Article

# Doctoral Student Reading and Writing: Making Our Processes Visible

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## Abstract

Reading and writing are core components of what it means to be a doctoral student. Although reading and writing are known to be discursive, socialized practices, doctoral programs often focus on the output of these practices and position reading and writing as generic, universal skills. Through collaborative self-study, we sought to examine our reading and writing processes to see what we could learn as doctoral students by making these processes visible. From our analysis, we discovered that understanding our reading and writing processes enabled us to use effective reading and writing strategies; revealed the benefits of blurring personal-professional boundaries; and contributed to shaping our identities as emerging scholars. We conclude that supporting doctoral students to examine their personalized reading and writing processes, as opposed to solely focusing on output, can support them to look inward, locate meaning within themselves, and recognize the multiplicity in what it means to read and write at the doctoral level.

## Introduction

Reading and writing are core components of what it means to be a doctoral student. Writing is closely tied to doctoral students' engagement (Badenhorst & Amell, 2019), identity development, and sense of belonging (Mantai, 2019). Reading, particularly reading research, has likewise been shown to contribute to doctoral students' values and program success (Burgess et al., 2012). Although reading and writing are known to be discursive, socialized practices (Baker et al., 2019), students are often introduced to doctoral-level reading and writing through a universal, product-orientated lens, one focused on absorbing content and producing publications. Indeed, reading and writing *processes*

become invisible, taken-for-granted activities within the sphere of academia (Starke-Meyerring et al., 2014). For doctoral students, this invisibility becomes problematic as it can disrupt students' perception of self (Aitchison & Mowbray, 2013; Badenhorst, 2018), decreasing their confidence (Huerta et al., 2017) and increasing their feelings of isolation (Kozar & Lum, 2013; Leijen et al., 2016). Under these circumstances, students can fall prey to the belief that they are deficient, and perceived deficiency can not only hinder progress (Déri et al., 2021), but also compromise students' willingness to engage and experiment with their reading and writing processes. As emerging scholars, this had been our experience.

Early in our doctoral program, we encountered profound moments of frustration, doubt, and anxiety as we struggled to fit within this academic sphere. Chantelle felt pressured to create polished, performative pieces of writing that left her feeling depleted and disconnected from her sense of self; and Melanie worried the temporal realities of her home life would never allow for the expansive and intensive reading on which doctoral studies rely. Writing can be emotionally fraught (Aitchison & Mowbray, 2013), as can the laborious demands of academic reading (Wohl & Fine, 2017b). Grappling with these emotions led us to recognize the dissonance between our reading and writing experiences and the product-oriented environment of our doctoral program. We thus asked ourselves, what can we learn as doctoral students by making our reading and writing processes visible?

In this paper, we examine Melanie's reading processes and Chantelle's writing processes in order to uncover the potential of process-oriented practices for doctoral students. Through collaborative self-study (Hamilton & Pinnegar, 2013), we discovered that understanding our processes enabled us to use more effective reading and writing strategies, revealed the benefits of encouraging our personal-professional boundaries to blur, and shaped how we view ourselves as emerging scholars. The purpose of this paper is to thus demonstrate how doctoral students can cultivate intentionality, awareness, and confidence when supported to understand their reading and writing processes as generative and worthwhile.

## The Landscape of Doctoral Writing

Doctoral education is a "high-stakes enterprise" (Burford, 2017, p. 19), and writing and publishing are core activities for doctoral students (McAlpine, 2012). Indeed, doctoral students are expected to deliver high-impact publications, access research funds, and fight for recognition in an increasingly competitive job market (Badenhorst, 2018). However, writing instruction in doctoral programs has often been understood as an "add-on" feature of product-driven pedagogies, located outside of

disciplinary knowledge and facilitated through ad-hoc workshops and interdisciplinary learning centres (Starke-Meyerring et al., 2014, p. 23). This occurs, in part, due to institutional assumptions that writing is a universal skill students master prior to beginning doctoral studies (Burford, 2017; Starke-Meyerring, 2011; Starke-Meyerring et al., 2014). Although there is a growing literature on doctoral writing pedagogies (Aitchison & Lee, 2006; Kamler & Thomson, 2006), many institutional efforts to address doctoral student writing remain product-oriented (Burford, 2017), leaving process as something doctoral students are expected to figure out on their own (Jensen, 2017).

