Few writers analyze hidden curricula in undergraduate or professional education, and even fewer examine graduate schools from this perspective. In fact, graduate schools offer several layers of more-or-less hidden curricula, ranging from relatively overt requirements of the program to conventions of the discipline to more covert notions of what makes a good student. We might think of the hidden curriculum of the graduate school as being like an iceberg, with the more overt requirements above the water and the rest submerged, though visible to a keen eye or with the appropriate equipment.

Students enter graduate school having done well in their prior studies and expect to continue succeeding. Many are profoundly disoriented by the greater degree of independence and originality expected of them. Course assignments are fewer but bigger, assigned readings more difficult, professors less indulgent, and peers more competitive. Although many graduate students will not become professors, the assumption that guides much graduate work, especially at the doctoral level, is that students are in training for an academic career. The degree of disorientation depends on many things, such as the quality of the undergraduate institution and the cultural capital possessed by the student.

Because conventions in graduate work vary considerably from country to country, the literature on graduate education must be read with care. For example, when writers from Britain or Australia consider what is there called postgraduate education, they have in mind a
system where the Ph.D. “research student” begins work on his or her dissertation almost immediately, usually under the guidance of a single supervisor. In the United States and Canada, students generally enroll in courses for several years, take a major examination, and then move on to the dissertation stage. They may need to obtain a master’s degree or satisfy equivalence requirements before becoming a doctoral candidate.

In all countries, conventions governing the dissertation phase vary among subject fields. These include the likelihood of the student working on a project related to the advisor’s own research; the extent to which she or he can expect funding; the rapidity of progress through the dissertation phase; the tolerance for personal narrative in the written account; the structuring of chapters; the formality of writing style; the ease of publication of findings; and the ethics of including the advisor’s name in publications. All these practices have to be taught or “caught” by students in each field.

The doctoral student has to become attuned to at least two aspects of socialization: the conventions of the discipline and the practices of the department. Sharon Parry and Martin Hayden (1999, 37) call the two aspects the disciplinary and the organizational cultures of the department. In the first case, students are being socialized or “disciplined” into a research culture (Green and Lee 1999). Students are learning, in Pierre Bourdieu’s (1973) phrase, the habitus of a particular field—the set of essentially cultural understandings that allows them to consider themselves and be considered by others to be bona fide sociologists, or anthropologists, or biologists. Departmental practices are more akin to politics. What characterizes a “good student” in Department X? What, exactly, is required and how much flexibility is there about it? This level of the curriculum is lodged within the deepest level of the iceberg. Some students appear to “catch on” and do what is required of a successful graduate student, while others seem endlessly to flounder (Acker, Transken, Hill, and Black 1994).

In this chapter I focus on one specific area within the hidden curriculum of graduate education, the process of what is usually called dissertation advising in the United States and dissertation or thesis supervision in Canada, Britain, Australia, and New Zealand. My sources are somewhat eclectic: the research literature; my own experience as a university teacher working in graduate departments of education since 1972 in Britain and Canada; a research project on supervision in education and psychology carried out with colleagues in England from 1989 to 1991; and a taped focus group discussion with a group of eight graduate students and ex-students and two faculty members in education in a Canadian university in 1997.

In the sections that follow, I consider two examples of the subtleties of the process of dissertation advising: finding an advisor and negotiating with an advisor. Both are examples that seem quite obvious until closely examined; both raise questions about power and positioning. I then make some remarks about the impact of different characteristics of students and their location within the institution.

**FINDING AN ADVISOR**

In the British study, students found their supervisors through two quite distinct processes, which we came to call warm or cold entry. In the warm entry process, students researched the specialties of different institutions and individuals within them. Having narrowed the field to one or more potential supervisors, they would try to meet that individual or individuals before applying for admission. If the student had been previously enrolled for a bachelor’s or master’s degree in the same institution, the student and proposed supervisor already knew each other. Other students, especially those pursuing their studies part-time, simply enrolled at a conveniently located institution (cold entry). Then a supervisor who most closely shared their interests was assigned to them.

The experiences of the Canadians in the focus group were very different. In the institution where this discussion was taped, the norm is for students to do a year or more of course work, and then have to persuade a faculty member to act as dissertation supervisor. Master’s students need an additional faculty member and doctoral students two others to make up a thesis committee. For part-time students it might be quite a few years before this moment arrives. Students are assigned on arrival to what are called advisors, but these advisors are not necessarily expected to supervise their dissertations—a situation that sometimes caused confusion.

