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### Doctoral students writing: where's the pedagogy?

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## Doctoral students writing: where's the pedagogy?

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Writing occupies a key role in doctoral research, because it is the principal channel students use to communicate their ideas, and the basis on which their degree is awarded. Doctoral writing can, therefore, be a source of considerable anxiety. Most doctoral candidates require support and encouragement if they are to develop confidence as writers. Drawing on interviews with two international doctoral students at an Australian university, this paper examines the writing practices the students have encountered and discusses them in the light of recent research on doctoral writing pedagogy. Analysis of the students' experiences in terms of Wenger's 'communities of practice' framework suggests that this perspective fails to account adequately for the power relations that impact on the students' learning opportunities. Examining the students' experiences also highlights the importance of good pedagogy in supporting the development of scholarly writing in the doctorate.

**Keywords:** higher education; doctoral students; writing; pedagogy

### Introduction

Doctoral study is a unique and paradoxical mode of institutional learning. It typically includes formal and informal elements, proceeds through instruction and autonomous discovery, and can be intensely individual and quintessentially social. Nowhere are these paradoxes more apparent than in doctoral candidates' experience of writing. Despite the challenges scholarly writing entails, not all doctoral supervisors provide helpful instruction in how to write; some seem to assume their students are able to write appropriately – the myth of the 'always/already' independent researcher (Johnson, Lee, and Green 2000).

Writing within the doctorate therefore is a challenging high stakes activity which can be a source of considerable anxiety (Wellington 2010). Doctoral writers need to familiarise themselves with institutional and disciplinary writing conventions, develop an appropriate 'voice' and learn to adopt an authoritative stance in their writing. Most doctoral candidates therefore require assistance if they are to become competent and confident scholarly writers. But where should this help come from, and what form should it take? Recent research on doctoral writing pedagogy has identified a range of helpful practices, but it is unclear how widespread they are.

This paper was inspired by awareness of 'the paucity of information about the everyday practices in the life world of doctoral students' (Aitchison, Kamler, and Lee 2010, 2) and a desire to share insights gained from examining the writing experiences

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of two doctoral students. The paper begins by framing doctoral learning as participation in a community of practice (Wenger 1998), before reviewing recent research in doctoral writing pedagogy. It then outlines the study and discusses the participants' writing experiences in the light of the highlighted pedagogical practices and the community of practice (COP) framework. This analysis suggests that the writing opportunities students experience are powerfully shaped by the relationship between student and supervisor.

### **Doctoral writing as a site of learning**

Viewing doctoral learning as participation in a (scholarly) COP highlights the centrality of writing in scholarly activity, and focuses awareness on how, when and where writing is attended to in the doctorate. The COP perspective suggests that newcomers' writing expertise will develop as they observe experts writing and produce their own texts, supported by advice and feedback. Therefore doctoral students' access to such opportunities is critical. However, in addition to *practice*, writing expertise also depends on familiarity with the perspectives, discourse and resources of the COP. How are doctoral researchers encouraged to acquire this awareness? Finally, the COP perspective is based on the notion that learning fundamentally changes who a person is. If we accept that doctoral education is 'as much about identity formation as it is about knowledge production' (Green 2005, 153), how does doctoral writing contribute to the construction of scholarly identity?

Doctoral writing entails significant challenges since writing is 'not just a mopping-up activity at the end of a research project' (Richardson 1998, 345), but the means by which doctoral students' claims to scholarly identity are tested. Effective scholarly writing depends on familiarity with the discipline's characteristic discourse, debates and assumptions about knowledge (Lea and Street 1998) – the 'tacit knowledge' which Elton (2010) argues needs to be discussed explicitly by expert writers and their students. However, in addition to acknowledging the rhetorical demands of their discipline, scholarly writers are expected to develop their own 'voice' (Belcher and Hirvela 2001) and infuse their writing with a sense of personal identity (Ivanic 1998). This may be even more challenging for researchers (like those in this study) who are writing in a second language. Shen, a Chinese scholar of English literature, writes of the identity transformation he experienced when he began writing in English at university:

In order to write good English, I knew that I had to be myself, which actually meant not to be my Chinese self. It meant that I had to create an English self and be *that* self. (Shen 1998, 126)

Furthermore, there is the challenge implicit in the convention that authors of academic papers adopt an authoritative stance in their writing – a position likely to feel 'anything but natural for a graduate student' (Li 2008, 48). On the contrary, doctoral writers are likely to consider themselves relative newcomers to the field and therefore to be troubled by this 'novice-as-expert' stance (Sommers and Saltz 2004, 133).