Product-oriented practices can act as a useful how-to guide designed to enhance productivity (Burford et al., 2021; Burford, 2017), and students and supervisors alike increasingly focus on productivity within current conceptualizations of doctoral studies as "utilitarian and economistic" (Lee et al., 2009, p. 276). Given the rigor and competitive demands of doctoral programs, we recognize that a product-oriented approach may thus be appealing — after all, students *do* need to write and sometimes publish to complete their degree and access the economic success to which they are thought to contribute (Burford, 2017). Unfortunately, according to Burford (2017), the doctorate can become framed as a "countable output" (p. 21) in which the writing product (publications) is given greater priority over the writing process (knowledge-making) (Aitchison & Mowbray, 2015; Badenhorst, 2010; Turner & Turner, 2016). Output, for emerging scholars, becomes understood as an effective tool to measure worth and academic potential (Jensen, 2017). However, an overemphasis on product becomes problematic and may prevent scholars from experimenting with elements of play and creativity that can be found with/in process. Additionally, Jensen (2017) asserts that product-oriented practices that place an emphasis on critical feedback and suggestions are not, in fact, what academics always need. Instead, she maintains that academics need a greater focus on process. For Paré (2009) process is both an individual and social practice that can be understood as what writers do when they write, why they write, and how others may influence or shape their writing. Given the interconnectedness of reading and writing (Graham, 2020), we infer that academics may benefit from greater attention to these socialized reading practices as well.

## The Case for Reading

A robust body of literature has developed on doctoral student writing (Aitchison & Lee, 2006; Badenhorst et al., 2015; Starke-Meyerring, 2011). However, despite the pivotal role reading plays in writing (McAlpine, 2012), studies on doctoral writing rarely address doctoral reading. We argue that these bodies of research must be brought together given the theoretical and empirical connections

of reading and writing (Graham, 2020). More specifically, reading and writing are mutually beneficial; students' reading and writing can be supported by one another and, when brought together, can improve students' learning (Graham, 2020). Like writing, reading plays an essential role in developing doctoral students' thinking and scholarly identity development (McAlpine, 2012), and students' reading practices further shape how doctoral students value research in their professional lives and whether they read research out of interest (Burgess et al., 2012).

Despite these implications, reading instruction is largely absent from doctoral education (Benge et al., 2010; Burgess et al., 2012). Even within doctoral writing pedagogy, the role of reading is often overlooked (van Pletzen, 2006), and there is a "general lack of supportive [reading] pedagogies" in doctoral programs (McAlpine, 2012, p. 351). Within the small body of research on doctoral student reading, much of what exists presents a limited or prescriptive view of reading. For example, studies investigate whether students complete assigned reading (McMinn et al., 2009; Onwuegbuzie, 2000; Onwuegbuzie, et al., 2001), and examine reading as it relates to producing a literature review (Kwan, 2008, 2009). Interestingly, Manarin et al. (2015) observe similar realities amongst the literature on undergraduate reading, stating that reading is primarily used as a means of "domestication, where students are trained to become institutionally viable in order to reproduce academic disciplines, often at the expense of their own sense of agency" (p. 65). In their review of the literature on academic reading, Baker et al. (2019) likewise note that few studies examine reading and its connection to student success, and even fewer conceptualize reading as a socially situated process. McAlpine's (2012) study on doctoral student reading is a unique outsider. From her longitudinal study on the experiences of 44 doctoral students, she found that students' reading plays a key role in their sense of agency and academic identity-trajectory. She and others (see Wohl & Fine, 2017a) call for greater attention to doctoral student reading purposes, practices, and strategies in light of the lack of pedagogic focus given to reading.

## Reading and Writing Invisibility

Why does reading and writing instruction continue to be excluded from doctoral education, relegated to remedial support programs or forgotten altogether? Graduate students are presumed to already be proficient readers, and thus, reading instruction is largely absent from doctoral education (Benge et al., 2010; Burgess et al., 2012). Likewise, writing is assumed to be a universal skill students learn prior to doctoral studies (Burford, 2017; Starke-Meyerring, 2011; Starke-Meyerring et al., 2014). Normalized assumptions that position reading and writing as universal skills — learned and

mastered once — leave doctoral students to learn in the dark (Starke-Meyerring, 2011), holding out hope that they will eventually stumble upon meaning in the texts they create and those with which they engage. When institutions assume that reading and writing are generic, they become invisible (Badenhorst & Guerin, 2016). If they are invisible, we do not need to explicitly include them; if they are generic, we do not need to focus on personal processes.

