students with a sense of dissonance that can lead to further thinking, reading, writing, and revising that gives them a sense of where they are and where they need to go next along the trajectory. The irresolute ending is not just my discursive construction; students do need to know that most course papers (even "A" papers) do not meet the expectations for publishable manuscripts. There are exceptions, of course; I managed to publish most of my graduate course papers, and some of my students have also been able to publish revised course projects successfully (e.g., DePalma & Ringer, 2011).

So, when do I offer my encouragement and how? The key is found in the words of my daughter's piano teacher. At the recital for her students, she always makes the point of asking the audience to provide words of encouragement to other people's children. "When parents praise their own children, they don't believe it," she explains, "but when it comes from other people, it's real." I encourage my students to attend and present at conferences not only to be socialized into the profession and to establish themselves in the field but also to expose them to real and meaningful assessment of their professional development. Many students come back from conferences excited that their work was recognized by peers and senior members of the field. When someone tells me my students are impressive, I make a point of conveying the message to the students. When they receive awards and other forms of recognition, when they pass exams, when their proposals and manuscripts are accepted, and when they reach other significant milestones in their careers, I congratulate them and share the news on my blog and through social media. I also announce and celebrate those accomplishments at the potluck dinners with my students at my house.

Coda

I have high expectations for myself and for my students, and my students know that. I expect them to work hard, but I also do everything I can to provide the support and resources to help them succeed. I tell my students that, if they can meet my expectations, they will be fine out there in the field. I also tell them that my mentoring comes with a lifetime warranty. It takes an enormous amount of time and effort for me to sustain this type of mentoring relationship, especially with the

growing number of students, and I imagine working with me requires a serious commitment on the part of my students. But can we do it?

Yes, we can.

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7 Choices in Identity Building as an L2 Writing Specialist: Investment and Perseverance

Tanita Saenkhum

I begin this chapter with an anecdote. In the spring of 2006, while I was in an early stage of my master's thesis work, I wrote an email to an established second language writing scholar asking for suggestions for readings focusing on second language writers in first-year composition classrooms. A few minutes later, I received a reply to my email to which three articles were attached. I was very surprised and impressed by that speedy reply. When I applied for my PhD study, the university where this professor worked at that moment was one of my top choices. Unfortunately, I could not submit my application to this institution because my GRE scores had not arrived and it was impossible to meet the deadline. I was really disappointed because I thought that I lost my opportunity to work with this professor.

But everything happens for a reason, and I do feel thankful for not being able to submit my application. In the fall of 2007, when I started my PhD study at Arizona State University (ASU), I was surprised (again) by the presence of this same professor at an annual Linguistics/TESOL social gathering. I learned at the event that this professor had recently joined ASU's Rhetoric, Composition, and Linguistics program, and I took that opportunity to introduce myself to him, to explain that I was interested in second language writing, and to show interest in working with him. A week after our discussion about my research interest and career plan, this professor agreed to take me on

as his mentee. Ever since then, Paul Kei Matsuda has been my mentor, teacher, and dissertation director. We have also collaborated on research projects and publications.

In this chapter, I discuss my perspective on going through doctoral education in second language (L2) writing, highlighting choices in identity building as an L2 writing specialist, and my decision to choose a tenure-track position in the United States. I graduated in the spring of 2012 and was subsequently hired as a tenure-track Assistant Professor of English with a specialization in second language writing in the Rhetoric, Writing, and Linguistics program at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville (UTK).

My background had nothing to do with teaching. A journalism major, I first worked as a columnist for a women's magazine and later as a journalist for an English newspaper, both in Thailand. Through many years of such experience, I discovered how much I loved writing, even though it was challenging to write in a language that was not my mother tongue. As a journalist, I worked under deadlines and pressure, writing on variable subject matters for a wide audience. Being able to write as a journalist was a big stepping stone to my other career goals. At that point, I thought about changing my career since I no longer wanted to write as a reporter; rather I wanted to pass on my knowledge of writing to those who were interested. All of a sudden, the idea of teaching came into sight; I wanted to be a writing teacher. But I did not have a teaching degree; "How could that be possible?" I asked myself. A year later, after researching various teaching degree programs and getting accepted to an institution in the United States, I decided to quit my job in order to pursue my master's degree in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) at Southern Illinois University Carbondale (SIUC) with a clear goal of learning how to teach writing. This is where the serious journey of my academic career began.

I first came into contact with the term "second language writing" when I took a course on teaching English as a Second Language (ESL) composition in my first semester at SIUC. That course was required for all new graduate teaching assistants who would be teaching first-year composition to ESL students for the first time. I first heard of Paul Kei Matsuda, Tony Silva, Ilona Leki, Dana Ferris, and other prominent L2 writing specialists from reading their work in that course. In addition to teaching first-year composition to international students,

I had the opportunity to assist the Director of the ESL Writing Program at SIUC in administering written placement tests, evaluating essays, and deciding course placement for students. I also co-organized a one-week training session for new graduate teaching assistants in the Linguistics department, where I mentored one writing teacher who was teaching second language students for the first time. Since then, I knew that L2 writing was going to be my area of specialization; I chose to focus my thesis on how L2 undergraduate students transferred what they learned in first-year L2 writing courses to writing in the disciplines (Saenkhum, 2007a). Later, when pursuing my PhD in Rhetoric, Composition, and Linguistics at ASU, I chose to specialize in L2 writing with a focus on writing program administration in order to broaden my scholarship in these two related fields.

Identity Building As An L2 Writing Specialist

Over the course of my graduate career, I participated in various communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991) that, in turn, helped develop my identity as an L2 writing specialist. I took on extra responsibilities, instead of just completing coursework, writing a dissertation, graduating, and having a doctoral degree. In what follows, I discuss how my identity has been shaped by my involvement in professional organizations, engagement in collaboration, and apprenticeship as a writing program administrator (WPA). In all of these capacities, Paul, my mentor, played a significant role in supporting and helping me build my L2 writing specialist profile, providing me with various professional development opportunities.

