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ABSTRACT

A major cause of writing anxiety among graduate students is their previous academic success. Graduate students are also plagued by their multiple roles and ambiguous situations, the mixture of dependence and independence, and freedom and responsibility--all of which create tensions and problems particular to their writing. Graduate schools can offer help by (1) establishing programs that incorporate thesis and dissertation research into the course work, (2) providing realistic but firm deadlines for the completion of courses and graduate degrees, (3) providing more information about research methodology and writing, (4) explaining the advantages and disadvantages of various organizational formats typical of papers in the student's discipline, (5) telling students what the faculty expects in breadth and depth of research investigation, (6) helping students to schedule their time and effort realistically, and (7) keeping the students accountable to their timetable. Students can help by communicating continually with their professors: by asking the professors to help establish a time schedule both for submitting work and receiving commentary; by arriving at a clear understanding about the scope, emphasis, and length of the dissertation; by showing a preliminary draft of each chapter; by working at the campus or designated research facility; and by striving to attain a realistic balance between efficiency and perfection. (HOD)

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Why Graduate Students Can't Write: Implications of Research on Writing Anxiety for Graduate Education

In a legendary conversation, when F. Scott Fitzgerald observed, "The rich are different from us," Ernest Hemingway replied sarcastically, "Yes, they have more money." Fitzgerald was making a qualitative distinction, while Hemingway's was quantitiative. The same considerations might govern this examination of the characteristics of graduate students who are anxious writers. Are they different from undergraduates, or do they simply suffer from more intense versions of the same problems that distress undergraduates and other anxious writers?

The answer is, predictably, both. Many anxious graduate student writers are plagued with some of the same problems that disturb other anxious writers. My previous research and some of the work of Daly and Miller shows that many such writers are chronic procrastinators, dislike writing, have difficulty concentrating on it, and fear evaluation of their work.[1] This study, however, will focus on graduate students rather than undergraduates, though because neither the students nor their problems can always be neatly segregated, there is some overlap.

On the whole, however, these graduate students, like their graduate student peers across the country, have a number of characteristics in common that distinguish them from undergraduates. They are older, more mature, and brighter. They earn better grades and more money than undergraduates, and usually work harder and more hours at jobs and studies. Their lives are generally more independent than those of undergraduates, and they are expected to display more intellectual ingenuity and independence of mind. Yet, paradoxically, if their jobs are related to their

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[1]Presented at the Conference on College Composition and Communication, Dallas, March, 1981.

research or other professional training, as graduate students these people are likely to be monitored very closely. So is their writing. And the stakes are higher, for on the quality and timing of their performance hinges their professional future. The multiple roles and ambiguous situations of many graduate students, the mixture of dependence and independence, freedom and responsibility, create tensions and problems particular to their writing that are far more common among graduate students than undergraduates.

After identifying the specific graduate student population studied in this research, this paper will explain the nature and the causes of these problems, and suggest some solutions.

Graduate Students Studied

My research includes case studies of ten graduate students, aged 23-49, in business, comparative literature, education, English, fine arts, history, law, and sociology. Although the studies were conducted on the campus of the College of William and Mary, the students themselves were enrolled in advanced degree programs at the University of Virginia, University of Michigan, Columbia, Harvard, Purdue, and the University of Richmond, in addition to William and Mary. These individual cases are supplemented by the collective experiences of a dozen masters and doctoral students in marine biology at the Virginia Institute of Marine Science. All of the information was derived from voluntary participants in my workshops at the College of William and Mary to help anxious writers overcome their problems and to learn to write with greater ease, efficiency, and understanding of the composing process and effective variations.[2]

Typical of graduate students in the select programs in which they were enrolled, most had excellent academic records in undergraduate and graduate schools.[3] Graduate students who have been poor or mediocre as undergraduates are perhaps justifiably apprehensive about their ability to succeed in more demanding

graduate work. But paradoxically, a major cause of writing anxiety among graduate students is their previous academic success. The experiences and reactions of Ellen, a straight-A undergraduate working on a Master's degree in fine arts, are typical: "I've never had lower than an A- on a paper. I've always done well, and expect to do well every time. My professors expect this, too." Such students fear that their self-esteem, or their reputation, will suffer if their writing is not perfect. They gain no confidence from an acknowledgment of their previous performance. As Ellen observes, "I have had the paper written on time but have been too insecure to hand it in. I've almost gotten sick over it! But when I've finally turned in the same paper -- two weeks overdue -- it's received an A. Even so, I avoid the professor when I pick up the paper."