Pedagogy that prioritizes product over process can cultivate discomfort and disconnection (Aitchison & Lee, 2006; Starke-Meyerring, 2011). For emerging scholars, adhering to a prescribed and product-oriented practice can lead to anxiety (Badenhorst, 2018), avoidance (Benge et al., 2010; Boice & Jones, 1984; Martinez et al., 2011), and frustration (Kwan, 2009). These factors can negatively impact self-efficacy and identity development (Antoniou & Moriarty, 2008; Huerta et al., 2017). Despite this reality, doctoral reading and writing pedagogy continue to prioritize product (Badenhorst, 2018; Starke-Meyerring, 2011; Starke-Meyerring et al., 2014), which can disrupt students from engaging with their personal reading and writing processes (Badenhorst, 2010, 2018; Burford, 2017; Turner & Turner, 2016). Given the invisible nature of reading and writing practices, we see these processes as rich sites of possibility that can support doctoral students' scholarly growth. In this paper, we explore our reading and writing, uncovering what can be learned as doctoral students by making our processes visible.

## Methods of Inquiry

Our exploration was framed as a self-study, a genre of educational research that draws attention to contextual factors that inform ideals and theoretical perspectives (LaBoskey, 2004; Hamilton & Pinnegar, 2014). We chose self-study methodology for its flexibility in design and the critical reflection for which it allows (Foot et al., 2014). Foot et al. (2014) argue that doctoral students can benefit from self-study research as a means to "critically [reflect] on their doctoral experiences and identity development" (p. 104). Although the "self" in self-study suggests that this approach to research is an individual or solitary venture (LaBoskey, 2004), an experienced self-study researcher will assert that collaboration (Butler & Bullock, 2022; Guðjónsdóttir & Jónsdóttir, 2022) and dialogue are at the heart of this "coming-to-know process" (Hamilton & Pinnegar, 2013, p. 74).

However, our study design was not initially collaborative. We began individual self-study projects, with Melanie collecting data on her reading process and Chantelle collecting data on her writing process. Given the interconnected relationship between reading and writing, we sought out one another to discuss the literature and share feedback. What began as casual email exchanges

flourished into a peer critical friendship, where neither status nor power compromised the foundation on which we began building a trusting relationship (Stump & Gannon, 2022). As our individual projects developed, we became more than just sounding boards for one another. The back-and-forth exchange allowed us to meaningfully engage and nurture both a virtual and transactional space where our ideas could be remembered, repurposed, and renewed (Olan & Edge, 2019). As we began analyzing and discussing our data, we recognized the common ground of our findings and moved beyond a "helping relationship" (Kitchen, 2022, p. vi), noting that our work was stronger when combined.

The organization of the remainder of this paper reflects the evolution of our collaborative self-study relationship. Given that our exploration into our reading and writing processes began individually, the following sections first describe the methodological decision-making and findings of our independent work. Chantelle presents the methods and findings related to her writing process, followed by Melanie's presentation related to her reading processes. We then bring our experiences and findings together in the discussion in order to share the impacts of making our reading and writing processes visible. From these sections, it becomes clear how examining our reading and writing processes illuminated value in blurring our personal and professional boundaries, shaped our identity as emerging scholars, and supported us in developing effective reading and writing strategies.

## Chantelle's Writing Processes

As a doctoral student, I have experienced first-hand the pressure to perform and create polished projects within a rigid and product-focused curriculum (Aitchison & Mowbray, 2015). The struggle to produce original and high-impact creative text (Burford, 2017) while cautiously censoring the emotional and playful side of my writing process created discomfort. Interested in resisting the rigid structure of more conventional and product-oriented writing formats, I used a variety of methods to collect data on my own writing process over the course of 25 days. Each day, I recorded in my journal or in the notes section of my phone details surrounding when I was engaged in academic writing — course assignments and scholarship applications — and when I engaged in what St. Pierre (2018) refers to as "the *aside*" (p. 605) — creative, uncensored, playful writing. While my journal entries primarily took the form of free-writes, my data collection and analysis were iterative processes (Kekeya, 2016; Merriam, 1998) and shaped by both the literature and my prior entries. Broadly, the

four main themes I focused on during data collection were time, inspiration, feelings of anxiety and confidence, and procrastination.

Many academics struggle to find, let alone make, uninterrupted time to write (Grant & Knowles, 2000). Yoo (2019b) notes that as the professional life begins to spill into the personal, writers may conform to more conventional academic writing styles as a time-saving approach. Thus, interested in the dilemmas of time and how it may relate to my writing process, I recorded the time of day when I wrote creatively and when I wrote academically. Relatedly, I examined what inspired my writing, as the writing process itself is an emotional endeavour (Badenhorst, 2018). The context in which we write not only affects what we write but also how we write (Richardson, 1997). I thus analyzed each journal entry, paying careful attention to whether the roots of my inspiration stemmed from emotion, academic interest, external relationships, or whether these occurrences seemed random and spontaneous.