Involvement In Professional Organizations

In order to learn more about the field of L2 writing, I actively attended and presented at regional, national, and international conferences related to second language writing. My professional debut was at the Annual Illinois Teachers of ESOL & Bilingual Education Conference in March of 2006, where I delivered a teaching demonstration based on a project entitled "Journalistic Interview: Promoting Better ESL Writing" (Saenkhum, 2006), originally developed in a course called "Teaching Composition in a Second Language" at SIUC. My teaching demonstration adapted the one-on-one interviews used in journal-

ism to teach L2 students how to better organize their writing. The rationale behind this teaching demonstration was that a successful journalistic interview requires solid research, question planning, and strategic organization of material to make the resultant article interesting and readable. My second professional presentation was at the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) in 2007, where I presented a paper on characteristics of ESL writing in the disciplines of business and engineering (Saenkhum, 2007b). The paper was part of my master's thesis, which investigated knowledge transfer from first-year ESL writing classes to writing in the disciplines (Saenkhum, 2007a)

I became more involved in professional organizations through working with Paul, serving as a symposium assistant for the Symposium on Second Language Writing (SSLW), which Paul and Tony Silva co-founded, between 2008 and 2011. I have also given presentations at SSLW since 2008 and served as a proposal reviewer since 2009. I was more actively involved in SSLW when I served as Associate Chair for the symposium in 2009 that took place at ASU (see Matsuda, this volume). Together with Paul, Tony, and Mark James, who also served as Associate Chair, I worked on the symposium planning, programming, and scheduling. Through this valuable experience, I learned how to collaborate with other professionals in the field and ultimately enhanced my understanding of the possibilities for a professional career. In addition to helping me develop my leadership skills, this opportunity allowed me to expand my professional network; I was able to get to know researchers from other universities who share my research interests, and I continue to collaborate with a number of them on conference proposals and presentations.

Apart from being involved in SSLW, I, as a graduate student, participated in other professional organizations such as the Second Language Writing Interest Section (SLW-IS) of TESOL and the CCCC's Committee on Second Language Writing. I attended their business meetings and took part in other scholarly activities, including working on workshop proposals for CCCC. As a result, I gradually developed my own academic community. My work commitment and involvement in the field of L2 writing have become more formal when I, as an assistant professor, was elected in March 2014 to the steering committee member-at-large for the SLW-IS and was invited to join the CCCC Committee on Second Language Writing, both for three-year terms.

Engagement in Collaboration

Apart from being involved in professional organizations, I had various opportunities to work collaboratively with my mentor and other graduate students. Paul and I published an Annotated Bibliography of Second Language Writing and Writing Program Administration in the *WPA-CompPile Research Bibliographies* (Saenkhum & Matsuda, 2010) and a review essay of three books in *WPA: Writing Program Administration* (Saenkhum & Matsuda, 2011). Along with Steven Accardi, we revised and resubmitted a manuscript based on an institutional survey of writing teachers' perceptions of the presence and needs of multilingual writers to the *Journal of Second Language Writing*, and it was accepted for publication (Matsuda, Saenkhum, & Accardi, 2013). We also presented findings from this institutional survey study at different conferences, such as CWPA, SSLW, CCCC, and AAAL.

In addition to publication and presentation collaboration, Paul and I also submitted a proposal to the CCCC and won a 2010-2011 CCCC Research Initiative for our project on the placement of multilingual writers in college composition programs, which collected data from a survey of writing program administrators across the country. The goal was to examine various US colleges' and universities' placement of multilingual writers in order to generate information that could help improve the quality of placement practices in college composition programs. This was an excellent hands-on experience for me; I learned how to write a grant proposal by doing it myself, with Paul providing comments and suggestions, and together discussing revisions. Enabled by the national grant, we are in the process of data analysis and writing up an article to be submitted to a major journal in the field of rhetoric and composition.

Working collaboratively on these research projects helped immensely to develop my research skills and, in turn, strengthen my dissertation, which investigated the role of agency in multilingual writers' placement decisions. By learning how to design questionnaires from the nationwide survey, I was independently able to craft different sets of interview questions and use them when conducting a series of four in-depth interviews with multilingual student participants. My prior experience in analyzing data from the institutional survey study informed my ability to understand this new data for my dissertation.

Through working on these collaborative projects, I also learned that Paul sets high standards and expectations, which was evident from the constructive, critical, and thoughtful feedback he provided on various working drafts of each project (see Matsuda, this volume). Paul read every single line, and his feedback was both thorough and prompt; I always received it within one or two days, sometimes even one or two hours. This prompted me to be fast in my response as well; I tended to work on revisions right away, and I usually would not let his comments sit for long. At first, I would count how many times I revised a draft; eventually I came to see it as a fluid, ongoing part of the writing process and adopted the mantra: Keep Revising. Paul's high standards encouraged me to achieve more and do better. From receiving his feedback, I learned to analyze my audience, understand genre, and establish a coherent argument. These skills helped me win two competitive awards: TESOL's Albert H. Marckwardt Travel Grant in 2009 and CCCC Chairs' Memorial Scholarship in 2012. The former was judged on an applicant's statement that addressed his or her scholarship, personal attributes, involvement in and commitment to ESL/EFL teaching and the profession, and financial need. The latter was judged on the quality of the proposal submitted for the annual CCCC. Both the statement and proposal were evaluated based on the quality of writing, among other things.

To be honest, I found that my biggest challenge in revision was my own tendency to become frustrated at my inability to express myself clearly and fluently. I learned that I could not force myself to write or revise if I felt upset. I came to the conclusion that I could revise more productively when my mind was clear, and I had a good sense of what my final product would look like. As a writer, I have come to deeply value feedback, and as a professor I tend to be explicit with my students about how I view it. I often share with them feedback I receive from colleagues and peers. I want them to understand that feedback is not only common but also necessary in the academic arena. One thing I learned from Paul that I use when providing feedback to student writing is to ask what types of comments students want from me. This encourages them to think about their own writing and allows them to engage with and be responsible for their own texts. I find this practice very helpful in the way that it allows me to meet the needs of my students.

Apprenticeship

In my last year at ASU, while finishing up my dissertation, I served as the Assistant Director of Second Language Writing in the Writing Programs. Paul created this position for graduate students who were interested in program administration and wanted to have administrative experience (see Matsuda, this volume). As the Assistant Director of Second Language Writing, I helped improve the placement procedures for multilingual writers—including international visa students and US residents or citizens who are nonnative English speaking students—by providing recommendations for increasing communication between the writing program, academic advisors, writing teachers, and multilingual students. This initiative was based on part of the results of my dissertation that showed academic advisors' lack of an accurate understanding of first-year composition placement and available placement options, as well as multilingual students' misunderstanding about placement information (Saenkhum, 2012). To increase first-year composition placement communication, I designed a brochure and handout that contained information about available first-year composition placement options, test score cutoffs, and a brief description of available courses. The writing program later distributed these documents to first-year multilingual students and academic advisors. I also recommended that the writing program disseminate placement information to other related academic units, such as ASU's freshman orientation and the office of international students.

In addition, I served as a member of the ASU Writing Programs Committee and presented a proposal to change course titles and descriptions of multilingual composition courses that caused the misplacement of multilingual writers, especially resident, nonnative English students. This proposal was based on data that Paul, Steven, and I collected from the institutional survey of writing teachers' perceptions of the presence and needs of multilingual writers in first-year composition courses. The survey also showed what teachers needed in order to work effectively with multilingual writers. As a result, the Director of Second Language Writing established a mentoring program for those who teach multilingual composition, as well as for mainstream teachers who have multilingual students in their classes.