Although a few writers are equally apprehensive about all papers, short and long, minor and major, as a rule the more important the writing, the greater the apprehension. "There's always the fear, says Maya, a specialist in medieval literature who has worked intermittently on a dissertation over the past six years, "that you're not as good as you or your professors thought you were, and that the dissertation will reveal what you'd managed to conceal in your course papers -- your ineptitude." Such fears undermine the votes of confidence graduate schools give to the students they admit to advanced study and research. Although apprehensive graduate students will acknowledge intellectually that only those judged likely to succeed will be admitted and thereby receive commitments of costly resources and time, they often convince themselves emotionally that by some fluke they and they alone managed to slip through the otherwise fine mesh on the screening net. Thus although procrastination helps insecure students to avoid (from their viewpoint) humiliating self-exposure or confrontation with their alleged ineptitude, it also postpones the opportunity

(from the faculty perspective) to restore the students' flagging confidence by showing them how able their work really is.

Such fears, accompanied by self-imposed pressure for perfect work, are likely to be exaggerated in graduate students who have received fellowships or other financial support. They believe they have to "live up to the implications of the award," which they are likely to interpret "more as a threat t vote of confidence." Reinforcing the threat are the realistic expectations of more demanding work and more difficult grading standards for graduate students than for undergraduates. How much more demanding and difficult are unknown -- and the unknown, because infinitely more stringent, is far more problematic than the known.[4]

So anxious graduate students, seeking the security of explicit standards, are likely to select -- or have recommended by their professors -- models of expert professional writing to follow. Immersed as they are in the literature of the discipline into which they are being initiated, graduate students seize such writings as exemplars -- of form, style, organization, research methods, and bibliographic format. But what might for more confident students provide assurance may prove terrifying to the insecure. Lamented Ken, a straight-A graduate student in history whose perfectionism had for five years inhibited the writing of his Master's thesis, "Even the best of my own writing seems lazy and slipshod in comparison with excellent professional models. I know I'm supposed to write a publishable thesis that's an original contribution to the professional literature. But I haven't had the experience to be able to write that well." And so he didn't write at all until I convinced Ken to discuss his expectations with his thesis advisor. "What a surprise," he told me later, "to find that although I had to know a small segment of the field very thoroughly, my thesis didn't have to be all that innovative. Although it was supposed to be well-written,

it wouldn't necessarily be publishable. O[illegible] I was able to get started."

Problems with Topi[illegible]sors

In addition to misconceptions about [illegible] misapprehensions about thesis and dissertation topics als[illegible]us graduate students. Although students appropriately "need to [illegible]ne thesis is important, a topic of significance to someone" besides [illegible]es, the pursuit of the right topic can occupy anxious or uncertain students for years. And failure to find it can inhibit or totally halt their research. As these students scan the literature for six -- or six hundred -- topics in search of an author, the plethora of possibilities may prove bewildering rather than inspiring. "After I finished my course work," sighs Barbara, a Master's candidate in sociology, "I spent eighteen months flitting among eight topics and different approaches to each of them. I was finally able to focus my topic when I had to accommodate some research data that came up in my job at the hospital. My boss said I could be the first one to use the data if I developed a good thesis, and I found one right away."

At the other extreme are graduate advisors who exacerbate rather than reduce their graduate students' anxiety by imposing uncongenial topics upon them. Or so it appears to the students, whether or not the advisors really intend this. It takes tough-minded and unusually mature students to refuse to write topics of the advisors' choice rather than their own. Yet if the students who succumb to the teachers' choice were not anxious writers before, the assignment of a distasteful (or in other ways unmanageable) topic can make them into proficient procrastinators overnight.

Although many students can cope with an uncongenial topic in a short paper that requires little time or investment, most find the selection of a thesis or

dissertation topic analogous to the selection of a spouse. It had better be one they love, or it will not survive the stress of intimate association. This is not the place to multiply tales of mismatched students and topics except to offer the observation that too often the students, lukewarm at the beginning of the shotgun wedding, lose interest and eventually abandon the unappealing subject and perhaps the pursuit of the degree, as well.