In struggling with these challenges, some doctoral writers may choose to 'mimic the language and behaviours they consider appropriate for the understanding with

which they are struggling' (Kiley 2009, 296). This mimicry strategy and the challenges discussed above suggest that novice researchers require a guide who can help demystify the writing process and provide opportunities to discuss and experience different ways of writing.

### **Pedagogical practices to support doctoral writing**

A survey of recent research into writing-related pedagogies for doctoral students identified several practices likely to address the challenges outlined above. Most involve a combination of discussion and experience since 'language by itself is inadequate to make tacit knowledge explicit' (Elton 2010, 158). In a study of 45 doctoral students, Caffarella and Barnett (2000) found that critiquing their peers' writing, and receiving feedback from professors and peers on successive drafts helped the students understand the process and produce better texts. Other researchers who highlight the benefits of doctoral students giving and receiving feedback on writing include Haksever and Manisali (2000), Simpson and Matsuda (2008) and Thein and Beach (2010). Critiquing writing in group settings has also been shown to benefit doctoral writers:

peer interaction in writing groups is doubly powerful because peers test and extend their conceptual knowledge as well as their capacity to communicate this knowledge through writing. (Aitchison 2010, 87)

Other research focuses on the supervisor's contribution as an expert writer. In discussing his mentoring of doctoral students, Matsuda identifies four roles:

(1) creating opportunities for attenuated authentic participation; (2) providing resources and support to help my collaborators succeed; (3) providing examples by sharing what I have done or by inviting mentees to observe what I do; and (4) introducing my mentees to the social network of professionals in the field. (Simpson and Matsuda 2008, 93)

Matsuda cites three apprentice-like writing practices as examples of the first role: copyediting proofs, transcribing a scholarly conversation and collaborating in a research project. Both the relationship and practices evoked by Matsuda fit comfortably into the COP framework where 'old-timers' support newcomers as they engage in the community's practices.

Research has also highlighted the benefits of collaboration between expert and less experienced writers. Thein and Beach (2010, 122) discuss the benefits of 'mutual engagement in collaborative research', 'co-authored research', 'reciprocal review and evaluation' and 'networking' which their writing collaborations as doctoral student and supervisor resulted in. The feedback which Beach (the supervisor) provided on Thein's writing 'modelled strategies for self-assessing her independent publishing' (2010, 124), reflecting the supervisor's goal of gradually transferring responsibility for revision to the student. But it is the *reciprocal* aspect of their collaborative review process which is most unusual, illustrated by instances of Thein giving feedback on her supervisor's writing in the context of a co-authored publication. Other researchers too (Kamler and Thomson 2006; Simpson and Matsuda 2008) have identified networking as an important supervisor strategy. Thein and Beach argue that by interacting with more experienced researchers, doctoral students can enhance their ability to engage

with an audience, understand the role of argument and acquire confidence in their scholarly voice.

However, scholarly writing expertise involves more than just observation, practice and interaction. Paré (2010) identifies three additional strategies for helping doctoral students develop confidence and authority as writers. The first is by providing them with opportunities to experience the ‘heuristic power of writing (and speaking)’ (31). The second involves studying the discourse of the discipline in which the student’s work is located (see also Duff 2007). Thirdly, Paré argues that doctoral students need to actually participate in their discipline’s ‘conversations’ (2010, 31). To take part in disciplinary exchanges (for example, by participating in conferences and writing academic articles), doctoral students need to understand the ‘epistemology, background knowledge [and] hidden agendas’ (Tardy 2005, 327) of their discipline, but Paré cautions that:

Neither genuine rhetorical contributions nor explicit attention to rhetorical practices are common experiences for doctoral students, as the literature indicates . . . (Paré 2010, 32)

Kamler and Thomson (2006) discuss several other helpful strategies for supporting doctoral writers. These include representing sections of text graphically (sometimes called ‘conceptual mapping’; see also Lee and Kamler 2008), joint texting, reading text as a writer, syntactic borrowing, encouraging the development of reflexivity and modeling strategies for locating the writer’s work within the discipline (see also Paltridge and Starfield 2007).

This survey is not exhaustive; rather it has identified several practices highlighted in recent research on doctoral writing pedagogy that are believed to support scholarly writing development. These practices provide the backdrop against which the study participants’ writing experiences will be viewed.