Through the apprenticeship, I gained hands-on experience in program administration for multilingual writers. I also developed my

understanding of the kind of work that WPAs do. This valuable opportunity has prepared me to effectively work with multilingual students who are part of college composition programs in US higher education.

Being Hired as an L2 Writing Specialist

Before I go into detail on my job search, I will briefly discuss my preparation for understanding the job search process in the United States. I started reading academic job advertisements on a listserv I subscribed to during my first year of doctoral study, participated in workshops on job application preparation, and attended candidates' job talks. One aspect of the job search I found especially helpful was when I had the opportunity to assist job candidates during their campus visits to ASU. I had seen what their schedule looked like, whom they had to have lunch or dinner with, and what they had to wear, among other things. These tiny yet important details helped me become prepared when I became a job candidate myself.

I went on the job market in the fall semester of 2011, but I had been thinking about applying since I entered the fourth year of my doctoral study because I was uncertain about where I wanted to work: here in the United States or in Thailand, my home country. It was a tough decision; I kept going back and forth between these two choices. At the end of my fourth year, a professor from a well-known university in Thailand approached me and encouraged me to apply upon completion of my degree. I was tempted by this potential offer for two main reasons: I could go back home and live with my family, and I could secure a position at one of the top two universities in the country. That temptation was only dampened by the fact that I had invested for so long in my academic career here in the United States. My research had been based here, and I wanted to continue it. I found it difficult to make a decision myself, so I discussed with Paul all the possibilities, advantages, and disadvantages of working in those two locations. Finally, I made a decision to apply for jobs in the United States with my own rationale: to continue my scholarship of second language writing with a focus on writing program administration for second language students.

Once the decision was made, I worked with Paul closely during my job search period, beginning with preparing job application materials before moving on to job interviews, campus visits, job talks, and accepting and negotiating job offers. Job applications require a lot of work in putting materials together: CV, cover letter, research statement/agenda, teaching philosophy, teaching portfolio, and description of experience in writing program administration. Like other job applicants, I did not just produce these documents once because I applied for multiple positions, and I tailored each application to each position. To increase my odds of success, I sent out 49 job applications, which I felt was crazy. I applied for everything: research and teaching institutions, tenure and non-tenure track positions, renewable and full-time positions. Later, I realized what I did was not unusual. Many of my friends did the same thing; some of them even sent out 60-70 job applications.

Sometimes, you do not know exactly what you want to do in your career. For me, I just knew that I wanted to do research on L2 writing and train prospective teachers to work with L2 students. In my case, it became clear when I saw a job advertisement from the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. Paul had forwarded the advertisement to me and left a brief message at the end: "This is Ilona's replacement." The full email reads as follows:

In case you haven't seen this:

U of Tennessee, Knoxville
English, 301 McClung Tower, Knoxville, TN 37996
http://www.utk.edu
Assistant or Associate Professor, Second Language Writing in English. [15577]

> The University of Tennessee, Knoxville, is seeking applications for a tenure-track position as Assistant or Associate Professor of English, with specialization in L2 writing in English. The successful candidate will teach in areas such as language acquisition and other domains related to TESL. In addition, he or she will play a significant role in course and program development and administration. Position requires PhD in Rhetoric/Composition with L2 writing specialization/concentration, Applied Linguistics, or related field, experience or

> strong interest in directing a writing program for multilingual students, a record of teaching excellence, and publications appropriate to the rank. Duties include active participation in graduate and undergraduate programs, both in the English department and in conjunction with relevant L2 faculty in other departments, plus significant research and publication. UTK features the BA, MA, and PhD in English with an emphasis in Rhetoric, Writing, and Linguistics. Salary and teaching loads are competitive, and our endowment provides ample support for research and travel. UTK, a "Doctoral/ Research Extensive" institution, is the flagship university in the state system. Applications due by November 1, but the search will remain open until the position is filled. Send letter of application and dossier (including detailed description of current project(s), a statement of philosophy of teaching and a description of interest and/or experience in program administration, and vita) to Misty Anderson, Associate Head, Department of English, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, TN 37996-0430. The University of Tennessee is an EEO/ AA/Title VI/Title IX/Section 504/ADA/ADEA institution in the provision of its education and employment programs and services. All qualified applicants will receive equal consideration for employment without regard to race, color, national origin, religion, sex, pregnancy, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, physical or mental disability, or covered veteran status.

This is Ilona's replacement.
P

I responded to Paul's email and let him know that: "This position is exactly what I was looking for." I read the job advertisement over and over, and my heart kept beating. What was written in the job advertisement was exactly what I had been trained to do during my graduate school career.

When working on job application documents for this and other positions, I realized how everything I did in graduate school came together; it helped prepare me for the "real work world." I was able to draw on my various experiences and professional involvement in the field of second language writing to compose application materials. I

also realized how Paul's high standards and expectations of quality of writing came into play. Certain job application documents required a great deal of genre and audience analysis, as well as a well-written and established argument. My understanding of these issues and my experience in writing with Paul helped ease the process of working on these documents. I did not start from scratch; rather I utilized what I learned from receiving feedback and applied those skills to the production of my job application materials.

When I learned that I was invited for a campus interview, I was thrilled and nervous. Fortunately, those feelings of uncertainly did not linger as long as I expected, though I did have butterflies in my stomach until the last day of my visit. Yet I was able to feel at ease because I knew what a campus interview and its process would look like, thanks to my prior experience in taking care of job candidates and attending their job talks. I found my job talk the most challenging part of the process because the majority of the audience was not from the field of L2 writing and was not familiar with my topic. I did my homework about the department and knew who would be my audience so that I could deliver my presentation in a way that everyone could understand. Again, this confirmed for me the importance of being able to know and analyze one's audience. I had the good fortune to be hired for what I felt like my dream job.

I started my tenure-track Assistant Professor position in the Rhetoric, Writing, and Linguistics program in the Department of English at The University of Tennessee, Knoxville (UTK) in the fall of 2012 with a 2-2 teaching load. My position is a replacement for the renowned L2 writing specialist Ilona Leki, who retired in 2010 and stayed post retirement through 2011. I am grateful for this opportunity, as it allows me to continue to do research on L2 writing and train prospective teachers to work with L2 students. In my first two years, I taught both graduate and undergraduate courses on L2 writing, teaching English as a second/foreign language, pedagogical grammar for ESL teachers, sociolinguistics, and second language acquisition.

My appointment has a component of administrative work, but I did not take over UTK's ESL Program until my second year. Because of the administrative duty, my teaching responsibilities have been reduced to a 1-2 load beginning in the fall of 2013. Before I assumed the director position, I took my first year to observe one of its co-directors administering an English placement exam to L2 students (internation-

al students are the majority), evaluating exam essays, deciding placement for students, and coordinating with other related academic units. My apprenticeship as a WPA at ASU has perfectly prepared me for my current position; what I used to do there makes my tasks here at UTK easier. As the director of ESL Program, I handle first-year composition sections for L2 students; determine the English placement exam policies; recruit, prepare, and supervise L2 writing instructors; serve as a liaison between the ESL program and other related stakeholders across campus; and lead faculty-development workshops within the English department and across campus, among other duties.