A case in point is Caroline, the recipient of various graduate fellowships and awards in English at the University of Virginia. Caroline sailed through her course work and comprehensive exams with highest honors, and eagerly began her dissertation on Beowulf. But as she wrote she found that as a consequence of suggestions and shapings from her advisor "my thesis became more and more refined until it was almost not mine anymore but my chairman's, and I felt pressure via loyalty and respect to follow through on his suggestions." At that point Caroline's work began to falter. Instead of writing a chapter every two months she has spent six months on four pages. Whether she will finish remains to be seen. She is currently obtaining psychiatric help.

Problems Inherent in the Nature of Graduate Education

Other problems with advisors that contribute to writing anxiety are less dramatic but inherent in the nature of graduate education, which is often more flexible than undergraduate education, allowing far greater freedom of time, with fewer constraints on how to use it. Graduate theses and dissertations are usually intended to be [researched] and written over protracted periods of time -- time which may be too unstructured for the students' own good. Most writers work more efficiently with clear goals and time deadlines than without. If the advisor can't or won't help to provide these and the graduate student is too inexperienced or unassertive to be realistic about focus and schedule, manana-- and the first -- or the second -- . . . chapter may never come.[5]

Yet graduate advisors may be justifiably reluctant to offer unsolicited advice to students whom they recognize as adults that have been functioning independently in many ways, for instance as self-supporting determiners of their own fates and fortunes. Advisors may not want to impose a dependency that would be, says Maya, "demeaning and depressing to we who have successfully performed many other roles -- such as wife and mother and community activist -- for years without outside interference. We believe we should be independent in our graduate work, as well."

Nevertheless, graduate theses and dissertations perforce involve varying mixtures of dependent and independent research performed by students of varying levels of capability and sophistication. Although they may believe, as Ellen says, that "it's a reflection on your character if you take too long to write your thesis," some graduate students want -- and need -- more help than others, with substance or with scheduling or both. As Glen, a marine biology doctoral candidate bogged down in a dissertation observes, "Advisors expect a maturity of graduate students that they don't necessarily have. They think we should be able to block out long-term research and writing on our own, even though we've never done it before. And we're pretty macho -- we don't want to admit that we need more advice than we're getting. So we don't ask and the advisors don't offer and the project just drags along." Maya adds, "Dissertation writers would be better off if we weren't expected to work at our own pace and set our own schedule. Advisors should help us set chapter-by-chapter deadlines. A firm, terminal deadline without the possibility of infinite extensions would help us reinforce our own internal deadlines."

The fact that theses and dissertations are written over an extended period may create additional writing problems. Longer works -- and their authors -- suffer from a discontinuity of perspective as advisors go on leave,

change jobs, or retire. New advisors may make new demands, require new methodology, question previously accepted research results and interpretations. The longer the writing period extends, the more likely such problems are to appear. Graduate fellowships and stipends, allegedly calculated to support students through the completion of their degrees, expire whether or not the thesis is done.

Yet if students leave campus when their funding runs out, they are subject to even more difficulties. The necessary laboratory or library materials may not be available in the new location -- provocative of delays. There may be "no fellow students to bounce ideas off of," says Liz, a determined student on a fast track to an MBA. Advisors are harder to reach, and may not "keep in touch unless students take the initiative," ruefully observes Berry, whose dissertation in history remains unfinished during the six years since he left Ann Arbor, where there are no longer any advocates committed to his project. The incentive to keep writing may dissipate as the student is removed from the customary writing context: "Being at Columbia got me really high," says Maya, "I crashed in Williamsburg."

Conflicting demands and priorities -- always problematic -- are more likely to impinge on graduate students than on undergraduates. Graduate students, more than undergraduates, are usually expected to be self-supporting, and often to contribute to the support of a spouse and children, as well. So they have jobs (sometimes two) which require time and energy, as do their families. In addition, many are extensively involved in community activiities -- women's centers, volunteer fire departments, tutoring, and the like. Whether such time consuming commitments increase their anxiety or are a diversion from it is hard to tell, but the effect is the same: overcrowded schedules that too often leave little time for or emphasis on writing.

