NEGOTIATED AUTHORSHIP: A RHETORICAL ANALYSIS OF PROFESSIONAL WRITER JOB POSTINGS

by

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ABSTRACT

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OF PROFESSIONAL WRITER JOB POSTINGS

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This qualitative study (a rhetorical/discourse analysis) explores the genre of job postings, particularly postings for writing-related jobs in the financial services sector, to determine how words like “author” and “writer” are used in the discourse community of a financial corporation (a pseudo-scientific “data”-driven organization). If one assumes there is a power struggle between the creative authorship (authority) of the Writer (Author) and the ideological authority of the Corporation, how does the Corporation negotiate with a consenting, potential employee/Writer? The space for this negotiation begins in the job posting.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

As a professional writer (by trade, not by title) who has been employed by two different financial companies, I have worked under titles such as Analyst, Coordinator, Specialist, and Trainer. Each of the positions required writing to be my primary responsibility. I have been recognized for having excellent "writing skills," but rarely have I been asked to write. Instead, I am tasked to "document," "draft," "compile," "compose," "add verbiage," not to mention also "creating," "making," and "doing" documents, along with various other activities that require the production of text. However, Jennifer Daryl Slack, David James Miller, and Jeffrey Doak proposed that technical communicators should claim their roles as *authors*. Their essay "The Technical Communicator as Author" encouraged not just a personal awareness of one's authorship as an aspect of writing, but rather the clear community recognition of authorship in the workplace. This challenged professional writers. The "author" title carries a traditional mystical quality, suggesting an individual who is the sole originator of creative, unique texts. The author is more elite than the writer, and certainly more so than the scribe. Slack, Miller, and Doak made me question my own standing. As I have yet to even "write" as a "writer", how am I to function (and be socially recognized) as an author?

With the intention of determining if technical authorship is possible, this study is a rhetorical analysis of the titles and job descriptions of writers in financial companies. And why not financial companies? Not only is this a familiar industry for me, but accounting-related services, with the ability to move money to generate money, is a wonderful blend of pseudo-scientific empirical reporting and creative marketing. The numbers are always interpreted, not just in their organization and presentation, but also in the interpretive text that always accompanies financial reporting; speeches to investors require far more laboring with language than the posting of straight-forward, standardized numbers.

For this study, I draw from the most popular online job boards to review how financial companies construct idealized descriptions of writing roles that both attract desirable candidates and dissuade unqualified applicants. Along with the notion of idealization (of company, of candidate, of role), negotiation of identity is a key component to understanding how workplace writing functions in this particular industry.

Many similar studies of organization discourse would require a full ethnography to more completely understand how writing works. However, this is a study of idealization. These are positions not-yet-filled by people not-yet-identified, and so the question becomes one of consent to corporate authority. Who—the employer or the employee—is the author in this particular role, this "becoming-writer" negotiation?

This study concludes with application for understanding ourselves as workplace writers. If professional writers can identify the boundaries of negotiation and the ideology demanding our consent, then we can better function within (and challenge) the parameters that we accept. The text of job postings functions as an offer extended—an open door for being, if one is only willing to accept it. How open for negotiation is that offer? How does language describing writers-to-be narrow their identities?

CHAPTER 2

SCHOLARLY REVIEW I: PHILOSOPHIES OF AUTHORSHIP

Authorship is often referred to as a modern phenomenon, arising from the proprietary issues of copyright and publication that arose only in recent centuries. The proprietary nature, the idea that the author owns the text, sparked a particular scholarly reaction in the mid-20th century. Like most contemporary reviews of the historical authorship debate, this study also begins with Barthes and Foucault and their debate as to the survival of the author, as well as another exchange of opposing views on the importance of authorial intent that occurred in that period, that of Wimsatt and Beardsley and Hirsch. This chapter concludes with an examination some more recent views on authorship that lend themselves to postmodern concerns of dynamic social relationships, technology, and ethics.

2.1 Authorial Existence Debate

Certainly an author does not inhabit the text, but a long line of theory counts on traces of authority as the ultimate, pure reading. But to what extent could the author have authority by staying in the text? This idea that an author might somehow remain present, internalized in the text for the purpose of controlling the reading and correcting interpretive errors, might be called a debate of "authorial existence."

Barthes strongly advocates the separation of text and author in his now foundational text "Death of the Author," an essay that could be called the single most influential piece on authorship. There, Barthes inquires whether it is necessary whatsoever to analyze the role of the author in connection with the text. Interestingly, Barthes' work recalls Nietzsche's theories about the death of God, and what that might say about the author as Author (God, Father, father, founding father, capitalist, bourgeois, etc.).

In one concise essay, he lays out his case that the author is removed from the experience of the reader when functioning intransitively within the text, explaining, "As soon as a

fact is narrated no longer with a view to acting directly on reality but intransitively, that is to say, finally outside of any function other than that of the very practice of the symbol itself, this disconnect occurs, the voice loses its origin, the author enters into his own death, writing begins" (1977, 142). Beginning with Mallarmé, Barthes creates a timeline that leads him to conclude that "the modern text" is "transformed" by the recognition that the author is a vaporous figure, the nonmaterial, nontemporal writing by which "I is nothing other than the instance saying I" (1977, 145). Reduced to the mere instance of an experience, the sense of history is demoted to the immediate understanding of here and now. Thus, "the modern scriptor… traces a field without origin – or which, at least, has no other origin than language itself, language which ceaselessly calls into question all origins" (146). Barthes claims that, having lost the opportunity to discover the author's "secret," the critic is also "undermined." Barthes transfers the focus to the reader, "the space on which all the quotations that make up a writing are inscribed without any of them being lost" (1977, 147). The reader carries these inscriptions.

Barthes reveals his own emotional engagement with the author's death in *The Pleasure of the Text*, in which he admits his "desire" for the author figure, who remains "lost in the midst of the text (not behind it, like a deus ex machina)…" (1975, 27). Despite having declared the death of the actual author, Barthes does not explain here why he might still "need" his presence. One wonders why the reader, here represented as Barthes himself, longs for a connection to the author, if the reader, as Barthes has said, "holds together...all the traces by which is constituted" (1977, 148). The author is both unnecessary and absent, yet the object of nostalgic yearning.

The reader described in "The Death of the Author" is a bit of a mystery, though Barthes credits him/her with tremendous perception and understanding, if indeed, the reader represents "the space on which all the quotations that make up a writing are inscribed without any of them being lost." Such a reader must certainly be learned, thoughtful, and appreciative of writing. However, this reader is apparently not part of "classic criticism" nor even part of the "good society" that "sets [it] aside, ignores, smothers, or destroys" (148). Not a critic and not a member of "society," who is this abused and oppressed, but wonderfully talented reader? This idea of the reader—or Barthes' ideal reader—is a fantastically intriguing construction.

The reader in Barthes' essay is not the only problem, which is evidenced in the fact that his proposal has been the target of so many attempted refutations by scholars over the last three decades (a fact that also verifies that contradictions and problems make for a lasting and heated argument, a crowning achievement for a published scholar). Much-debated contradictions complicate the idea of a nontemporal, absent author-as-subject, but Barthes' scriptor serves as relevant consideration for the workplace writer, as shown in the second section of the Scholarly Review herein.

Foucault's "What is an Author?" investigates subjectivity and the qualifications for the exclusivity of authorship as distinct from simply being a "writer." Unlike Barthes, Foucault accepts a more inclusive role for authorship in criticism, but he draws distinctions between the types of discourses that warrant authorship. Of course, I am interested in these discourse distinctions, i.e. why can't a financial report, carefully constructed to persuade investors of the financial state of a company, with debatable accuracy, be authored?

Arguably a response to Barthes' "The Death of the Author," Foucault's "What is an Author?" instead questions the identity of the author, not his total negation. Foucault proposes an "author function," which is described by four features: (1) texts with authors are "objects of appropriation" (property), (2) the author-function is limited to certain types of discourse, (3) the author-function is a projected construction outside of the "simple attribution of a discourse to an individual," and (4) more than "a pure and simple reconstruction," the author is present in the text through the "number of signs that refer to the author" (124-129). By outlining the function of the author in relation to the text, Foucault dismisses the rhetorical "theme" or "empty slogan" of death, in order to inquire about the space outlining the Author's disappearance, all the while noting the separation of the actual individual who writes and the abstraction of the author that is formed and known by the reader. While both Barthes and Foucault acknowledge the multiple roles the Author plays and the inflated importance projected onto the Author (as Foucault says, "what matter who speaks?"), the latter deepens the discussion by more thoroughly questioning the implication of negation.

Unlike Barthes, Foucault distinguishes between science writing and literary discourse to consider that non-literary writing may or may not require authentification (125). Foucault also introduces an explanation for those authors who seem to exist in meanings well beyond the limits of actual texts. In addition to literary authors, there are those who are “transdiscursive,” whom Foucault refers to as “initiators of discursive practices” who spark “endless possibility of discourse” (131). Foucault turns to the individuals who inspired Marxist and psychoanalysis, writing, “[Marx and Freud] cleared a space for the introduction of elements other than their own, which, nevertheless, remain within the field of discourse they initiated” (132). Because certain elements of specific texts may fall out of the larger scope of an initiator’s lifetime work, Foucault explains that earlier work is not negated, but it is “overshadowed” by more relevant work” (134).

However, Adrian Wilson points out, “the author function” is not free from problems either (though his objections at times seem to demonstrate a superficial reading of the text). Wilson claims that Foucault, in fact, significantly expanded on Barthes in three aspects: Foucault “problematized” the author figure, rather than overrode him; Foucault brought the author figure into non-fictional writing; and Foucault contributed to the rise of the understanding of the varied “text.” Despite these contributions, Wilson claims Foucault doesn’t adequately explain his understanding of text, or he is contradictory in his claims about what the text is. Secondly, the identity of the author is unclear: Foucault sways between a literal understanding of the author as individual, and the constructed concept of the author, particularly in the overlap between author name and proper name (357).

Regardless of the voices raised in opposition, which can spout either well-constructed or poor arguments, Foucault offers a significant resource for us with his “author function.” As he introduces a complex and flexible way of understanding the author in the real world, he also recognizes the problems of types of texts, in that types or genres are fundamentally tied to problematic issues of authorship. The author function is the remnant of the author that varies in intensity according to genre.

2.2 Authorial Intention Debate

Another well-known mid-century scholarly exchange occurred between Wimsatt and Beardsley and Hirsch. In *The Verbal Icon*, a collection of (primarily Wimsatt's) essays published in 1946, Wimsatt and Beardsley argue against relying on the author as a source of meaning, pointing out two key errors to this type of interpretation. While the essays concern poetry, the theories easily can be extended to the critical analysis of all texts with authors. In "The Intentional Fallacy," Wimsatt and Beardsley point out that measuring the quality of a text by its adherence to the author's "intention" is both impossible, as one cannot get into the author's head, and undesirable. To focus on the author's intended meaning discounts "critical inquiries [which] are not settled by consulting the oracle" (18). The origin of the text is not the text itself. Rather, the text must be read as standing alone. Once written, "the poem [and by extension for this study's purpose, any text] belongs to the public," claim Wimsatt and Beardsley (5).

In "The Affective Fallacy," the essayists claim that the text cannot be lost to its "results" of the response of the reader (21). The error here is when a critic is overly concerned with the very personal suggestion and feeling of the reading. A better and more careful critic will rely on the historical context of the culture in which the text was written, in order to better capture the text's meaning as meaningful in its time (39). This argument, although it seems somewhat contrary to the "The Intentional Fallacy," reinforces Wimsatt and Beardsley's argument that the text is public. The clarification is simply that the public is also cultural.