Nevertheless, as a pre-tenure writing program administrator, I find this administrative role the most challenging. First and foremost, since I am new to the institution, I am still in the process of navigating and articulating the institutional cultures and the department's system, among other things. Second, administrative work takes a considerable amount of time, energy, and effort. As one can imagine, I have to juggle my own research, teaching, administrative work, and other departmental service, including advising both undergraduate and graduate students. Third, as the director of ESL, I have been asked by other departments and units on campus to serve on various committees related to ESL. While I cannot take on additional roles since I already have a lot on my plate, I am in the process of learning to say "No."

In grappling with those challenges, I have developed some strategies while negotiating the workloads in order to balance my work. I hope what I share here will be helpful to those who currently are or will be working as pre-tenure writing program administrators, a position that an increasing number of junior faculty have been asked to take on in their early-career (Saenkhum, 2014). Assistant professors need to be protected, and I believe everyone realizes this. First, I seek help and advice from my faculty mentor and department head. Every new tenure-track assistant professor at UTK is assigned to a faculty mentor who serves as his or her academic advocate. In my case, I always communicate with my faculty mentor, keeping him informed about my research progress, teaching, administrative work, and other related issues and concerns. For example, when I was asked to serve on a search committee for another department and did not think I could take it on. I did want to say "No," but saying it to the head of that department was difficult for me. To be honest, I did not know how to respond to that request and so decided to consult my mentor

and department head who both knew about my situation. They said since I was over extended, it was perfectly fine for me not to take on this additional role. In the end, I was confident enough to decline that request. Yet, I am learning to say "No."

Second, because I do not want to lose my writing momentum, it is crucial that I save an entire day or two (during regular semesters) for my research and writing. This is something that I can control. So, I set a time and concentrate on my writing, and I do not open emails until I am done writing on that day. I know it is easy to say. In fact, it is the hardest thing to do. In addition, I have a writing buddy who is also an assistant professor in the same department. We get together and write for four to five hours a day once a week. Having a writing companion has helped me immensely. We encourage each other to write since we are both working toward to same goal of getting tenured and promoted.

Third, I find support from my fellow assistant professors, both within the department and outside the institution. It is important for junior faculty to have someone who is in the same situation to share things with and to talk to. As I mentioned earlier, I have my own academic community, and folks from this academic circle are my friends who share research interests. We used to be graduate students, and we currently are assistant professors. I still keep in touch with all of them and continue to collaborate on conference presentations and publications. In addition to working collaboratively, we discuss and share with one another what we have encountered and gone through as junior assistant professors. By discussing and sharing, we have learned from one another and have developed a better understanding of how the academy works.

All things considered, I find time management the most challenging part of the tenure-track career. I am learning to strike a balance between research (working on my writing), administrative work, and teaching; at the same time, I want to make sure that I have a well-rounded, healthy life.

This may seem like a story with a happy ending, yet the real story has just begun. What I have shared with you so far is just a prologue. I cannot know what will happen over the next five or ten years, but one thing I can do is to continue to invest, commit, and persevere.

Coda

I would like to emphasize the essential nature of participating in communities of practice, which can help one become prepared when she or he is on the job market as well as when she or he enters the real academic work world. Graduate students, talk to and consult your mentors about your career plan. Mentors are great resources for your professional development; they can even help open the door to opportunities for you. Yet, you are the one who needs to take the initiative and walk through those doors.

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8 From Doctoral Education to the Tenure Track: Lessons and Observations from the Journey

Christina Ortmeier-Hooper

In 2007, I completed my PhD. Currently, I am an advanced assistant professor at a research institution, which also happens to be my alma mater. I work with graduate students with interests in composition, literacy studies, linguistics, and second language writing, and I have gone from being the advisee to the advisor. As a doctoral student, though, I remember finding guidance and confidence in talks given by Dana Ferris (2005), Linda Lonon Blanton (2005), Stephanie Vandrick (2006), and Christine Tardy (2010), among others. These talks, and subsequent book chapters, welcomed me as a graduate student to look behind the curtain of the profession and provided insights into publishing, research, and theory building in the field. This chapter is written in that tradition. The chapter begins with a narrative of my early journey to the field. Then I'll draw upon my experiences through graduate school and along the tenure track in order to highlight how perseverance, previous professional identities, and a broadened sense of professional community can augment graduate students' movement into disciplinary discussions, traditions, and norms. I'll conclude with some reflections derived from writing this chapter and consider how my own experiences impact my current role as an advisor to new doctoral students in the field.

My Journey Into Doctoral Education

Casanave (2008) once wrote that "learning how to 'do' graduate school does not come naturally to most people" (p. 14). The ways in which we enter academia and our fields are not always smooth or clearly delineated. My own story begins with the fact that I was a first-generation college student, whose parents immigrated to America without any knowledge of English and no experiences in higher education. My father always taught me to take chances and to hold onto the mantra that anything was possible, but in our family, the idea of earning a PhD or working in academia was an unheard of proposition.

My journey into the field of second language writing, and academia more generally, did not begin with an unwavering sense of certainty. In many ways, I stumbled upon the field of second language writing, and it was an irregular and unexpected path that led me to work with my dissertation advisor, Paul Kei Matsuda. Like many of my colleagues, I came across the world of L2 writing through my students. I began my work as a teacher with secondary school ESL students at an urban school in the Northeastern US. My portable classroom was far from the main building, and on cold winter days, the wind off the playground made it feel like a mile. As the only dually licensed English language arts and ESL teacher at the school, my job was to teach all the sections of ESL Reading and Writing. I had no budget and limited textbooks.

Early on, I knew writing was essential to my students' success. I had seen myself as a writing teacher. Books and lessons from Lucy Calkins (1986), Don Murray (1995), and Nancie Atwell (1987) lined my shelves, but at that time, the theories and practices for teaching writing in the dominant fields of composition and literacy studies didn't address the complicated act of writing in an L2. In researching my Master's thesis on teaching ESL writing at the middle school level, I had come across the works of Sarah Hudelson (1989) and Carole Edelsky (1986); only their works offered me a glimmer of hope that some other answers might be out there.

Those answers began to come in 1999 when I attended my first TESOL conference in New York City. It was the largest, most international conference that I had ever attended. I had to commute to the convention from a friend's house in New Jersey, because I could not afford to pay for a hotel room. But I didn't mind, and the experience

was eye-opening, thrilling. After I presented a poster session on a curriculum unit I'd developed, I went to all the sessions I could manage, grabbing every handout and good teaching idea I could find. But one session caught my eye in the program book: "On the Future of Second Language Writing." I circled the title and underlined those last three words: Second Language Writing. It was the first time that I had seen the term, and it resonated with me. I wondered: were other people asking similar questions about writing and ESL?