Some students had been advised or learned somehow that course selection would be important in terms of sizing up and establishing rapport with potential supervisors; others did not know this information or figured it out too late. Several then had the task of trawling through faculty members trying to find someone who shared their
At one point in the discussion, a faculty member tried to explain how she experienced students trying to find a supervisor:

I feel quite bad sometimes when people approach me and almost invite me to reject them. It's when you get a phone call from somebody you've never heard of and they leave a message on your voice mail. They don't tell you what the topic is. They say, "I'm looking for a supervisor or a committee member, please phone me." And you think, "Why me? Why should I? I've got enough to do. Who's this person?" Sometimes the sort of techniques people use almost backfire for them.

Clearly students and supervisors start from different positions and interpret finding a supervisor in very different ways. Supervising a student, especially through a doctoral dissertation, is a long and arduous task, one faculty do not want to agree to unless they can predict a high likelihood of success without undue stress for themselves. As Margot Pearson (1996, 307) commented, some discussions of supervision appear to give the supervisor responsibilities that are simply immense. They become responsible not only for helping students organize their work and giving them feedback but for explaining institutional procedures; troubleshooting with the committee and other faculty; editing and proofreading; providing information and advice over finances and housing; inducting the student into the professional culture of conferences, networks, and publications; supporting the student through personal crises; finding a job for the student; and remaining an active mentor for years to come. The notion of mentoring is a concept larger than the specific issues of supervision I discuss here.4

In part, a confusion between mentoring and advising may be at issue. Some students expect too much, while others expect too little. If faculty see a huge responsibility looming, they may feel that it is important not to take on more students than they can cope with. It is also likely that supervision will not "count," or not count much, in decisions over tenure and promotion or workload; and even if the quantity of supervision is measured, the quality is probably not (Acker and Feuerverger 1996, Hulbert 1994). For faculty, the necessity for students to find a supervisor may be seen as a sign of their progress through the system, an aspect of the partially-hidden curriculum or a rite of passage indicating that the student has been sufficiently socialized into the
disciplinary and departmental understandings to master the process. But for at least some of the students, finding a supervisor is a humiliating ritual—grovelling—one that requires abasement and extreme deference on their part.

NEGOTIATING WITH THE ADVISOR

To oversimplify a bit, the advisor’s role could be characterized as either manager/director or facilitator. In the first conception, the supervisor’s main task is to keep the student moving along the stages of dissertation research by telling him/her what to do. In the second, the role is less overt; the supervisor tries to respond more to what the student wants and needs. The two main conceptions match respectively what could be seen as a technical-rational view of the process (it can be predicted, understood, controlled, improved) and a negotiated-order view (what happens is emergent and depends on interpretations and strategic responses). The manager/director conception is the one found in guidebooks and is a more obvious part of the hidden curriculum. It is helpful insofar as both parties gain a clearer understanding of ways they can proceed and seek consciously to improve their practice. However, the second model is a more insightful one in terms of the actual dynamic relationships involved in advising. This argument is developed further in Acker, Hill, and Black (1994).

What is being negotiated? We can start by considering, for example, negotiations over procedural issues, such as how often advisors and students will meet, what the typical content of a meeting is, how much work the student will be expected to do in what time frame and to what standard; how much direction the advisor should provide and how much further input such as reading and editing chapters he or she should give. Examples of different expectations, negotiated more or less well, can be found in the British research. Here is a case where a student wanted the supervisor to be more focused in his meetings:

Sometimes they [meetings] haven’t worked because I’ve got eight things to talk about and we talk about the first one and the hour has gone and he’s got another student waiting outside. So I sometimes say, “Before you say anything, Bill, there are eight things I was hoping to cover in this session.” So in a sense I’ve been more formal than he has, and that’s something I’ve learned to do. (male student)

In contrast to “Bill” (all names are pseudonyms), this supervisor tried to control everything that happened:

That’s the way I handle all my meetings: what’s our agenda, what are we trying to achieve, what’s our time line? And I would say, “Okay, I would like to get this on the agenda” and then we would go through whatever it was and then I would say at the end something like, “Are we okay now?” or I might say, “Look I think we’re pressed for time, I think we ought to wrap this up. Given what we said at the outset is there anything we need to get done before you leave? Would you please make a note of what we’ve agreed and send me a copy.” (male supervisor)

