

**REx Uptake Form (please fill out one per project) – Susan Chaudoir  
Summer/Fall 2014**

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**Section 1: General Information**

Study Title: Learning Writing Assignments in the Undergraduate Curriculum of one Faculty of Nursing

**Abstract/Summary:**

This case study explored how undergraduate students learned peer collaborative writing across four years of one Canadian nursing baccalaureate degree program (Chaudoir, 2013; Chaudoir & Liao, 2013). The goal of the study was to understand how nursing students prepare for professional practice through their writing assignments, and to identify aspects and issues of peer collaborative writing that nursing students consider important to their nursing training before they graduate. Preliminary findings suggested a constellation of personal, political, relational, emotional, and philosophical dynamics that differed from year to year. Issues/aspects of learning writing assignments that students' identified as being important to their education were grouped into two major categories: connections and disconnections to learning. Connections to learning included mentoring, trusted networks, strategic talking, and timely feedback. Disconnections included reading deficiencies, assignment-specific writing supports (e.g., WAC-specific supports limited students' writing capabilities), and assignment design that is too detailed/too vague. Participants' suggested: (1) effective instructional strategies to enable student-teacher relational interaction throughout the whole period of nursing student education; and (2) faculty development that specifically addresses the changing dynamics of learning collaborative writing across all four years of baccalaureate nursing. Implications for teaching students how to write suggested that the implementation of instructional prompts are complex sites of relational interactions that can vary significantly as students learn to write across the 4-year trajectory.

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**Show Contact Email in Published Entries:** Yes =

**Section 2: Principal Investigators**

Principal Investigator:

First name: Susan

Last name: Chaudoir

Institution: University of Alberta

Email: chaudoir@ualberta.ca

Additional information:

Doctoral Student: Yes

Co-Principal Investigator: NONE

**Section 3: Project Team and Support** List the names and roles of additional project team members, excluding PIs and Co-PIs (i.e., web designer, statistician): NONE

**Funding Types (mark "x" for all that apply)**

- University or College Funds: YES (BELOW)
- College (within a University) Funds: YES (BELOW)
- Department or Program Funds: YES (BELOW)
- Federal Government Funds: YES (BELOW)
- State Government Funds: NO
- Local Government Funds: NO
- Private Foundation Funds: NO
- Personal Funds: NO
- Other:

**Funding Source (name any funding sources as specifically as possible):**

- MYER HOROWITZ SCHOLARSHIP AWARD
- GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH AWARD
- PROFILING ALBERTA'S GRADUATE STUDENTS AWARD
- SOCIAL SCIENCES & HUMANITIES RESEARCH COUNCIL OF CANADA (SSHRC)

**Funding Notes (provide additional information about funding, such as time frame, restrictions on use, etc.):**

**Other Support (mark "x" for all that apply):**

- Graduate Student Assistant: YES
- Release Time: NO
- Staff Assistant: NO
- Travel Support: YES
- Undergraduate Student Assistant: NO
- Other: NONE

**Section 4: Study Details**

**Your [primary] Research Question:** HOW DO STUDENTS LEARN THE GENRES THEY ARE ASKED TO WRITE ACROSS ALL FOUR YEARS OF THEIR UNDERGRADUATE EDUCATION?

This research is (part of) a/n (mark "x" by all that apply):

- Accreditation Report:
- Doctoral Project or Thesis: YES
- Grant Project:
- Institutional Assessment:
- Masters Project or Thesis:
- Program Review:
- Undergraduate Project or Thesis:
- Not Applicable/This research is not part of another project:

Notes (add any additional information you wish):

**Site of Data Collection:** UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA, FACULTY OF NURSING

**Number of Participants:** 37

**Start of Data Collection (month/day/year):** MARCH 2012

**End of Data Collection (month/day/year):** MARCH 2013

**Research Methods** (mark "x" for all that apply):

- |  |  |   |
|--|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Action Research   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Discourse Analysis</b> | <input type="checkbox"/> Quasi-Experimental Research                                    |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Analytical Induction</b> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Ethnography</b>        | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Rhetorical Analysis</b> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Archival Research   | <input type="checkbox"/> Experimental Research   | <input type="checkbox"/> Sampling   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Autoethnography   | <input type="checkbox"/> Grounded Theory   | <input type="checkbox"/> Statistical Analysis   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Case Study (Cohort)   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Interviewing</b>       | <input type="checkbox"/> Survey or Questionnaire  |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Case Study (Single)</b>  | <input type="checkbox"/> Linguistic Analysis   | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Describe Below)   |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Content Analysis</b>     | <input type="checkbox"/> Narrative Inquiry   |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Critical Analysis   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Observation</b>        |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cultural Analysis   |  |   |