In 1967, Hirsch countered such arguments as Wimsatt and Beardsley's as he built his case for parameters for sound interpretation. In his "defense of the author," Hirsch addresses arguments such as these in refutations to claims like "It Does Not Matter What An Author Means—Only What His Text Says" (10). Hirsch claims that the "intentional fallacy" is a respectable theory that was hijacked and distorted into a "false and facile dogma", one that breaks down in once practiced (12). The text without the "determinate existence" of a supplied meaning is "merely a sequence of signs" (13).

Hirsch also refutes the claim that the author's intent is "inaccessible" by clarifying a more complex understanding of what is accessible or inaccessible. He points out the tendency to

“confuse a public fact—namely, language—with a private fact—namely, the author’s mind” (14). While the latter is obviously impossible to access, the critic is able to share in the author’s language, genre conventions, and other public norms and customs, considering, of course, that the author has used language that is generally accessible to readers and is not wholly “autobiographical” (16). Another error, claims Hirsch, is the propensity to “confuse the impossibility of certainty in understanding with the impossibility of understanding” (17). Instead, he advocates probability; the probability of understanding the meaning of a text is a useful and valid indication of interpretation.

Authorial intention is knowable insofar as meaning can be communicated through language. He writes, “although verbal meaning requires the determining will of an author or interpreter, it is nevertheless true that the norms of language exert a powerful influence and impose an unavoidable limitation on the wills of both the author and interpreter” (27). As far as getting inside an author’s mind, acknowledging an author’s changing opinion, or other attempts to see the author outside of language (all objections to intentionalism), Hirsch disregards as irrelevant for interpreting the text. Hirsch is also careful to note that his focus is on interpretation, rather than criticism, as to ensure his method targets the author’s intentional and shared meaning, not the critic’s personal preferences and opinion.

Wimsatt, Beardsley, and Hirsch, as well as those who follow and alter their theories, bring to light the role of the author, or the traces of the author, left behind in the text. Whether taking a psychological approach (trying to think the author’s thoughts) or historical approach (trying to think about how the author thought) or a more literal approach (trying to read what the author actually wrote), the interpreter is forced to at least acknowledge the author’s shadow on the text.

2.3 Contemporary Contributions

Turning to more recent contributions to discussions of authorship, I briefly offer three scholars who help bridge the authorship discussion from the dated understanding of texts as static, printed books by single individuals to a modern reality of virtual, changing, and collaborative texts.

Seán Burke targets Barthes and Foucault, as well as Derrida, in his critical examination of the movement towards more text-centered analyses. In a detailed historical account, Burke points to the influences of Saussure's arbitrary connection of signifier and signified, Lacan's anti-subjectivity, and Kant's transcendental conditions of knowledge, among others, in his investigation into the fall and return of the author. He is unimpressed with the strong attack on authorship that, he claims, only works to reaffirm the author's presence. Burke concludes boldly, "What [Barthes' Foucault's, and Derrida's] texts say about the author, and what they do with the author issue at such an express level of contradiction that the performative aspects utterly overwhelm the declaration of authorial disappearance" (154). He specifically takes them to task for blurring criticism, rewriting, and writing. The implication of methods (he includes Wimsatt and Beardsley's influences, as well) is that "the critic [is] is free to pursue entirely textualist readings without regard or responsibility for what those readings exclude or short-circuit" (168). Questioning the results of the demise of the author, Burke wonders,

> Critic or author? Critic *and* author? It might be necessary to arrive at a new writerly category, or to revive the notion of a classical pedagogy in order to adequately describe [these three writers'] situation. What is assured, though, is that they did not force this rethinking of the relationship between critic and author through declaring the death of the author. Rather, they have expanded and revised our notions of both criticism and authorship by writing their way out of criticism in the only way one can: that is, toward authorship (162).

While Burke, disillusioned with anti-authorialists, believes "the question of the author poses itself ever more urgently," other scholars are more willing to accept and modify Barthes to fit. In response to poststructuralists' claim that "the tyranny of the author has been replaced by that of the reader," Theresa Enos argues for moderated view of a rhetorical poststructuralism in which the writer and audience unite within the text (339, 345). She does not advocate a "return of the author" but rather the acknowledgement of the writer who plays an interactive role with the reader (or more accurately, "audience"). Her argument builds on Barthes' distinct dichotomy of

the author as fulfilling a function (“intransitive”) and the writer performing an activity (“transitive”) (340). Enos is comfortable returning to the classical rhetorical notion of persuasion, in which, regardless of the text—literary, rhetorical, discursive,—the writer is actively constructing *ethos* and inventing an audience. This moderate view, in which the writer, audience, and text “come together” harmoniously, works as such: “the writer projects a self (*ethos*) that invites the readers in, and, if the readers identify with this self, they, in effect, become part of that self, transform from reader to the audience that has been forming” (344). “Deconstructing [a text] is antagonistic—reading becomes combat,” says Enos. “…But reconstructing requires that the reader approach the text with openness in order to be receptive of the writer’s rhetoric” (343). This notion of “openness” of text, an area for cohabitation of both writer and audience, is more in tune with the current reality of responsive, collaborative texts.

How the writer can create this open space is tackled by Michael Hassett. Proposing a revision of authorship drawn from “Dramatism” and other theories of Kenneth Burke, Hassett also encourages a peaceful co-existence of writer and reader. In further developing the implications of Enos’ work, Hassett says that an “author” is not in an ethical position in that he or she is not poised to respond to readers. Writers, however, can be in a dynamic relationship with readers. He writes, “Using the term “writer” rather than “author,” then, will give us a constant reminder that we are creating a new form to match new conditions” (184). The “writer as agent, as acting upon language, while still … being acted upon by language” is better positioned to construct the necessary space for the readers to respond (180). The ability to create space for response is cleverly termed the writer’s “response-ability,” which “refers to the idea that as writers we have an obligation to ensure that our readers are invited to respond” (192). Again, like with Enos’ suggestions, the collaboration of writer and active reader points to an acceptance of postmodern social navigation. The author is not “dead” because someone (the writer) must be present to participate in discourse. Nor is the author’s intention under debate; in this collaborative restructuring of writer-reader/audience-text, the writer’s intention is to contribute to open dialogue.

This brief review of the scholarly debate regarding authorial issues is far from over. The works of Burke, Enos, and Hassett demonstrate the need for dynamic models of the text.

Positivist theories in which the writer writes a message for a reader do not function well in the real world. The open space for collaboration, according to Hassett, is where the writer acts with ethical considerations for the reader. This model makes sense within the confines of the workplace, in which individual endeavors and purposes generally are brought in line with a common goal. In moving closer to the discussion of job descriptions and the negotiation of authority, I consider some of the more specific issues of authorship in the workplace and the problems of basing conclusions on the rhetoric of job descriptions.

CHAPTER 3

SCHOLARLY REVIEW II: SOCIAL THEORIES OF AUTHORSHIP IN WORKPLACE WRITING

3.1 Issues of Identity in Workplace Writing

When scholars talk about money, business, and finance from the perspective of an organization as entity, the discussion tends to relate to that entity's control, power, and ideology, that is, its authority to speak. To begin to understand why this is, I approach the language of economics and organization of the structuralist Louis Althusser, who discusses the role of the subject in the context of state. His work is a foundation for understanding the postmodern cynicism of organizational ideology, and it also assists in better understanding subjectivity as later proposed by Foucault and Derrida. Althusser discusses Marxist reproduction of the productive forces, both the productive tools and productive labor, necessary for continued life of the State. Importantly, he calls the "duplicate mirror-structure" of ideology, by which results: "1. the interpellation of 'individuals' as subjects; 2. their subjection to the Subject; 3. the mutual recognition of subjects and Subject,...; 4. the absolute guarantee that everything really is so, and that on condition that the subjects recognize what they are and behave accordingly, everything will be all right..." (181).

Althusser's is perhaps a cynical view, but it stands that the ideology of a corporation requires employed writers recognize their Subject (employer) in order to recognize themselves as subjects—the title bestowed on them.

Althusser's model is a classic starting point, but more recent discussions that incorporate his views may be more helpful in understanding the current reality of organizational authorship. Much of these works revolve around what is being called organizational discourse, which is a combination of organizational studies and linguistic analysis. To better understand the discourse in the workplace, I desire to know how language works with ideology, identity, message, power,

and consent. Briefly, it works as such: for ideology to exist or be reproduced, subjects must actively consent to recognize authoritative power. Identity is established or affirmed. This construction of ideology and identity is achieved by messages. Messages are all the evidences that are visible.

Renata Fox and John Fox subscribe to this model. They point out Althusser's contribution to the theories of ideology and acknowledge the historical acknowledgment for legitimizing power (5). This requires consent of the subject. “Because a corporation's power is practiced through consent, the social issue at stake is not really about the corporation exercising too much power over people. Rather it is about people accepting corporations practicing power through consent, and about the social responsibility of corporations manufacturing consent” (Fox and Fox, 7).

Again, messages are the only lasting artifacts that can be reviewed, handled, and researched. The written message prevails as the best hope for understanding. According to Fox and Fox, writing is the “preferred” method of capturing ideology because it can be better controlled and distributed. “Through writing,” they claim, “ideas contained in a [corporate public discourse] communicative event are taken beyond the even itself and linked to the entirety of a corporation's discourse” (75). The spoken word may be “off the cuff,” but the written word captures a planned, strategic attempt at ideological persuasion that unites a branded corporation, creating it as an entity unto itself.

Writing by and writing for corporations must therefore be privileged over individual writing acts, in that it represents important pieces of corporate discourse that build corporate identities. Written “by” the entity, not the individual, corporate messages are ‘authorless’ in the sense of the traditional view of the lone individual author that speaks with singular determination. The writer employed by a corporation is therefore simultaneously privileged (as a contributor to the discourse community) and silenced (from speaking outside the discourse community). Because corporate writers are human, not robot, the duality of the role persists. The paradox of individuality requires a splintering of power structures within the organization whereby normative and creative authorities are held in tension. This is the “question of the stability and power of

discourse communities": on one hand, the "gatekeeper" of the discourse community establishes normative expectations, while the "novice" brings his or her own influences to the appropriation of those expectations and therefore alters the discourse community (Borg 400). "Novice" is less a notion of 'amateur' than it is of 'Outsider' or 'Other' who must be convinced toward ideological consent.

If the writer is an Author and thereby a unique individual free to remain Other, interorganizational tension escalates. To resolve this, I return to Barthes' suggestion to recognize the scriptor who stands in the negative space of the dead Author. The scriptor who replaces the Author has great potential impact on technical and organization communication. Writes Barthes, "Succeeding the Author, the scriptor no longer bears within him passions, humours, feelings, impressions, but rather this immense dictionary from which he draws a writing that can know no halt: life never does more than imitate the book, and the book itself is only a tissue of signs, an imitation that is lost, infinitely deferred.... To give a text an Author is to impose a limit on that text, to furnish it with a final signified, to close the writing" (1977, 147). Considering how corporations use and reuse, plan, strategize, and market through writing, the idea of an "infinitely deferred" origin is apt. An organization must avoid the Author that "close[s] the writing." A single individual cannot finalize meaning herself if she is to represent the corporation. The organization itself is to set the limit on writing. However, if this were possible, media and public relations professionals would not be necessary. As it is, the corporation must continually assert the message to combat the reader's or consumer's second-guessing of its meaning. So while the scriptor-over-Author model allows organizations to deny writers of authority, it simultaneously demands that the organization relinquish some part of the (imagined) authority of text to the reader. No individual author and therefore no corporate author.

