Chapter 9. Involving Others in Writing for Publication: Mentoring, Collaboration and Writing Groups

Part I: Crossing the Threshold

> *I'm all about collaboration. I'm a writing center director … I believe 100 percent that you do the best work with other people. That other people—different perspectives, different voices, all of that generates better knowledge faster and more effectively and more productively than you can on your own. If it weren't for the fact that my department is squirrely about collaboratively written articles, I would never write a single authored thing ever again.*
>
> *– Emilio, Emerging scholar*

> *I think that writing is always about navigating relationships and sometimes these relationships are more immediate, sometimes those relationships are future-oriented, in terms of temporality of the text and the way that it's going to interact with future readers and audiences … But there's always a lot of conversation.*
>
> *– Matt, Expert Scholar*

As our opening quotes illustrate, writing for publication is inherently social. As an emerging scholar, you are joining a conversation in the field, you are responding to blind peer reviewed feedback, and you might also seek support before and during the publication process. Thus, in our final chapter, we turn to the social nature of writing for publication—unlike the classic image Thoreau writing solitary in in the woods, the writers in the three studies had extensive social interaction, always well beyond the required editor and blind peer review feedback.

As has been long established in writing studies, writing is a social action, and genres—including genres within professional academic scholarship—are enacted socially (Bawarshi & Reiff 2010; Miller, 1984; Swales, 2004;). Learning to write is a socially enacted developmental process (Driscoll & Zhang, 2022; Kostouli, 2009). As has been explored in multiple professional genres, learning how to be an expert often includes a substantial period of social apprenticeship, where novices apprentice with experts to learn a new discipline—including how to write in that discipline (Driscoll & Yacoub, 2022; Beaufort, 2000).

This chapter explores the myriad of ways that both emerging and expert scholars engaged in social activity surrounding writing including how writers seek support during the writing and publication process, the critical role of mentoring

and literacy sponsorship for emerging scholars, and models for writing groups. Our threshold concept is:

> ***Threshold Concept:*** *Expert writers leverage social support networks (mentors, peers, and writing groups) to stay current, gain feedback, share encouragement, and offer support throughout the entire writing publication process.*

When we think about how we construct the social nature of writing, there are distinct differences between how education systems often frame learning and output as individual (individual grades, writing projects) vs. writing for publication. For emerging scholars, they often need much more mentoring and support than in coursework, and those mentoring relationships with faculty and peers deepen. Table 9.1 offers some ways that coursework may be different for individuals writing in a learning setting vs. writing in a professional community.

Table 9.1 Crossing the Threshold

Writing as an Individual Student	**THRESHOLD**	**Writing as a Member of a Professional Community**
Writing is viewed as an independent process (especially in coursework under tight deadlines).		Writing is viewed as taking part in a conversation of others and may be collaborative (co-authorship) or meaningfully supported by others.
Peer review and feedback from peers may be viewed as a source of useless information or skepticism (especially in course-based settings).		Experts rely on high quality feedback from mentors, peers, and writing groups to navigate the challenges of peer review.
Knowledge may be seen as individually constructed.		Knowledge is socially constructed.
Limited opportunity for long-term collaborations with others.		Collaborative writing and writing with others is common and for some individuals/disciplines, may constitute the bulk of one's writing for publication.

Within professional academic writing, we can see evidence of social apprenticeship tied to learning disciplinary genres with NIH grants (Ding, 2008), within doctoral studies of second language students (Zhang & Hyland, 2021), and in scholarly publishing (Berkenkotter, et al., 1989; Lei & Hu, 2015; Li, 2007). And certainly, the social nature of writing was borne out consistently in the interview data with both emerging and expert scholars, as well as various documents that they sent: examples of feedback from writing groups, feedback from peers, for, interaction with editors and peer reviewers, and for emerging scholars, textual discussions of conversations with mentors. Thus, academic publication is far from a solitary endeavor, and part of building writing expertise is building a supportive network in which to write.

The two key concepts that are critical for you as an emerging scholar are **social apprenticeship** and **literacy sponsorship**. Social apprenticeship, which is described by Beaufort (2000), is a model of writing development and expertise where novice writers are socially apprenticed into a particular discourse community by sharing the responsibility of writing, gaining experience and feedback from more advanced members of the community, and through those practices, building expertise. This is certainly the case with emerging scholars co-authoring with their faculty experts, which was the case for four emerging scholars in the study. Faculty-graduate student co-authorship has been demonstrated to be a highly effective practice to support the development of graduate students (Kamler, 2008). More broadly, this and other kinds of mentoring works is a form of literacy sponsorship (Brandt, 1998), which Deborah Brandt recognizes as a "range of relationships and ideological pressures that turn up at the scenes of literacy learning" and recognizes that this kind of sponsorship is complex, situated, and advantageous to those who have access to it (p. 558).