Another student was clearly unhappy with the meetings with her supervisor but could not work out how to change the situation:

There’s a feeling that I need to perhaps have some set time where I could say, you know, or she could say to me, “You have three quarters of an hour of my time” … I’m feeling for almost a clue for her to say, you know, “I’ve had enough of you now” or “That’s the end of the session” and there isn’t any. (female student)

Despite their typical lack of clarity, procedures for conduct of meetings seem straightforward when compared to some of the other questions that arise (or lurk, unaddressed) during the process of advising, such as how much should be expected from an advisor or how close the relationship should be between student and advisor. Complications also arise from the social location of the main players—both in terms of their identification as “students” or “supervisors” and also in terms of differential resources and perspectives related to gender, class, race, and other such attributes.

A particularly difficult question is how close the personal relationship between the student and the supervisor should be. In general, both the faculty and students in the British research said they preferred a professional relationship, with some distance, but in practice some relationships were close while others were almost nonexistent. One male supervisor told us: “I don’t actually see it as my function to be their support and soul mate and someone who will get them through the next five years of general living. I don’t think that’s my job,” while
another male supervisor went to the opposite extreme: “They’ve all got my home telephone number. They come and visit me . . . some stay with me . . . I get very close with them.”

One woman student had hoped for a closer relationship with her female supervisor, saying sadly, “There was a time when we were quite close, but then she really clouted me away.” Another woman student expressed similar hopes:

[In the meeting] we talked about Melanie [the supervisor] because she’s been going through a bad patch, so I think, but that felt good because it felt like somehow I was getting a bit closer to her, that she was opening up a little bit to me, and that was like a kind of little self-disclosure that made her seem . . . a bit more human as it were. I felt much better.

A third female student had a number of problems with her supervisor, who seemed to be indifferent, distracted, and inaccessible. The alternative to indifference seemed to be harassment:

Fiona [another student] is a bit different because she, I think they get on very well because she’s superbly beautiful and she’s very charming and I think when she arrived Simon [the supervisor] was very interested in her, and so he got her a research assistantship and she’s designed a program and he’s been working very closely with her. I think she has different problems with him in that he will be calling her up at all times of the day and even when she’s at home, and wanting her to work, you know, all hours of the day and night.

Several commentators point to the difficulty managing the degree of potential intimacy in the advisor-student relationship, especially when there is a hint or more of sexuality. Colin Evans, in a study of university foreign language departments in Britain, speculated on the parameters of the gender imbalances common in universities. In modern language departments, the students are mostly young women and the faculty middle-aged men, but “the sexual elements of this relation are almost never acknowledged . . . The whole gender question is an emotional and intellectual no-go area.” Participants retreat, he suggested, into a father-daughter role relationship (Evans, 1988, 134–35). Calls to incorporate “caring” more centrally into teaching (Noddings 1988), easily extended to supervision, require some attention to “the delicate balance between too much and too little loving care” (Booth 1994, 36).

Most of the pairs in the British data consisted of a male supervisor and either a female or male student. Female supervisors (themselves a minority among the supervisors) tended to supervise female students; there were just a few cases of female supervisors and male students. One was particularly interesting as it seemed to embody the potential difficulties and contradictions inherent in this pairing. The participants seemed unsure of whether they should be acting as man and woman or supervisor and student. The male psychology student, John, was unhappy that another prospective supervisor had left the university and Catherine, the substitute, was clearly second best in his eyes. His interview was full of contradictions. He praised Catherine’s intelligence and gave her credit for solving major problems with his work. Then he compared her to the supervisor who had left, and said Catherine didn’t really come up to that sort of standard: “It’s hard to describe, you know, but in times of real anger, I’ve sort of like, really felt down and you think oh God, she’s just so bloody stupid.” He also had other criticisms of her: she lacks humor and “is a very nervous character . . . smoking cigarettes, drinking cans of Coke, God knows how much . . . there’s always a can of Coke there, she must get through more caffeine, God knows.”