Other (please name additional research methods here):

**Research process (describe your overall research process, methods, and analysis.):**

**Method:** The study combined theoretical frameworks of rhetorical genre (Artemeva, 2008; Bazerman, 2004; Miller, 1984/1994) and situated learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991) to explore multiple contexts of textually-oriented and sociocultural systems of writing activity, pedagogical interactions, and discursive/communicative practices of collaborative writing and revision processes. Institutional ethnography methods (Devault & McCoy, 2002; Smith, 2005) allowed analysis to focus on the practice and function as well as the intention and reception of the collaboratively writing the scholarly paper assignment. We used three complementary analytic tools of institutional ethnography methods:

- (1) *voluntary, semi-formal interviews* with nursing instructors and students;
- (2) *observations* of in-class writing instruction, peer collaboration, group writing, co-writing, and assignment-specific writing supports such as tutorials by a WAC/WID writing specialist); and
- (3) *textual analysis* of all course materials and assignment documents.

University ethics were approved and reputational case selection was made with a nursing faculty liaison to place the call for student and instructor volunteers and gain access to course materials and assignment documents (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

**Data Collection & Analysis:** The sample included 37 participants (31 students and 6 instructional/classroom tutors) from 4 courses and 5 different scholarly paper assignments. Content analysis (Krippendorff, 2004a/b; Neuendorf, 2002) and OmniGraffle® software tools were used to sort and code course materials, assignment descriptions, field notes, and interview transcripts. Documents and transcripts from each year were analyzed separately and iteratively. As categorical themes emerged, parent-sibling codes were established to reflect these themes.

IRB (Human Subjects) Approval: YES, Approved February 9, 2012

Institution(s) Granting IRB (Human Subjects) Approval: University of Alberta

### **Section 5: Reflections and Outcomes**

#### **Motivations (i.e., what prompted or motivated this study?):**

Working as the lead research analyst on research of postsecondary writing assignments by Professor Roger Graves (principal investigator), University of Alberta (Graves et al, 2014; see <http://wac.ctl.ualberta.ca/research/writing-across-undergraduate-curriculum.aspx>).

Graves encouraged me to embark on a qualitative doctoral (PhD) study of learning writing assignments across all four years of one discipline. I chose the nursing discipline because we had interesting findings that demonstrated writing assignments in nursing were pedagogically exemplary yet anecdotal evidence from WAC/WID student tutorials suggested writing assignments were problematic. A qualitative study to explore the aspects and issues of learning to write across all four years of nursing was worth exploring and undertaken/supervised in the discipline of postsecondary and higher education research, with extended interdisciplinary interest by researchers of college composition, writing studies, and nursing education research.

#### **Related Work (i.e., what, if any, previous research or scholarship have you drawn on for this study?):**

NOT EXACTLY SURE WHAT YOU'RE LOOKING FOR HERE. IF YOU WANT A MORE DETAILED RESOURCE LIST, THAT IS BELOW. OTHERWISE, I THINK YOU MEAN WHAT FIELDS OF RESEARCH AM I DRAWING FROM

FIELDS OF RESEARCH INCLUDE: WAC/WID; writing studies research; Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL); Postsecondary and higher education research

KEY LITERATURE FOR MY CASE STUDY INCLUDE:

Artemeva, N., & Freedman, A. (Eds.). (2008). *Rhetorical genre studies and beyond*. Winnipeg, MB: Inkshed Publications.

Bazerman, C. (2004). Speech acts, genres, and activity systems: How texts organize activity and people. In C. Bazerman & P. Prior (Eds.), *What writing does and how it does it: An introduction to analyzing texts and textual practices* (pp. 309-339). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