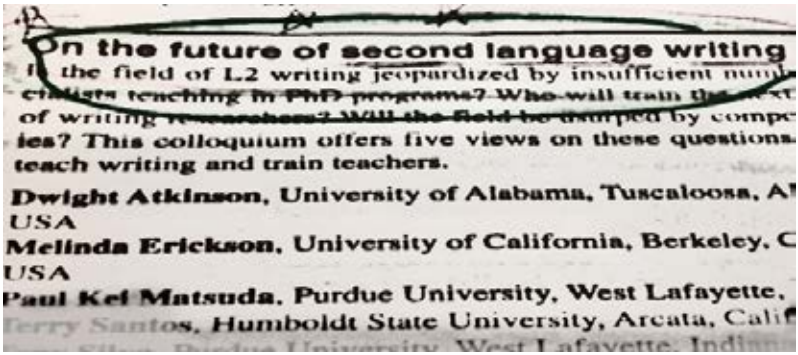
On the future of second language writing
the field of L2 writing jeopardized by insufficient numb
of writing researchers? Will the field be dumped by compo
ies? This colloquium offers five views on these questions
teach writing and train teachers.
Dwight Atkinson, University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa, A
USA
Melinda Erickson, University of California, Berkeley, C
USA
Paul Kei Matsuda, Purdue University, West Lafayette,
Terry Santos, Humboldt State University, Arcata, Calif

Figure 1. From the TESOL 1999 Program Book.

As I stepped into the session room, I saw a panel that included some of the biggest names in the field today: Terry Santos, Tony Silva, Melinda Erickson, Dwight Atkinson, and this other guy—Paul Kei Matsuda. I knew none of them, and truth be told, much of the conversation that day went over my head. I was not immersed in the discourse yet, and like so many new graduate students, I felt lost. But bits of the conversation stayed with me. In my journal, I wrote: "It seems like there may be more questions, than answers here." I didn't find the lack of answers frustrating; instead, I was intrigued, fascinated by the work that needed to be done. It seemed like a world teeming with possibilities. I wanted to engage in these conversations and seek more answers to the kinds of questions that kept arising from my work in the classroom. But I had no idea how anyone "did" this kind of work. The session ended historically with Matsuda and Atkinson in disagreement about the future of the field (see Santos et al., 2000). I only saw the future. I left the session and met Tony Silva at the bottom of the stairs. He generously listened to my questions, handed me his card, and told me about the PhD program at Purdue. As he headed to the next ses-

sion, I sat in the lobby, tucking his card away with a sigh. I could almost hear the sound of a door closing in my mind.

At that time in my life, there was no way that Purdue could have been a possibility for me. Indiana was a world away from our house and mortgage, my husband's business, my elderly parents, and my growing family. The same was true of the few other doctoral programs in the US that had scholars working in L2 writing. Still, I went back to my students with renewed enthusiasm for teaching. I had learned that I wasn't alone in my questions or my interests. In my classroom, my students and I continued to work on their writing, trying out new workshop strategies and new projects. In the evenings after teaching, I would reread Hudelson's work. I began to buy books by Barbara Kroll (1990), Ilona Leki (1992), and Joy Reid (1993). I wrote an article about a writing curriculum that I'd developed, and I sent it to *TESOL Journal.* I continued to work with local workgroups on ESL issues. The following fall, *TESOL Journal* accepted my article for publication. I began to struggle with the reality that I was the only teacher in the school building that was allowing my ESL students to write extensively. I began to wonder if I might be able to create more change from another vantage point. I returned to the idea of a research degree, and I began to think creatively about my more local options, including the University of New Hampshire.

The PhD program in Composition Studies at UNH was well known for its scholars' interests in writing and literacy studies. Through my teaching, I'd met professors from the program and asked about pursuing a self-designed path in writing studies, ESL/immigrant literacy, and teacher education, if I were accepted. The graduate director told me 'yes,' and several linguists in the English department offered encouragement. So I took a leap of faith and send out some applications to UNH and few other regional programs. Later that spring, I was accepted into the UNH doctoral program. Two days after receiving my acceptance letter, I learned that I was pregnant with my first child; the intertwining of my personal and professional life would be part of this journey from the start. Six months later, pregnant and nervous, I would leave the stability of my full-time teaching position to start commuting to the PhD program in New Hampshire. There was no reason that this should work, I whispered to my husband at two in the morning. Looking back now, I can see that I had only a vague sense of where this new path might lead me.

At UNH, I had all the support I needed to learn about composition, writing-across-the-curriculum, writing centers, and more. But becoming immersed in L2 writing would be a solo mission at the start, and I would need to build my own opportunities. Luckily, I met Aya Matsuda, UNH's new linguist, and her interests in ESL and World Englishes were compelling. We serendipitously served together on the state-affiliate for TESOL. One day after a local conference, we had coffee. I shared my concerns that many of the writing initiatives at UNH didn't seem to acknowledge ESL writers. Aya mentioned that she had fielded numerous calls from faculty asking for assistance with UNH's growing international student population. Fueled by caffeine and a wonderful sense of synergy, we began to brainstorm. By the end of my first year, that conversation (and partnership) would turn into a small survey study of faculty and a collaboratively-designed series of faculty workshops that focused on culture, ESL, and writing, funded by the University's WAC program. For me, these initiatives, though not part of any formal coursework, helped me to become more familiar with ESL conversations in higher education. They would also be some of my first forays into building workshops and presentations for university faculty. Aya Matsuda would remain an important mentor, and that collaboration would soon unlock other doors.

As Aya and I worked together, I learned that Paul Kei Matsuda—that guy from that TESOL panel—was her husband. He was then an assistant professor at Miami University in Ohio. When he visited, Aya would invite me to join them for bagels. We had some great talks about L2 writing and my own interests in immigrant literacy. But geographically, Paul was far away from New Hampshire. Undeterred, I continued with my course work, studied my growing reading list, and developed my first seminar papers around my interests in immigrant literacy and the rhetoric of citizenship. One day via email, I took a chance and approached Paul to see if there was any way I might virtually sit in his upcoming seminar titled "Linguistics and Writing." It was a long shot, but his fondness for technology meant that aspects of the course would be on-line, and I was eager to participate in conversations with others who had similar interests. Paul graciously agreed to add me into the spring course as a guest. At UNH, I finagled, lobbied, begged, and finally persuaded the graduate director to allow me to participate in Paul's class for credit, as part of an independent study. That spring, in front of my computer screen and sometimes while

bouncing my newborn on my lap, I took my first seminar with Matsuda. Only later would I learn that UNH was interested in hiring Paul for the composition program. Paul's arrival at UNH would add new dimensions to my journey in doctoral education.