John saw Catherine virtually every day: “I never let it go for more than, say, a couple of days really. I mean I always see her, even socially, you know, go for a drink or something.” He said he’s been away for weekends with various people in the department and she is included in the group. He discussed “a weekend by the sea, and we hired a car and I drove up with Catherine, and we just had a weekend there . . . we used to go for a drink occasionally . . . never just me and her, it was usually a group of people, say, from the department . . . there’s certainly no distance socially. I mean, I feel completely relaxed with her.” Nevertheless, John asserted that Catherine is too busy and not available enough: “Like I say, she’s a workaholic, and like a lot of the time I have to go through and explain things to her which I’ve already explained and like she’s forgotten about or at least forgotten the gist of it.” He even complained about her reluctance to come to his office:
I'm on this floor, I'm on the third floor and she's on the second... And you know, it's a case of, I've only seen her in my office twice or something like that. And it would be nice, once in a while, if she just popped in and just said, "How's it going, what are you doing?"

In trying to make sense of this supervisory relationship, the gender dynamics are hard to ignore. Age may also play a part. John is twenty-seven, while Catherine is about six years older. Had she been still older and a more commanding figure in her field, some of the ambiguity might have been reduced. As it is, John does not seem quite sure whether Catherine should be regarded as an authority figure, a girlfriend, a friend, or a mother. We see here the operation of contradictory norms and negotiations around power, gender, reciprocity, and intimacy.

**DIFFERENTIAL LOCATIONS**

Barbara Grant and Adele Graham (1994, 165) refer to “unequal underpinnings” of the supervisory relationship, given that the dissertation is “likely to be the student's major work focus while it is one small aspect of the supervisor's current workload.” Like Grant and Graham, I think this model of “sovereign power,” similar to a class conflict model, contains important insights but is also problematic—the advisors themselves are embedded in work relations that do not necessarily empower them, and many of the students themselves have an expectation of “upward mobility” into an academic position in time. Also, the students and advisors are united in their wish for a successful outcome. Where the model is helpful is to remind us that different parties are differently located in the structures that make up graduate education, and that their perceptions and vested interests will inevitably be correspondingly different.

While acknowledging the importance of locating perspective in “advisor” and “student” frames, we must move beyond seeing all advisors, or all students, as interchangeable. This conceptualization is a major flaw in the literature. Diversity among students can stem from idiosyncratic characteristics or ways of interpreting their situation (Acker, Transken, Hill, and Black, 1994). It can also stem from what I will call “registration status”—essentially whether they are full- or part-time students. It can stem from a myriad of other features of people's lives related to the operation of gender, race, class, age, and other attributes.

Below I expand first on the importance of registration status, mainly as it emerged in the British research project but with some support from the Canadian focus group discussion. Then I look at some of the complications that emerge when we take into account relations of gender and other positions and resources. In the process, we will see that “power” no longer seems simply vested in the advisor.

In the British research, what stood out in shaping student perspectives, rather to our surprise, was whether the student was registered full-time or part-time, and if the latter, on what basis (Hill, Acker, and Black 1994). Part-time students might be either “detached”—usually working full-time outside the university and whose contacts apart from the supervisor were minimal—or “semi-detached”—in the university working full time, usually on a faculty member's research project, and simultaneously registered as a part-time student.

Of course the variables were not independent; for example, full-time students were more likely than the others to be young, in psychology rather than education, and to have funding for their studies. But there was far from a perfect correspondence between registration status and other characteristics. The importance of registration status was that it stood as a representation of where the student was located vis-à-vis the academic world. It strongly shaped expectations for supervision and how students coped with indifferent supervision if they encountered it. Full-time and part-time “semi-detached” students were more likely to voice dissatisfaction than part-time students, even though part-time students got little by way of material benefits from the university (they were rarely given desks, lockers, or access to other facilities; they knew few other students or faculty members). Detached students usually had other sources of self-esteem and support, however, and they were not so dependent on supervisors and the graduate student experience for validation. Some who were making little progress blamed themselves or stressed how little the degree mattered as they were so enjoying their research experience. Full-time students complained more about not getting sufficient supervisor time and they often had financial worries. Semi-detached students were characterized by their marginality in both the student world and the faculty one.
Their progress on dissertations was impeded by their work responsibilities; yet they were not accepted as equals to faculty members and many expressed discontent with their ambiguous situations.

I had not expected similar issues to arise in the Canadian focus group. Nevertheless, there were parallels. Some students in the focus group talked about how difficult it was for them to find a supervisor or know the ropes when they lived at a distance or could not "be around" for other reasons. One student commented:

When I look back there was a real difficulty, and I think it's common to students that do their work here on a part-time basis, and that is that there isn't a relationship building among students and among faculty. So you don't know faculty that well and they don't know you that well in terms of developing bonds and knowing where your different interests and faculty interests are.

