

OWNERSHIP IN WRITING

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B.N., University of Lethbridge, 1995

A One-Credit Project
Submitted to the Faculty of Education
of the University of Lethbridge
in Partial Fulfilment of the
Requirements for the Degree

MASTER OF EDUCATION

LETHBRIDGE, ALBERTA

April, 1997

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Dedication

**"YOU WERE MY STRENGTH WHEN I WAS WEAK
YOU WERE MY VOICE WHEN I COULDN'T SPEAK
YOU WERE MY EYES WHEN I COULDN'T SEE
YOU SAW THE BEST THERE WAS IN ME
LIFTED ME UP WHEN I COULDN'T REACH
YOU GAVE ME FAITH COZ YOU BELIEVED
I'M EVERYTHING I AM
BECAUSE YOU LOVE ME"** (Dion, 1996).

To God, the Holy Spirit, for His faithfulness;

To my mom, Carolyn for her love, prayers and inspiration;

To my deceased grandmother, Gammie, for her Godly influence;

To my father and my grandfather, for their support;

To my brother Jeffrey and his wife Vincella, for their love,
valuable assistance and the 'boot camp' experience;

To my sister Chizelle and her husband Perry, for their
encouragement and love;

To my brother Jason and his wife Rochelle, for their
wonderful support and love;

To my sister Glendina and her husband Jonah, for their love;

To R.E.B., my soulmate.

I LOVE YOU ALL.

Respectful Acknowledgements

Dr. Robin Bright,

Robin, thank-you for your support, positive outlook and attitude toward writing. You inspired me beyond words can tell which enabled me to gain a greater understanding of an area that is quite passionate to me, ownership in writing. Through this project I have experienced the "ugh haw" feeling by having ownership of this writing project and of the topic.

Dr. Michael Pollard

Michael, in many ways you have given me ideas for my project. When I took your class, it was a frustrating challenge as I tried to understand what it meant to be self-directed in my learning. I did not realize then that it was in some ways a preparatory process for the undertaking of my project. Thank you.

Deb McDonald, Marissa Enns and Jasmine Matthew

I am indeed grateful and would like to express my appreciation to these individuals for participating in this study. Their willingness and enthusiasm to share their thoughts and feelings about ownership in writing have made this project possible. Thank you very much.

Jasmine

Sincere gratitude and appreciation for your ongoing encouragement, support and friendship. As you have come to realize over the years that we have known each other, that to be my friend required strength and flexibility. Thanks for believing in me.

I would also like to express my deepest gratitude and a heartfelt "THANK-YOU" to all the wonderful people in the Faculty of Education for their guidance and support. You have made the Master of Education program more incredible than I had dreamed possible. I thoroughly enjoyed the flexibility in

courses and especially the opportunity to engage in a team teaching practicum within the Faculty of Nursing. I would also like to say thank you to the faculty and staff of the Bachelor of Nursing program. The preparation I got within the program contributed to my successful outcome.

Acknowledgements

May 23rd, 1997, I shall convocate with a Master of Education degree. On this occasion, I wish to thank these people for their contribution to my success: Mama (for our pep talks), Daddy Kingston (deceased, I was fortunate to have known you), the Stubbs family, the Thompson family, the Brown family, the Miller family, my uncle Dukie, my nieces Jaychelle, Sarah, Jennifer and Aisha, my nephews Peter, Joshua, Abijah and Afiba, my best friend Sylvia, my grade seven teachers, Blonie and Beverley who inspired me to be the best that I could be, Constance and Alicia, my wonderful friends, my friend Angela, Joyce, Carlton, Sandy, Chrystal, Joseph, Ella, Jimmy and other friends of the family, Mrs. Dean, Fr. Robinson, Mrs. Robinson and the parishioners of The Church of the Good Shepherd, Pastor Allen, Sister Allen and the members of Abundant Life Bible Church, the staff of The Rand Memorial Hospital, the staff of Doctors' Hospital especially the staff of the emergency room, Agie, Peter, Sister P, Kim,

Ingrid, Delores, Linda, Joan, Carillon, Deane, Doreen, Edith,
Brian, Yvan, Pat, Randy, Troy, and the numerous people in the
Nassau, Freeport and Canada who encouraged me.

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to explore the thoughts and feelings of two teachers and two post-secondary students with regards to ownership in writing. However, one teacher, even though she expressed initial interest in the study needed to be withdrawn from participating due to scheduling conflicts.

A second purpose was to analyze the content of the questionnaires and interviews, which were administered and conducted with each of the participants, in order to discover the important themes in ownership in writing. Utilizing a case study approach, data were collected using self-administered questionnaires. In addition, the primary teacher and the two post-secondary students were interviewed.

The concept of ownership in writing is claimed by an individual when his or her writing ideas reflect concerns for meaning, value and his or her audience. However, this claim has to be expressed in writing as the individual's ideas, ways

of seeing and communicating, so that they can be endorsed (Buddemeier, 1982). According to Bright (1995), allowing students to have ownership in writing seemed to encourage students to write with "less difficulty and more confidence" (p. 3). Shanklin (1991), believes that students tend to write best when they are allowed to frequently self-select topics, are interested in a topic or are familiar with a topic (p. 50).