I tell this narrative at length because, like many other people's tales of graduate education, it is marked by moments of doubt and setback, as well as moments of confidence and conviction. For many of us, we fluctuate between variations of these extremes throughout our graduate years, though we don't often talk about them. The obstacles that we encounter in graduate school are also part of the learning, though. Personal and institutional obstacles do not stop when we reach the tenure track, or even, I'm told, after tenure. But I encourage doctoral students to embrace these challenges with a sense of perseverance and even a bit of entrepreneurial spirit. My father used to quote an old line, often attributed to the philosopher Seneca, that there is no such thing as luck; rather, luck was what happened when hard work met opportunity. He also taught me to embrace the fact that many opportunities don't often come about in straightforward ways; sometimes you have to be open to discovering less traditional pathways and making them work for you. In the remainder of this chapter, I'll expand on these sentiments by sharing some of the lessons I've learned through my own doctoral experiences and the tenure track.

Learning the Ropes of the Academic Workplace: Lessons from the Journey

Paul's coming to UNH as a faculty member certainly solidified my commitment to the field of L2 writing. His presence also marked the beginning of my more nuanced understanding of the workplace of academia and my own moves toward a new professional identity. As Paul has shared in earlier publications, he is a firm believer in facilitating mediated learning and creating authentic participation (see Simpson & Matsuda, 2008; Matsuda, this volume). His philosophy, which draws on situated learning theories (Lave & Wenger, 1991), is evident throughout his graduate courses and beyond them. But, for me, one of the most valuable aspects of his instructional stance has been his willingness to provide some transparency to the work and workplace dynamics of academic professionals. Paul spoke candidly about the

academy *as a workplace*, offering students a sense of transparency on the day-to-day responsibilities of faculty members, the inner workings of academic institutions, and insights into administration, proposal writing, presentations, networking, editorial work, and publication. In classes and casual conversations, he helped to decipher how a person might move from one stage of a career to the next. In doing so, he demystified the academic work environment, often only discussed in ethereal terms of knowledge and remaining somewhat clandestine to those outside of it.

One result of his tutelage was that throughout my doctoral education, I was always keen to learn more about navigating and contributing to the communities that were all intrinsically part of this new "workplace" that I was entering. Although I learned a great deal working with Paul and my other professors throughout my doctoral program, four lessons from these conversations and experiences continue to reverberate for me in very salient ways as I navigate the tenure track. Drawing on examples from my own journey, I'll expand on them in the pages ahead, but in brief, they include the following: (1) Every experience can be a learning opportunity, even the challenging ones; (2) New professional identities don't have to be disconnected from old professional identities; they can be built upon them; (3) Be an ethnographer of the new workplace; and (4) Understand the importance of community and invest in the communities that surround you.

Lesson 1: Every Experience Can Be Seen as a Learning Opportunity, Even the Challenging Ones

Sometimes as doctoral students, we have successful moments, and other times, we don't. On one occasion, I turned an early bibliographic essay on the status of immigrant L2 writers in US contexts into an article, and Paul suggested I send it to the journal, *Written Communication*. Months and months later, it was returned with a letter of rejection and four pages of detailed commentary—commentary that closely mirrored the intense scrutiny that Paul often gave in his feedback to our seminar work. I'll confess that that envelope from the journal sat in my car's glovebox for over two weeks. I wasn't sure how to handle the rejection. Mostly I felt embarrassed and those "imposter" doubts surfaced again, making me question what I was trying to accomplish.

I questioned how I would ever find a voice and a way of writing that would be good enough for this new academic world.

Around the same time, though, Paul shared some of his publication woes and the critical feedback he received from a piece that he was working on. He wasn't thrilled, but—and I think this was most enlightening—he wasn't devastated either. After a seminar one day, he shared his thoughts and brainstormed aloud how he might respond with revision, or even resubmission to other journals. It made me realize that these kinds of rejection might be par for the course in this profession, and I had to develop productive ways of responding to them.

That realization allowed me to step back and take stock of what I might learn in the moment. I turned back to the editor's feedback with renewed curiosity and an intention to learn from their concerns. The article never did make it into that journal, but elements of that early piece would become part of a CCC article in the future. Now, as an editor and reviewer myself, I recognize the generosity of those four pages and the rich, detailed feedback they contained. I also remind myself of the significance of those editors' final sentences, which kindly and sincerely encouraged me to continue writing and sending my work out. That encouragement helped me to believe that my voice and my interests mattered, and I continued to hone my writing skills.

Lesson 2: New Professional Identities Don't Have To Be Disconnected from Old Professional Identities

Lave and Wenger (1991) have theorized the importance of apprenticeship models, a concept that informs much of the current literature on graduate education. Academic apprenticeship models, however, often seem to rely on the idea that the apprentice is always a novice, a *tabula rasa* of sorts. Many doctoral students, though, are actually transitioning and transferring *across* professional identities, not just entering new ones. Current discussions don't often address how individual students can and do transfer knowledge and identities across their experiences as they navigate into new professional conversations and identities. For example, before I began my studies, I had an established teaching career in K-12 and a rich professional identity derived from that experience. As I entered my doctoral program, I saw all my efforts not just as a program of study, but as an extension of my professional career. I knew I had a great deal to learn, and I was eager to do so. Yet, my

"new job" of graduate school, along with the tenure-track positions that came later, was not completely severed from my old job, and I continued to draw upon the professional profile that I had already established.

Throughout graduate school, I used my earlier professional identity and communities to propel me forward, to maintain my confidence, and to prepare me for later opportunities. For example, I continued to work with many of my secondary school teaching colleagues, sometimes returning on breaks to teach classes on writing to their students. During three summers, I served as a curriculum consultant to a local literacy program for ESL students. I remained active on the steering boards for local teacher organizations, including my local TESOL affiliate. I furthered these roles by joining ongoing school-university collaborations that were already taking place at UNH, particularly by working at the writing center and serving as a Steering Board member for the local chapter of the International Writing Center Association. In summers, I joined with fellow graduates to do workshops for local school teachers and students. Whenever possible, I continued to present at local conferences on writing, literacy, and teaching. My local initiatives, often emerged from connections established by my earlier professional work, and I firmly believe that these earlier connections and support networks helped me to have confidence in starting new initiatives and participating more actively in new disciplinary conversations.

When Paul and others began to approach me with opportunities for more national and international work in the field, I drew strategies and support from these past successes, experiences, and professional relationships. For example, when I started to collect signatures in 2004 to form the Second Language Writing Interest Section (SLWIS) at TESOL, some of the very first signatures on that petition, along with letters of support, came from old colleagues, area teachers, and regional TESOL leaders that I'd known through my work as a K-12 teacher. Looking back, my continued engagement in local actions and networks helped me to build a stronger sense of my growing expertise and a more insider's sense of the demands that were part of the broader academic community.