While the structure of ideology, authority, message, and consent may seem too abstract and too theoretical to matter much in the practical, daily life of professional writers, other issues can have practical implications. Writing carries rhetorical power and authority that technical and business writers must face in their daily writing choices. This rhetorical power of choices is concealed in favor of a unified, empowered corporate identity in every document produced. The

tension between technical and business communication (here: technical as objective, business as subjective) is especially interesting in the financial world, as the rhetorical masquerades as the "scientific." In particular, the financial corporation, which is the focus of the empirical study herein, would attempt to deny rhetorical individualism, as financial "data," like scientific evidence, is supposedly nonrhetorical. However, reporting choices demand rhetorical choices. (Another issue is the corporation's proprietary rights on documents, which is inconsistent with modern understanding of authorship copyright. Although proprietary issues are not addressed in this study, refer to the works of Martha Woodmansee and Peter Jaszi for insight.)

The titles of author, writer, and scriptor aside, employed communication specialists may even struggle with achieving the status of "professional," according to some theorists. Writers have long worked for finding legitimacy in the professional workplace, a dilemma which impacts how technical communicators view themselves. Jim Henry takes up the study of elitism as he examines, for instance, why professional writers hesitate to use the title "writer" to describe themselves. Even to reach the status of "Author" or "Writer," one must first be prepared to claim a "professional" identity. It is the notion of "professionalism" that so concerns the contributors of *Power and Legitimacy*.

In a postmodern culture, however, these terms may not be necessary anymore. Gerald J. Savage suggests "professionalism" is trapped within a "modernist agenda" and that, as modernism is more and more outdated, the idea of professionalism is "less and less relevant or useful" (170). In a personal note, in the development of this study, questioning "professionalism" never occurred to me. I, the subjective researcher, assume that I am already a professional, although I am aware that certain titles like "trainer" are viewed as "a writer-plus," more advanced than "just a writer." I'll return to this at length later.

According to my understanding of Savage's claim, modernist professionalism is an attempt to establish a collective and recognized identity as being categorically distinct from non-professionals. Hassett best summarizes the problems of this conceptualization in postmodern times when describing "identification" and "division" as "the chaotic mixing of attempts at identification with 'natural' estrangement with its resulting partisan conflicts, the encouragement

'to believe that the important battle is between two Isms. Everything becomes Us-ism against Them-ism'" (187, Hassett quoting Kenneth Burke in *A Rhetoric of Motives*).

If the concept of professionalism (and by extension, non-professionalism) is outdated because it creates unnecessary classist divisions, identifiable demarcations functionality are still helpful. The people who write are "writers," even simply for ease of locating these individuals. If "writers" exist functionally in the financial realm, where are they?

As a writer by functional activity, not by title, working in financial industries for five years, I have noted that the literal "writers" tend to be outside the corporation, appearing as financial educators and commentators who speak about the industry, but not from within or on behalf of companies. Technology boasts other types of writers, such as software writers or technical writers, with limited commentarial or marketing duties. The majority of writers who write for the core financial business are referenced by other titles, such as documentation coordinator, policy and procedure specialist, PR or marketing manager, or reporting analyst.

Slack, Miller, and Doak's essay, which initially sparked my interest in the topic, had great influence in the scholarly discussion of technical communication authorship. In it, the authors promote "articulation" as a more functional communication theory for the workplace, as it better accommodates realistic power struggles within an organization. Even with a realist view of power structures, the theorists still champion the role of authorship in technical writing as it recognizes the personal contributions of writers to developing messages.

Other influential authors include Sharon Crowley, who examines Foucault and the hierarchy of workplace writing, in particular for its pedagogical implications, and Lisa Ede and Andrea Lunsford, who have authored multiple works that help unravel the complexities of the collaborative authorship and substitutionary authorship that occur in the workplace. Ede and Lunsford point out that, as of 1990, the idea of author as a lone, solitary writer was unrealistic, that, in fact, most writing took place in groups. They describe a more realistic approach of collaborative writing, particularly in two modes, the "hierarchical" and the "dialogic" (Singular 132). As opposed to the hierarchical mode, which refers to the rigid structure of clearly delineated roles in writing, the dialogical is described as "loosely structured," with "fluid" roles, and in which "a

problem [is] a strength to capitalize on and to emphasize" (133). In describing the limitations and shortcomings of study in a rapidly changing world, Ede writes, "Changes in copyright laws, in corporate authorship, in library cataloging systems, in artificial intelligence, in computer-generated discourses, in mixed-media texts, in networking systems, and in even more vast information storage, retrieval, and sharing systems seem necessarily related to theoretical challenges to the "author" construct and indeed to the whole notion of the codex book" (139).

Indeed, the current reality of the workplace requires dynamic social and cultural skill. Workplace writers are experts in mediation and assessment of culture, and are critics and influencers of culture (Henry 1995, 262). A more theoretical and playful approach to this aspect of the writer is explored by Savage, mentioned previously, who argues for a sophistic rhetorical view of technical communication. For a postmodern view of changing situations and navigation, he promotes the legitimacy of sophists as models for professional writers, pointing out the conflict between believers in "instrumental discourse" (such as Moore) and those who are proponents of "rhetorical discourse" (172). To describe workplace writers, he uses the terms "trickster" ("an agent of social change"), "medieval fool" ("socially marginal" and a boundary crosser), and "sophist" (for incorporating Michelle Ballif's "third-sophistic cyborg" and the cunning goddess Metis) (183-184). Savage also mentions Poulakos' "philosopher-strategist" as a worthy title for workplace writers (188). These additional terms provide a wider view of the dynamic community and social relationship inherent in workplace authorship.

There is another significant mark in the workplace authorship discussion. Ten years after publishing the influential "The Technical Communicator as Author," Slack released a "Postscript" to the essay. There, Slack addresses the responses she received from writers who had attempted to claim authorship for themselves just as she and her coauthors had urged, and she describes the forces working against writers who attempt to empower themselves as authors, as well as the limitations of using categories. Slack concedes that, while authorship is a proper description of writer's contributions, "[she has] come to doubt that the assertion of authorship is either as possible or, even if successful, as effective as we seem to imply" in the real workplace (194). It's "an unfair burden," and she suggests "a middle ground" of power and authority (195).

The writer subject (“technical communicator”) and their activity (“technical communication”) are both are “contingent identities,” unfixed signifiers that are made to mean whatever is practiced. “The trouble is that an identity does not in and of itself guarantee the realization of these possibilities [of expertise, relative autonomy, and responsibility], because identity is ultimately fictional, it is never fixed, and it is never entirely in one’s control” (200).

Slack’s admission of a fictional, unfixed identity may be enough to answer the question—while authorship in the workplace is possible, it is only possible if it is permitted to be practiced. That, in itself, cannot be the final answer for this endeavor, however. The permission to practice via power/consent is dramatically played out in the job posting. To better understand the job posting as a text type, I look to theories of genre.

3.2 A Look at Genre

Current discourse research is mostly considered in terms of systems of texts/genres (Berkenkotter, 61). This genre of job postings may be troublesome because one can easily imagine a complicated but unknowable story behind each word. In the practical workings of a business, a job posting is shaped under the influence of human resources policies, budgets, resource limitations, and organizational hierarchies. Emphasizing a particular textual characteristic may be misguided, since that characteristic becomes irrelevant in the real social context of the workplace, if, say, the posting is outdated (a portion of the text is used and reused for different positions over many years) or inexact (the actual hiring manager’s idealization of the candidate or the reality of the job can differ from the posting description). Therefore, it is essential to remember the temporal and dynamic scope of job descriptions (life span, scope of influence, etc.) rather than accepting an isolated text devoid of the ability to historically, socially, and politically influence. Scholars have debated how to understand genre, which is both a stable norm and a shared and flexible cooperation of author and reader, and the social and relational implications of genre must be grasped before making assumptions about job postings as a single genre.

Hirsch, who supplied insight into why one can look to the author and the authorial meaning for the interpretation of a text, also emphasized the importance of genre for all

understanding. He writes, "…the paradox regarding the individuality of meaning and the variability of interpretation can be resolved by saying that a speaker and an interpreter must master not only the variable and unstable norms of language but also the particular norms of a particular genre" (71). The reliance and insistence of a particular generic understanding, without the flexibility of understanding the author's intention, is "comforting but delusive faith of some interpreters who believe in the semantic autonomy of texts" (74). Hirsch discusses the many problems of genre, but concludes that chapter by stressing the vitality of "norm—a meaning that is stable and determinate no matter how broad its range of implication and application" (126).

M.M. Bahktin opened critical consideration of the genre to the communication of everyday language in his essay "The Problem of Speech Genres." Unlike Hirsch, who emphasizes the normative characteristic of genre, Bahktin advocates the flexibility and diversity of the various types of genre. Bahktin explores why the complexity of genre is resistant to simple taxonomies, although he does advise methods for organizing and understanding speech, either oral or written. His theory hinges on recognizing the utterance as separate from the words and sentences of language. Language, even with the inclusion of "context," is insufficient for capturing meaning because it is inherently neutral and cannot adequately account for stylistics. The utterance, on the other hand, is what might be called a complete, purposeful communication: a boundary is established by a change in speakers, there is a "finalization" as the utterance is completed, and the speaker must relate to others when speaking (71, 76, 84). The utterance is therefore a more appropriate mode of examining the genre, which Bahktin draws into two sets: "Secondary (complex) speech genres…arise in more complex and comparatively highly developed and organized cultural communication (primarily written) … During the process of their formation, they absorb and digest various (simple) genres that have taken form in unmediated speech communion" (62). Bahktin describes. "[Language forms] are stable and compulsory (normative) for the speaker, while generic forms are much more flexible, plastic, and free" (79). Of foremost importance remains the speaker's use of genre that is open to stylistics and flexibility, standard and appropriate for the situation, and diverse enough to accommodate any combination of creative and normative practices.

In the classic 1984 discussion “Genre as Social Action,” Carolyn Miller offers a valuable hierarchy for understanding the complex genre construction. She defines “genre” as “limited to a particular type of discourse classification, a classification based in rhetorical practice and consequently open rather than closed and organized around situated actions” (155). She describes “rhetorical situation” as “not material and objective, but a social construct, or semiotic structure” and emphasizes the role of “exigence” as the “core of situation.” (157). Exigence is “an objectified social need” by which the rhetor is provided a “socially recognizable form” or “social motive” (157-158). The five loosely constructed “features” include the following two: first, the idea that genre is a typification of action, gaining meaning “from situation and from the social context in which that situation arose” and second, genre as both distinguishable and separate from form and constitutive of form when there is “a fusion of lower-level forms and characteristic substance” (163).

Building on Miller’s genre theory, and introducing elements to the model that further account for complexity of genre, Dorothy Winsor proposes an “activity theory” that, unlike genre theory, “has the potential to help us stop thinking of context as a container in which text is subsequently produced. Rather, an activity system and the elements making it up (i.e., tolls such as texts, actors, and the object at which they aim) can be seen as mutually constitutive and always in flux (as, indeed, are the objects themselves).” Winsor also takes into account the “normal” tensions within an organization that arise from the fact of enveloping “several subsidiary activity systems with different interests” as well as “actors [that] are never simple and unified” (201). Winsor then approaches her engineering case study by examining the role of the text “in both maintaining and shaping activity systems” (202). She claims that “in composing documentation, writers are using text to create a particular enactment of an activity system, an action in which there is the potential for (although not the guarantee of) change and the exercise of agency” (203). She writes, “Producing documentation … carries with it the potential for both modifying and maintaining activity systems” (204).

Winsor discovered that as the engineers advanced in their early careers, they spoke more of “documentation” rather than “writing.” She supposes, “In activity theory terms, this

change suggests that producing documentation made sense in the activity system of the full-time employee but not in that of the co-op student" (206). She traced the change back to issues of claiming and negotiating responsibility for past and future actions and in establishing agreement of past and future events. There is a movement away from self-centeredness (or better, the isolation of being less socially responsible for the organizations' members and activities) to a more socially inclusive political awareness. She also noted that collaborative writing "regulated future actions by mutual consent, giving that mutual consent a more durable and, hence, stronger form" (212). Further, "a documentary text becomes a concrete tool around which people orient their participation in the activity system" (216).