Spouses neither enrolled in nor involved with graduate school can also be a distraction from -- or a deterrent -- to writing. In many cases where women graduate students are married to men not likely to obtain an equivalent or superior education, the husband may implicitly or explicitly sabotage the writing-in-progress. His work takes precedence over his wife's. He expects her to be home by 5 p.m., to have dinner on the table every night even if this interferes with her late labs. He wants to play on the weekends she has set aside for writing. If she pays more attention to her research or writing than to him, he sulks or nags or fights or thinks of reasons to command her attention. (These pronouns are used advisedly. Men seeking graduate degrees evidently have more accommodating spouses; at least, I have never heard such complaints from graduate men.) The writer of a dissertation must be particularly determined, even at the risk of seeming self-absorbed, to keep at it without reinforcement on the home front.

The writer of a thesis or dissertation must also be uncommonly determined to keep at it without the assurance that it will lead to a job. This is not necessarily true for undergraduates, whose pursuit of a bachelor's degree (now the Great American Norm) is reinforced by the prevailing belief that going to college is a particularly constructive way to spend one's eighteenth through twenty-first years. There is no corresponding belief that going to gradua school is the best way to spend one's twenty-second through thirtieth (or more) years, unless the securing or retaining of one's job depends on it. Either can, to paraphrase Jonathan Swift, "wonderfully focus the dissertation." Betty, a Harvard graudate student in comparative literature who had avoided work on her dissertation during the four years she was teaching full time, wrote it in five weeks when she needed the degree in hand to get a better job.

One source estimates that there will be 400,000 unemployed Ph.D.s by 1985;[6] with job prospects dim, even the graduate students themselves may look upon extended study as dilettantism or prolonged adolescence, and abandon it for the rigors of the real world. "I'm at the stage of my life where I feel I should be productive and making a real contribution," says Barry, 35, "but there's not a great market for medievalists. Why bother to finish my dissertation if I can't get a job when it's done? It just doesn't seem worth the effort."

For other graduate students who experience dramatic changes in their lives or careers, the completion of a thesis or dissertation may become irrelevant, a costly self-indulgence. Irene, 49, explains, "When my ex-husband cut off my alimony, I had to get a full-time job. Becoming a paralegal has been much more rewarding, personally and financially, than a job in special education would have been. I only have twenty-one hours to complete, but if I do it will just be for the satisfaction of finishing the degree. I'll never use it."

Problems with Age of Work and Writer

Some of the diminution of effort to finish a thesis or dissertation -- and consequently a graduate degree - is undoubtedly a phenomenon of age, either of the writing project or the writer or both. The writing of this extensive work is often done in time which is unstructured and open-ended in comparison with an otherwise highly regimented curriculum. Whether it gets done expediently -- or at all -- is epitomized in a variation of Murphy's law: The work either expands or contracts to fill the time allotted to complete it. Thus, as a rule, graduate students eager to earn an advanced degree budget their time carefully and stick to a schedule of research and writing that enables them to "get through and get out." And so they finish well within the generous time deadlines that most institutions set for the completion of graduate degrees. Employers are looking for the self-starters and the fast movers; the early birds get what jobs there are.

So the rapid pace provides both the built-in satisfactions of completing the writing and the degree, and the likely reward of a job.

Neither are necessarily present for those graduate students who, at the point of writing their thesis or dissertation, begin to dance to the erratic beat of their own, much slower drummer. As time passes, they are likely to slow down to such an imperceptible pace that they scarcely seem -- to the observer (though perhaps not to themselves) -- to be moving at all. The longer the time that has elapsed between when the student began the thesis or dissertation and the current time, the less likely s/he is to finish.

The slower the pace, the less likely the rewards, either immediate or long term. And so it becomes easier to ignore the writing to be done, thereby avoiding the effort of writing and the possibly painful confrontation with an advisor angry over the lack of progress. Yet I have never, either as a researcher or as a supervisor of TAs, met a graduate student who would acknowledge the possibility of not finishing the thesis or dissertation, even some who have not touched the incomplete opus in over two decades. To do so would involve a great loss of self-esteem, and would explicitly break their promise to complete the work.