### **Study context and participants**

The students whose writing experiences are discussed here – Mary and Journey<sup>1</sup> – are participants in an ongoing narrative study of the lived experiences of six international doctoral students enrolled at an Australian university. Mary and Journey were selected as case subjects because at the time of writing they had had the most extensive experiences with writing. The study’s research questions were:

- (1) What writing experiences have the participants encountered since enrolling?
- (2) What roles do they and others adopt in these writing experiences?
- (3) What writing challenges do the participants identify?
- (4) How do these experiences impact on their confidence as writers and researchers?

Data for the study consisted of three semi-structured interviews with each participant (each lasting approximately 1 hour) conducted over a seven month period, and two email messages sent by each in response to requests for clarification of points made during interviews. Interviews, which were audio-recorded and later transcribed, began in the second half of 2009 and are ongoing. Data collection and analysis were carried out simultaneously in a dynamic, recursive process (Merriam 1998) with

writing emerging as an important site of learning. Thematic narrative analysis (Riessman 2008) of each participant's interviews involved repeatedly reading the transcripts to identify all writing-related practices and related expressions of attitude or belief. The aim was to produce case-centred accounts (Riessman 2008) of Mary's and Journey's respective experiences of writing in the doctorate.

Mary and Journey are full-time doctoral students enrolled in a large metropolitan Australian university where 37% of doctoral students are classified as international (Blinded Institution Higher Degree Research Office 2010). Mary, who is studying Computer Science, was a PhD student in China for three years before enrolling as a doctoral student in Australia in April 2008. Journey, who is studying Business, is a mid-career academic at a university in Indonesia where he has worked since graduating in 1995. In 2001 he completed an MSc in the Netherlands and in March 2008 he enrolled as a PhD student in Australia. At Mary and Journey's university, students can complete the PhD either by submitting a conventional thesis (Mary) or a thesis by publication (Journey). A thesis by publication includes relevant papers published, accepted or submitted for publication during the period of candidature accompanied by a comprehensive and critical introduction and an integrative conclusion. (Blinded Institution 2010). Table 1 provides additional background on the participants.

Table 1. Participant details.

Name	Gender	Country of origin	Subject	Thesis type
Mary	Female	People's Republic of China	Computer science	Conventional thesis
Journey	Male	Indonesia	Business	Thesis by publication

### What writing experiences do the students encounter?

This section presents an overview of the writing practices Mary and Journey encounter, the roles they adopt, the challenges they identify and the way writing impacts on their confidence as researchers. The numbers which appear after the participants' names in quoted extracts indicate in which interview the exchange occurred. The letter [R] precedes questions from the researcher.

#### *Mary's experiences of doctoral writing*

Mary claims to have acquired most of her knowledge about writing in English from reading journal articles. In China, she published three papers in English, relying on the feedback of senior students in her research laboratory. Since enrolling in Australia, Mary has co-authored three academic papers with members of her supervisory team. While she is confident of her ability to write a logically argued academic paper, she is aware of weaknesses in her academic English skills. When drafting an article, Mary first discusses her ideas with her supervisor's post-doctoral student (in Chinese). She then runs a computer simulation and looks at the data. Once she has some results, Mary discusses these with her (principal) supervisor (in Chinese) before starting to draft a full paper. Once she has a complete draft, Mary sends her paper to her supervisor for feedback:

Basically . . . I done all the writing first, then my supervisor change it, edit. [Mary 2, lines 98–99]

Subsequently Mary and her supervisor work collaboratively on revising the paper. When a deadline is approaching, Mary works intensively with her supervisor, either receiving handwritten feedback on her drafts, or letting her supervisor revise it electronically (email message from Mary, 10 March 2010). Once her supervisor is satisfied with the draft, Mary sends it to her adjunct supervisor for comment. Her adjunct supervisor (who lives in another city) provided handwritten comments on Mary's first paper, but more recently has preferred to use Skype to discuss Mary's drafts.

In addition to finding it challenging to express some of her ideas clearly in English, Mary finds it particularly difficult to write the introduction to her articles:

But to me it's all about the first paragraph because you have to use a few sentences to ah picture the whole area and ah in my supervisor's view, you can't use plain language because you should use some fancy words (laughs) and – [Mary 3, lines 186ff].

This difficulty is usually resolved by Mary's supervisor writing the first few sentences of each of her papers, since 'she will never satisfied with my written of the big picture' [Mary 2, lines 741ff].