The theories of Hirsch, Bahktin, Miller, and Winsor present us with a movement away from understanding genre as a static construction of language toward accommodating the active social engagement of language as necessitating genre choices. Genre does not subsist as text, but rather as the sum of all textual efforts made to accomplish a purpose. Careerbuilder.com postings consist of normative, predictable characteristics, but also variances. With the understanding that any variations likely point to the speaker's effort to accomplish his or her purpose, the reader is free to wonder what those purposes might be.

3.3 Rhetoric of Job Descriptions

Winsor refers to documentation as "one of the resources that may deployed to create relations of power and hierarchy" and claims that it "serv[es] as a tool for ordering the [activity system] group's members and for enlisting them in ordering themselves and others" (222, 221). Like engineering documentation, job descriptions assist in creating powerful hierarchy for ordering. Before embarking on the findings, I offer a look at how a researcher approaches a discourse analysis like this, some considerations for looking at the genre of job descriptions, and some insight into online recruiting.

As her epigraph to "Analyzing Everyday Texts in Organizational Settings," Carol Berkenkotter quotes: "The presence and significance of documentary products provides the… [researcher] with a rich vein of analytic topics, as well as a valuable source of information. Such topics include: How are documents written? How are they read? Who writes them? Who reads

them? For what purposes? On what occasions? With what outcomes? What is recorded? What is omitted? What is taken for granted? What does the writer seem to take for granted about the reader(s)? What do readers need to know in order to make sense of them?" (47, quoting Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983). Answering these questions allows the researcher to begin to unravel the social and cultural implications of a particular document. They are not necessarily easy to answer, however, even in a full on-site ethnographic study, which is not without complications either.

In the same essay, Berkenkotter includes a second set of questions for discourse analyses of workplace documents, questions such as "How are texts carrying out work?," "What kinds of purposes do they accomplish?," "What are notable grammatical, syntactical, or graphical features of the texts?," "How does this text function to influence audience?," "What type of social action does the text carry out, in what kind of situation, and in what recognizable form?," and "How does this text fit into a larger system of organizational practices?" (56). Because I am looking at writing (the actual postings) about writing (the documents that must be written by the employee-to-be), I am briefly tempted to ask these questions twofold, once for the job descriptions available and then again for the multiple types of documents described in the postings. However, these described documents are totally removed from the reach of analysis.

Rather, in this study, I am focused on the discourse of job descriptions, known in the world of recruiting as online job ads or postings, e-recruiting, and e-cruiting. Companies may advertise their openings and themselves as employers on their own websites or in online job banks. This study focuses on the latter advertisements. (See Jun Young and Kristen Foot's article, described below, for an interesting study using the career pages of companies' websites.) More or less, this is an examination of post-positivist theories applied in real, actual workplaces that idealize prospective people producing idealized, prospective products. In performing a rhetorical analysis, I am wondering how the assumption of a title, either "Writer" or Non-Writer, might work to establish individual authority. While the exact nature of the hired writer's consent and how it eventually plays out in the construction of organizational authority are unknowable, I can hope to better understand the first phase of the preliminary negotiation.

At least two previous studies provide assistance in approaching a rhetorical analysis of online job descriptions. Both relate to how companies use the job posting text to maintain and create ideology. Young and Foot conducted a rhetorical analysis of the career pages of corporate websites of Fortune 500 companies, specifically how each company sold itself to potential employees on its own site. They found the text represented constructed idealizations of the company, the work, and the workers (work as "career-building," workers as "agents," and employers as "benefactors") (61). In a discussion of idealization and concealment, Young and Foot point out a possible "gap between employees' expectations and actual experiences of work" (62, 65). The ideas of idealization, concealment, and actual-expectation gap are intriguing when considering how someone possibly desiring agency as a writer will read and respond to ads that either do or do not offer them that agency, and how the writer assumes they can "earn" that agency through the status of the job. Short of interviewing candidates for their reactions when reading job postings, this would be a difficult supposition to make in this study.

Staying in Young and Foot's theme of corporate marketing descriptions but turning from internal sites to collective job banks, Kristin Backhaus reviewed employer—not job—descriptions on Monster.com. In her review, she points out that "the task of business communicators [meaning, recruiters] is to find the appropriate words to pique the curiosity of the desired potential workers and encourage them to continue through the application process" (116). Some effective traits for marketing jobs include vividly written, concrete language, the inclusion of unexpected information, personally relevant information, understandable and credible content, and the inclusion of specific rather than general information (117). For her own study, she developed a systematic taxonomy of measuring and quantifying the instances of language that advertised the benefits of the company (for example, corporate social responsibilities, advancement opportunities, compensation, location, etc.). Like Young and Foot's study, Backhaus' research studies the marketing rhetoric of companies. However, neither study concerns itself with the relationship of job titles and job duties.

A job posting seems like a bridge, a space for negotiation. Even as the language of postings shape expectations and identity, it is important to remember the limits of relying on

singular texts as representative of actual and real contexts. Berkenkotter advises against allowing documents alone to serve as “documentary reality,” that “the researcher needs many sources of data to corroborate his or his observations” and “researchers should not treat organizational records...as being “official” or transparent--that is, as solid evidence of what to report...” (51-52). This is true. However, the texts of postings are intriguing because they are a frontline communication for persuading a person to pursue or ignore the job. These are actual workplaces but they are vacant jobs, concerning idealized, not-yet-real people and products. No supporting documentation is fundamentally necessary to assist a candidate in this stage. The online posting hangs alone in virtual space; its version of reality is the summation of reality.

In an attempt to get something like a grip on the background of job descriptions, two financial recruiters, CC and KD, were interviewed. CC, who has a master’s degree in Human Resources and experience recruiting for two companies, one financial company and one retail-related, is familiar with using Monster.com, Careerbuilder.com, intranet postings, and university postings for entry-level positions. KD has more years of experience, working as an internal recruiter with three different financial businesses and one media organization, as well as doing consultative-type recruiting for industries as varied as dance and aerospace. Before using online job boards “since 99 or 2000,” KD posted open positions in newspapers. She is also familiar with Monster, HotJobs (for the “more technical jobs”), Careerbuilder, company websites, online newspapers boards, and “more creative” outlets, such as associations, interest organizations, and university sites.

Both recruiters described using the major online job boards as a streamlined process, beginning with setting up an account and purchasing a package. Posting a job on Careerbuilder involves selecting up to three industries and three job types to allow a broader search and increased visibility. The recruiter can then paste in the job description, specify qualifications, and set the application process. The posting runs for a predetermined time before the recruiter is given the option to renew it. Any applications and resumes received are directed to the company for internal processing.

Currently, Careerbuilder is KD's company's primary recruiting outlet, as, she claims, Careerbuilder is "the leader" according "many current surveys and statistics" and is a "fail safe [that] works for finance," which is a large and diversified industry. However, KD's own preference is to use a specialized recruiting outlet that is "niche-y…where you can network effectively."

In their current recruiting positions, CC and KD utilize standard, approved job descriptions that have "very little room to tweak." Because many people may have the same title in a company, "nine-tenths of the time" or even "ninety-nine percent of the time," claimed CD, the job description is a template that is posted over and over, even though, KD suggested, it is helpful to "be as descriptive as possible."

If creating a new posting, rather than reusing a standard description, the hiring manager, "the expert on the job," will complete a standard form, which instructs the manager on how to write paragraphs on introduction, skills, responsibilities, etc. Another level of approvals, such as a recruiter or compensation manager, checks for reasonable wording, codes it for the appropriate pay rate, and modifies the format. This person might also ensure the job "sounds sexy" (according to KD) and "has all the pretty words" (according to CC). The job will be sent back and forth between the hiring manager and the recruiter for review. According to CC, job titles can be altered for "advertising purposes to capture the right candidate" as the titles must "mesh with what the industry understands."

When asked about considerations to keep in mind when writing a job posting, CC promptly asked for clarification, asking, "For the applicant's sake or for our protection?" Her question highlights the sometimes oppositional stances of employers and potential employees. Even internally, company culture and the needs or desires of the manager may be very different or even competing influences. "Some companies may want more pizzazz" or to sound as "enticing" as possible, said CC, while the hiring manager may be "trying to be as clear as possible with qualifications and expectations."

CC also mentioned recruiters' attention to a posting's attractiveness beyond the job description. She said, "You put on a pretty logo [and] talk about culture and benefits." Meanwhile, managers may choose to write about the position as vaguely as possible to be both accurate and

attractive. “It has to be vague because you can’t possibly capture every scenario… it’s a necessity,” said CC. For example, she explained, the phrase “contact vendors” that could mean “calling up and yelling at” a vendor about a problem or it could involve first class meetings with high-profile executives. For this, CC used the term “vague specifics,” explaining, “You want to weed people out…and still be attractive.”

CC and KD both discussed the problems using sites such as Careerbuilder, mostly due to recruiting from a large pool of diverse candidates less familiar with the industry, company, or position. There lacks the “name brand recognition” of the company name, said CC, which would require additional advertising and information of the company. Nor is there a way to reach a focused group of similar professionals, such as with small professional networking organizations, in which the candidates are “educated” and well-researched. In comparison, “everybody and their dog” uses the large sites, said CC, and everybody “thinks they can do [the job].” This anonymity is further complicated when a large site automatically submits applications based on key words without the candidate’s knowledge. Candidates may be called for interviews but are unaware of the posting. For recruiters, though, these issues are balanced by the streamlined process that minimizes the work of creatively writing each detail of a job posting.

As financial recruiters using Careerbuilder, CC and KD seem less concerned with overtly protecting and reproducing corporate ideology or negotiating authoritative hierarchies and more focused on the day-to-day task of finding qualified candidates. However, even as they play an important role in the construction of language (after all, these are the people responsible for adding “pizzazz” and “pretty words”), they are both acutely aware of the internal tensions in the company—often corporate ideology (“branding”) running counter to the practical needs of managers, whom KD called “the experts.” Aware of the different realms involved and their position in that structure, they clearly protect the companies they represent against a flow of undesirable applicants. Even as they recognize the benefits of using a far-reaching and streamlined recruiting tool, the effort required to communicate a distinct message is taxing. These recruiters would far prefer a smaller, personalized discourse community that shares a more common language. These tensions behind the creation of a job posting—internal conflict, fear of

external power struggles, and the toll of identifying a shared language—affirm the importance for this study to carefully examine the discourse. Even if the structure of the negotiation is not visible in the text, job postings maintain the traces of conflict in culture and language.

CHAPTER 4

TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

4.1 Methodology

Much of the existing research in technical writing has been ethnographic, what Susan Katz calls “thick description” (24). A complete and internal workplace study is very revealing as to the political and social constructs of writing, as well as to how the actual development and use of documents differs from their proposed functions. The time-consuming and resource-intensive method of ethnography is not absolutely necessary to begin a discussion based around a particular genre. Besides, ethnography is not without problems, even with its broad opportunities for gains in knowledge. When a researcher becomes closely involved with and within a discourse community, there are issues of the validity and reliability of findings, questionable claims of cause/effect, and dubious claims of generalizability, along with subjective narrative choices (Katz 36). Nancy Roundy Blyler mentions the ethnographic researcher may confront issues of power arising from personal involvement, specifically of domination and exclusion in ethnographic studies (144).