So although they may say, as does Berry, "As I get older, finishing for the sake of finishing doesn't seem worth it," they invariably follow such defeatist remarks with a contradiction that indicates their ambivalence. "I need to finish my dissertation to get out from under my dependency on my advisor," adds Berry. "I'm independent in every other respect, and I should be in this one, too.

Yet as both the project and the writer age, the momentum and the incentives to complete the work diminish considerably. Inaction breeds inertia. And some rationalizations, often partially true, always self-serving:

1. Why undergo the grueling labor a dissertation requires if, at thirty-five, or forty, or fifty, one's career lifetime is short -- perhaps, in some instances, ready to begin when one's peers are contemplating early retirement?

2. Why begin at the beginning of a new career in mid-life when one's current occupation and habits are familiar, perhaps even comfortable?

3. Why work hard on a thesis or dissertation if one's physical stamina or energy is diminishing? "Students who blaze along in graduate school with no respite may find themselves quickly burned out," says Ellen, "and simply not finish." Why work hard if one's health is uncertain? The students in this study have been afflicted with eye problems, chronic illness, surgery, and the need for psychiatric help.[7] Once vulnerable, twice threatened.

4. Why not enjoy life while one can? Carpe diem may be preferable to carpe dissertation, especially if one's peers have abandoned graduate work. "Dropouts are contagious," says Ken. "You see your friends leaving graduate programs and it makes you scared to start your dissertation, or indifferent about finishing."

These are "good" reasons (phony excuses) for some, very real reasons for others who give up graduate work without regret. Yet for the anxious graduate students in this study and many of their peers, failure to finish would mean the abandonment of golden dreams, the curtailment of careers and the foreclosure of options, as well as the waste of human effort and graduate school resources. These people who seek help with their writing, and they are legion, clearly have the desire to finish their work, no matter what their rationalizations. Graduate schools, graduate faculty, and graduate students themselves can provide considerable assistance in enabling graduate students to complete their work and earn their degrees in a realistic time period.

Solutions - Graduate Schools and Faculty

Graduate schools can be of particular help in the following ways, say the anxious students in this study.

1. Graduate programs should incorporate thesis and dissertation research, and even writing, into the course work, so students can do significant segments of it on a regular schedule, under supervision.

Ken says, "I finished my master's course work within a year, and was eager to get out and buy a car and furniture. But there was no time to write the thesis when I was taking a full load and preparing for comprehensives. After that my money ran out and I couldn't work two jobs at once and write in addition. If my thesis research had been incorporated in my course work, I'd have been through five years ago. Only five of the nineteen people in my class have finished their degrees. We all have the same problem."

2. Graduate school regulations should provide realistic but firm deadlines for the completion of courses and graduate degrees. "The possibility of infinite extensions simply contributes to our own lack of structure," laments Barbara, candidate for a Master's degree in education. "A firm, terminal deadline would help to reinforce our own internal deadlines."

3. Graduate faculty and advisors need to provide more information than many of them currently do, say these students. Graduate students may be more naive about research methodology and writing than they're willing to admit; graduate faculty should tailor their instruction accordingly. This may involve providing basic instruction in some of the following areas.

A. Teaching students how to find the key resources first, and how to distinguish between primary and secondary resources.

B. Suggesting to students the outer limits of their reading and research investigations, and setting a realistic time to stop, rather than letting

the time extend into infinity. "I've been reading for four years as a way to avoid writing," laments Sara, a doctoral candidate in sociology. "I'll never finish if I keep this up, because new material is always being added to the field."

C. Explaining the advantages and disadvantages of various organizational formats typical of papers in the student's discipline. Many students don't know how to organize their materials, especially if new data or readings, like a pig in a python, modify the shape of the original. So they need to see good models.

They also need to learn when and how to cite references. "A great meticulousness in documentation is expected of graduate students," observes Ken. "A lot of people drop out of graduate work in history because they cannot cope with the minutiae of scholarship and nobody teaches them."

D. Telling students what the faculty expects in breadth and depth of research investigation:

1. To what extent should it be original?

2. To what extent should it represent the student's independent effort? To what extent may it be part of a team project? Or an interpretive summary of the literature?