Another student explained that because she lived in another province, she took courses for two consecutive summers before she was able to do her residence year. She stressed how difficult it was to meet people and "it's really just by luck that you happen to encounter a course where people are instrumental in furthering you along your way." She went on to say:

The problem when you come as a summer student is that often the advisor that you have been assigned isn't there in the summer. That was the case with me. I came for two summers, but my advisor was never present in the summer. And he doesn't answer E-mails, so when I E-mailed him from [her home] I never got any response. So I just said well, maybe he's not interested. I found out subsequently that he just is not a good E-mailer, he doesn't like to read it.

A third student added to the conversation:

I think we undervalue the [effects of] being outside, like living in [suburb], for other people too who are outside of [the city where the university is], you can't underestimate the value of just being on the premises, being seen, being able to be on these committees and whatever else, and getting to know people not just through courses but through a number of things.

This discussion suggests pressing questions about where students and supervisors are located on various dimensions. The literature on graduate student supervision has been remiss in looking at race, class, and age, for example, and almost as unlikely to notice whether students are fully engaged in their study or are part of what Leonard Baird (1990) calls "the forgotten minority," those who are studying part time. In writings by black feminists, there are certainly indications that they survived graduate school despite, rather than because of, the response they found there (Bannerji 1991; Carty 1991; hooks 1988; see also Margolis and Romero 1998). A study of a large U.S. Midwestern university concluded that minority women had fewer professional socialization experiences than majority women; that is, they were less likely to report being mentored, holding research and teaching assistantships, coauthoring papers with faculty or being introduced to wider academic networks by the faculty (Turner and Thompson 1993; see also Margolis and Romero, chapter five). In their study of twenty-six women students of color in American graduate sociology departments, Eric Margolis and Mary Romero (1998) go further in concluding that not only are the women disadvantaged by a socialization process based on a white, male model, but the entire process confirms and reproduces social differences in the academy based on gender and race.

An American study of graduate students in engineering, history, and economics found that students from the United States, with their more fluent English, were more likely than international students to be teaching assistants, which gave them helpful experience for the future as well as office space (Friedman 1987). In engineering departments, research associateships were more likely to go to the students from abroad, but advantages were not always apparent because they worked in groups where the professors did not give much individual assistance. American students had more outside sources of support and were better integrated with student peers. Nathalie Friedman's (1987) study as well as Joanna Channell's (1990) research in Britain found that faculty saw international students as highly problematic, mainly because their greater needs and expectations for close supervision resulted in extra work for the supervisor. Similar sentiments were expressed in our British supervision project interviews. Tanya Aspland and Thomas O'Donoghue's (1994) interviews with five international
students in Australia found that these students were disappointed and disillusioned about what they saw as inadequate supervision. These students paid much higher fees than other students and some believed they were not getting “value for the money.” Prejudices and deeply embedded cultural assumptions held by supervisors about “Asian women” also entered into the relationships (Aspland 1999).

Age and class feature less often in the literature. Because many of the students interviewed in the British study were older—for example, former or current school teachers studying for a higher degree—they were aware that academic careers might not be open to them, even when they desired them. It was curious to find individuals in their forties refer to themselves as “geriatric” or “oldsters” (Acker, Transken, Hill, and Black, 1994). Most, although not all, of the interviewees who made such references were women, probably reflecting the deeply rooted combination of sexism and ageism that flourishes in the academy as well as elsewhere (Carpenter 1996).

Tensions based on ethnicity or social class seem even more rarely explored. Josephine Mazzuca (2000) reports on the complex strategies employed by Italian-Canadian women graduate students to negotiate (and often segregate) their family and student lives. Most rarely spoke about their families to their student peers. They also found the individualism and competitiveness of graduate school at odds with the collective ethos encouraged in their communities. Similarly, students who hail from less advantaged backgrounds may downplay their origins in order to pass as part of the elite in the academy (hooks 1988; Smith 1993). Patricia Clark Smith (1993, 132, italics in the original) refers to looking around surreptitiously at academic functions wondering: “Who's here who wasn't born knowing how to do this?”