Instead, a specific genre can lend itself to the external scrutiny of a textual analysis. Determining an exact structure for this textual analysis is difficult, however, considering the variety of guidance for such endeavors. According to Berkenkotter, there are three approaches to textual analysis: rhetorical analysis (identifying the argument strategy employed and the “situational, sociohistorical, and discursive contexts”), a more quantitative discourse analysis (locating “linguistic and grammatical elements,” by which the aim is for “plausible interpretation”), and interdisciplinary genre analysis (a blend of rhetorical and discursive analyses, as well as an acknowledgment of the intertextual dependency of organizational documents) (48-50). These categories, however, seem problematic in their unclear division.

In their review of documents produced within the United Nations, Ray Donahue and Michael Prosser described a simpler understanding of forms of analysis, explaining, “Discourse analysis and rhetorical analysis tend to overlap in many respects, and the terms, in fact, are sometimes used synonymously. However, if one had to state their essential difference, it might be this regarding their emphasis: Discourse analysis tends to be text-oriented and descriptive; traditional rhetorical analysis, author-oriented and prescriptive; and contemporary rhetorical analysis, audience-oriented and critical” (2). Using these definitions, however, this approach of textual analysis might be a combination of all three: the discursive (“What terminology and tenses are used to describe jobs?”), the traditional rhetorical (“How is the company using language to create their ideal candidate-to-be?”), and contemporary rhetorical (“Does the language shape the image of interested applicants?”).

A third approach, even more usable because it does not attempt to establish a binary opposition between discourse/discursive analysis and rhetorical analysis, but instead makes the latter a component of the former, is the method of Mary Sue MacNealy. In this method, discourse or text analysis is a more flexible, adaptable systematic method composed of “any one of at least four constructs: style, structure, rhetorical strategies, and semantic information” (136). Her approach is more concerned with selecting adaptable “tools” for an individualistic “purpose” rather than drawing distinctive categories of methods based solely on the appearance of a resulting research genre; that is, whether the final research seems to be prescriptive or critical or sociohistorical or some other style does not closely correlate with the textual characteristics that were studied (131). With some generalizations and overlapping of categories, this study most closely mirrors MacNealy’s description of rhetorical analysis, which is used to examine techniques of persuasion.

Of course, like ethnography, a textual analysis is not free from difficult considerations. Like with all research, findings may be very inconclusive. If results are not repeatable, they may be deemed invalid. With a textual analysis, many conclusions may be especially tentative—to be taken as plausible interpretations at best. This notion of the researchers making assumptions and offering opinions is problematic for me, at least initially. Two considerations that confront me are

“What are my qualifications?” and “What paradigm orientation and assumptions undergird the study?” (Breuch 14). Aware of my subjectivity, I confess with full disclosure that this researcher has (1) used job boards to locate every job I've had in my adult career, (2) applied for similar positions as those being reviewed, and (3) assisted with writing job descriptions as an employee of a financial corporation. Rather than requiring strict objectivity, this study benefits from the personal experience of the researcher. I prefer to think that I have insight into and passion for the subject matter.

I also question if the textual analysis study lacks by skipping a deeper cultural approach, such as acknowledging that the expectation gleaned from a posted job description may be disconnected from actual expectations in the minds of recruiters, but not attempting to answer that question. Findings can only be interpretive suggestions.

4.1.1. Scope and Parameters

The scope of the study includes examining the portions of text that describe (1) the job title; (2) the position duties and responsibilities; (3) the education, experience, and skill requirements and preferences; and (4) any key terms selected by the recruiter (job type, industry, etc.) that appear in a panel on the page.

Even limited to these four aspects of the job, the text is not a straightforward communication of a single desire. Consider its history and the great many influences on the job description as posted. Conceivably, any number of individuals may have influenced the job posting in any number of ways: it is not difficult to imagine that an HR employee created a job template, a staff writer researched the job and completed the template, the hiring manager completed a draft, a higher manager rewrote it, an HR manager edited it, a compensation manager altered it, and a recruiter tweaked it. Even as the production process behind the text cannot be known, the four elements should provide enough evidence to string together a cohesive text for examination: how does the text construct the writer.

Other elements clearly are not central to understanding the ways in which the text accomplishes this. Therefore, beyond the parameters of the study are characteristics of the text that may have more to do with the company’s image and branding, rather than their ideology

towards writers and writing (see, again, Backhaus and Young and Foot). Areas not examined include methods that company use to promote themselves and their openings, such as any text describing the company or the inclusion of logos and slogans. And while salary may be a good indicator of the "status" of the job, I have not examined pay, benefits, or other compensation that may attract writing candidates. Also determined irrelevant are the application submission procedures and, because they are not consistently used by many companies, long lists of key words included by recruiters hoping to trigger search hits. Job postings also include visual communication elements such as color, font, interactivity, graphics, composition and organization, and number of characters. Because these elements are very likely developed and implemented by graphic designers (or, since design can be costly, by non-designers who attempt to do their best), I must ask the reader to overlook design as key to any "message."

In order to focus on the four selected parts of the text and to limit any temptation of being influenced by the parts of the job posting outside the set parameters, the desired text was copied and pasted into a new document. While not every job position includes all four elements, any elements that appeared were copied and included. All formatting was adjusted for uniformity prior to a closer reading.

In general, the selected portions of text reveal how key terms are used and how that usage relates to writing. I am attempting to pick up on how terms like "writer" and "author" and "write" are used ideally in the workplace, as the job posting represents the idealization of the company. My specific questions are:

1. Is writing actually a primary function in this job? If "writing" is not a primary function, has this word or other key terminology been borrowed and standardized in other ways (for example, quantifying references to web authoring and loan underwriters)?
2. If writers don't write, what do they do? What might the choices of these various verbs indicate about the position?
3. What is the grammatical usage of the key terms? How might nonstandard usage transform otherwise common words into industry jargon?

4. What types of texts or genres are within the responsibilities of writer? Do job titles and job activities tend to align with particular types of production?
5. What are other skills are necessary for writers, beyond writing and editing skills? How important is a financial or accounting aptitude for writers in the financial industry?
6. Are certain departments or job types more likely to use the job title “writer’? How might marketing, public relations, communications, operations, training, information technology, and analytics areas demonstrate different vocabularies?
7. What sorts of education, experience, and technical requirements might be appropriate and expected for someone assuming a particular job title?

4.1.2. Preliminary Analysis and Predictions

On March 26, 2008, a few preliminary Internet searches were conducted to ensure that plenty of jobs would be available for review, and that the number of results correlated with general perceptions of the state of the job market. Searching three of the top job boards (Monster.com, Careerbuilder.com, and HotJobs.com) revealed tens of thousands of postings in financial industries. Thousands of postings include the verb “write” in the description, but very few of them appeared to be associated with a person who is a “writer.” As anticipated, only a few dozen results included the term “author.” These counts supported my proposal sufficiently to continue pursing the study. (See Appendix A, Table A.)

At this point, some preliminary predictions seemed appropriate. Using the results of the preliminary analysis, which was simply tallying search results using three job boards, and my own personal experiences, I predicted findings for each area outlined in the Scope and Parameters section above.

1. Prediction for question 1: I anticipate the verb “write” to be a duty associated with a great variety of job titles, some that involve the traditional sense of writing, some that do not.
2. Prediction for question 2: I expect that there will be many synonyms of “write,” such as “compose” and “draft.” Because “to write” or “to author” can imply

creative origination and therefore authoritative power, these alternative terms might be used even more frequently in jobs that require fewer high-level skills or decision-making responsibilities.

3. Prediction for question 3: Because of traditional associations made with the word, I do not expect to see “author” unless in the context of “web/software authoring.”
4. Prediction for question 4: I expect the types of texts produced will show some correlation between the job titles and selected verbs and genres, such as “specialists compose” reports and policies, while “writers write” customer communications and marketing materials.
5. Prediction for question 5: Because writing in any workplace requires many other business and social skills, I predict seeing necessary aptitude in areas such as collaboration, negotiation, teamwork, project management, and the ability to improve processes, for example. However, I do not expect accounting skills to be of great importance.
6. Prediction for question 6: I expect to find “writer” is included within divisions that encourage creativity, like marketing and public relations, far more than in the more technical areas like analytics.
7. Prediction for question 7: I anticipate that while education, experience, and skill requirements will vary, some patterns will emerge.

4.2 Empirical Evidence of Subjectivity in the Financial Workplace

The actual study required a search of jobs on Careerbuilder.com in the “Finance” category (search A) and then searches within the Finance category by three different key terms: “writer,” “author,” and “write” (searches B, C, and D). Because findings are automatically sorted by relevance, I then selected the results of the first few pages as the “most relevant” for review and then excluded duplicate postings. Because search B and search D yielded a high number of findings, not every posting in that category ultimately reviewed. (See Table 4.1.)

The second step (search E) was a more in-depth analysis in which I closely read several dozen job postings to locate those that appeared to be primarily writing jobs, regardless of the specific terminology included in the job description. The job postings were collected by searching with various writing-related terms and combinations of terms.

Table 4.1 Search Results in the Finance Category by Key Terms

Search	Date Searched	Term(s) Searched	Total Results	Results Reviewed
A	6/9/2008	*none*	40,996	*NA*
B	6/9/2008	Writer	151	29
C	6/9/2008	Author	30	23
D	6/9/2008	Write	1,066	46
E	6/30/2008	Write, document, edit, content, communication, etc.	unlimited	10

Search A simply established a ratio of job postings with these terms compared to all job postings in the Finance category. Considering, for example, that only 30 of the nearly 41,000 Finance jobs included the word “author” allows us to keep in perspective the rarity of the term. The findings of searches B, C, D, and E showed sufficient findings and a closer review was conducted. Those findings are highlighted in the following sections.

4.2.1. “Writer”

Of the 151 results returned by searching the Finance category by “writer,’ the first 32 postings seem relevant. Starting at the thirty-third job result, the term “writer” seemed less relevant to the job posting. (For example, the returned postings included such usages of the term as “...X Company is the country's third-largest writer of both private passenger automobile and homeowners insurance...” and “...Utilizes the installed software and report writer effectively and works with IT...”). Of the first 32 postings, I excluded three duplicates and reviewed 29 job descriptions. The titles varied, as did the types of writing produced. (See Appendix A, Table B.)

One interesting result of searching “writer” in the Finance category is the reusing of text: nine of the jobs were from a single recruiting company that used very similar text and titles to describe different jobs for different employers around the country. The other 20 jobs were each posted by different sources: 18 from 11 different employers and 7 recruiters, while two postings did not include the posting company’s name.

The recruiter who posted nine of the “writer” jobs had clearly written these job descriptions for reuse, particularly in using the phrase “RFP Writer” (an abbreviation of Request for Proposal). Four of the seven RFP jobs were from this recruiter. (A quick search of “RFP” under “Finance” revealed other posting companies using titles such as Manager, Analyst, and Specialist in conjunction with RFP.) The repetition of titles by a single company supports the predicted limited use of the job title “Writer” in the financial industry.

Most of the 29 results were apparently relevant because “writer” was in the title. Several included “writer” in the text of the duties of the job. There were two instances of “writer” used as jargon (the job title Loan Underwriter and a reference to skill with the software Crystal Reports Writer). (See Table 4.2.)

Table 4.2 Usage of the Term “Writer”

Usage of “Writer”	Job Title	Instances
Within job title	Ex: Investment Writer, Advertising Writer, Report Writer, etc.	24
Job title "Loan underwriter"	Service Writer	1
Software Skill ("Crystal Report Writer")	Clinical Performance Analyst	1
Duty: "help our writer write, review, and edit)	Content Developer	1
Duty: “edit work of writers”	Financial Editor	1
Duty: “manage writers”	Institutional RFP Manager	1
Total		29

Even with a search within the Finance category, the results were spread across genres of writing or various writing functions. Twelve positions were related to marketing and product collateral, investment commentary, newsletter and brochure content, or some other creative text. None of the job descriptions described writing specific investment plans or financial and accounting reports. (See Table 4.3.)