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Dedication	iv
Respectful Acknowledgements	v
Acknowledgements	viii
Abstract	x
I. CHAPTER 1	
INTRODUCTION AND STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM	1
Importance of the Study	2
Purpose of the Study	3
Central Concepts and Definitions.....	3
Research Question	5
Blueprint of the Study	5
Additional Techniques	6
Limitations of the Study	7
Assumptions of the Study	8
Significance of the Study	9
II. CHAPTER 2	
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE	1.1
Themes	2 1
Gaps	2 2
Summary	2 4
III. CHAPTER 3	
METHODOLOGY	2 4
Description of the Sample	2 4
Selection Process	24
Method of Data Collection	25
Reasons for Tape Recorders	26

	Instruments For Data Collection	26
	Questionnaires	26
	Interviews	27
	Treatment of The Data	27
	Summary	28
IV.	CHAPTER 4	
	RESULTS OF THE STUDY	29
	Identification of the Themes	29
	Description and Analysis of Themes	30
	Analytical Comments	43
	Interpretive Comments	45
V.	CHAPTER 5	
	FINAL DISCUSSION	48
	Summary	48
	Implications	49
	Recommendations	50
	Concluding Statements	51
	REFERENCES	52
	APPENDICES	59
	Appendix A: Student Consent Letter	60
	Appendix B: Students' Questionnaire	61
	Appendix C: Interview Questions	62
	Appendix D: Teacher Consent Letter	63
	Appendix E: Teacher Questionnaire	64
	Appendix F: Interview Questions	65

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In writing, opportunities for ownership occur when topics call for students to explore their own experiences and opinions, or to elaborate on a point of view (Applebee, 1991, p. 554).

In recent years, there has been increasing research on the writing process, more importantly how do we describe it and how we understand it. For example, there is research that focuses on the writing process itself (Flower & Hayes, 1981), studies that focus on students' knowledge about the writing process (Raphael, Kirschner & Englert, 1986), and further investigations that focus on writing instruction (Applebee & Langer, 1984).

In spite of these efforts, ownership in writing is not being fully realized nor are students encouraged to choose their own topics for writing (Fear, Anderson, Englert & Raphael, 1987). Some of the research studies that have been

conducted on ownership of writing have used terms such as "authorship or "professorship" because these words, like the word "ownership" reflect a relationship between the writer and the writing (Ede, 1985).

Importance of the Study

Ownership in writing is important to me because I have found that I am able to write better papers if I am granted ownership of the writing. I have purposely chosen courses that provide a greater opportunity for ownership than those that do not. I also believe that ownership of writing helps students to express themselves better, as well as build self-esteem and confidence.

I have become quite passionate about this issue because I think there comes a point in each person's life when they experience the 'aha' feeling about ownership in writing. This refers to the moment when a writer writes because he or she feels a deep and personal connection to the process. I want to know at what point this starts and when does it seem to end.

For me, I think it ended in high school when I was forced to write about topics that were of no interest to me, but has been re-cultivated since coming to university. Finally, I have talked with a few students and teachers who express confusion about writing when they do not have ownership of the writing.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the thoughts and feelings of one teacher and two post-secondary students about ownership in writing. The study was conducted using a qualitative approach which included (a) interviewing these three individuals about their feelings toward ownership in writing and (b) analysis and interpretation of the data. This study was designed to understand, explain and explore further what is known about ownership in writing by working with these three individuals with varied experiences in writing.

Central Concepts and Definitions

For the purpose of this study, the main concepts to be

defined are ownership, thoughts, feelings and writing. The first concept ownership refers to representing oneself in writing, pursuing satisfaction in writing as well as expressing personal value in writing (Carroll, 1991). Clay (1991) defined thoughts as expressing one's ideas, opinions and wishes in words (p. 108). Feelings is defined by Longman (1981) Dictionary of Contemporary English as "sensations of joy, sorrow, hate; the part of a person's nature that feels, compared to the part that thinks" (p. 402). In other words, feelings that are strongly opposing versus strongly in favour of developing ownership in writing. Feelings will not refer to judgement of this teacher and these two students. The final concept writing is defined by Shanklin (1981) as "a transactional process of progressive refinement, resulting in a graphic display for which meaning can be constructed" (p. 180). In essence, writing represents how ideas are expressed, that which matters or has meaning to the individual and that which creates identity and autonomy.

Research Question

In addressing the focus of this study of one teacher and two post-secondary students' thoughts and feelings toward ownership in writing, the following research question was considered:

1. In what ways does this teacher as well as two post-secondary students describe their feelings toward ownership in writing?" The following questions will guide this study:

1. What does ownership in writing mean to this teacher and these students?
2. How does this teacher and these students feel about ownership in writing?
3. What does this teacher and these students gain from ownership in writing?

Blueprint of the Study

The broad term which has been utilized in this study to characterize the process is qualitative. A qualitative research

method attempts to understand the ideas or interests from the perspective of the individual. Since this study seeks to understand the writing experiences of one teacher and two post-secondary students, a qualitative approach is deemed relevant (Howard, 1985).

In order to accomplish the purpose of this research study, a case study approach was utilized. One primary teacher as well as two post-secondary students (university students) from Southern Alberta area were selected as the participants for this study. These three individuals were purposively selected, having indicated to me or to my advisor their interest in this topic and their willingness to participate.

Additional Techniques

To further accomplish the purpose of this study it was also necessary to collect information about ownership in writing using the following methods:

1. Questionnaires -- The teacher and the two

post-secondary students were asked to complete a written questionnaire. The purpose of the questionnaire was to collect information regarding the thoughts and feelings of the three participants regarding this topic.

2. Interviews -- Audiotaped interviews were conducted with the teacher and the two post-secondary students and later transcribed, in order to more freely explore their understanding of the topic under study.