3. Should it be of potentially publishable quality?

4. How close to perfection is it expected to come? Says Sara, "I couldn't get started on my dissertation in sociology, because I thought it had to be comprehensive, perfect, and publishable -- an original contribution to the literature. I didn't know how to do all this. So I stayed away from my advisor, too embarrassed to confront him with my ignorance.

"As a consequence of our discussion in the Writing Anxiety workshop, I finally went to see him -- after avoiding him for over three years. Amazing! He told me that a narrow topic was acceptable. In fact, he urged less rather than more. He said that even a dissertation didn't have to be 100% original,

nor did it have to be perfect. That was just what I needed to get moving on it!"

E. Helping students to schedule their time and effort realistically, including consideration of such matters as:

1. How much time should a chapter or given segment of research take?

2. What is the suitable apportionment of time between short and long papers? "I always have trouble in allotting time," says Ellen. "I spend too much time on the short papers and not enough on the long ones. Once I took ninety-six hours to write an abstract of a two-page article. I got an A, but it wasn't worth the effort."

3. How much time should one allow for revision and shepherding the work through committees?

4. When can one reasonably expect to finish the work? Advisors, as experienced researchers, have a much better sense of this than do their just-being-initiated advisees.

F. Keeping the students accountable to their time schedule. "I got my dissertation done in nine months, just ahead of having the baby," comments Linda, a recent Ph.D. who finished on time, "because my advisor insisted on a chapter a month. When I turned it in he'd make an appointment to discuss it the next day."

Solutions: Graduate Students

Yet graduate students, as reasonably autonomous adults, cannot expect all the directives to come from their advisors. The students themselves must assume significant responsibility for controlling the nature and progress of their reasearch and writing. The students in this study, no longer as anxious as they used to be, and all actually writing, offer the following advice:

1. Graduate students should communicate continually with their professors, and should feel free to ask questions about writing style, footnote format, anything. "It's far better to admit your lack of knowledge at the outset, even on elementary matters," says Roy, the 34-year-old law student struggling to finish incompletes by writing term papers while taking the bar exam. "Otherwise you get caught later, when ignorance is no longer bliss."

2. If professors don't volunteer deadlines, ask them to help establish a time schedule both for submitting work and receiving commentary on it. "Be sure to hold the professor to the deadline, too," says Maya. "You don't have time to wait three months for commentary on what you wrote. Even if you have to nag your advisors by phone calls or letters, do it. They shouldn't be allowed to hide in the stacks; their jobs exist for the benefit of their students, after all."

3. Arrive at a clear understanding with the professors about the scope, emphasis, and length of the thesis or dissertation. "And double check if you're contemplating any changes," says Ellen. "False or inappropriate leads can waste a lot of time."

4. Show a preliminary draft of each chapter to the advisor. Use the comments as guides to revision, and to the writing of the next chapter. "This is infinitely preferable to writing the entire opus and submitting it, only to find that it requires major revisions," warns Caroline. "That can set you back months."

5. Try to do all the work at the campus or designated research facility at which it was begun. "Belonging to a community of scholars with common goals and priorities is not easy to duplicate in the outer world," says Sara.

Staying on campus also permits the formation of dissertation support groups (as three of the people in this study are doing), to discuss research issues and techniques, and to encourage each other to stick to their writing schedules.

6. In striving to attain a realistic balance between efficiency and perfection, don't expect perfection. Students who encounter perfectionistic advisors should switch rather than fight. "If you don't you'll never finish, observes Berry. "Doing the best you can in the time available is the closest we mortals can come to perfection."

It would be an oversimplication to say that all the problems of anxious graduate student writers would be resolved if these suggestions were followed. But many of them would. Many of the solutions can be effected by clearer and more constant communication between graduate students and their professors or advisors.

An illustration of this occurred dramatically in the Writing Anxiety workshop that I conducted for the twelve marine biology graduate students -- who were in various stages of not finishing their theses and dissertations -- and ten of their advisors. Typical of Glen, cited earlier, the graduate students thought that they were supposed to do all the writing on their projects by themselves, and to turn in a perfect, finished draft to their advisors. But they didn't know how to do this.