During iterative data analysis, I noticed that my feelings and emotions featured prominently in my journal entries, particularly in entries recorded following creative, poetic, or "unconventional" writing. Richardson (1997, 2001) argues that engaging in unconventional or experimental writing supports writers in discovering new insights about self and others; through this understanding, writers can gain a deeper appreciation of text, allowing themselves to become more consciously engaged with the material. Similarly, Huerta et al. (2017) maintain that writing spaces that provide emotional and creative support for graduate students increase students' academic writing confidence and notably reduce the effects of writing anxiety. Guided by Richardson (1997, 2001) and Huerta et al. (2017), I thus coded my entries on creative writing according to whether I reported feeling reduced anxiety, increased confidence with regards to writing academically, and/or deeper understanding of self.

Finally, given the prominence of time and my personal feelings in my data, I noticed that the anxiety I experienced while engaged in academic writing presented itself as procrastination. Thus, to better understand how my tendency to procrastinate impacted my writing process, I analyzed each journal entry and coded them according to procrastination style using a framework developed by Schubert Walker and Stewart (2000). They outline four styles of procrastination: the perfectionist, the politician, the postponer, and the punisher. The perfectionist is someone who has high achievement needs and fears never reaching the expectations of others. The politician refers to someone who seeks to please others, who tends to be easily swayed, or who struggles to prioritize their work. Postponers attempt to avoid discomfort and fear of boredom. And finally, the punisher

has a negative self-image and is hypersensitive to their own shortcomings. Punishers often believe they are inefficient or lazy. I applied this framework to my journal entries to better understand the impact of procrastination on my writing process, as described in the following section.

Findings

Regarding time of day, I learned that there were few notable differences between when I engaged in conventional academic writing and when I engaged in the aside. I wrote most often in the afternoon (12:00 p.m.–5:00 p.m.), and this finding did not differ between academic and creative writing. This finding complements what drives my inspiration to write. Prior to this study, I believed my expressive writing was unpredictable and that my playful and poetic side surfaced suddenly and at random. However, as I analyzed the data, I discovered that I was inspired to write playfully or creatively *while* I was engaged in academic work. In my journal, I described the creative and academic writer as "co-existing," moving seamlessly alongside one another. The second primary source of inspiration was emotion. I described my writing as "emotionally charged" to capture feelings of anxiety, self-doubt, sadness, anger, or happiness.

Using Schubert Walker and Stewarts's (2000) framework to analyze my procrastination habits, I learned I was both a perfectionist and a postponer. I coded these two styles 10 times each over the course of 25 days. While engaged in academic writing, I had the high achievement needs of a perfectionist. For example, entries in my journal centre around fear, namely that I would never measure up to the standards of writing required at the doctoral level. I am also someone who postpones — I coded my "no writing day" entries as postponement, as I realized that I was often avoiding my academic writing. While I was postponing my academic work, I often found that I would later engage in creative or expressive modes of writing such as poetry. This engagement created an opportunity for me to gain insight into what I was emotionally processing at that time, and what was at the root of my postponement. From the data collected at this time, I realized that there was an increase in my sense of self-discovery/self-awareness when I turned to these expressive modes of writing. Likewise, based on my journal entries, my confidence appeared to increase while engaged in expressive modes of writing, notably reducing my level of writing anxiety and enhancing my understanding of content.

These findings provide insight into my writing processes, specifically, why I write and what influences my writing (Paré, 2009). I learned that I am a writer whose confidence and academic work

is enhanced when I write expressively. These findings were validated, solidified, and further enhanced when Melanie and I began to discuss our shared insights.

## Melanie's Reading Processes

I examined my reading practices over two-weeks, including reading completed for one course (both what was assigned and what I pursued independently for course-related purposes), excluding reading done for pleasure or other professional or academic purposes. In order to best capture my typical reading load for this course, I was mindful to choose a time period that did not include any extended breaks and that was neither in the "ramping up" nor "winding down" phases of the semester.

I collected data on each of my reading sessions over fourteen days. For the purpose of this study, I considered a "session" as an extended period of reading focusing on one text. If I began reading a second text, I began a new session. Sometimes reading one text required multiple sessions. After each session, I completed a log on my phone using Google Forms. The log took the form of a questionnaire and included prompts on the date, what text I read, why I was reading it, strategies I used while reading, and the degree to which I was engaged in the reading process. The final question asked me to describe other thoughts, feelings, or reflections I had following each session.

Some prompts in the log, such as the date, were included for organizational purposes only, while others required greater forethought. Regarding engagement, for example, I delineated three levels of engagement: engaged (focused, interested, and making connections); somewhat engaged (intrigued, but somewhat off task); and not engaged (disinterested or bored). I was not aware of a framework that outlined reading purposes within my context, so instead, I completed a brief freewrite on why I thought I read most often within my doctoral program and created the questionnaire prompt based on key ideas produced during the freewrite. They were reading to understand content (in essence, to learn new material); reading to analyze or evaluate; and reading to understand how a text is constructed (to understand authors' moves, genre conventions, etc).

