What are YOU doing for the Creation of the Beloved Community?
By Mary Watkins, PhD

bell hooks shares that she asks herself each day, “What are you doing, bell, for the creation of the beloved community?” This creation is her highest value, her life telos. It orients her writing.

For you, dear reader and dissertation writer, what is the telos of your life? How does the scholarly work you are doing express this and how will it help to build the world you want to help create? Dissertation Tip #1: Strengthen your understanding of this.

To grow your roots down deep, in order to steady yourself in this research and writing process, ask yourself, “What work in the world do I want my dissertation to contribute to?” Listen carefully to the answer. Be true to it.

Continue. “What is my hope for how this dissertation will help to create and sustain the world I want to live in?” Let the shine and beauty of your vision and hope feed your energies to persevere and navigate through inevitable setbacks and slowdowns.

Once your research question and its indissoluble connection to your life telos begins “to sing,” break the work down into small doable pieces. When you look at all the work to be accomplished, it can feel over-whelming. However, when you sit down on any particular day knowing the specific thing you need to address, it is quite doable. Step-by-step you create the work. There is a beginning, middle, and an end of each day’s work, each piece of research and writing, and of the whole.

All the writing you have done in your lifetime contributes to your psychological faith in the writing process. For many, the dissertation is, Continued on page 2

“Research is to see what everyone else has seen, and to think what nobody else has thought.”
—Albert Szent-Gyorgyi, winner of the Nobel Prize in Medicine in 1937
However, the most complex piece of research, scholarship, and writing you have yet worked on. If you do not yet have personal faith in this process, borrow on that of your committee members and others who have completed such writing in meaningful and fulfilling ways. Talk with them when it all seems impossible. As someone who has been blessed to be a dissertation mentor for 30 years, I can promise you that it is NOT an impossible task.

Dissertation writing—with all its challenges and rigors—can be a deeply enjoyable process of learning. The gate at its far end opens on to the rest of your life, firmly anchoring you in a life of unfolding learning. Being able to spend several years of one’s precious life in deep study and writing is a rare life privilege and opportunity. Enjoy it and make use of it to birth something of value for others.

—Mary Watkins, PhD, Depth Psychology Chair and Core Faculty


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**How to Avoid Common Formatting & Style Errors**

Some of the most common formatting errors Pacifica dissertation students make, and which are easy to find and correct, include the following:

- Set the left margin to 1.5 inches and all others to 1 inch.
- Use Times New Roman size 12 font, double space, with no extra vertical space between paragraphs or subheadings. Double space the entire manuscript including the Table of Contents, block quotes, captions, and references.
- Avoid widows (single lines at the bottom of a page) and orphans (single lines at the top of the page) by formatting paragraphs with Widow/Orphan control.
- Avoid italics, boldface, or quotation marks to emphasize a word or phrase in a paragraph. Write better sentences instead.
- Never underline to identify the title of a text; use italics instead.
- Avoid capitalization except for proper nouns. Jung is a proper noun, depth psychology isn’t.
- An ellipsis is three spaced periods (...). A fourth period is added if there is an omission of words between two sentences. Omit leading or trailing ellipses from any quoted text, whether it is within a paragraph or in a block quote. Only use ellipses to indicate deleted text from the middle of the quotation.
- Format long dashes consistently and correctly. Use what is called an "em dash" with no spaces between the words it is separating.
- Use block quotes sparingly and, when possible, avoid them by separating the longer quote into smaller quotes woven into your own sentences.
- Check that every source cited in the text is in the list of references and that the spelling and capitalization are consistent.
- Use meaningful, succinct subheadings to alert the reader about the direction of the discussion. Be sure that the discussion immediately following keeps the promise of the subheading.
- Check for consistency between subheadings and Table of Contents entries.

—These tips are from the 2015-2016 Pacifica Dissertation Handbook.
Trust Yourself

You do not see things as they are. You see things as you are.

Anonymous

During the dissertation process I pasted the quote above on the wall in front of my desk. The words helped orient me to the possibility that the events and relational interactions that disrupt me are of my own creation. One day I wrote below it, "Fear is a funny thing; you can't always believe it."

In recent reflection came yet another thought: "A dissertation is also a funny thing, you can't always believe what you write." During my time at Pacifica the essence of this last thought was implied by many of the professors, the assigned readings, and by what I wrote in my dissertation regarding reflexivity—you can't always believe that what you are seeing and even experiencing is necessarily what is actually occurring.

In the process of research, one must always step back and consider the predisposition that colors one's vantage point; especially when conducting qualitative research. A reflexive stance necessarily leaves the researcher continuously questioning any reported findings, laboriously asking, "Is what I have written true? Is there another way of seeing and evaluating the raw data? What if I am wrong?" The cycle can catch the researcher in an unending loop of self-doubt and fear. Ah, but what if one's self-doubt and fear cannot be trusted? What if what we see as researchers is not a clear objective subjectivity, but rather ourselves caught in a mirror of our own making? Such was the mirror that captured me for nearly two years as I analyzed interviews for a phenomenological study. It was only when the window began to close on the dissertation timeline that I was forced to consider the possibility of trusting what I had written and what I was yet to write.

Through my experience I discovered the shadow side of reflexivity. With Theseus, Hades, and Persephone by my side I began to see myself and the way things truly are with greater clarity. I discovered a golden thread that led me out of the darkness: Trust yourself. Trust your writing even as you reflect on it critically. Trust that the process that called you will lead you and your research to significant and meaningful findings. Trust yourself even when your findings are in chaos and you feel completely alone. Trust that what is within you is enough to guide you through the shadows and mirrors that distract you. Trust yourself!

—Ward Robak, PhD, 2015 Graduate of Pacifica’s Clinical Psychology Program
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