The advisors were eager to offer advice but refrained, not wanting to impose direction on their adult students. They wondered why the students never consulted them, and they were perplexed because so many were not progressing. Once each side could state its case, as they did in the Workshop, they realized that they needed to talk to each other and to work together, rather than in isolation. As a consequence, three students finished their degrees within six months, and the rest are writing busily. It can be done.

Students capable of being admitted to graduate school are presumably capable of earning degrees in their particular programs. But what many

need to learn involves how to set parameters, as well as how to fill requirements; how to write in an appropriate form, as well as how to do research on the substance; how to schedule research and writing time, as well as courses; and how to bolster self-confidence as well as research skills. If these things were taught and learned, my research predicts that far more graduate students would complete their theses and dissertations in far less time than many currently take. It can be done.

Notes

[1]Lynn Z. Bloom, "Identifying and Reducing Writing Anxiety: Writing Anxiety Workshops," in The Psychology of Composition, ed. Douglas R. Butturff. Akron: Language and Style Books, University of Akron Press (in press); Lynn Z. Bloom, "The Composing Processes of Anxious and Non-Anxious Writers: A Naturalistic Study," Resources in Education (Sept. 1980), ERIC # 185-559; John A. Daly and Michael D. Miller, "The Empirical Development of an Instrument to Measure Writing Apprehension," Research in the Teaching of English, 9:3 (Winter 1975), 242-249.

[2]"I Hate/Love to Write: The Fear of Writing," Alumni Gazette (College of William and Mary), 47:6 (Jan./Feb. 1980), 25-29.

[3]There were two exceptions. One, a Master's student in education, had concentrated as an undergraduate more on social life than on studies, as verified by her undistinguished record of twenty-five years earlier. The other was a thirty-four year old law student. A dozen years earlier, as an undergraduate at Rice, he had received lowered grades as a consequence of turning in late papers, and he had failed several other courses for not writing papers at all. Yet in a Master's program in zoology a year later, with no papers, he earned straight A's.

[4]Could not experienced graduate students, accustomed to the institutional criteria, be expected to become less fearful? Probably so, for those not inclined to be anxious. But for anxious writers, left to their fertile and frightening imaginations, every new paper, whether for a new or familiar teacher, is an unkown. And "that way be monsters," as old maps designated the edge of the flat earth -- at the peril of unwary sailors who got too close to the edge.

[5]See Lynn Z. Bloom, "Teaching Anxious Writers: Implications and Applications of Research, Composition and Teaching, II (1981) (in press).

[6]Landon Y. Jones, Great Expectations: America and the Baby Boom Generation (New York: Coward, McCann, and Geoghegan, 1980), p. 300.

[7]To my knowledge, there is no data to indicate whether or not anxious graduate student writers are more susceptible to these afflictions than other graduate students.

PLEASE ANNOUNCE IN YOUR CLASSES

"THE REAL THOMAS MORE"

A Public Lecture by Professor G. R. Elton, University of Cambridge

Date: Monday, April 6, 1981

Time: 8:00 p.m.

Place: Campus Center Little Theatre, College of William and Mary

A reception in the Gallery of the Wren Building will follow, 9:00-10:00 p.m.

About the Lecturer:

G. R. Elton, considered to be the foremost living authority on Tudor England, is Professor of English Constitutional History in the University of Cambridge. A Fellow of Clare College, Cambridge, since 1954, Elton is the author of more than a dozen books and scores of articles on the history of Tudor government, law and society. Probably his best known work is England Under the Tudors, the standard text on the subject.

A dynamic, provocative platform speaker, Elton is known principally for his controversial interpretations of politics and personalities during the reign of Henry VIII. Elton is a Fellow of the British Academy and a former President of the Royal Historical Society. His publications include:

The Tudor Revolution in Government (1953)
England Under the Tudors (1955, 1962)
The Tudor Constitution (1960)
Reformation Europe (1963)
The Practice of History (1967)
The Sources of History: England 1200-1640 (1969)
Political History: Principles and Practice (1970)
Policy and Police: The Enforcement of the Reformation in the Age of Thomas Cromwell (1972)
Reform and Renewal: Thomas Cromwell and the Common Weal (1973)
Reform and Reformation: England 1509-1558 (1977)