For reading strategies, I adapted a framework used by Haas and Flower (1988), which distinguishes between content reading strategies, function/feature reading strategies, and rhetorical reading strategies. These strategies have been shown to be used widely (Haas & Flower, 1988), so I felt confident my own reading strategies would fit within this model. However, I felt the categories did not sufficiently account for reading's connection to writing (Berthoff, 1982, 1983); therefore, I chose to add a fourth strategy — writerly reading strategies — which was inspired by Bunn (2011).

Findings

I collected data on 30 reading sessions over 14 days. During this time, I read to learn new material or content 23 times, to evaluate or analyze 20 times, and to understand how texts were constructed four times. In 53% of my reading sessions, I reported reading for more than one purpose. I reported using more than one reading strategy in 100% of my reading sessions. Rhetorical strategies were used 24 times, content strategies were used 23 times, function/feature strategies were used 21 times, and writerly strategies were used six times. I was engaged for 50% of my reading sessions, somewhat engaged for 30%, and not engaged for 20%.

The final question on my autobiographical log-questionnaire asked me to describe other thoughts and feelings I had following each reading session. I coded these responses using the iterative process described by Saldaña (2016), and two of the themes I identified were *reading in pieces* and *reading through life.* Under the first theme, I organized all codes related to my broken, iterative, and frequently interrupted reading practices. I mentioned "reread[ing]," "skim[ming]," and "interrupt[ions]" frequently, and other similar codes such as needing a "refresher" or needing to "go back." Across my 30 reading sessions, I coded 16 words or phrases under this descriptive category. Under *reading through life,* I broadly grouped the codes that referenced external features of my life. These included mentions of my children, my mother, my dog, the telephone, the baby monitor, illness, and time constraints. I coded eight words or phrases under this category, all pertaining to external factors that impacted my reading.

Combined, my data points toward reading practices that are frequently segmented and nonlinear. This finding was not surprising to me; I knew my reading practices were often fragmented. However, the larger meta-findings Chantelle and I were able to identify from our shared work helped me see the strength in otherwise scattered and solitary experiences.

## Discussion

Our exploration began independently as two Ph.D. students confronted by the product-oriented nature of doctoral programs seeking to investigate their reading and writing processes. As such, our individual findings are local in nature. Chantelle's examination of her writing processes provided insight into her motivations, habits, and anxieties. She learned that she is a writer who writes creatively to enhance her understanding of content and to support her in writing academically with more ease. Likewise, Melanie gained from her data an appreciation of the reading strategies she uses

and why she uses them. She learned to recognize and appreciate her adaptability as a reader, nimbly drawing on different reading strategies in order to engage with course readings within the constraints of her home life. When combined, these findings demonstrate the awareness and confidence doctoral students can cultivate when intentionally attending to their individualized reading and writing processes, rather than solely focusing on the output of those practices. Specifically, understanding our writing and reading processes has allowed us to more effectively employ writing and reading strategies; to embrace the frequently blurred boundaries of our professional and personal lives; and to develop our scholarly identities with greater confidence. It is these meta-findings — effective strategy use, blurring of professional and personal, and scholarly identity development — to which we turn in the remainder of the discussion.

## Effective Strategy Use

Odena and Burgess (2017) found that personal writing strategies relating to organization, time, and environment, among other factors, are necessary elements of success when it comes to doctoral student writing. Our data, while limited, corroborates this finding. By attending to her writing processes, Chantelle discovered that her writing anxiety was rooted in procrastination and that she procrastinates because she tends to both postpone tasks and perfect her work before moving on. For example, "I'll write after watching this show" or "just fifteen more minutes" were all statements she would use to delay discomfort, avoiding the incessant chatter of the perfectionist, convincing her that her writing was simply not good enough. Having completed this study, Chantelle recognized how her self-perception impacted her writing process as well as her needs relating to both periods of sustained work and productive breaks from writing.

For Chantelle, engaging in creative and expressive writing was found to support her academic writing. She was often inspired to write creatively while completing academic work or while emotionally charged. Emotions and writing are closely linked (Badenhorst, 2018); they are a normal part of writing and are not problems in need of managing (Burford, 2017). Chantelle was able to use creative writing to address and include her emotions as part of her writing process. As such, it has become an effective strategy that directly influences and supports her academic writing in at least two ways. By including the emotional element of writing, Chantelle was able to confront a potential roadblock to writing that, if left unaddressed, could inflame her writing anxiety (Badenhorst, 2018). Secondly, she was able to use activities such as creative writing, or even more menial tasks, as productive writing breaks in order to incubate and further refine ideas (Odena & Burgess, 2017).