Twenty-three of the 29 position specifically required a 4-year degree. Of these, five specified that the degree be in business, finance, economics, or a related degree. Only three requested a degree in journalism, marketing, or communications. One job recommended degrees from either of the two categories. Fourteen of the positions did not specify a particular degree. The education requirements specified in the postings indicate very little emphasis on an English degree (mentioned in one posting) or a writing degree (not mentioned at all). Of the twelve

Marketing and Commentary positions, only two specifically requested a journalism, marketing, or communications degree. (See Table 4.4.)

Table 4.3 Writing Duties Related to the Keyword "Writer"

Genre/Writing Function	Examples of Writing Duties (with Job Title)	Instances
Marketing/Commentary/ Creative	"Principle Responsibilities: Write and create commentary and content…Key outputs may include: Mutual fund shareholder reports; repeatable portfolio commentary…; commentary on market/portfolio events…; investment and advisory content…" (Investment Writer)	12
Requests for Proposals (RFPs)	"Duties and Responsibilities: Answer and edit RFP's and RFI's, Due diligence Questionnaires and all other requests for information; Update and maintain all RFP language in the RFP Machine database…" (Retail Senior RFP Writer)	7
Technical/IT	"The Report Writer will design, develop, test, and implement SQL reports, queries, and provide subsequent SQL support…" (Report Writers)	5
Education/Training	"Develops paper-based and web-based training materials…; Develops materials (such as overheads, prepared flipcharts, and posters) to supplement training materials…; Revises and updated materials…" (Instructional Designer/Technical Writer)	3
No Writing Function ("writer" as jargon)	"Loan Underwriter" (Service Writer)	2
Financial Plans and Accounting Reports		0
Total		29

Table 4.4 Educational Requirements of Various Writing Functions

Writer Function	4-year Degree (unspec.)	No Education Specified	Business, Finance, Economics, or Accounting	Journalism, Marketing, or Communi-cations	Either Business or Journalism	Total
Marketing/ Commentary	5	2	2	2	1	12
RFPs	7					7
IT	2	1	2			5
Educational		1	1	1		3
Other		2				2
Total	14	6	5	3	1	29

Other findings showed only one position ("Institutional RFP Manager") had supervisory duties. Twenty-five positions included requirements for years of experience: entry level to three years (7), four to six years' experience (12), or at least seven years (6).

4.2.2. "Author"

The search for "author" returned a total of 30 postings, which is significantly less than the search for keyword "writer" (151 results). Seven duplicates were removed, leaving 23 unique postings from 22 employers or recruiters. (See Appendix A, Table C.)

The 23 jobs could be categorized in the following types: accountant, auditor, or financial analyst (12), IT developer or analyst (3), financial writer (2), other financial role (2), and other (4). The four "other" results (researcher, engineer, etc.) seemed at odds with the anticipated results. However, a closer reading of the descriptions revealed these postings may have been included in the "relevant" findings as a close match to "author" rather than part of the Finance category. For example, one researcher position referred to a writer of academic, peer-reviewed publications as "an author." This researcher or "author" position was more closely aligned with healthcare than a financial industry, but was apparently relevant enough to be returned as a search result.

Identifying the use of the word "author" became even more challenging. The definitions of author (to write literature, to construct technical codes, to create reports) were difficult to distinguish. In an attempt to categorize the ways in which the word was used, the type of job and the grammatical usage of the word "author" were compared. (See Table 4.5.)

Table 4.5 Grammatical Use of "Author" and Job Type

Grammatical Use of "Author" in the Job Description	Accountant/ Auditor/ Financial Analyst	IT Developer/ IT Analyst	Financial Writer/ Editor	Other Financial (ex. Clerk, Loan Consultant)	Other (ex. Researcher, Engineer)	Total
Verb	10	3		1	3	17
Noun					1	1
Noun and verb			1			1
Noun adjunct			1			1
Not in context of job description	2			1		3
Total	12	3	2	2	4	23

Only one posting included “author” as the actual job title—“Editor/Author (GAAP Reporter Service)”. Other than this instance of the noun form of “Author,” the word was used as a verb twice in the same job description (“The Editor/Author will provide the professional insight and expertise necessary to... author market-leading analysis and guidance...” and “Responsibilities: 1. Author concise, comprehensive plain language restatements and explanations...”). In these contexts, determining if “(to) author” implied “to write” or “to construct” was difficult. The verb “to author” may be borrowed from a computer-related, technical sense, rather than a literary sense.

For example, compare the usage above with the two results in Healthcare Research, the “Senior Research Associate / Data Analysis” and “Senior Clinical Research Associate” job descriptions. The former included two instance of “author,” both in the same sentence: “The person in this position is expected to serve as an author on more than 4 peer-reviewed publications per year and to be the lead author on one or more of these.” The latter listed 19 research-related responsibilities of the job, the first being “Assist in managing large scale clinical trial projects or function as project manager for small scale projects...”. The eighteenth of the 19 responsibilities is: “Author Clinical Study Reports.” These two descriptions and their respective uses of “author” and “(to) author” imply an academic publication, which would lend itself to the literary usage of “author.”

Of the 23 job descriptions, 18 included the verb form of “author” as a synonym of “to write or construct.” One (mentioned above) used it as a noun. Three job descriptions used the word as unrelated to the job itself, but rather candidate experience or the company's functions (“Experience as an author, speaker or educator is a significant plus”, “The CEO and CIO of my client is the author of several finance books and academic studies,...” and “[company specializes in] non author driven illustrated books”). The remaining job description (“Newsletter Editor”) listed in the Responsibilities section “...manage author deadlines...,” an example of “author” functioning as a noun adjunct.

As the word “author” was used with such variation, the next step was to determine if writing was actually a vital component in these roles. That was accomplished by simply numbering listed duties and tallying the occurrences of responsibilities described as “to author.”

(This also assumes that the list of duties is ordered from most important, frequent, and/or time-consuming, to the least.) The categories for quantifying importance included: “Primary importance” (”authoring” seems to be the single most important function as described in the posting), “Very important” (”authoring” is among the top three or top 50% of duties listed), and “Less important” (”authoring” duties are detailed more than halfway into the list of responsibilities). “Not Applicable” was included for those instances in which “author” was related to the employer’s activities or was otherwise unrelated to the job duties. (See Table 4.6.)

Table 4.6 Priority of Writing and Job Type with Keyword “Author”

	Accountant/ Auditor/ Financial Analyst	IT Developer/ IT Analyst	Financial Writer/ Editor	Other Financial (ex. Clerk, Loan Consultant)	Other (ex. Research, Engineer)	Total
Primary importance			2			2
Very important	3	1			2	6
Less important	7	2		1	2	12
Not Applicable	2			1		3
Total	12	3	2	2	4	23

The two Financial Writer/Editor jobs (“Editor/Author” and “Newsletter Editor”) were the lone jobs in which writing was a primary function. All other positions included writing either near the top or near the bottom in the list of duties, but not as the single most important task.

None of the jobs postings requested a degree in journalism, English, or communications. (Even the “Editor/Author” position required an accounting or finance degree.) Nineteen of the jobs specifically required a 4-year degree and one of them required a graduate degree. Of these 20 jobs that required specific education, ten required an accounting, finance, or a related degree. Four required a degree in another specific industry (chemistry, engineering, IT and public health). The remaining six positions did not specify the area of education.

Three positions included supervisory duties. Eighteen job descriptions included an experience requirement. This included entry level to three years (3), four to six years (7), and seven or more years (8).

4.2.3. "Write"

The fourth search differed from the second and third, in that it relied on only the abbreviated postings on the results page. Careerbuilder.com initially returns shortened job postings for easier scrolling, including just the job title, company, location, posting date, job type, salary (if disclosed), and the selected text that includes the user's search word. Since a single search for "write" in the Finance category produced over a thousand results, I made a general analysis of the first, or "most relevant," 50 postings. Excluding duplicates left 46 posting remaining.

Determining the job type in the second and third search results was aided by using both the job title and the job description. In the fourth search, job type was determined strictly using the job title. Also, the usage review was limited to just the context selected and returned by the search function. Still, these limitations did not hinder determinations. While the uses of the word "write" clearly varied, usage (often, jargon) and job types aligned somewhat; the Financial Writer/Editor category showed all instances of "write" referring to writing text, while all instances of "write" in the IT Developer/IT Analyst category referred to writing code. (See Table 4.7.)

Table 4.7 Uses of "Write" and Job Type

	Accountant/ Auditor/ Financial Analyst	Financial Writer/ Editor	Other Financial (ex. Clerk, Loan Consultant)	IT Developer/ IT Analyst	Other (R&D Manager)	Total
to write (text)	6	3	4		1	14
to write (code)	2			2		4
application	4					4
requirement	3		5			8
write-off	1		8			9
write-up	3		3			6
write-back	1					1
Total	20	3	20	2	1	46

Of the 46 "most relevant" results of the word "write" appearing in Finance jobs, 16 returned instances were related to the business/accounting terms "write-off" (9), "write-up" (6), and "write-back" (1). Two of these terms are uncomplicated technical uses: "write-off" relates to charging off or cancelling a financial asset and "write-back" refers to a computer cache of data.

“Write-up” is a more interesting phrase. In business, it involves a range of vague meanings, such as referring to the completing of a form as “doing a write-up.” Per the American Heritage Dictionary, the noun form of “write-up” means both “a published account, review, or notice, especially a favorable one” and in accounting, “an intentional overevaluation of a corporation's assets.” In the sampled job descriptions, the former definition is used in the common personnel responsibility, as seen in the job description “Operations Manager” with “...Supervision of dispatchers, completing write ups as necessary.” The latter definition is used within the job description “Tax and Write-Up Paraprofessional,” which includes “Growing CPA firm is seeking a Tax & Write-Up Paraprofessional with 3+ years public accounting experience.”

General application and basic requirement instructions accounted for 12 instances of the word “write,” such as “Please write about your experience...” and “Must be bilingual (speak, read & write) Business/Medical Terminology in Spanish...” Not included in these 12 instances of basic requirements are phrases for more job-related skill requirements, such as “Ability to write speeches and articles for publication,” which is included in the “to write (text)” group below. Four instances were clearly computer-related uses of “to construct” or “to write (code),” as in “...Create Calculation Scripts (write/maintain/enhance)” listed for the job “Hyperion Essbase Database Developer.”

The remaining 14 samples were in the commonly understood usage of “to write (text)” within the job description responsibilities, such as, “PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITIES: Write content in support of the various products, including: brochures...” and “...•Work independently •Write cogent business communications...” Since this use of “write” was targeting as the anticipated “goal” of the search, the finding that only 14 of 46 instances (30%) represented writing as a specific job function was especially interesting.

Education and experience requirements were not reviewed among this group of search results. Since these positions varied so greatly, adequate comparisons would have been difficult.

4.2.4. Functional Writing Positions

From the dozens of job descriptions located using the three key terms, I was unable to find a sufficient number of positions that described writing and producing written materials as the

primary function within that job. Therefore, for the fifth part of the study, I searched using whatever combination of terms necessary to locate ten jobs in which writing was the main role, responsibility, and/or function of the position. These roles may not have included specific words in the job titles or descriptions; rather, they were selected by the content's meaning, at least, as well as meaning could be determined definitively. Positions that required equal responsibility for writing and some other duty (computer language coding, team management, project management, data analysis, or even editing, for example) were not included. Positions with job titles that seemed writer-specific, like "Document Specialist," were excluded if the position simply required document management. The "Editor/Author (GAAP Reporter Service)" and "Senior Retirement Plan Writer" job postings were reexamined along with eight new postings.

Compared to the readings done for the first four searches, a much closer reading was conducted of the ten carefully selected descriptions. This very close reading revealed a variety of phrases and terminology that referred to writing.