- Beaufort, A. (2007). *College writing and beyond: A new framework for university instruction*. Logan, UT: Utah State Press.
- Benner, P., Sutphen, M., Leonard, V., & Day, L. (2009). *Educating nurses: A call for radical transformation*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Bereiter, C., & Scardamalia, M. (1987). *The psychology of written composition*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Carroll, L. A. (2002). *Rehearsing new roles: How college students develop as writers*. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press.
- Chaudoir, S. (2011). *Mapping people and places for writing in the disciplines*. Paper presented at the 2011 Conference of the Canadian Association for the Study of Discourse and Writing, May 29, 2011, Fredericton, New Brunswick, Canada.
- College Entrance Examination Board. (2004). Report of the National Commission on Writing for America's schools, families, and colleges: Writing: A ticket to work ... or a ticket out: A survey of business leaders. Available at [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com)
- Fairclough, N. (1989). *Language and power*. New York: Longman.
- Flower, L. (1994). *The construction of negotiated meaning: A social cognitive theory of writing*. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press.
- Hawthorne, J. I. (1998). Student perceptions of the value of WAC. *Language and Learning Across the Disciplines*, 3(1), 41-63. Retrieved from The WAC Clearinghouse website: <http://wac.colostate.edu/llad/>
- Lave, J., & Wenger, E. (1991). *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Light, R. J. (2003). Writing and students' engagement. *Peer Review*, 6(1), 28-31.
- Miller, C. (1984). Genre as social action. *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 70(2), 151-167.
- Russell, D. R. (2010). Writing in multiple contexts: Vygotskian CHAT meets the phenomenology of genre. In C. Bazerman, R. Krut, K. Lunsford, S. McLeod, S. Null & P. Rogers (Eds.), *Traditions of writing research* (pp. 353-364). New York: Routledge.
- Scardamalia, M., & Bereiter, C. (2006). Knowledge building: Theory, pedagogy, and technology. In K. Sawyer (Ed.), *Cambridge handbook of the learning sciences* (pp. 97-118). New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Shulman, L. S. (2005). Signature pedagogies in the professions. *Daedalus*, 134(3), 52-59.
- Stierer, B. (2000). Schoolteachers as students: Academic literacy and the construction of professional knowledge within master's courses in education. In M. R. Lea & B. Stierer (Eds.), *Student writing in higher education* (pp. 179-195). London: Open University Press.
- Sullivan, W. M., & Rosen, M. S. (2008). *A new agenda for higher education: Shaping the life of the mind for practice*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Swales, J. M. (1990). *Genre analysis: English in academic and research settings*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Wake, B. (2010). Preparing students to write: A case study of the role played by student questions in their quest to understand how to write an assignment in economics. In C. Bazerman (Eds.), *Traditions of writing research* (pp. 297-308). New York: Routledge.

Wenger, E. (1998). *Communities of practice: Learning, meaning, and identity*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Yin, R. K. (2009). *Case study research: Design and methods* (4th ed.). London: Sage.

**Findings: (i.e., please list any findings you have to date):**

There are three things I will mention about findings:

First, it was anticipated that students would discuss personal writing strategies or recall interesting aspects of writing assignments that (dis)connected to professional growth and intellectual development, or, even, perhaps reveal good/poor teaching instruction as students advanced through their program. Instead, I discovered a constellation of personal, political, relational, emotional, ideological, social, institutional, and philosophical dynamics that differed from year to year. Findings suggested that student writing needs differed as they advanced/developed through the years. I grouped findings into two major categories: connections and disconnections to learning. Connections to learning included mentoring, trusted networks, strategic talking, and timely feedback. Disconnections included reading deficiencies; assignment-specific writing supports (e.g., WAC-specific supports limited students' writing capabilities); and assignment design that is too detailed/too vague.

Second, there was a changing nature of learning to write across all four years in nursing. By changing nature, I mean students' writing practices, learning needs, and writing/learning support preferences changed from year to year: Year 1, students were the most open to learning how to write, but susceptible to confusing writing instruction that carried across all four years; Year 2, students were the most resistant to writing supports, competitive in peer-to-peer relationships, carried frustrations from Year 1, and held conflicting interests with instructors; Year 3, students were the most cohesive learning group, with self-initiated trusted networks for writing their assignments that included both academic and professional collaboration groups; Year 4, students were most the most cooperative in learning their writing assignments and eager to complete their degree programs.

Third, the study also identified common concerns of students, focusing on participants' suggestions to reform writing across the curriculum. Participants suggested: (1) effective instructional strategies to enable student-teacher relational interaction throughout the whole period of nursing student education; and (2) faculty development that specifically addresses the changing dynamics of learning collaborative writing across all four years of baccalaureate nursing. We conclude the article with

**Distribution (i.e., please list formal and informal audiences for your work):**

Undergraduate students; educators at all levels; curricular designers; Researchers of: college composition, writing studies, nursing education, higher education; Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL); pedagogical theorists.

**Related Publications: (i.e., please provide citations for formally or informally published and/or forthcoming work):**

*Currently submitting this proposal for publication, due Sep 1<sup>st</sup>, adjudication Oct. 2014.*

Chaudoir, S., Lasiuk, G., & Trepener, K. (submitted, 2014). The changing nature of interactional patterns: A case study peer collaborative student writing across all four years of baccalaureate nursing. Submitted to *Journal of Writing Research, Special Issue: Towards a blueprint for successful collaborative writing in educational and professional settings*.