Although doctoral student reading strategies are under-researched compared to their writing counterpart, Benge et al. (2010) argue that doctoral students would likely benefit from instruction on specific reading strategies. In studying her own strategy use, Melanie learned that she employs reading strategies in a varied, dynamic, and complementary manner appropriate for an experienced reader (Hass & Flower, 1988). Additionally, she realized that she implements specific reading strategies to account for the interruptions she often faces in her reading practices. Throughout her 30 reading sessions, she used function/feature reading strategies 21 times, which most often included identifying and labeling main arguments, definitions, examples, counter arguments, and other elements of a text. Reading to identify these elements is effective during her recursive processes of scanning, skimming, and rereading, as supported by the following entry:

> I also make short notes on structural elements so I know where to find things later (ex, ai, R questions, "road map," etc.). Lately I'm finding my reading to be broken up a lot – I get a few paragraphs in, have to stop, not always sure when I'll get the chance to pick it up again. The signals to structural elements have become important to me. (Melanie's journal, October 11, 2022)

The practices of skimming or reading only fragments of a text are not inferior to other reading practices that may seem more focused or in-depth. Both are necessary and serve vital functions in academic reading (Wohl & Fine, 2017a; Wohl & Fine, 2017b). Indeed, it is by skimming and scanning that Melanie is able to employ function/feature strategies most effectively and thus able to read efficiently in the face of life's interruptions and distractions. Wohl and Fine (2017b) acknowledge that there are countless external factors to which doctoral students must adapt in order to achieve their reading goals. Our data suggests that Melanie has adapted in the way they call for, that while her reading is often segmented, she uses appropriate, effective reading strategies to remain engaged and purposeful. It is important to recognize that our strategies are not universally effective. Although it is often assumed successful academic reading and writing are generic (Badenhorst & Guerin, 2016), Melanie's and Chantelle's strategies are personalized to their unique identities, habits, and constraints. Recognizing and reflecting on these contexts allows the authors to select and develop more effective, more personal strategies to succeed in doctoral level reading and writing. In fact, it was the personal — personal writing strategies and personal reading strategies — that allowed us to experiment and embrace the frequently blurred lines between the personal and professional.

Blurring of Professional and Personal

Antoniou and Moriarty (2008) argued that the personal and professional domains of experience are not separate, as all aspects of self — the physical, emotional, spiritual, and intellectual — become entangled through writing. Given reading's connection to writing and their combined role in the professional socialization of doctoral students (McAlpine, 2012), we extend Antoniou and Moriarty's (2008) argument to include reading in this entanglement. Indeed, our data revealed that although we were often reading and writing for academic purposes, personal practices continually bled into our work in ways dominant academic discourse rarely makes space for or acknowledges (Yoo, 2019b).

For example, during data collection, Chantelle wrote most often in the afternoon (12:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.), both academically and creatively. She discovered that there was no split between these two writing styles, that the personal and professional co-existed. Like St. Pierre (2018), "the *aside* happened" (p. 604), it became an expansive field of play that enabled Chantelle to operate free from the critical and "all-seeing eye" of academic writing pressures (Badenhorst & Guerin, 2016, p. 14) that drive conformity. The blurring of the personal and professional, that is, writing emotionally and creatively supported Chantelle in reclaiming her sense of self, providing her with the confidence to write academically, as supported by the following entry:

> As I began to free-write, I found myself becoming consumed by the process. My thoughts burst onto the page freely and without apology. Within ten minutes, I wrote almost 1,700 words. In those ten minutes of free-writing, the first sentence of my academic paper suddenly emerged, making itself visible within my uncensored rambling. Within the *aside*, where I expressed myself on a more personal level, supported me in gaining the confidence to (re)claim my academic voice. (Chantelle's Journal, December 11, 2022)

Exercises such as freewriting, according to Elbow (1998), are not "just therapeutic garbage" (p. 8). Freewriting, he argues, supports writers to meaningfully engage with their writing process and can lead to more organized and coherent writing. For Chantelle, writing creatively through freewriting exercises allowed her to revise, rewrite, and playfully experiment with language, enhancing her understanding of content and supporting her to see another side, a more personal side, to her writing process.

For Melanie, this blurriness presents most strongly in two of the themes she identified in her qualitative data: *reading in pieces* and *reading through life.* The first theme grouped all references to skimming or rereading parts of texts, being interrupted or multitasking, and needing a "refresher."

Under the second theme, Melanie grouped all the external factors that impacted her reading, primarily the presence of two young children in her home. Melanie reports regularly attempting to complete school work while her toddler is occupied or while her infant son sleeps, but these moments are usually brief.