Limitations of the Study

One limitation of this study is that all of the interviews and the recording of the data was conducted by one researcher. The data collection is limited by the focus of discovering insight into the thoughts and feelings of the participants toward ownership in writing and by the probing skills of the interviewer. The individuals in this study volunteered and could at any time drop out of the study. Another limitation of the research design includes the familiarity of the researcher with the participants which may make objectivity difficult

especially since the researcher is the main source of data collection. A final limitation of the research method is its lack of generalizability and constrained sample size. It is unknown whether the same thoughts and feelings toward ownership in writing will appear in other individuals.

Assumptions

According to Polit & Hungler (1995) assumptions are "basic principles that are accepted as being true on the basis of logic or reason..." (p. 636). In this study the subjects are believed to be the best sources for data information. The one teacher and the two post-secondary students thoughts and feelings toward ownership in writing are believed to be accurate. The assumption is also made that an individual's thoughts and feelings toward ownership in writing is individualistic. Another assumption is made that the researcher-as-instrument is an adequate instrument for retrieving information about the thoughts and feelings of these participants toward ownership in writing (Polit & Hungler,

1995).

Significance of the Study

Although many research studies show the importance of ownership in writing for all levels of writers, from pre-primary to high-school aged students to college-age adults and beyond, few have focused on the feelings of individuals toward ownership in writing. Therefore, a significant aspect of this study is to further what is known about ownership in writing by working with three individuals with varied experiences in writing.

It is hoped that this study will provide information about what may be important similarities and differences in the participants' views toward ownership in writing. Furthermore, it is hoped that this study will contribute to the practice of teaching by gaining one primary teacher's as well as two post-secondary students' feelings toward ownership in writing. This study also has the potential for increasing the understanding of the importance of ownership in writing to

this teacher and these students.

The chapter that follows provides a review of the literature with emphasis on the importance of ownership in writing for all levels of writers. The literature review will also describe studies of ownership in writing as well as studies which address the feelings of writers toward ownership in writing.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Ownership in writing is not a new concept but rather a concept that is gaining new recognition (Ede, 1985). Both the teaching practitioner and the research literature pertaining to writing recognizes that writing fosters personal, intellectual and interpersonal meaning (Britton, 1975; King, 1980; Graves, 1983; Talbot, 1990; Applebee, 1991; Bright, 1995). Thus in writing, opportunities for developing feelings of ownership exist when topics allow students to explore their ideas, experiences, concerns, opinions, interests as well as to write about what is important to them (Applebee, 1991; Barbieri, 1987; French, 1986; Rosen, 1986; Smith, 1982). Calkins (1986) lends further support to these ideas by stating that writing should allow the student to write with his or her own voice thereby indicating that he or she is not told what to write about. For the purposes of this discussion, Applebee (1991) refers to ownership as:

opportunities which occur when topics call for students to explore their own experiences and opinions, or to elaborate upon a point of view...to develop--and defend--their own interpretations, rather than being led to accept the teacher's predetermined point of view (p. 554).

Ownership also refers to "being able to make important decisions about the substance, form, and audience of one's writings in order to fit the individual's interests and meet the individual's purposes" (Spaulding, 1989a, p. 414). Over the years, researchers of classroom teaching methods have discovered that when students have ownership of their writing they possess a higher level of commitment to the writing tasks than students who do not have ownership of the writing tasks (Graves, 1983; Marshall, 1984; Hudson, 1986).

Educators provide students with ownership and responsibility of their writing when they allow them to choose

the topic, voice, form and audience as well as the subject (Calkins, 1986; Jenkinson, 1988; Spaulding, 1989a). In this way students are not depending too much on the guidance of the educator or the influence of the textbook; rather they are provided with an opportunity to refine, articulate and produce their own meanings (Rosen, 1986; French, 1986).

Frazier & Paulson (1992) believe that students' personal freedom, growth, development and sense of ownership can be hindered by unnecessary limitations. Collins (1985) and King (1980) suggest that ownership of writing helps to improve writer sensitivity, affects the student's views of his or her world and self, increases confidence and diminishes his or her sense of failure. Ownership of writing also allows the student to become one with his or her writing whether it emphasizes personal experiences (past or present) or fantasy (Britton, 1970b; King, 1980; Graves, 1983). An individual brings unlimited resources to writing and writes for many different reasons including to communicate his or her thoughts or to

make sense of his or her environment. Writing must be an interactive, discovery process utilizing creative skills, intellectual abilities and the expressive skills that each individual owns as a outcome of his or her existing knowledge (Moffett, 1968; King, 1980; Calkins, 1986). In essence, writing does not only affect an individual audience but also a collective audience.

Kucera (1995) conducted a teacher-research project by exploring the attitude of a test group of students toward writing. The sample included four sixth grade students in a small country school. Data collection was conducted using a five point Likert scale survey as well as student interviews. The purpose of the attitude survey and interviews was to determine if the attitude of students who hated writing changed after being engaged in a writing workshop. The students participating in the writing workshop believed they had something to communicate, that their writing was purposeful and took responsibility for the writing topics they

chose. Also during this writing workshop experience, the teacher portrayed less of herself which allowed more of the students' identity to emerge. The findings revealed that three of the four students had acquired positive feelings toward writing and the importance of communicating their ideas in writing.

Talbot (1988) conducted a study to find out whether it was possible to learn through writing. The sample included twenty-five grade eight students in a language arts classroom. Six of the students in this study used expressive writing in class, four used it at home to explore their feelings, redefine problems and as a way to find meaning through their writing. The remaining fifteen students revealed that although these students too felt that it was important to have ownership of their writing and to be able to write about personal concerns, they felt that the school environment was not conducive for writing to learn. The findings of this study suggest that teachers must provide the environment for students to have

freedom to write about their own values and views.