Throughout my doctoral program, Paul and my other professors encouraged me to draw upon my past professional experience and expertise as I ventured into new professional territory. They reminded

me that, although I was a student again, I was not an empty slate. That realization was empowering. Through the years, I have continued to value and benefit from the fact that my earlier professional identity was not lost; it has become an integral part of a unique professional profile that I continue to build upon as I move forward in my academic career.

Lesson 3: Be an Ethnographer of Your Field and Your Job (Transitioning to the Tenure-Track)

Since completing my dissertation, I have held faculty positions at two PhD granting programs: first, at the University of Massachusetts, and now at the University of New Hampshire. It is an interesting transition to move from being the student to being the advisor. During the early years of graduate school, we can get comfortable in our role as students, participating and rising to the challenge set forth by our professors, the experts in the room. Then, the roles change, and newly minted PhDs "officially" become the experts. But in many ways, the tenure-track position is a natural progression from the growing sense of independence that emerges as one presents at conferences, completes a dissertation, enters the job market, and continually moves forward toward the new professional identity. The early years on the tenure track are marked by similar demands to establish (continually) a professional profile in our fields and within our institutions. This is my case presently, as it was Paul's when I was his advisee (see Matsuda, this volume).

I feel fortunate that I was able to work and observe Paul during his early years in this profession, watching him navigate much of the tenure-track terrain that I now find myself on. At the time, I didn't always understand what I was seeing: the balancing act between defining one's own career and helping move students forward, negotiations and programmatic choices that were made at the department level, or the decisions to take on certain difficult discussions (e.g., studio courses for basic writers) and professional roles (e.g., program administration) within one's institutions, but not others. I also learned the importance of timing. I observed how Paul engaged in certain contentious conversations by turning to allies who were tenured and more fully aware of the larger conversations in a department or across a campus. Furthermore, he taught me to be open to the reality that the tim-

ing of a proposed initiative may not be right and that often one needs to do more foundational work by building a network of stakeholders and a sense of exigency within an institution. Paul, often over coffee, would frequently ask me where I wanted to be five years from that moment. To be truthful, I sometimes didn't have an answer to that question or perhaps more accurately, I had competing answers and scenarios (it is a difficult question!). But Paul helped me to understand how one might think beyond the day-to-day goals of the semester—the seminar paper, the annual faculty report, the administrative role, and the CV—in order to set a course for larger goals and initiatives. As an advisee, I appreciated Paul's willingness to make transparent many of his own goals and decision-making processes. And even when he was more evasive, I learned to listen and watch, thinking about how certain choices he made led him to new opportunities or propelled him in new directions.

I also learned a great deal from just listening and learning from other mentors and professionals, many from the second language writing community and my home institution. From talks in the corridors of conference venues and sometime continued over email, I gained insights into decisions on committee work, professional ways of working with fellow faculty and administrators, and handling frustration and setbacks, and other tales from the tenure track. For example, Dana Ferris gave a brilliant—and wonderfully direct—presentation at one Symposium that explicitly showed how her research and publications unfolded alongside her teaching and personal life (see Ferris, 2005). Others, like Deborah Crusan and Sarah Hudelson, graciously shared insights into their own department dynamics, their campus initiatives, the tenure process, and their work with publishers. I have learned so much from the candor and examples set forth by the women in my field. Those conversations and observations have helped me, in recent years, to think strategically about my own choices and pathways in the field and at my institution.

Doctoral students should not limit these kinds of questions and conversations only to their formal advisors. It is important to seek out other mentors, as well, and listen to their perspectives. Mentors can exist in array of capacities, inside one's program and also through various other organizational structures. Over the years, I've listened and learned from stories told by other compositionists and L2 writing scholars as they shared how they have navigated through decisions at

their home institutions, regarding administrative work, departmental politics, tenure, and teaching. I read books like *ESL Composition Tales: Reflections on Teaching* (Blanton & Kroll, 2002). I wondered, and sometimes asked, from where did these scholars derive their sense of achievement and accomplishment? There is no doubt that students, listening and asking such questions, will hear about different strategies in different settings. This is important and valuable, because there are an array of professional and academic decisions that will arise over the course of a career. I also listened to colleagues as they shared the outcomes of the decisions they had made. What might they have done differently? What other choices existed? How did they define success?

I continue to listen and learn from my mentors as I navigate new pathways and decisions. Over the years, I've come to realize that there isn't just one way to have success in the academic world. Listening to a multitude of perspectives has given me insights into the opportunities and the choices that exist.

Lesson 4: Become Aware of the Importance of Community and Invest in the Communities That Surround You

Individual perseverance is a part of the commitment to a doctoral education, but I'm not sure that any of us make it through as pure soloists. The best experiences are never complete solo ventures. Wenger (1998) in his work on community of practices (CoP), defines the roles and competencies of members within CoPs, noting that

> members build their community through mutual engagement. They interact with one another, establishing norms and relationships of mutuality that reflect these interactions. To be competent is to be able to engage with the community and be trusted as a partner in these interactions. […] Communities of practices have produced a shared repertoire of communal resources—language, routines, sensibilities, artifacts, tools, stories, styles, etc. To be competent is to have access to this repertoire and be able to use it appropriately. (p. 229)

Wenger's theory of CoP is often drawn upon in discussions on doctoral education, particularly when scholars consider how students enter and begin to engage with the academic discussions in their disciplines. Advisors encourage students to learn the discourse and norms of the

disciplinary communities that they are entering. These are important endeavors. But I encourage doctoral students and their advisors to consider their communities more broadly and to work to establish an awareness of CoPs on multiple fronts. In short, I suggest that we expand our vision of disciplinary CoPs to include some of the smaller communities that graduate students encounter during their programs. The importance of nurturing these smaller communities for doctoral students cannot be overstated.

When I attended my first Symposium in 2002, I knew very few people in this field. But over the course of that conference, I met students from a number of other doctoral programs. It was exhilarating to be among peers who held a similar passion for this work. Over the years, these individuals who were graduate students when we first met have become important collaborators, strategic advisors, and skillful partners in creating organizational/institutional change. We've done workshops at CCCC and NCTE, advocated for the foundation of the SLW-IS, and introduced one another to other colleagues, other scholars, and advisors. Along the way, some of us even shared hotel rooms on shoestring budgets, found the best sushi at conference sites, shared in the trials of the tenure-track, and celebrated one another's successes. As we continue on the tenure track, we often contact one another to work in leadership roles, write position statements, visit one another's institutions as guest speakers, and sit on committees.

These types of relationships often grow from attending smaller, more intimate conferences, like the Symposium on Second Language Writing. I recommend to my own graduate students that they keep an eye out for smaller conferences and submit proposals to share their work at these venues as well. Students should seek out and become involved in the smaller work groups and communities that exist at the larger conferences like TESOL, AAAL, AERA, and CCCC. Students shouldn't be reluctant to reach across campus borders to meet and befriend graduate students from other programs with similar interests. These fellow students will be future colleagues.