Collins (1998) asserts that many mothers experience fluidity between their professional and personal lives. However, that fluidity can be more difficult to navigate in an academic context such as a doctoral program (Castle & Woloshyn, 2003) and is perhaps better understood as a blurriness–still melding, but with greater unease. When imagining a successful doctoral student engaged in academic reading, one may not be likely to picture a frazzled mother of two who "honestly skimmed some parts [of her assigned reading] (once [she] picked ot the [important] pieces) due to time crunch ( short nap)" [sic] or who "had to stop [reading] only a few pages in" despite considering the article "highly relevant" [sic]. Yet for these two responses, Melanie reported being engaged in her reading process. Indeed, she reported being at least somewhat engaged for 80% (24 out of 30) of her reading sessions. On the surface, this percentage may seem to contradict the reports of skimming, rereading, and being interrupted prevalent in Melanie's written responses. However, we believe it demonstrates that although Melanie is unable to read for long periods of time, she is deeply engaged during the majority of her reading sessions. Her reading processes may be segmented, interrupted, and ultimately recursive—blurring into her personal life—yet she is able to be engaged in these small bursts.

Conditioned to separate the personal and professional (Bochner, 1997), doctoral students exert immense effort attempting to shield the more intimate and textured pieces of themselves within academic learning spaces. According to Murray (2006), this practice has been learned; as part of academic socialization, students are encouraged to draw lines of division and keep them straight, narrowed, and focused (Bochner, 1997). The creative, that is, the expressive, playful, or imaginative, becomes understood as separate or entirely different from objective, impersonal, and rational academic writing (Antoniou & Moriarty, 2008). However, according to Antoniou and Moriarty (2008), the split between the academic and the creative or process-oriented scholar is erroneous, a false divide that becomes reinforced by "epistemological position[ing as opposed] to any real difference" (p. 159). Recognizing this false binary, Yoo (2019b) argues for seeking out and embracing "personally meaningful" (p. 354) practices that instead breathe life into academic work rather than oppress it.

Like Yoo (2019b), Chantelle's personal, creative writing does not fit that dominant academic discourse, and Melanie's reading process similarly diverges from the "ideal of deep reading" many

students have when beginning doctoral studies (Wohl & Fine, 2017b, p. 222). Our data illustrates that we are unable to separate our personal selves from the academic work in which we are engaged, but this study has enabled us to see that we do not have to; we recognize the success we have found when we allow our personal and professional selves to coexist, creating space for us to (re)negotiate who we are, and who we hope to become as emerging scholars. This blurring becomes a prerequisite for growth, inviting us to attend and re/construct our scholarly identities.

## Scholarly Identity Development

Students undergo multiple transformations along the doctoral journey, which can be fraught with doubt and confusion (Foot et al., 2014). Baker and Pifer (2011) suggest that students who are able to take on new identities with ease may be more likely to persist with their doctoral programs. Fortunately, active engagement with research is one way doctoral students can positively cultivate scholarly identity (McAlpine & Amundsen, 2009). Further, Mantai (2018) identifies reading research and informal doctoral student writing as contributing to students' development of scholarly identities.

For Chantelle, creative or playful writing fueled her process of scholarly self-discovery. Experimenting with non-conventional and expressive writing such as narrative, freewrites, and prose or lyrical poems can support writers to engage in what Richardson (2001) refers to as "language in use" (p. 35), moving the writer towards a process of discovery (Colyar, 2009; Richardson & St. Pierre, 2001). Engaging in expressive modes of writing contributed to shaping Chantelle's awareness of self, allowing her to (re)consider and (re)construct her identity as an emerging scholar. It was within the writing process where Chantelle's ideas and perception of self were made accessible. It provided her with an opportunity to look inward, confronting and connecting with more difficult aspects of self, such as "feeling like some sort of failure" and "like nothing I ever do is good enough," as she wrote in her journal. The *aside* carved a new pathway in thought that supported Chantelle in recognizing "who I am and how I come to know" in relation to the world. In other words, writing creatively presented Chantelle with fertile ground to explore aspects of herself that felt unavailable or frequently cut off by more conventional writing practices. Capturing moments of clarity and understanding through creative and expressive writing allowed Chantelle to suspend judgment, finding "grace and forgiveness with/in the process" of writing, as opposed to the product. The *aside* thus gifted Chantelle the opportunity to witness how her experiences and perception of self contributed to shaping her identity as an emerging scholar.