Similarly, Frazier and Paulson (1992) engaged students in a writing "pullout" program. The purpose of the program was to have students voluntarily share their writing in order to see how much improvement they were experiencing in their writing during the year. The sample consisted of six fourth grade students in an Oregon elementary school. The method of collection is similar to coinvestigation, that is, the students were allowed to reflect on their writings from time to time. The findings of this study suggested that gaining ownership during the portfolio process contributed tremendously to the positive attitude of the students toward writing, and increased their confidence levels as they selected their own pieces to write about. The most important implications from these three studies is that the research supports "ownership of learning" as a method of writing about what is important to the them.

Wason (1987) explored the development of beginning

writers in a grade one class to observe what effects expressive writing could make to the students' learning in a mathematics classroom. The method used to gather information was journal writing which assisted the students to communicate their mathematical thoughts. The findings suggest that ownership of knowledge was important to students and their writing development as evidenced by them using their own terms about the constructs that they were learning.

Similarly, DeFord (1980) investigated the spontaneous writings of fifty two-through-seven year olds. The writing samples of the children were presented in order to better understand the importance of children's intentions within the learning environment and how they obtain control over the written form. The findings from this investigation suggest that children learn to write by writing and that although it may not always be clear to educators what they write, their writing intentions are known by them. These two studies

focus on the writings of children and lend support to the need for writer control and writing opportunities to explore writing.

Spaulding (1989b) conducted a study to explore the ownership opportunities and instructional support for high school students' writing tasks. The sample consisted of 66 high school students who were enrolled in U.S. history courses in a suburban school located in a major metropolitan area. The method of data collection included observation and interviews with the teachers. The students were asked to choose from a series of three papers that they themselves had written. They were asked which ones they personally liked best and were provided with three conditions: ownership opportunities/no instructional support; instructional support/no ownership opportunities and ownership opportunities/instructional support. The results of the study showed that students were most involved with their writing tasks following instructional support and least involved following no instruction or

ownership opportunities. The finding of this study argue for further investigation of the interaction of teachers, students, writing tasks and ownership opportunities.

Collins (1985) conducted an experimental study of college students in a reading course to see if the use of expressive writing had an impact on their attitudes toward ownership in writing. The sample included 70 first year college students, half of whom were taught reading in a traditional setting and the other half were given daily writing practice. The results of the study showed that the students who were given daily writing practices showed noticeable changes in their attitude toward writing. These students also experienced improvements in how they felt about themselves as writers, readers and learners.

In a similar study of expressive writing done by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), nine, thirteen and seventeen year old students as well as twenty-six to thirty-five year old adults, (about twenty-five hundred in

each age group), were asked to write about personal feelings and ideas. The findings of this study revealed that the students were enthusiastic about expressive writing but that differences in the way they expressed themselves may be linked to their attitudes toward writing and their understanding of the social and personal function of writing. The research from these three studies supports expressive writing as a connection to students' attitude toward writing.

Hudson (1985) conducted a study to investigate children's developing perceptions of contextual factors surrounding their writing at home and at school. The sample included twenty children from grades one through grades five who wrote in a vast range of contexts. The method of data collection were interviews which occurred every three weeks during which time the students' writings were labelled and placed in five categories: ownership; setting; audience; purpose; and genre. The findings indicated that students of all grade levels cited more audiences, purposes and genres for

their spontaneous writing as compared to their assigned writing. The results of this study suggest a restructuring of the classroom to allow students to have more genuine and enhanced development as writers. While this study focused on ownership, it specifically looked at ownership of childrens' writing at home and at school.

Themes

It is apparent that several themes have emerged from the literature which help support this study. They are: ownership opportunities, student responsibility, voice in writing, confidence, greater control of academic endeavors and individual satisfaction. The literature on ownership demonstrates that "teachers can encourage their students to take ownership of their work by allowing them to control some significant dimensions of their writing tasks" (Spaulding, 1989a, p. 414). It should also be noted that the studies summarized in this review show that importance of ownership in writing for all levels of writers, from pre-primary children

to high-school aged students to college-aged adults and beyond.

Gaps

From this literature review, the gap that was discovered was that many of the studies focused on young children in order to obtain information about ownership in writing.

Summary

The prior review of the literature suggests that ownership in writing better facilitates the writing experiences of the individual and cannot be seen as a separate entity because it provides identity and meaning to the writer. The literature review also discusses and describes the feelings of students and teachers. If a writer is to improve his or her writing, the ownership for the writing must not be taken over by an educator who may not understand the intentions of the writer.

While writing that leads to ownership has been criticized in some studies because it does not always have a

place in the curriculum, it can be adapted in all disciplines. However, looking at the literature in total caused me to think there is more support for understanding and developing ownership in writing than against. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to further what is known about ownership in writing by working with three individuals with varied experiences in writing.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to investigate the thoughts and feelings of one teacher and two post-secondary students toward ownership in writing. This chapter presents information about the selection of the sample, the methods used to collect data and the data gathering techniques.

Description of the Sample

Selection Process

The participants of this study consisted of one teacher and two post-secondary students who were selected purposively. They were selected having indicated to me or to my advisor their interest in this topic and their willingness to participate. In addition, the teacher was selected on the basis that he or she could provide information about ownership in writing from the primary school setting. The post-secondary students were selected on the basis that they

could provide a broader perspective of ownership in writing.