In the same vein, it is also important to build circles of community among graduate student at our home institutions and programs. I was fortunate to be part of UNH's graduate student community with its long tradition of collaboration, support, and camaraderie. Alumni regularly mentor new students; we have regular potlucks; and graduate students often work together to write proposals, submit articles,

organize workshops, and present at conferences. When I was a student in the program, my own cohort formed study groups early on to discuss readings and prepare for exams. During our dissertation years, we formed a writing group that met regularly at a local restaurant, staying late into the night fueled by multiple cups of coffee, good humor, an encouraging wait staff, and chocolate cake. We help set writing assignments and goals for one another. Sometimes, we shared freewrites, working arguments, and rather clunky chapters. Other times, we simply met, took out our laptops, and wrote side-by-side. That group met for years and regularly invited other doctoral students, who were at earlier stages in program, to join in so that they could learn more about the next steps.

Aside from the intrinsic value of the friendships I gained, these meetings aided my development as a scholar and influenced my work today as a doctoral advisor. Through ongoing conversations about my peers' work and interest areas, I became more familiar with a range of discussions in college composition, workplace literacies, archival methods, feminist theories, race theories, and more. Second, we all learned to be more astute readers and responders of one another's scholarship and research methods. To this day, that trusted group of individuals remains some of my first readers and responders when I approach a new project or challenge. Those experiences also helped to train us for the responsibilities of serving as editors and reviewers that would be forthcoming. My community of peers also prepared me for my own eventual work with graduate students. We all had different backgrounds, work experiences, personal circumstances, and various passions in the field, all of which drove and inspired us in an array of ways. As friendships grew, we candidly shared with one another our individual and differing concerns, needs, and strategies for venturing through graduate coursework, teaching, and the dissertation process. We shared advice, became one another's sounding boards, encouraged one another's writing, and provided support when needed. These days, we've all moved on to various new positions along the tenure track, but I continue to draw upon the memories, wisdom, humor, and varied insights of my peers whenever I sit in my office and find myself advising the doctoral students in our program.

Some Thoughts on Deliberate Choices

The pursuit of a doctoral degree is not always a direct path, nor are there cookie-cutter approaches to success and completion. Writing this chapter has given me an opportunity to reflect upon my years as a doctoral student and my decisions in recent years along the tenure track. As I noted earlier, I never would have characterized steps in my journey into this field as well-defined, deliberate, or calculated. But I do admit that there have been certain ideals that I have tried to stay true to, and those have, in turn, guided many of my choices.

First, my professional choices continue to be guided by my concerns for young multilingual students. Pictures of my former middle school students still hang by my desk, and I regularly think about those that made it onto higher education and those that did not. On the job search, I purposefully sought out institutions with substantial roots and collaborative opportunities in literacy studies and K-12 teacher education. My work as a graduate advisor in these kinds of programs means that I have the opportunity to work with master's candidates who will work in K-12 schools, as well as, doctoral students who will work in higher education, often as future teacher educators or writing program administrators.

Second, at my institution and in composition-rhetoric circles, I have made a conscious decision to define myself as a second language writing specialist. I regularly teach a second language writing course which is now, with the support of my colleagues in composition and linguistics, a fixture for our graduate students, as well as our undergraduate teaching majors. This summer, I developed new L2 writing courses including a summer hybrid course directly tailored for teachers working with immigrant students in public schools. I am developing a new seminar on globalization and cross-cultural rhetoric that I'll offer next year. L2 writing scholarship seeps into every course I teach, and it is a regular part of all my students' reading lists.

Third, I make deliberate choices about the work I pursue. To date, I have always tried to intertwine my passions with the research that I pursue. I draw upon the very real concerns that I see and hear from students and teachers in order to shape the inquiry questions that drive my projects. I have purposefully pursued work that crosses traditional disciplinary borders in writing scholarship, whether they be the borders between secondary school and college, or the borders between L1

composition and L2 writing. In practice, this has meant publishing in college-level composition and L2 writing journals, as well as, education and more teacher-focused journals. It has also meant attending and presenting at a range of conferences—from TESOL to CCCC to NCTE—often bringing colleagues from other areas with me in order to extend the conversations across these borders.

Finally and this is probably the most personal of my choices, I have deliberatively tried to pursue a whole-self perspective, not putting certain aspects of my life on hold while pursuing others. I have three children—ages 3, 8, and 11. The first was born when I began my doctoral program; the second was born after I took my comprehensive exams; my youngest son arrived while I was on the tenure-track. I am not the only student or faculty member to make such choices (see Coiner & George, 1998; Slaughter, 2012). My personal and professional aspirations have often intertwined in ways that others may find contradictory, or at the very least, ill-advised. But as a doctoral student, I was fortunate to have professors who were very supportive. If Paul, as my advisor, had concerns about how my personal responsibilities might have impacted my drive or my work ethic, he never voiced them. He never questioned my abilities. At the same time, he respected the choices that I sometimes had to make in regards to a one-year leave of absence after my second son, scheduling meetings during babysitter's hours, and sometimes having to forego a conference.

Today, like many working mothers and fathers, I live in a rather busy world. My minivan is regularly piled high with soccer gear, car seats, and Goldfish snacks. I start my days at 5am in order to fit it all in, but I treasure the insights and experiences that my children—and my family, more broadly—bring into my world. The balancing act is not an easy one. I continually find myself recalibrating my responsibilities, my schedule, my communication skills, and more. I don't always get it right, but I keep trying and I have an incredibly supportive spouse. My family and children remind me that life is short, and that I am not solely defined by my CV. Currently, none of my graduate students have children, but they do have other life responsibilities—taking care of ailing grandparents, balancing the work of spouses, financial concerns, volunteer work with veterans, etc. As an advisor, I am open with them about the need to find some balance in their professional and personal lives. I encourage them to pursue success in

their academic lives and careers, but I also encourage them to pursue satisfaction and joy in the other areas of their lives as well.

Paying It Forward

Nowadays, as a faculty member, I've come to understand that the experience of teaching graduate students shapes advisors, as much as advisors shape their students. As an advisor, I am (and suspect I will remain) a work in progress. From my work with my students, I continually learn and develop in my role as their teacher and advisor. Working with them acts as a catalyst for me. They ask questions that I have yet to consider and drive me to think more critically and more attentively to questions from the field and in the classroom. My students continually fuel my energy and my passion for the field, for student writers, for schools, and for writing. I also realize that I was fortunate in my own doctoral education. I had a supportive advisor with a sense of transparency that let me know what I needed to do and how I might do it. I had loyal and caring peers. I also had passionate, encouraging professors in my graduate program and welcoming scholars from the field, who formally and informally, became my extended group of mentors. The generosity and shared experiences of those individuals have been instrumental and inspirational on so many fronts. Now, I find myself in a unique position to give back what I've been given—to pay it forward. To the best of my ability, I intend to do just that.

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