These findings further support Starke-Meyerring (2011), who advocates that through writing, doctoral students can produce and negotiate new scholarly identities. As doctoral students move into new identities, "becoming-academics" and "becoming-researchers" (Aitchison & Lee, 2006, p. 272), adhering to a prescribed and product-oriented practice can negatively impact writing productivity and self-efficacy in students, a significant predictor of writing anxiety (Huerta et al., 2017). However, as our data demonstrates, Chantelle reported increased confidence and, as a result, reduced anxiety around writing. This finding supports Huerta et al. (2011), who advocate that engaging in non-conforming writing strategies can support novice scholars to not only succeed as academic writers, but also gain the confidence to (re)negotiate their scholarly identity.

While there is a rich body of literature on doctoral student identity development (Foot et al., 2014; Starke-Meyerring, 2011) and on writing as identity work (Richardson 1997, 2001), there continues to remain a gap in the literature around the way in which reading contributes to doctoral students' scholarly identity and development. Baker et al. (2019) argue that reading is informed by and contributes to disciplinary epistemologies and identities alongside writing. From the few case studies on students' reading practices, their scoping review found that reading "becomes a vehicle for the enactment of students' multiple identities" (Baker et al., 2019, p. 453). Our data corroborates this finding, as Melanie's exploration of her reading practices revealed the interconnectedness of her identities of mother and doctoral student. Though she often felt guilty that she was not reading "correctly" or in the way doctoral students "should" read, Melanie was able to gain confidence by reflecting on her reading processes and recognizing the intentional, strategic way she employed reading strategies and maintained her engagement.

Relatedly, reading with a particular identified purpose allows for greater access to intertextual networks and disciplinary discourses needed to internalize and enact disciplinary, scholarly identities (McAlpine, 2012). Our data illustrates that Melanie does read this way, approaching texts aware of the purposes for which she is reading and actively selecting reading strategies to construct meaning. As such, delving into her reading processes has not only raised her confidence by validating these processes, but it has also illuminated novel ways in which she is developing her identity as an academic. McAlpine (2012) observed similar findings in her study on the reading experiences of 44 social science doctoral students, and she suggests a need for "reading pedagogies [that] enhance students' efforts to be intentional – thus furthering [their] doctoral progress and identity development" (p. 359). This call speaks to the benefits we have found from intentionally examining and reflecting on our reading and writing processes. We agree with Foot et al.'s (2014) assertion that

self-reflection is essential to doctoral student identity development. Examining our processes gave us permission to acknowledge our individual ways of engaging with reading and writing at the doctoral level, allowing us to embrace and even celebrate our evolving scholarly identities.

## Conclusion

Product-oriented approaches have conditioned doctoral students to value publications and citations as they relate to establishing scholarly identities. However, our findings suggest that when we allow ourselves to consciously tune into our own individual reading and writing processes, we can tap into new potential that, according to Colyar (2009), enhances our awareness as writers, thinkers, and emerging scholars. More specifically, we discovered that understanding our reading and writing processes enabled us to use and reflect on the effectiveness of our reading and writing strategies; revealed the benefits of blurring personal-professional boundaries; and contributed to shaping our identity as emerging scholars. In sum, our processes were unique to our specific circumstances and contexts; therefore, our findings helped illuminate what works for us individually as we evolve as doctoral writers.

Given these findings, we believe that doctoral writing pedagogy should better support students to meaningfully engage with their individual reading and writing processes, allowing them to critically reflect on the ways in which they contribute to their scholarly identity. This call has implications for doctoral supervisors and other faculty who support students as they become doctoral and dissertation writers. Incorporating, for example, reflective writing, journaling, or reading and writing logs into doctoral writing curriculum may guide students toward individualized reading and writing strategies that embrace, rather than antagonize, their personal identities and constraints. Such inclusion should be sustained and reflected upon throughout the doctoral program, rather than treated as a one-off offering with inoculative power. While sweeping pedagogical recommendations are beyond the scope of this paper, we believe that these efforts could encourage doctoral students to widen their focus to include process and thus enhance their understanding of self, increase their confidence as writers, and make the doctoral journey a more enriching experience.

Given the mounting pressures of doctoral education (Burford, 2017), the tallying of publications is likely to remain a crucial component of the doctoral journey. However, if supported to understand their reading and writing processes as productivity, and to embrace individualized process-oriented approaches, producing those publications may become less daunting and perhaps even more enjoyable. We believe that in order to contribute meaningfully to academic discourse and produce

the high-impact work expected of us, doctoral students may benefit from first gaining the confidence found in understanding themselves as writers, readers, thinkers, and scholars. In this way, the potential for doctoral research to move towards new and innovative dimensions may begin with process. Inviting doctoral students to embrace the possibilities that exist with/in process can support students to (re)gain the confidence to look inward and recognize the multiplicity in what it means to read and write at the doctoral level.

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