The ten writing job descriptions included a total of 21 terms other than "write" that worked as synonyms for "write" or otherwise described activities within the writing process. (See Table 4.8.) Two terms appeared equally in the majority of descriptions; seven of the ten positions included the word "write" at least once to describe a responsibility; the same number of postings included at least one instance of the word "develop" to refer to creating written products. The common usage of "develop" is interesting as it apparently encompasses not just the writing process, but all stages from researching and planning to editing and testing. Twelve terms appeared in no more than one job description each; this included infrequently heard terms like "tailor" and "integrate" but also conceivably more common terms like "document" and "produce."

The written materials and texts produced by these activities were most frequently referred to very generally as "content" or "documentation," as well as "pieces," "materials," and "elements." (See Table 4.9.) In several job descriptions, "content" and "documentation" were then further described with clarification of more specific genres, for example: "The Technical Writer is responsible for planning, developing, writing, formatting, and editing documentation, including but limited to process workflows, high level procedures, and detailed user manuals…" In the

“Marketing Communication Specialist” position, the phrase “communication vehicles” took an all-encompassing role: “…a variety of communication vehicles such as email, Web, and marketing materials.” The technological application (email and Web) is blended with the genre (marketing materials).

Table 4.8 Writing Terms and Examples

Term	Example	No. of Postings that Include Term
Author	"Author concise, comprehensive plain language restatements…" (Editor/Author (GAAP Reporter Service)	1
Commun-icate	"…communicate key firm initiatives to multiple audiences through a variety of communication vehicles such as email…" (Marketing Communications Specialist)	1
Convert	"…convert content [from SMEs] into policy and/or procedure documents." (Technical Writer)	1
Create	"Create user guides and training manuals" (Technical Writer/Documentation Specialist)	4
Design	"…design a cutting-edge customer-oriented product…" (Editor/Author (GAAP Reporter Service))	1
Develop	"…develops course materials…" (Instructional Design, eLearning)	7
Document	"Document plans and project events" (Technical Writer/Documentation Specialist)	1
Draft	"Draft, edit, and publish other tax legal content such as articles…" (Tax Technical Legal Writer)	2
Edit	"Edit commentary…" (Investment Writer)	4
Format	"…is responsible for planning, developing, writing, formatting, and editing documentation…" (Technical Writer)	1
Integrate	"Create and integrate special elements…that provide actionable insight and opinion…" (Editor/Author (GAAP Reporter Service))	1
Maintain	"Maintaining content (as needed)…" (Banking-Policy and Procedures Specialist)	3
Plan	"…is responsible for planning, developing, writing, formatting, and editing documentation…" (Technical Writer)	1
Produce	"...producing the highest quality material i.e. proposals, informational correspondence and product pieces…" (Financial Services-Marketing Specialist)	1
Publish	"Draft, edit, and publish other tax legal content such as articles…" (Tax Technical Legal Writer)	2
Reformat	"Reformatting/rewriting existing business policy, standards, and procedure content…" (Banking-Policy and Procedures Specialist)	1
Review	"…writes, edits, and reviews Tax Alerts and other tax legal content…" (Tax Technical Legal Writer)	2
Revise	"Draft and revise text content…" (Technical Writer/Documentation Specialist)	2
Rewrite	"Reformatting/rewriting existing business policy, standards, and procedure content…" (Banking-Policy and Procedures Specialist)	1

Table 4.8, continued

Tailor	"…tailor responses to strategies developed with field associates…" (Financial Services-Marketing Specialist)	1
Update	"Updating Web content of employee Intranet site…" (Marketing Communication Specialist)	2
Write	"…write their policy, standard, and procedure documents…" (Banking-Policy and Procedures Specialist)	7

Table 4.9 Job Titles with Writing Activities and Texts

Job Titles	Words used for writing activity (with description of written text)
Banking - Policy and Procedures Specialist	Maintain (content), reformat (content), review (policies, procedures), rewrite (content), update (policies, procedures), write (documents)
Editor/Author (GAAP Reporter Service)	Author (analysis, guidance, restatements, explanations), create (elements), design (product), integrate (elements, content), write (analysis)
Financial Services - Marketing Specialist	Develop (responses), edit (RFPs), produce (materials), tailor (responses), write (correspondence, pieces)
Instructional Design, E-Learning	Develop (materials)
Investment Writer	Create (content), edit (commentary), write (content, commentary)
Marketing Communication Specialist	Communicate ("through a variety of communication vehicles such as email, Web, and marketing materials")
Senior Retirement Plan Writer	Develop (concepts, content)
Tax Technical Legal Writer - Assistant Director	Develop (content), draft (content), edit (content), publish (content), review (content), write (content)
Technical Writer	Convert (content into documents), create (communication), develop (documentation), edit (documentation), format (documentation), maintain (documentation), plan (documentation), publish (communication, content), write (documentation)
Technical Writer / Document Specialist	Create (guides, materials), develop (documentation, materials), document (plans, projects), draft (content), maintain (documentation), revise (content), write (files)

In contrast to the wide diversity of language used to describe writing activities, collaboration and teamwork were consistent themes. Findings related to social skills included the following:

- Nine of the ten positions included at least one mention of writing collaboration with peers, supervisors, or customers.
- Phrases referring to writing collaboration included "work with" or "work closely with," "assist," "collaborate with," "partner with," "support," and "team with." Other phrases related to the sharing of writing expertise and knowledge included

"assess and make recommendations," "offer positive and constructive ideas, encouragement, and support," and "provide the professional insight and expertise necessary."

- While one position ("Technical Writer/ Document Specialist") did not mention writing collaboration or knowledge sharing as a responsibility, this job description began, "The {company} Financial Systems team, a group of 10 developers and analysts, has an need (sic) for a Technical Writer/Documentation Specialist…". By framing the particular job description within a description of a team and a particular team need, the description conveys a sense of social accountability to the team, even without an explicit expectation of knowledge sharing.

Seven of the ten job descriptions included editing responsibilities or a requirement for editing skills. Like writing, editing seemed to require its own vocabulary in some of the positions. Some of the more interesting ways to describe editorial duties included "applying enterprise-wide editorial standards to all documents," "ensuring adherence to general writing and style guidelines," and "applying quality standards and verifying the content meets stated requirements for relevant audience."

Three of the ten primarily writing positions required business, accounting, or financial experience foremost, with writing experience as secondary. Only four job descriptions required skill in at least one particular software application; for example, three required proficiency in Microsoft Word. The other six positions did not mention any skills in particular computer programs as required.

For educational requirements, only one required a writing-related degree, and one included a requirement for a 4-year degree in "Business, Journalism, or Marketing." One required an accounting or finance degree, and one posting required a graduate level JD. Four descriptions requested a bachelor's degree but did not mention any particular major. One required only a high school diploma, and one posting did not specify any educational requirements. (See Table 4.10.) All ten positions requested a certain number of years of experience: entry level to three years' experience (4), four to six years (5), or seven or more years' experience required (1). (See Table

Table 4.10 Educational Requirements for Jobs Using Various Writing Terms

	High School (1 job)	4 year degree (English, Literature, Writing) (1 job)	4 year degree (business, finance, or not specified) (6 jobs)	Graduate (1 job)	Education Not Specified (1 job)
Author			17%		
Communicate			17%		
Convert		100%			
Create		100%	50%		
Design			17%		
Develop	100%	100%	67%	100%	
Document			17%		
Draft			17%	100%	
Edit		100%	33%	100%	
Format		100%			
Integrate			17%		
Maintain		100%	17%		100%
Plan		100%			
Produce			17%		
Publish		100%		100%	
Reformat					100%
Review				100%	100%
Revise			17%		100%
Rewrite					100%
Tailor			17%		
Update			17%		100%
Write		100%	67%	100%	100%

4.11.) The position requiring at least seven years' experience was the "Senior Retirement Plan Writer" job, which used only the word "develop" to refer to the writing process. The job description was brief in that it mentioned duties as only the "…development of creative concepts and content…" and the only other lines describing responsibilities emphasize collaboration and teamwork. The eight requirements listed under "Qualifications" moved from writing experience to business knowledge to management and other professional skills: "Minimum of 10 years of Professional Writing experience; Experience writing for the Financial Services industry; Extensive knowledge of Retirement Plan Income;…"

As could be predicted, writing experience was requested more often in these positions than had been in the nonwriting positions of the earlier searched postings. Four job descriptions required as the primary experience requirement some specific type of writing experience (ranging

from 2 years to 10 years of writing experience). Five other descriptions required writing as a secondary experience requirement, behind experience such as banking, business, and auditing. Only the Instructional Design position did not specify what type of past experience was required.

Table 4.11 Years of Experience Required for Jobs Using Various Writing Terms

Term for "Write"	0 to 3 years (4 jobs)	4 to 6 years (5 jobs)	7+ years (1 job)
Author		20%	
Communicate	25%		
Convert		20%	
Create	25%	60%	
Design		20%	
Develop	75%	60%	100%
Document	25%		
Draft	25%	20%	
Edit		80%	
Format		20%	
Integrate		20%	
Maintain	50%	20%	
Plan		20%	
Produce		20%	
Publish		40%	
Reformat	25%		
Review	25%	20%	
Revise	50%		
Rewrite	25%		
Tailor		20%	
Update	50%		
Write	50%	100%	

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

Considering these many findings, I return to my initial hypotheses to comment:

1. I anticipate the verb “write” to be a duty associated with a great variety of job titles, some that involve the traditional sense of writing, some that do not (question 1).

Not only did “write” appear among many job titles and across many job types, the word was varied in usage, such as in unexpected jargon and technical uses like “write-back” and “write-off.” However, in the variation, it was clear that some uses where limited to a small number of people with those usage habits, such as with the recruiter who posted nine similarly worded postings for nine separate jobs.

2. I expect that there will be many synonyms of “write,” such as “compose” and “draft.” Because “to write” or “to author” can imply creative origination and therefore authoritative power, these alternative terms might be used even more frequently in jobs that require fewer high-level skills or decision-making responsibilities (question 2).

While a total of twenty-one alternative terms appeared as activities related to the writing process, these terms did not necessarily align with skill-levels because every position prioritized the same skill: collaboration. Regardless of the terms chosen to represent writing, each job description included as one of its most vital skills and responsibilities the requirement to work well with others.

3. Because of traditional associations made with the word, I do not expect to see “author” unless in the context of “web/software authoring.” (question 3)

Surprisingly, not only was application “authoring” found, but “to author” was a previously unexpected synonym of “to write” in reference to technical accounting reports and other

documents. The cross of “author” from a computer language context to an accounting vocabulary demonstrates the slipperiness of language among discourse communities.

4. I expect the types of texts produced will show some correlation between the job titles and selected verbs and genres, such as “specialists compose” reports and policies, while “writers write” customer communications and marketing materials (question 4).

I had not predicted the hyphenations of roles, such as “Editor/Author” and “Technical Writer/Documentation Specialist.” Nor had I anticipated job titles that referred to the function over the individual: “Instructional Design, eLearning.” These two alternatives to single job titles show the complexity of the roles and, possibly, resistance to the problems of categorizing jobs and workers. Hyphenated titles and function titles offer new categories of solutions.

5. Because writing in any workplace requires many other business and social skills, I predict seeing necessary aptitude in areas such as collaboration, negotiation, teamwork, project management, and the ability to improve processes, for example. However, I do not expect accounting skills to be of great importance (question 5).

Three of the ten primarily writing positions required business, accounting, or financial experience as the foremost requirement, with writing experience listed as a secondary requisite. Accounting and financials knowledge was of great importance.

6. I expect to find “writer” is included within divisions that encourage creativity, like marketing and public relations, far more than in the more technical areas like analytics (question 6).