The nature of the study was described for each participant in a consent letter given to them (see Appendices A & D). As well, information about the questionnaire (see Appendices B & E) and interviews was also emphasized. All consent letters from the participants in this study were signed and returned as were the questionnaires. The researcher made several telephone calls to two of the participants and the third was contacted by the advisor in order to make arrangements for an interview.

Method of Data Collection

The interviews with the two post-secondary students were conducted at the university and the interview with the primary teacher was conducted at the school of the primary teacher. The students' and teacher interviews were tape recorded and later transcribed. The tape recording of the interviews permitted the interviewer's undivided attention to the interviewee and to noting additional insights or questions.

Thus, the authenticity of the data was enhanced and the conversational flow of the interview is fostered by the utilization of a tape recorder (Patton, 1980).

Reasons for using tape recorders. Tape recorders are recommended during qualitative interviews because they allow transcription of data, analysis of data and interpretation of data to be done more accurately. The quotations and words of the respondent are contained in the raw data of this kind of a qualitative study. Therefore, the validity of the analysis of the data depends on how accurately the subject's explanations are sustained.

Instruments For Data Collection

In order to discover and analyze the views of the participants, questionnaires and interviews were used to collect data regarding the thoughts and feelings of the participants toward ownership in writing.

Questionnaires. The questionnaire given to the students included information about their writing experiences as well

as their feelings toward ownership in writing. The questionnaire given to the primary teacher consisted of information regarding his or her writing instruction.

Interview Process. A thirty minute interview was conducted with each participant. Even though the university professor had expressed an interest in participating in the study, due to time constraints and schedule conflicts, it became necessary to withdraw him or her from the study. After the interviews were completed, the data were transcribed and analysis occurred to determine the dominant themes that were generated.

Treatment of the Data

The data obtained from the interviews with the teacher and the two students were transcribed. In addition, the information gathered from the questionnaires and the interviews was compiled and charted to create a profile of the thoughts and feelings of the participants. The purpose of this study was to allow themes to emerge from the data rather

than begin with a set of hypotheses from which to work.

Summary

This chapter provided an outline of the methodology by discussing how the participants were selected, the methods used for collecting the data, the instruments that were used to collect the data and finally the treatment of the data. In the chapter that follows, I will attempt to discuss the findings of the study and describe the patterns that developed.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this chapter is to present the results of this study. In shedding light on this topic, it was necessary to identify, review and analyze the responses obtained from the questionnaires and from the interviews with the participants.

Identification of the Themes

In order to identify the themes for this study, the data (questionnaires and interviews) were transcribed, written out on chart paper into three columns (one for each participant) and analyzed for patterns. Each theme emerged from statements made by the participants on the questionnaire or during the interview. The results therefore, are arranged according to the four major themes that emerged from the data. In addition, the themes provide a form to recognize and describe writing experiences that help us to understand ownership in writing. The four major themes identified include:

1. Emotional Response to Ownership in Writing
2. Reluctance and Evaluation
3. Freedom
4. Control

Description and Analysis of the Themes

Emotional Response to Ownership

The first theme that will be discussed describes the emotions associated with the topic of ownership in writing as discussed by the primary teacher and the post-secondary students. The participants felt that what they write is who they are and they have a positive attitude toward writing about topics that are emotionally stimulating to them personally. Some of the emotional responses to ownership reported by the primary teacher and the two students included: (a) feelings of pride. These are cultivated because they can write about whatever they want, (b) improvement of self-esteem. They felt this occurred because they own the thoughts and ideas that they put down on paper, (c) writing skills have

improved. The participants noted this occurred because they felt self-motivated to chose their own writing topics, and (d) the development of self-confidence. They don't view writing as just because something has to be written, rather, writing is viewed as valuable and important to them. The results of the questionnaires (Appendices B & E) which was administered to the primary teacher and the two students, show that, the teacher and students possess positive emotions about ownership in writing.

The findings revealed that the participants generally displayed positive feelings about ownership in writing. The results do coincide with other qualitative data depicting positive emotional responses to ownership (Frazier & Paulson, 1992).

Furthermore, the participants said their thoughts and feelings toward ownership in writing were positive because they felt emotionally attached to the writing. In addition, their most common response was that their feelings about

writing improve when they have a personal interest in the topic and when they can choose what they want to write about. This finding is congruent with the work of Kucera (1995) who conducted a teacher-research project by exploring the attitude of a test group of students toward writing.

The following comments of each participant are illustrative of the theme labelled, "Emotional Response".

Graduate Student: "I think ownership of writing is connected to my self-esteem because what you write is who you are...when somebody doesn't appreciate what you write or you know they don't understand it, it's personally offensive to me...because I really think what you write is who you are" (March 28, 1997).

Undergraduate Student: "... so I feel that writing helps you to express how you feel...my emotions are expressed in my writing" (March 27, 1997).

Primary Teacher: "Well I guess it's more of I want them to be happy with what they're doing and I don't want them to be

stressed out about it and I want them to be proud of their final project so that it is something that they wanted to do not something that I told them to do...so we have a block of time when they can write and write about whatever they want to..." (April 9, 1997).

To summarise, the students observed that when they felt good about their writing, whether they received a good grade or not, they were able to maintain those feelings. However, to receive a good grade did make them feel better about the writing. That is, it's almost validating in some ways. The primary teacher felt that positive reinforcements allow students to want to write more about what is important to them. All in all, the data shows that the primary teacher and the students report positive emotional responses to having ownership in their own writing.

Reluctance and Evaluation

The themes of reluctance and evaluation will be discussed separately and then they will be grouped together.

