

DISSERTATION NEWSLETTER

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Finding Intention in the Dissertation

By Joe Cambray, PhD

The scholarly preparation for writing a dissertation is a complex and demanding task. In delving ever deeper into our chosen subject matter, a vast body of knowledge is often accumulated. Since the dissertation is often the first major piece of academic writing for a person, though some students do publish articles along the way, the tendency is to try and include everything learned on the topic. The processes of pruning and editing a dissertation can be arduous and at times painful. What then are a couple of ways to manage this process without either overwhelming the dissertation or leaving out vital material?

Perhaps first is to differentiate the fantasy of a book from a dissertation. Certainly it is possible to convert some dissertations into books and that is a worthy pursuit which may open new professional doors. However, dissertations often necessarily have fine grained details that require more synthesis and integration by the author before being placed into the world. There usually is an alchemical digestion process required post-dissertation, a cooking and refining of theories, research, experiences, emotions, ideas, and images, before crafting a book for a larger audience than the insiders of one's dissertation committee. Those advisors, moreover, may be able to assist you in thinking through the process of such a transformation. They have all gone through the

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dissertation writing experience and know something of its arcane ways; additionally they are often published authors themselves who may know publishers and editors to approach as well as helpful hints to facilitate this transformation.

Another thing to consider is the intention that lives in the dissertation, for example, does "it" want to become a book? What unconscious forces has the dissertation process mobilized? What is the telos emerging from the writing process--often not apparent at the start of the work? Many Pacifica dissertations engage deeper aspects of the researcher, so we are challenged to explore, get to know and be in dialogue with those aspects of our being seeking expression through the dissertation. Their voices may not always be syntonic with the conscious attitude of the researcher, how then will you work with this difference? While all candidates face dissertation clocks, how do we reconcile those legitimate external pressures with the dissertations own pacing? To learn to live in multiple temporal realities is one of less frequently discussed elements in the writing process. Finding your own rhythm can be a vital key. The dissertation process offers the opportunity for sustained engagement of your mind with your passions and is most deeply nourished by a disciplined capacity for soulful, imaginative inquiry.

--Joe Cambray, PhD, Provost



Friendly bird on
Lambert Road
Campus. Photo
by Rachel Reeve.

The Tech Corner: Widows & Orphans

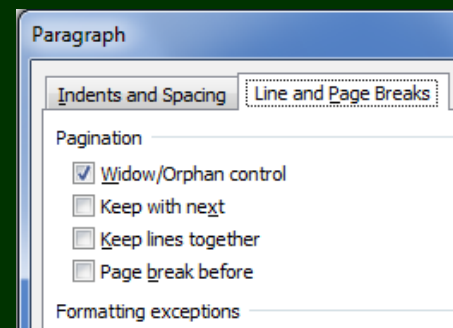
Widow: When the last line of a paragraph appears alone on the first line of the page.

Orphan: When the first line of a paragraph appears alone on the last line of a page.

Both APA and MLA prefer that writers *avoid* widows and orphans.

But how? To manually avoid in Word; under the "Home" tab, go to the "Paragraph" section, click "Line and Page Breaks," then checkmark the box for "Widow/Orphan control." (See image to right.)

Wah-la! No more pesky widows or orphans!



The Oral Defense

The oral defense is that wonderful day, that finally arrives (yes it does!), when the work comes off the page and is shared in your voice, in a face to face connection with others.

The guidelines for the oral defense include an overview of the literature review, research question, methodology, findings, and the future implications of the research. The preparation for the oral is usually left aside until after the final proofreading and editing is finished. I suggest taking some time in the final few weeks of writing to imagine standing at the podium, presenting your work. There are several reasons this can be helpful.

The last few weeks of writing can be difficult—so close to the finish line yet writer's block can still arrive and the last chapter can become elusive. Also, the editing process often requires deleting sections that do not fit anymore as the paper reaches its conclusion. Beginning to imagine the oral defense presentation may help hone your final chapter, and craft the conclusion. Considering what you want to include in your oral presentation can help reconnect you to the core of your work and give you the energy and focus to get the writing done.