However, Mary reports feeling anxious about depending so heavily on her supervisor. One day she asked her supervisor how she could become more independent as a writer:

. . . she said that 'You have problem with your writing. . . ' and I said 'Yes, yes, I just wondered what if I graduated without you? What should I do . . . ?' She told me . . . after this paper I will write some journal papers so during that stage she said writing a journal paper will help me a lot. Though I don't know what it will help me but I hope so (laughs) [Mary 2, lines 133ff].

Mary's comments throughout the interviews suggest that she has little understanding of how writing competence is acquired. Unfortunately, her supervisor's explanation does little to demystify the process.

Mary is reluctant to seek feedback on her writing from anyone outside her supervisory team. When, during an interview, she asked for advice on how to improve her writing and the strategy of peer review was mentioned, Mary raised a series of objections. She believes that other students do not have time to read her drafts and that, if they lack expertise in her area, their feedback would not be helpful. She also reported that there was no culture of peer review in her department.

In summary, Mary views her principal difficulties in writing as lexical and grammatical. She receives significant conceptual and writing support from her supervisory team but still lacks confidence in her writing ability.

### ***Journey's experiences of doctoral writing***

Journey produced course papers and a thesis in English for his MSc in the Netherlands. However in doing so, he explains that he tended to follow his first language (L1) (Bahasa Indonesia) writing practices and feels that his writing was

probably not ‘what is known as internationally standard...academic writing’ [Journey 3, lines 187ff]. (In saying this, Journey seems to equate internationally standard academic writing with an *English* international standard, reflecting the dominance of English in academic exchange.) He believes that culture affects his tendency to express ideas indirectly when he writes:

I think it’s also probably it’s culturally bound ... So sometimes if you...ask an Indonesian and probably...not go straight to the point but yeah we give you flanking answer to the question [Journey 3, lines 229ff].

Journey also describes differences in the way that English writers and writers of Bahasa organise their texts. Whereas he considers that English writers state their main idea first and then follow it with supporting arguments, in Bahasa he reports that there is no strict rule about where the main idea should be located [Journey 3, lines 209ff].

Journey faces several challenges when writing in English. He claims to have difficulty organising his ideas and says that to produce writing that is ‘concise, clear but sharp, that’s a struggle’ [Journey 2, lines 741ff]. He also comments that it is difficult for him to express ideas using complex language and that he often needs help reformulating his ideas in the way a native speaker of English would express them. On several occasions, Journey has sought assistance from his faculty’s writing specialist with editing his drafts.

Journey also reveals awareness of some of the rhetorical choices available to him when writing academic English:

I’m a kind of person that sometimes just say what I want to say, not consider what is the rule of the game here in this field of study, so for instance it is probably not well accepted using yeah ‘I’ or ‘us’, ‘we’ – in the way we write.

R In some disciplines it’s *encouraged* now ...

In some disciplines. That’s, yeah, so that’s also make me confused. Can we, it’s probably for me not important, the most important thing is probably when we write probably the content, how robust our argument is – [Journey 3, lines 300ff].

Later in the same interview, Journey comments that he would like to experiment with a different way of reporting his research, trying to develop a more ‘story-like’ approach, but he feels that this is problematic:

but yeah that’s a problem of I think first the tradition in certain fields, and second...also with myself, what the narrative writing actually is and how do I formulate my papers into a ... narrative writing style... I am still yeah struggling with this and finding ways to represent myself into that kind of writing [Journey 3, lines 1035ff].

In addition to using personal writing (in L1 and L2) to clarify his ideas (experiencing what Paré (2010) calls the ‘heuristic power of writing’), Journey has produced three conference papers since enrolling, two of which he subsequently revised as journal articles in collaboration with his supervisor. He enjoys a collegial relationship with his principal supervisor whom he finds supportive and approachable. Journey



identified four of his supervisor's practices as particularly helpful for his writing: first, posing questions about parts of the text which need clarification or greater support; second, highlighting points to discuss at their next meeting; third, reformulating sections of Journey's text; and finally, suggesting the use of graphs or tables to communicate particular ideas [Journey 3, lines 653ff].

In an email message Journey described the collaborative process he and his supervisor engage in when co-authoring a paper:

... when he adds his parts into the draft I submitted to him, he will ask my opinion on that ... I respect his way of letting me be in a strong position to decide what would be best for the papers ... He also changed the formulation I made on another part of the paper. And, he asked me whether I am happy with what he added and whether the change doesn't take away the main message I want to deliver [Journey, email message, 25 February 2010].