This is because the comments of the participants seem to suggest that their feelings of reluctance are connected to evaluation and that evaluation gave rise to their feelings of reluctance. The first of the two themes to be discussed is reluctance and the effect it could have on ownership in writing. The two students indicated they felt reluctant to write because they believe their writing is going to be evaluated by someone else who may not understand it. The following comments illustrate the feelings of the undergraduate student.

The undergraduate student: "I wrote a paper...I felt I wrote a very good paper the professor didn't and the first time he marked it , he put a few comments on it. I went to talk to him about it with the intention of rewriting it and when I did, I got it back from him only this time it was covered with comments from beginning to end which I didn't read his comments because I felt what you don't know won't bother you. In spite of her professor's comments, she still felt she had ownership

of the writing but experienced feelings of reluctance to continue writing.

The Graduate Student: "Even now when I have total control over it (my writing) and I feel good about it but when I hand it over to my supervisor to read I don't hand it over proudly...I feel like apologizing when I hand it over. When I read it to myself I like it but to hand it over for someone else I don't feel confident about handing it over. When it's mine and I'm sitting there with it and I'm working on it I feel have control and confidence about it but when I hand it over and it's not here and it's being read over there and changes are being made to it I don't feel good about it" (March 28, 1997).

The primary teacher also felt that her students are reluctant to write sometimes because they have not always been given positive reinforcements for their work. She indicated that young children are threatened by being told that what they write about is wrong. Here are some of her some of the comments about reluctance.

The primary teacher: "At this age they are really reluctant to write because they don't have enough of the basic skills and somewhere along the line they have the idea that I need those basic skills in order to be a writer and I just say it does not matter" (April 9, 1997).

The second of the two themes to be discussed was evaluation and how it supported or hindered ownership in writing. The undergraduate student felt that the evaluation aspect of writing is intimidating which causes her to be reluctant to write and even selective about what she writes. Furthermore, she believes that "grading can be quite subjective because I have had occasions where I've written a paper and in my opinion I feel good about it because I feel that I did a good job but a professor may read it and in their opinion they don't find it good" (March 27, 1997). She writes freely about her thoughts only when engaging in "pleasure writing" because she knows this kind of writing will not be evaluated by anybody else.

The following illustrates the comments of the graduate student with regards to evaluation.

The graduate student: "I think when we mark writing or we evaluate writing we lose ownership...evaluation destroys the ownership...it leads to reluctance especially when you are told what to write about...there is no emotional attachment. I think the evaluation of my writing constant evaluation, not that evaluation is a bad thing but I think it could have been done more positively" (March 28, 1997). Here are some of the comments of the primary teacher about evaluation.

The Primary Teacher: "We do writing journals too and we started those the very first day of school and what I do now sometimes, (not that I use it as an evaluation tool) I like to see what they can do in a certain amount of time so I will give them a very broad topic and say tell me everything you can about say Spring you have fifteen minutes go...I am really conscious of making sure that they know that everything that they try is okey and everything is yeah good job good try lots

of positives...cause if a kid is constantly told like no that's not right that's not good enough they're not even going to want to try...it does make a difference" (April 9, 1997).

To summarize, the primary teacher and the two students agree that evaluation has a role to play but that if it is done in a negative way it could destroy ownership of the writing. Also, they feel that reluctance can be overcome by self-motivation, positive feedback or constructive criticism that maximizes the feelings of ownership of the writing.

Freedom

The third theme describes freedom of expression, that is, being able to express one's own ideas and thoughts in writing. Freire (1985) suggests that educators have much difficulty allowing learners freedom of expression and opportunities for reflection. Freire also suggests that, "education for domestication is an act of transferring "knowledge" whereas education for freedom is an act of knowledge and a process of transforming action that should be exercised on reality" (p.

102). Freire's comments seemed to be raised by the participants in this study. They felt that having freedom to express themselves through their writing provided more of an opportunity for reflection. In addition, freedom for them means that they can write more freely about their ideas and thoughts because they are comfortable with what they write. When they had limitations placed on them, they became reluctant writers which made writing difficult. The comments that follow represent the participants' thoughts and feelings about freedom in relationship to writing.

Undergraduate Student: "I feel that writing gives you the freedom to express how you feel without actually stating it...at times you must have a certain amount of understanding about what you're writing about which gives you with freedom to express your feelings (March 27, 1997).

Graduate Student: "I think what you write how you express yourself is who you are...it says everything about...it's like your essence...what's going through your mind...your freedom to

express your feelings. Then when you write who you are down on paper it's there for ever and it's who you are and then you hand it in and somebody judges it and you get an A or B or C" (March 28, 1997).

Primary Teacher: "Well I guess my main goal is that I don't want to turn anybody off of it especially at this young age and that's why I think I give them so much freedom to do what they want...I have a little fella and he's really reluctant to do anything and for the 'Great Author's Contest' he wrote a really really good story and some of the subject material was not something that I usually would encourage the children to write but that was something that he did and was really proud of it and I wasn't going to say to him no you can't do this because I don't agree with what you've got here. I didn't say anything to him about that at all because it was his work and to me that was important that he took that step and actually did something on his own without me having to be there for him all the time" (April 9, 1997).

To summarize, the need to have ownership in writing is developed by providing opportunities that allow freedom in writing. The primary teacher spoke of allowing the students to have freedom because she does not want to discourage them. The two students also talked about having freedom as a way of expressing their emotions and opinions. Each of the participants view positive reinforcement as necessary and important to the success of the writer.