Distilling a dissertation that has taken years to produce into a 30 minute presentation is difficult. Giving this final piece of your academic work the breathing room to take shape is beneficial. You do not want to rush the preparation. The presentation is the capstone on your years at Pacifica. As you sit at your desk, slogging through the formatting and citation rules, feel yourself speaking out loud the beauty of your writing. It is a productive day-dream!

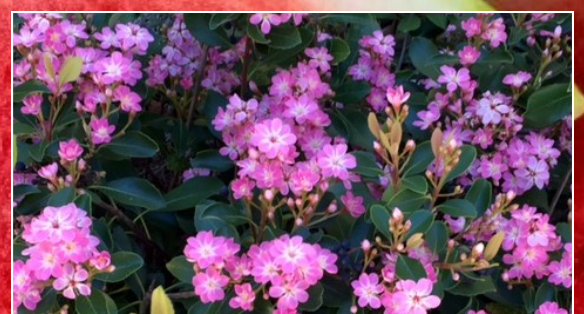
For me there was a vivification of my dissertation the afternoon of my oral defense. Standing there in the small Studio classroom, with the spring flowers blooming outside, speaking my work out loud, my dissertation became animated. It was off the page and alive. It was a moving and humbling experience. In Kaballah the humility that is brought to spiritual practice is an emptying of one's self, so there is space to be filled with spirit. So too, the act of standing before one's committee, Pacifica colleagues, family and friends, to share your work is a moment of offering them the deeply personal experience of your dissertation. And in that offering, there is a finishing of the work, so you can be filled up with what will come next.

The oral defense is the final moment as a student here at Pacifica. It is also the first step into where your work will lead next.

—Alice Arnold, PhD, 2016 graduate of Pacifica's Depth Psychology program.



Lush flowers
growing at
Pacifica. Photos
by Robyn Cass.





View from the lawn on the Ladera Lane Campus.
Photo by Joanne Hayden.

**DON'T COMPLAIN ABOUT
YOUR RESEARCH PROJECT.**

THIS WAS MY GOOGLE.

Recent Pacifica Dissertation Publications

Alice Arnold, Depth Psychology, *Sacred Illness: Breast Cancer and the Dark Feminine*

Andrea Bruce, Clinical Psychology, *Examining Diagnostic Bias Among Clinicians When Diagnosing Adults with AD/HD*

Carol Cruz, Clinical Psychology, *El Camino sin Palabras/A Road Without Words*

Craig Deininger, Mythological Studies, *Imagination and Poetry: The Transmutation of Revelation into Art*

Alexandra Dragin, Mythological Studies, *Re-Enchanting Aphrodite: The Feminine and Erotic Wisdom in Myth*

Jane Gaunt, Depth Psychology Psychotherapy, *The Necessity of Failure, Women's Severe Substance Use Disorders, Long-term Recovery and Relapse*

Elisha Gilb, Depth Psychology Psychotherapy, *Transgender Experience of Romantic Relationship: The Transcendent Function and Buddhism's Middle Way*

Marissa Gran, Clinical Psychology, *Parent-Child Interaction Therapy: Effectiveness in Home-Based versus Office-Based Settings*

Wendi Hill, Depth Psychology, *Go Down the Road a Ways, Turn Left: Regrowing Our Symbolic Hands*

Grecilda Hogstad, Mythological Studies, *Destiny in Memoir*

Veronica Marchese, Depth Somatic Studies, *Wholeness and Holiness in Marriage: The Catholic Sacrament of Matrimony as a Container for Individuation*

Jordan Shapiro, Depth Psychology, *Jung, Heidegger and a Phenomenological Amplification of Edginess: An Interpretive Inquiry into Being-with-Boundaries*

Lisa Wong, Clinical PsyD, *A Self-Perceived Needs Assessment of Individuals with Serious Mental Illness*

These dissertations are now available on [ProQuest](#) and in the [Pacifica Research Library](#).