In the supervision research in Britain, a male psychology student in his late fifties explained why he did not want to join the academic world: “I've never been interested in academia as such because academia smacks, to me, of a club, it's a bloody club. When I went down to that conference it was a middle-class club . . . with everybody telling everybody else how wonderful they were. That's not for me.” A woman psychology student transferred to a different supervisor after repeated conflicts with the first one. She resented the way he had altered her topic, his high-handed manner, and his inclination to take rather than give, despite his “brilliant mind.” She disliked his giving her orders: “Go and read this, do that, do the other,” because “you just felt like you were sort of like an office girl.” She added: “And, you know, I'm a sort of working-class girl and he's this sort of like private school, you know, type lad, and do you know what I mean, he's just much more articulate than I am.” In contrast, another woman student got along well with the same faculty member, with whom she shared leisure interests as well as a similar class background: “We do most of the time get on. He's young for a supervisor and he still has an interest in sport and things so we can talk about a lot of issues. It's very relaxed most of the time.”

In the Canadian focus group, one of the students raised questions of class and ethnicity:

I know it's important, the personal, but a lot of our behavior is also influenced by our ethnicity, our class position. And if most of the faculty are from, say, middle class, can there be tension because of the different social structures that we come from? Or do we go back to the idea that maybe it's a rite of passage and whatever class we're from we have to learn sort of middle-class kind of behavior in order to get the supervisor and the committee members.

Another student took up her point:

I think it's true that it makes a difference for me, coming from a certain ethnic background, a working-class background, but especially around the ethnicity, where family is really central. So that I might in a conversation mention something about that and right away feel like, "Oh, why did I do that?"

She told an anecdote about a group of students being invited by a faculty member into his home and how comfortable she felt because although the specific ethnic background was different, it was also one “where family and community [are] really important.” This faculty member “has got his mother living there and two sisters and a brother, and it really is validating for me. He's okay with it. . . . It is important.”

Of course, it is difficult to tease out individual characteristics that put a student at ease or otherwise with advisors. We can surmise that a combination of characteristics—class, age, gender and others—work to produce comfort or diffidence. I have not exhausted the list of possibilities. For example, I have not discussed students who are gay or
lesbian, who are disabled, or who are single parents, all groups who may feel uncomfortable in certain supervisory relationships. Nor have I said much about the characteristics of advisors. There is some writing that points to difficulties that faculty from minority ethnic backgrounds have with students who do not recognize their authority in the classroom and about the ways in which they are silenced in the academy (e.g., Bannerji 1995; Karamcheti 1995; Ng 1993). Minority faculty are also overworked by efforts to mentor minority students (Tierney and Bensimon 1996). Power relations are not simply questions of “me faculty, you student.” Grant and Graham (1994) suggest we use a Foucauldian view of power instead. Students and faculty are inserted into various discourses of the academy and of social life more generally (as we have seen most vividly with the story of John and Catherine) and thus the “rule of supervisory power is neither complete, nor is it unmediated by the students: both the student and the supervisor are acting subjects who may act on the actions of the other” (Grant and Graham 1994, 168).

DISCUSSION

One theme in this chapter has been that the graduate student experience is far from homogenous. I have given examples that focus on the particular characteristics of the student and the advisor and the negotiation that takes place throughout the relationship. There is much more that could be said about the context in which those activities take place, which would involve further study of the impact of departmental culture, disciplinary conventions, institutional type and location, government research policy, and the state of the economy and the academic labor market. Enough has been said to show that the relationship at the core of producing a doctoral dissertation, that between student and advisor, includes aspects of both power and pedagogy and cannot be made entirely predictable or homogenized. Students and advisors should understand that they may operate from very different perspectives that are rooted in their structural location within the academy. Moreover, these perspectives are further influenced, although by no means in simple fashion, by attributes such as gender and class origin. The advisory process is certainly important to the production of the successful graduate student—but it remains elusive, mysterious, and ambiguous, well below the tip of the hidden curriculum iceberg.

NOTES

1. In this chapter, I use “advising” for general points, but “supervising” when reporting on the research conducted in Britain or Canada, where the latter term was the conventional one.


3. The study, conducted by Sandra Acker, Tim Hill, and Edith Black, was a funded, two-year project involving qualitative interviews conducted in 1990 and 1991, producing usable transcripts from sixty-seven students, fifty-six supervisors, and fourteen “others,” such as heads of department or administrators. Three departments in each discipline participated. For more details, see Acker, Hill, and Black 1994a; Acker, Transken, Hill, and Black, 1994b; Hill, Acker and Black, 1994.

4. Mentoring is more fully investigated in chapter five by Margolis and Romero who examine the experiences of women of color in U.S. sociology graduate programs.