Journey has also had the experience of engaging with reviewers' feedback and having a journal article rejected. In the latter case, he reported that the feedback was 'tough, critical but it's very helpful' [Journey 3, lines 535ff] and explained cheerfully that in the meantime another avenue of publication for the article had opened up.

Journey is aware of cultural differences in rhetorical organisation and genre, disciplinary conventions and of his rhetorical choices as a writer. He is also open to the idea of experimentation in writing. However it is not clear to what extent he discusses these issues with his supervisor. Journey has twice initiated contact with international experts in his field to seek feedback on his draft papers, reporting that their positive responses boosted his confidence and reassured him of the relevance of his work [Journey 2, lines 666ff].

### How do the students' writing experiences measure up?

In this section, Mary's and Journey's doctoral writing experiences are discussed in the light of the pedagogical practices reviewed earlier. The first column of Table 2

Table 2. Recommended writing practices identified in participants' accounts.

Writing practices	Mary	Journey
Expert critique of own writing	Yes	Yes
Review of others' writing	No	Limited
Co-authorship	Yes	Yes
Attention to disciplinary discourse	Yes*	Yes*
Participation in disciplinary conversations	Limited	Yes
Experience of 'heuristic power of writing'	No	Yes
Supported networking	No	No*
Fostering reflexivity	No	No
Modelling – locating own work within the discipline	No	No
Reading text as a writer	No	No
Conceptual mapping	No	Yes
Joint texting	Yes	Yes
Syntactic borrowing	Yes	No

Note: An asterisk denotes a practice initiated by the student, not the supervisor.

lists the practices highlighted in the review of doctoral writing pedagogy and the second two indicate which practices were talked about by the participants during interviews. However, several important points need to be made about this table. Firstly, it simply indicates whether each writing practice was *mentioned* by Mary and Journey (in their own words). Talking about writing is difficult; Mary and Journey may therefore have encountered additional practices that they were unable to 'name'. Secondly, Table 2 gives no indication of the *frequency* with which the participants encountered each practice. Thirdly, practices highlighted with an asterisk (\*) were initiated by the participants, not by members of their supervisory teams. For example, while both Journey and Mary reported spending time studying the structure and style of journal articles in their fields, neither mentioned discussing 'disciplinary discourse' with their supervisors.

### *Discussion of Mary's writing experiences*

Mary seems to have encountered a narrower range of writing experiences than Journey, and only a limited number of those highlighted in the review of doctoral writing pedagogy. While she no doubt benefits from co-authoring papers with her supervisors, she has little opportunity to observe more expert writers at work and no chance to critique others' writing. Furthermore, Mary's principal supervisor seems to adopt a deficit view of her abilities, telling her 'you have problem with your writing' and appearing 'never satisfied' with Mary's article introductions. The 'joint texting' (Kamler and Thomson 2006) technique which Mary's supervisor adopts 'if time is [not] tight' [Mary, email message, 10 March 2010] has the potential to contribute to Mary's writing expertise by making 'the process of knowledge production 'hands on' (2006, 53). But when Mary's supervisor edits her drafts in her absence, she is denied an important learning opportunity and her ownership of the text is threatened. This, combined with Mary's resistance to seeking feedback outside her supervisory team, indicates that her opportunities for participation in the wider COP are limited.

A more disturbing feature of Mary's experience is the absence of opportunities to experience the heuristic power of writing and speaking (Paré 2010). Mary rejects the strategy of using writing to clarify her thinking, explaining that supervision sessions are her chance to explore ideas. Indeed, Duff argues that a great deal of 'high-stakes academic discourse socialisation takes place orally' (2007, 1.8). However, given that Mary's supervision sessions take place in Chinese, her opportunities to practise the kind of academic discourse in which she needs to gain expertise are limited. When asked how she feels about this Mary explains:

Yeah of course it's negative because you don't have time to, don't have opportunity, much opportunity to practise your English. But you can't ask for your supervisor to change her way (laughs) [Mary 3, lines 960ff].

Lillis (2001) recommends that supervisors create opportunities for dialogue to enable 'talk as apprenticeship' (158) within which students can engage with new forms of literacy. Denied access to such opportunities, it is not clear how smoothly Mary's ability to communicate effectively in academic English is likely to develop. This

example also illustrates the invisible tensions in doctoral learning which make it difficult for students to challenge their supervisors' suggestions or practices.