Control

The final theme describes control, having the control to write about whatever you want to write about. Also having control means you are able to express your thoughts and ideas on paper without the teacher imposing his or her views in an evaluative manner. As stated previously, each theme was derived from statements that asked each participant to provide information about her feelings toward ownership in writing. In the examples that follows, the participants were asked to reflect on control in relationship to ownership in

writing.

Undergraduate Student: "When I sit and write a paper and I feel that it is good and I submit it and get a good grade on it makes me feel really good because I feel I have control of that topic and have expressed my feelings or given good arguments on the topic which allows me to own the writing. My most recent experience (with ownership in writing) is on a paper that I am working on presently is entitled 'The Power of Language: Uses and Abuses' and I feel that I could really relate to this topic because it's something that I experience in my everyday life...I find that it easier to write on this topic...it gives me more of a zest for writing. When I have no ownership of the writing I don't feel as self-confident...my reaction is to keep putting it off" (March 27, 1997). The graduate student also felt that she had had opportunities during the past year that allowed her to have control and ownership over her writing.

Graduate Student: "Well right now I am working on my project my research project and I feel I have total ownership over it

because I've chosen the topic, I've done the research or I'm in the process of doing the research and I'm writing the research up from my perspective, it's my information that I'm writing the way I want it to be written and so I feel I have total ownership over it. At one point I felt I lost that ownership and control when my supervisor was making changes on it but regained it once I understood his reasons for making the changes" (March 28, 1997).

Primary Teacher: "I think it's just having the control that you can do whatever you want and just being really really proud and pleased of what you do no matter what it is" (April 9, 1997). Having provided information on the raw data of this study, I will discuss how I analyzed and interpreted the data.

Analytical Comments

The questionnaires and interviews suggest that the primary teacher and the two students generally feel that having ownership is important to their own writing. Related to this finding is the fact that the teacher and the two

students express negative feelings toward evaluation of their writing because they felt it took away the opportunity for ownership of the writing. When the students write for pleasure they see this as more fulfilling because they know that the writing is not going to be evaluated. The students also felt that receiving a good grade made them feel better about their writing.

As stated previously, the students felt that they had been given opportunities to have ownership of their writing. The primary teacher also provided her students with opportunities to own their writing. These comments provide the need for teachers to be aware of how important having ownership of writing is to the individual. For example, when the students wrote on topics they could relate to or were not given by the teacher they experienced feelings of control and freedom. When they wrote on less familiar topics they felt reluctant to write and were intimidated by evaluation of their writing.

There was a difference in the students' and the teacher's views on evaluation. The students reported evaluation as being intimidating and judgemental. The teacher views evaluation as a way to see how the students were progressing. Finally, in this study students felt better about papers and topics that they have ownership over than about topics that they could not relate to or identify with. As well, it was important to have positive feedback which was sometimes seen as verbal or was based on a good grade.

Interpretive Comments

The comments obtained from the questionnaires and the interviews related in many ways to the findings stated in the literature review in this study. For example, the teacher and the students felt that having ownership in writing contributed to feelings of pride, feelings of self-motivation, improvement of self-esteem, the development of self-confidence and improvement in writing skills.

The question posed at the beginning of this study was: In

what ways does this teacher as well as two post-secondary students describe their feelings toward ownership in writing? Several other questions were posed which were (1) What does ownership in writing mean to this teacher and these students? (2) How does this teacher and these students feel about ownership in writing? (3) What does this teacher and these students gain from ownership in writing? The answer to these questions are summed up in the four major themes that emerged: emotional response to ownership, reluctance and evaluation, freedom and control. The study indicated that, all in all, the teacher and the students report positive emotional responses to having ownership in their own writing. They also reported feelings of reluctance which in some ways were related to how their writing was evaluated. Although the evaluation of student writing is subjective, it should not destroy ownership of the writing.

One way to do this is to allow students to have flexibility and choice over the topics (Applebee, 1991).

Furthermore, it is easier for students to conform to social pressures and peer expectations in their early school years than in post-secondary schools (Arnold, 1991). However, the study indicated that in spite of evaluation measures, these students still felt they had ownership of the writing.

CHAPTER 5

FINAL DISCUSSION

Summary

The purpose of this study was to investigate the thoughts and feelings of three individuals with varied experiences in writing about their feelings toward ownership in writing. The participants of this study were a primary school teacher, a graduate student and an undergraduate student. They were selected purposively, having indicated to me or my advisor their interest in the topic and their willingness to participate in this study.

In order to accomplish this purpose, the following case study techniques were used to collect the data: (1) questionnaires and (2) interviews. The questionnaires yielded knowledge about the writing experiences of these three individuals. The interviews yielded information about the thoughts and feelings of these three individuals toward ownership in writing, what ownership in writing means to

them and what they gain from having ownership in writing.

Implications

Although this study looked only at the thoughts and feelings of three individuals toward ownership in writing, the results of this study can have some implications for education.

These include:

- By being aware of the feelings associated with ownership in writing, educators can acquire understanding about what it means for students to have ownership of their writing.
- By providing students with more positive feedback and less evaluation of their writing, educators can help to minimize reluctance and fear of writing.
- If the feelings of these individuals is similar to what other individuals feel about ownership in writing, it seems only natural to enhance ownership in writing so that individuals can have freedom to choose topics and to express their views in writing. This area could benefit from further

study.

Recommendations

1. Duplication of this study using a larger sample size might provide more conclusive information from which generalizations can be drawn about feelings toward ownership in writing.

2. If more time was available to the researcher, a more in-depth analysis would have been possible.

3. A comparable or replication study might be carried out with two groups of individuals to discover if corresponding and non-corresponding themes or pattern emerge about their feelings toward ownership in writing.