On the contrary, the use of “writer” was often very technical. I entirely did not expect to encounter the phrase “RFP writer” so much, granted, of course, that it was cited mainly from the postings of a single recruiter. Technical writers and software writers remain prevalent in all corners of the job market, including the finance industry.

7. I anticipate that while requirements will vary, some patterns will emerge (question 7).

A “pattern” may be difficult to identify, given the small sample pool—a complication of the methodology. However, interestingly, the “Senior Retirement Plan Writer,” the writing position that most emphasized writing experience as necessary (the first qualification listed being “Minimum of 10 years of Professional Writing experience”) was one of the most brief, least descriptive postings. Once could hypothesize that the skills and knowledge that the highly experienced writer brings to the role makes describing the job in detail less vital. Meaning, as Slack described identity in her “Postscript,” the job is up to the writer to make his or her own. A competent, knowledgeable writer is trusted to write their own job description.

This is, perhaps, the conclusion that best fits this study. As anticipated, writers are writing regardless of the words used to describe it, but the room for negotiation is not as one-sided as had been predicted. The employer does not extend a single, unalterable ideological construct, available for the writer to take or leave with a single motion of consent. The employer is not necessarily attempting to act as the ultimate “Authority” for establishing the role and boundaries of the writer. The job description, as an ideological construct, is more flexible. The key to negotiation is language. More terms, spilling out of large vocabularies of unfixed and open words, are necessary for both parties to properly negotiate. Ambiguity, those “vague specifics” that trouble recruiters, is necessary for compromise.

Like Savage's stance that “professionalism” is an outdated term, being an author is less relevant in today's workplace. It is an outdated concept on at least two fronts: the recent and growing acknowledgement of collaborative writing and the changing media that allows easy, instant publishing. In 1990, Ede and Lunsford wrote about collaborative authorship in the workplace, and that it was becoming more widespread through shareware and servers. This concurs with the findings herein; collaboration is clearly a very common and necessary part of workplace writing. On the other side of the coin is instant publishing. As common as team publication is self-publication. Today, in the time of blogs and wikis and YouTube, anyone can author. The tradition of a venerated “writer” and “author” who writes alone and achieves immortalized publication has faded a bit.

The yellowing of the writer/author title is more than just a reflection of changes within writing, editing, and publishing, but also of the changes surrounding those acts. The findings of this study revealed the reality of writing-related jobs; skills and responsibilities required are simply not limited to writing. Other proficiencies are just as vital. Appearing in job descriptions are all the current buzz words that reflect the social interdependence of the workplace: listening, negotiation, conflict resolution, change management, project coordination, project management, team support, and, of course, collaboration. Writing is but one of the necessary skills for participating in the modern workplace discourse community.

And so, it no longer matters if those who write are not necessarily recognized as authors or even writers, as Slack came to realize. Writers are not being demoted to the humble role of scriptor; rather, they are being promoted to communicator (and/or specialist, designer, analyst, etc.) for the purpose of acknowledging the multiple and varied roles and skills inclusive in their respective functions.

For evidence of this move, consider that the Society for Technical Writers and Publishers adopted the name Society of Technical Communicators in 1971, prior to the age of the Internet. Even in the pre-Internet era, the name change was attributed to better capturing the group's goal: "to advance the theory and practice of technical communication in all media" (Martin, O'Sullivan 5). In 2007, members of the organization lobbied the government's Bureau of Labor Statistics to change the BLS's "technical writer" category to "technical communicator," for many of these same reasons mentioned above. In their memo to the government agency, STC leaders pointed to a survey that supports the active role of employers in this transition: "hiring managers are looking beyond the basics of writing and editing. Rather, companies are looking for people who can perform research and assist in publishing and packaging. The latter skill set suggests that a flair for marketing is also desirable" (ITAA survey, quoted in Martin, O'Sullivan 3). The STC writers summarize their reason for lobbying change as simply: "Technical writing is static and one-way. Technical communication is dynamic and interactive" (6).

The STC's general advocacy captures the reality of the marketplace, yet it limits itself by assuming a single definition of technical writing and presuming that "writing" is not understood as

broad enough to include these other facets such as researching and marketing. In the job descriptions reviewed, the words “author” and “writer” (and even “write”) take on many different shades of meanings beyond a single definition. Rarely, if at all, did the texts project writing as “static and one-way.” In the context of job descriptions, pinpointing exactly where literary usage and technical terms separate is difficult, as both literary and technical functions imply the creative and original actor, whether that’s through composing investment commentary or drafting an investment audit or coding an investment software program. The case-by-case overlap of skills and media integral to modern writing confuses standard or single definitions. Indefinite meaning of terms aside, the very definitive social requirements of writing jobs prove that writing is not static.

The STC, however, does not recognize that, just as the realities of the job are flexible, the terms to communicate it are equally plastic. If single words are adaptable, and the actual role described must be interpreted by the accompanying jumble of skills and jargon, then caring about the terms “writer” and “author” and “write” is unimportant. If writers are to make their positions “their own,” or even prior to assuming a position, to understand the position as initially constructed by the employer, then they must be permitted to have broad vocabularies at their disposals for discussion. The negotiation ability, for both employer and employee, is enhanced by ambiguity. Ultimately, enjoying enhanced opportunities to describe themselves and be described, is empowerment.

Job titles, then, are not important, as they are only one clue (and often, as the interviewed recruiters confirmed, a marketing hook) to interpreting the reality behind the text. Minding to a particular title seems unnecessarily impractical, a shallow view of the breadth of a workplace function, even elitist and old-fashioned. On one hand, the reality of the political workplace requires that the text—including the job title and job description—is necessarily separated from the individual. To borrow from Winsor, a growth of social and organization awareness creates less need for “writing,” in the traditional view of individual production, and more for “documentation” as individual contribution to community texts. Social needs trump

individuality in the workplace. Interaction and interrelations theoretically ensure that all texts are jointly produced.

On the other hand, it is helpful to keep in mind that companies do attempt to produce and reproduce ideology, and any power that is negotiated with or granted to an individual is important to that individual. To be responsible to "author" a newsletter article may indeed indicate a different expectation than to be asked to "contribute content" to that same newsletter assignment. The roles of these two players differ, but in light of the current reality of the workplace, their individual titles are not fundamentally necessary to the ability to exercise authority. Discourse communities always vary from one to another. The flexibility of language allows each community to determine its own vocabulary. On a smaller, pragmatic scale, individuality does matter. Individuals work to shape and negotiate their roles.

Elizabeth Tebeaux complains that a shift in technical writing research has been towards the academic, not the practical. She advocates that the only worthwhile goal for research is making better technical communicators in order to make for better workplace writing (21-22). Is this study contributing to developing better technical communicators? I prefer to believe so. If writers understand why they are granted certain titles, they better understand their employer and can mediate and navigate the organizational ideology with increased awareness. Writers do not come into being or cease being according to their job titles, nor do they require social recognition as this or that to come into being, as Slack concedes in her "Postscript." Writers negotiate their being by their activities and by the functions they fulfill. The sliding of their identities, which includes the widest possible range of descriptions, should be welcomed with open arms. If the language and genre of job descriptions are to truly reflect the reality of workplace writing—active, dynamic, social—then we must anticipate a language that makes itself available for open negotiation. No single term should take precedence over another in a job description, assuming the terms represent accurate descriptions.

There is, perhaps, one exception, and that is the word that appeared as commonly as "write" in the ten writers' job descriptions: "develop"—the fantastically ambiguous term. It strikes out the scriptive, static activity of pen-to-paper writing that the STC opposes, but also

encompasses the reverence of a creative, original Authorship. “To develop” is both to bring into being and to make complex, to clarify and to expand, to improve and to transform. This might be the only term that could delight a job candidate with the thrill of wide open potential for actively negotiating a sliding identity.

APPENDIX A

ADDITIONAL DETAIL ON EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

Table A. Preliminary Search Results

Job Board	Monster	Hot Jobs	CareerBuilder
Relevant Category	*Accounting/Finance/ Insurance*, *Finance/Economics*, and *Financial Services* (combined)	*Accounting/Finance*	*Finance*
Total Jobs in Category	>5,000	13,613	43,945
Total jobs in Category that include selected terms:			
"Write"	2,209	4,330	12,923
"Author"	54	15	51
"Writer"	298	85	198
"Document Specialist"	16	1	14
"Technical Writer"	41	6	3
"Communications Specialist"	27	6	5

Table B. Job Titles and Texts Associated with Term “Writer”

Job Title	Specific Texts Produced
Senior Retirement Plan Writer	Creative content for print, multimedia and Web communications
Institutional RFP Writer	RFPs, RFI, questionnaires
Equity RFP Writer	RFPs, RFI, questionnaires
Investment Writer	commentary, shareholder reports, newsletter content
Senior Financial Writer	Marketing materials such as brochures, presentations, commentary
Senior Financial Writer	commentary, newsletters, articles
Web Writer	website content and graphics
Retail Senior RFP Writer	RFPs, RFI, questionnaires
Report Writers	SQL reports and queries
Technical Analyst/Technical Writer	analyze, test, document new IT system
Cognos Report Writer	COGNOS reports
Retirement Plan Writer	Creative content for print, multimedia and Web communications
Tabulation/Spec Writer	Data tables, specs, statistical tests
Telecommuting Healthcare Financial Writer	Ads, headlines, print and web copy
Advertising Writer	Sales letters for investment newsletters
Proposal Writer - Retirement Services	RFPs
Senior Financial Writer	Marketing collateral
Writer, Sales Performance Improvement	sales training materials, communications
Star Financial Writer	newsletter copy
Service Writer	NA (oversee loan originations)
Institutional RFP Writer	RFPs and questionnaires
Business Analyst/Report Writer	Data reports
Instructional Designer/Technical Writer	training materials
Institutional - Senior Investment Writer	white papers, newsletters, product collateral, website content
Institutional RFP Specialist 2 (Institutional RFP Writer)	RFPs and questionnaires
Clinical Performance Analyst	NA (hospital analysis)
Financial Editor	editing in-house marketing copy
Institutional RFP Manager	Marketing Communications, RFPs
Content Developer	Online educational content

Table C. Job Titles and Usage of Key Term Associated with “Author”

Title	Usage Notes
Editor/Author (GAAP Reporter Service)	"to write" accounting principle statements, standards analysis
Senior Research Associate / Data Analysis	"to write" peer-reviewed publications
Senior Clinical Research Associate	"to write" clinical study reports
AV-8B Production Controller/Subject Matter Expert	"to write" process control documents
QA (Quality Assurance) Lead Auditor	"to write" standard operating procedures
Senior Financial Analyst	"to write" advance balances
Manager of Financial Reporting	"to write" accounting memorandums
Finance Manager (Media)	NA ("…the world leader in non author driven illustrated books…"
IT Internal Auditor / System Auditor	"to write" audit work programs and reports
Project Manager	"to write" informal and formal written communication
Market Intelligence Analyst	"to write" deliverables (accounting reports)
Account Executive - Leading Investment Firm	NA ("…client is the author of several books and finance studies…")
VP Level CDO / Credit Derivative Product Controller	"to write" policies
Principal Nuclear Cost Engineer	"to write" tech docs
SALT (State and Local Tax) Manager	"to write" technical memorandum
Financial Reporting Manager	"to write" financial statements
Business Analyst III	"to write" technical specifications
(Senior Level) Investment Advisor	NA ("Experience as an author, speaker, or educator is a significant plus.")
Client Support Analysts	"to write" newsletter articles
System Analyst	"to write" process documentation
Newsletter Editor	NA ("…manage author, editorial, review and production deadlines…")
IT Audit Manager	"to write" audit work programs, reports, advisory letters, position papers
AVP Level CDO / Credit Derivative Product Controller	"to write" policies

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