Finally, Mary seems to have encountered some unhelpful attitudes to writing in interactions with her supervisor. During one interview, Mary explained that she wanted to improve her writing but was reluctant to ask her supervisor for this kind of help:

I think in my supervisor's point of view . . . writing papers is the first priority, to write conference papers and journal papers, so I think that if I ask her [for help with writing] she will . . . agree . . . but . . . I don't think she's happy with that I'm spending time particularly on writing, but not on writing . . . papers [Mary, 3, lines 460ff].

The message Mary seems to have understood from her supervisor is that it is important to produce papers, but not to spend time learning how to write better papers. While the logic may be difficult to follow, Mary's unwillingness to challenge her supervisor's position is understandable.

### *Discussion of Journey's writing experiences*

Journey's doctoral writing experiences have been both more varied and productive than Mary's. The reciprocal reviewing process he describes in co-authoring papers with his supervisor reinforces his sense of authority as first author, and expands the range of linguistic and rhetorical options available to him. However, he has no experience of peer review, probably because of the small number of students in his department engaged in related research. Interestingly, while Aitchison (2010) highlights the benefits of doctoral students' giving and receiving critical feedback, in an email message to the author on 4 January 2010 she reported that international students are underrepresented in the student writing groups she has organised.

Journey has had more opportunities to participate in disciplinary conversations than Mary, having presented his ideas at several conferences, submitted papers to international journals, received reviewers' reports on submitted articles, and networked with international colleagues regarding his work. It is difficult to determine the extent to which Journey's exposure to a richer range of opportunities is because of his greater maturity and professional experience. However, what is clear is that all doctoral students can benefit from guidance with writing:

a doctoral pedagogy devoted to helping students move from apprenticeship to professional participation requires teachers with a deep understanding of the rhetorical practices of their disciplines . . . who are also able to induct students into their discipline's discourse practices. (Paré 2010, 36)

A key attribute of doctoral supervisors therefore is their ability to talk about the rhetorical practices that students are expected to master. It is unclear from the interview data to what extent Journey has had the chance to discuss such topics, but his comments about wanting to experiment with other writing genres suggest that he would value this kind of debate.

## Conclusion

Consideration of Journey's and Mary's writing experiences suggests that both could benefit if more attention were paid to *writing as a practice*, for example by encouraging Journey to explore different written genres within his discipline, and engaging with Mary's questions about how to enhance her writing skills. Both would likely also benefit from opportunities to critique other students' writing; participating in a student writing group would provide Mary with a valuable opportunity to discuss her ideas in English, rather than doing so only in the high stakes context of papers for publication.

Examining Mary's and Journey's writing experiences has also revealed that by focusing on the practices in which they engage, the all-important power relations which shape those practices might be neglected. Critically, the circumstances in which writing practices are embedded and the power relations enacted as student and supervisor engage in those practices must also be investigated. Journey's account of his experiences evokes a productive and respectful collaborative relationship with his supervisor. However, Mary's writing opportunities are constrained by her supervisor's preference for interacting in Chinese, her tendency to edit Mary's writing rather than revise collaboratively, and her failure to discuss how Mary might enhance her writing skills. Given the asymmetrical power relations involved, Mary's reluctance to challenge her supervisor is understandable, but the negative impact on her research confidence is clear.

The analysis therefore suggests that when applied to doctoral education, Wenger's COP framework may offer an overly benign view of relations between participants (see also Lea 2005). It cannot be assumed that expert community members will prioritise the induction of newcomers, or that they will generously (and skilfully) impart their understandings of the discipline. Consequently, newcomers cannot be expected to always progress smoothly from marginal participation to full membership of the disciplinary community. Instead, newcomers' learning trajectories will be powerfully shaped by the opportunities and resources they are provided with. Where opportunities for participation are restricted because of decisions made by expert COP members, and where challenging those decisions is risky, learning is impacted.

The study's inescapable conclusion is that supervisors need to embrace their pedagogical role in inducting students into their discipline's writing practices. Although it is true that 'not all so-called experts are good socialising agents' (Duff 2007, 1.6), universities should encourage doctoral supervisors to take up opportunities to develop their pedagogical repertoire. Ultimately, however, while this study has identified limitations in the writing pedagogy encountered by the students, pedagogy is not the only dimension demanding attention in doctoral education – 'technical virtuosity on its own cannot serve students' (Fitzmaurice 2010, 53). As this paper has demonstrated, effective doctoral learning depends as much on the quality of the relationship between supervisor and student as on the practices in which they engage.

## Note

1. The pseudonyms were selected by the participants.

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