Concluding Statements

After interviewing the primary teacher and the two post-secondary students, it was evident to me that ownership in writing is important. This research supports the belief that individuals should be allowed to write about what is personally important and interesting to them (Smith, 1982; Rosen, 1987). Furthermore, when students are permitted to write about their own experiences, they develop confidence because their voice is heard through their writing (Calkins, 1983).

Although the results of this study do not allow for generalizations to be made, they do provide important information about the feelings of three individuals toward ownership in writing. In addition, this study might help to provide a basis for further studies which propose to collect data regarding ownership in writing.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Student Consent Letter

Dear Student,

I am conducting a research study of ownership in writing. The purpose of this study is to determine the feelings of students toward ownership in writing. I anticipate that you will benefit from participation in this study by being able to make sense of your writing experiences. I would like your permission to participate in this research study.

As a part of this study, I will be interviewing you once in March at your convenience during a semi-structured interview. I will also like for you to complete a student questionnaire, also in March which consists of ten questions regarding your writing experiences. The questions I will be asking you are attached for your information.

The information that I will collect from the questionnaire and interview will be handled in a confidential and professional manner. All names, locations and any other identifying information will not be included in any discussion of the results. You also have the right to withdraw from the research study without prejudice at any time.

If you choose to participate in the study, please indicate your willingness by signing this letter in the space provided below, and return the letter to me.

I appreciate your assistance in this study. If you have any questions or comments about this study, please feel free to contact me at home at 403-329-6483. Also feel free to contact the supervisor of my study Dr. Robin Bright at 403-329-2066 and/or the chairperson of the Faculty of Education Human Subjects Research Committee, Dr. Robert Runte at 403-329-2454.

Yours Sincerely,

Nina S. Thompson
MEd Candidate - University of Lethbridge (380-1838)

(Please detach and forward the signed portion)

Ownership in Writing

I agree to participate in this study.

Name

Signature

Date

Appendix B

Students' Questionnaire

Dear Student:

This questionnaire represents part of a research study you will be involved with for the next seven weeks. The purpose of this questionnaire is to gather information about your feelings about ownership in writing.

Please write the best response that applies to you.

SA Strongly Agree
A Agree
N Neutral
D Disagree
SD Strongly Disagree

1. I like to write.
2. I have had at least one experience within the last twelve months that caused me to think about ownership in writing.
3. I like to choose my own topics when I write.
4. I like it when my teacher asks me to read my work aloud.
5. Unfamiliar writing topics make me anxious.
6. I like to write for pleasure in my free time.
7. When I choose my own writing topics, I find writing easy.
8. I read my teacher's comments about my writing in order to become a better writer?
9. Writing gives me a chance to express myself.
10. I dislike writing for school assignments.

Please make any further comment(s) you would like to about ownership in writing.

Appendix C

Students' Interview Questions

1. If you write for pleasure in your free time, please describe what, when and how you write?
2. What does having ownership in writing mean to you?
3. When was the last time you wrote on a topic at university over which you felt you had ownership? Please describe. How did it make you feel?
4. When was the last time you wrote on a topic at university over which you felt you had little or no ownership? Please describe. How does it make you feel?

Appendix D

Teacher Consent Letter

Dear Teacher:

I am conducting a research study of ownership in writing. The purpose of this study is to determine how you feel about ownership in writing. I anticipate that you and other teachers will benefit from participation in this study by reflecting on teaching strategies that encourage ownership. I would like your permission to participate in this study.

As a part of this study, I will be interviewing you once in March at your convenience during a semi-structured interview. I will also like for you to complete a questionnaire in March which consists of eight questions regarding writing instruction. The questions I will be asking you are attached for your information.

The information that I will collect from the questionnaire and interview will be handled in a confidential and professional manner. All names, locations and any other identifying information will not be included in any discussion of the results. You also have the right to withdraw from the research study without prejudice at any time.

If you choose to participate in the study, please indicate your willingness by signing this letter in the space provided below, and return the letter to me.

I very much appreciate your assistance in this study. If you have any questions or comments about this study, please feel free to contact me at home at 403-329-6483. Also feel free to contact the supervisor of the study Dr. Robin Bright at 403-329-2066 and/or the chairperson of the Faculty of Education Human Subjects Research Committee, Dr. Robert Runte at 403-329-2454.

Yours Sincerely,

Nina S. Thompson
MEd Candidate - University of Lethbridge (380-1838)

(Please detach and forward the signed portion)

Ownership in Writing

I agree to participate in this study.

Name

Signature

Date

Appendix E

Teachers' QuestionnaireBackground Information

- 1 (a).How many years of teaching experience do you have? _____
 (b) At which grade levels? _____
 (c)What subjects have you taught? _____
2. In your university teacher education, did you receive instruction in the teaching of writing? If so, please describe.
- _____

The Writing Program

3. If you were asked to characterize your writing program for another teacher, what would you say? What would you emphasize? _____
4. (a) What are your goals in helping children to write?

- (b) What do you want your students to take away at the end of the year concerning their writing? Please specify.

5. (a) What kinds of skills do you work on in writing?

 (b) What kinds of attitudes do you hope student will have about writing when they leave your classroom?

6. What do you do to help students find topics to write about?

7. What frustrates you the most about teaching writing to your students?

8. What additional comments you'd like to add about the teaching of writing:

Appendix F

Teacher Interview Questions

1. Do you allow your students to write for pleasure?
2. What does having ownership in writing mean to you?
3. How do you feel about ownership in writing?
4. What do you want your students to take away with them at the end of the school year concerning their writing?