*Not sure if this counts but several conference presentations Include:*

Anson, C., Horning, A., & Chaudoir, S. (2014, February 21). *Response writing and the development of expertise: Professional, pedagogical, and relational perspectives*. Paper presented at the Conference of Writing Research Across Borders III, Paris, France.

Chaudoir, S., Oermann, M., White, J., & Grant, R. (2014, February 22). *Preparing for professional practice: Writing pedagogies and affective complexities of student writing in medicine, nursing, and clergy education*. Paper presented at the Conference of Writing Research Across Borders III, Paris, France.

Chaudoir, S., Liao, A. (2013, June 24). *The beauty and the curse of scholarly writing: A case study of how nursing students learn to write*. Paper presented at the 2013 Canadian Association of the Schools of Nursing (CASN) Conference, Vancouver, BC. Narrated slides available online at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DtGTuJkA1U0>

Chaudoir, S., & Chenier, I. (2013, March 16). *Doing gender: A descriptive study of male nursing students' perspectives of reflective journaling*. Paper presented at the 5th Research Showcase Conference, Edmonton, Alberta.

Chaudoir, S., McCracken, S., Liao, A., & Chenier, I. (2013, March 16). *Participating teachers and students talk about contexts of teaching and learning to write in post-secondary education*. Paper presented at the 5th Research Showcase Conference, Edmonton.

Chaudoir, S. (2013, March 14). *It's hard to start swimming if you don't have water: Challenges student writers face when writing the scholarly paper*. The 64th Convention of the Conference on College Composition and Communication, Las Vegas, Nevada.

Chaudoir, S., Lasiuk, G., & Trepener, K. (2013, February 22). *Misunderstanding the assignment: First-year students and the anxieties of teaching in one clinical course*. Paper presented at the 2013 Western & Northwest Regional Canadian Association of the Colleges of Nursing (WNRCSN) Conference, Edmonton, Alberta.

Chaudoir, S. (2012, June 27). *Rethinking writing assignments: Learning peripheral genres across one nursing curriculum*. Paper presented at the 2012 International Conference on Genre Studies, Carleton University, Ottawa, Ontario.

Chaudoir, S. (2012, March 22). *Writing assignments and dominant genres: Gateways to understanding writing in the disciplines*. Paper presented at the 63rd Convention of the Conference on College Composition and Communication on St. Louis, Missouri.

**Is there anything you would do differently if you were to repeat this study?**

YES, I would make this a grounded theory research methodology

**Based on your work to date, what new questions have emerged? How have existing questions changed?**

I don't really have new questions.\*\* Rather, I have new connections to other theories and research areas that help explain the findings, which were so diverse and dynamic.

1. I am in the beginning stages of developing a theory called writing resilience theory;
2. Starting to draw from these theories & research disciplines: theories of belonging (from human geography); relational-cultural theory (from social education research); and theories of desirability (from educational psychology).
3. Expanding my understanding of rhetorical approaches to include philosophy and philosophy's role in teaching/learning to write.
3. Others areas of research that influence my research findings: emotional-relational components of teaching undergraduates (emotional side of learning, relational side of teaching), neurobiology (cognitive learning), psychophysiology (emotional/cognitive state of coherence for learning to write); philosophical foundations of learning (i.e., epistemological values, beliefs, fears, assumptions, expectations inherent in the learning to write process).

\*\*NOTE: If you really want some new questions you could include these:

- How do students, who are preparing for professional practice, develop professional identity through writing assignments in their major field of study?
- In what ways do writing assignments prepare students for professional practice?
- How do students connect learning to professional development through [name of course assignment]?

**Section 6: Related Files**

We invite you to attach additional materials that you believe will enhance the information you are sharing about your research. We also ask you to remember that REx is a publication, and your research report along with uploaded materials will ultimately be published by a digital academic press (details TBD). Before uploading PDFs or audio/video files of research presentations, spreadsheets containing your raw data, or other information you believe will be valuable to REx readers, please consider the following question:

Do I need permission from anyone—coauthors or copresenters, previous publishers, institutional review board—to publish my files in REx? **NO, I AM THE SOLE AUTHOR.**

If your answer is *no*, please attach related files to the message you send RExexchangeupdate@gmail.com! If your answer is *yes*, you must also send documentation that demonstrates you have permission from relevant parties to publish your materials in REx. If you are not sure of your answer, [contact us](#), and we will gladly help you decide.

I will attach a brief summary of my case study doctoral research (being used in my doctoral defense) and is titled: Chaudoir-2 page summary.pdf