



## Companions on the Journey

There were a few in my Pacifica cohort who began planning and preparing for their dissertations from our very first weekend together. Eventually, the time came when we had to submit our concept papers, focus on the dissertation hypothesis, and think about possible committee members.

Through the times together, gathering at the Best Western or at the beach, the bonding strengthened the individual commitments to push forward into the writing of the dissertation. This beginning can be lonely and isolative especially because of the years in a cohort that provided academic, professional, and even personal support. There was a shift of consciousness when we realized that three years of classes have come to an end.

A development that evolved between my cohort members and myself was a promise to join together to give one another much-needed guidance during the writing of the dissertation. We could see in one another the already-descending gloom as we sat together that last weekend of classes. We didn't want to separate. One of us said, "Shouldn't we stay together through the dissertation writing process?" We looked at one another and said, "Yes!" We knew it wasn't just to be together for the writing of the dissertation—though that was very important, it was also to be with one another in the continuation of rich learning moments. We understood that researching and writing our dissertations would require not just the ego seeking an individuated path of continued learning but also a collective of friends-scholars-colleagues with whom we had already begun the journey. Knowing this, we met together as a group twice a year until the last one had finished and stood for the oral defense.

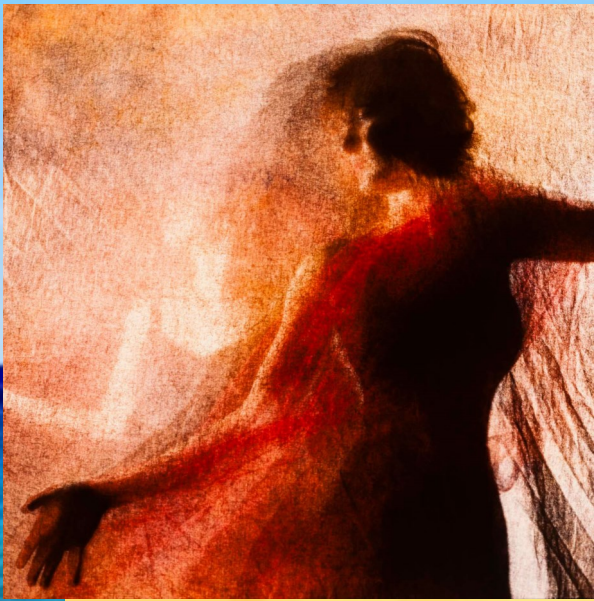
The writing of the dissertation can be a lonely experience. The times that I was able to travel and meet my dissertation group members—we gave ourselves a name, The She-Crabs, was enlightening, powerful, and life-changing. I acknowledged them in my first book because of the care we shared with one another during those years of writing our dissertations.

Reach out to a few cohort friends with whom you can share the lonely and exciting moments of your dissertation writing process. See if you can visit, email, and share a few intimate moments together by phone or in person. It will never stop enriching your life.

—Fanny Brewster, PhD, Clinical Psychology Core Faculty







## Dancing with the Dissertation Shadow

As depth psychology students, we are invited to explore and expand our epistemological point of view. As doctoral candidates, we are asked to assume a position. This polarizing conundrum is one of the many ways shadow announces itself during our academic journey. Muddling through the dissertation process, I found myself identifying with one side or another and created a process of differentiation. I tracked my polarizing reactive states, dreams, and projections. When I didn't feel like writing, felt stuck, or uninspired, instead of resisting, I allowed myself to be ushered into the imaginal realm; meeting and greeting the shadow aspects.

This 3-step process of noticing, naming, and embracing emerging shadow themes not only helped me finish my dissertation expeditiously, it encouraged my aptitude for embodied fluidity for what I call *dancing with the shadow*. I will describe this process here.

### Step 1: Noticing

It seemed clear my unwanted feelings and reactive states was shadow announcing itself. Romanyshyn explains "the work wants something from the researcher as much as the researcher wants something from the work." I became curious instead of resistant and started taking notice of these moments. That's step 1: Notice what's showing up. Pay special attention to opposition to what you want to be experiencing.

### Step 2: Naming

Naming is identifying who or what's coming forward, ushering the unconscious to the forefront. According to Jung, "if the conscious attitude were only to slight degree 'directed,' the unconscious could flow in quite of its own accord." To do this, sit quietly, take a few breaths, and drop beneath the chatter. Ask your body: Who or what is here? The key is waiting with an open heart and sincerity. Whatever is in the unconscious is there for a reason. It might be a picture, color, shape, figure, or sensation. Let it become clear.

### Step 3: Embracing

During this last phase, it is important to form a relationship with what has come forward. Jung explains "the essential thing is to differentiate oneself from these unconscious contents by personifying them." In this intersubjective place, transformation takes place and the next steps appear. Ask whoever has come, what do you want? Try not to judge what happens. I had convicted murderer Jodi Arias show up in one of my early reveries—not at all who I wanted! Yet, embracing her informed my entire academic journey, lead me to my topic, and specific focus of my work in the world.

I wish you courage on your dissertation journey. Embrace the gifts your embodied shadow has for you!

—Maryanne Comaroto, PhD, is a 2018 Depth Psychology, Somatic Studies graduate. Dr. Comaroto is a Relationship Specialist and Founder of The National Action Organization, "Committed to changing the way our culture values women."



*A life truly lived constantly burns away  
veils of illusion, burns away what is no  
longer relevant, gradually reveals our  
essence, until, at last, we are strong  
enough to stand in our naked truth.*

—Marion Woodman  
1928-2018



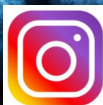
READING CAN SERIOUSLY DAMAGE  
YOUR IGNORANCE.



## Pacifica Web Links

[Dissertation Webpage](#)

[Upcoming Oral Defenses](#)



## Academic Writing Tips

### The Big Picture

Unlike fiction or journalistic writing, the overall structure of academic writing is formal and logical. It must be cohesive and possess a logically organized flow of ideas; this means that the various parts are connected to form a unified whole. There should be narrative links between sentences and paragraphs so the reader is able to follow your argument and all sources are properly cited. The introduction should include a description of how the rest of the paper is organized.

### The Tone

The overall tone refers to the attitude conveyed in a piece of writing. Throughout your paper, it is important that you present the arguments of others fairly and with an appropriate narrative tone. When presenting a position or argument that you disagree with, describe this argument accurately and without loaded or biased language. In academic writing, the author is expected to investigate the research problem from an authoritative point of view. You should, therefore, state the strengths of your arguments confidently, using language that is neutral, not confrontational or dismissive.

### Evidence-Based Arguments

Assignments often ask you to express your own point of view about the research problem. However, what is valued in academic writing is that opinions are based on a sound understanding of the pertinent body of knowledge and academic debates that exist within, and often external to, your discipline. You need to support your opinion with evidence from scholarly sources. It should be an objective stance presented as a logical argument. The quality of your evidence will determine the strength of your argument. The challenge is to convince the reader of the validity of your opinion through a well-documented, coherent, and logically structured piece of writing. This is particularly important when proposing solutions to problems or recommended courses of action.

USC Libraries. (2018, July 10). Organizing your social sciences research paper: Academic writing style [Web log post]. Retrieved from libguides.usc.edu



## Recently Published Pacifica Dissertations

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Grotto on Lambert Road Campus.  
Photo by Robyn Cass.