Part II: The Social Nature of Writing: Collaboration, Mentoring, and Involving Others

To begin to explore the different ways in which all writers involved others in their publication process, I share the many ways that both sets of authors involved others in their writing for publication processes in Table 9.2.

As we can see from the table, emerging scholars seek social support from a wider range of individuals than experts; and many of these support networks are tied to doctoral study (faculty mentors, university-sponsored writing group or writing center support, and writing for publication seminars). Expert scholars use a more limited range of social supports focusing primarily on individual readers, co-authorship, writing groups, conferences, and editor mentoring. But what is important to note from this table is that all writers used at least two different kinds of social support—they were always having people read their work, talk about it, and connect with others prior to submission.

Table 9.2 Social Writing Supports for Emerging and Expert Writers

Area	Emerging Scholar	Expert Scholar
Co-authors: Writing with others for support and community (and for novice scholars, social apprenticeship)	4 (36.4%)	4 (66.6%)
Conference interaction: Engaging in conversation, presenting and getting feedback on work, or structured publishing/networking/feedback opportunities	2 (18.1%)	4 (66.6%)

Area	Emerging Scholar	Expert Scholar
Editor/collection editor mentoring: Mentoring and more extensive feedback from editors, particularly in the case of an edited collection	3 (27.2%)	4 (66.6%)
Faculty mentors / advisors: Social apprenticeship of graduate students into publishing	11 (100%)	0
Individual readers: Peers who may read drafts, offer comments, often with a draft exchange	8 (72.7%)	6 (100%)
Silent writing group: Time set aside in a group format to write	2 (18.1%)	0
Talking through with non-academic peers or family: Sharing ongoing research and publication ideas with family and friends	2 (18.1%)	0
University-sponsored writing group or writing center support: Attending a regular writing group and/or tutoring for graduate students	2 (18.1%)	0
Writing group: Regularly meeting with peers for goal setting, peer review, and emotional support	4 (36.4%)	2 (16.6%)
Writing for publication seminar: Taking a course in writing for publication as part of doctoral studies	4 (36.4%)	0

In what follows, we focus on three of the most critical areas for emerging scholars to understand to be successful in writing for publication: faculty mentoring, individual readers and writing groups.

Faculty Mentoring and Opening Doors

Faculty play an enormous role in mentoring graduate students into emerging scholars, with 100 percent of the emerging scholars sharing multiple inspiring stories of how their mentors supported them to initially pursue publication and through the entire process. Emerging scholars universally describe faculty mentoring in almost all positive ways, and all emerging scholars discuss the importance and impact of their faculty mentors on their successful publication. Based on these conversations, this mentoring can include any of the following:

- Encouraging them to publish, particularly from specific promising course papers or other program-based structures such as papers written in formal doctoral exam settings
- Offering courses in writing for publication and mentoring beyond the course
- Sharing additional resources (articles, books) to help spark interest in a topic that a student might pursue towards publication

- Offering feedback and advice on drafts, drafting, and writing process
- Helping navigate editor and peer reviewer feedback and develop revision plans
- Social apprenticeship through co-authorship and modeling

One way of articulating this work can be seen through the ways that graduate students described faculty mentoring: "demystifying" "opening doors" "seeing under the hood" and "sharing possibilities." These opportunities were both formal (structured mentoring through programs) and informal (elective mentoring, seeking out support from faculty).

In addition, many emerging scholars described structures that are in place in their doctoral programs designed to help students publish, including writing for publication seminars (taken by four of 11 emerging scholars) and/or comprehensive examinations that include an article writing portion that later led to their publication. These program structures were sometimes tied directly to faculty support, and they were generally met with enthusiasm and positivity as aids that led to successful publication.

Further, for emerging scholars, faculty mentoring relationships are key in moving them forward, and since each publication is unique, faculty mentoring centers on helping them navigate the complexities of that specific publication—encouragement, support, sharing what is typical or normal, how to manage feedback and peer review, and how to overcome emotional challenges. But faculty support that graduate students describe goes beyond typical university structures and into deep one-on-one relationships and literacy sponsorship.

Literacy sponsorship and support: Amal, an emerging scholar and multilingual writer, describes the importance of faculty mentorship, "Mentorship is so important … especially for students like me, international students … We don't have this mentorship in Lebanon. Mentorship does not really exist." Further, for Amal, having faculty members open the doors and tell her that she is capable of publishing was a big part of the process, "All I needed was somebody to tell me I can do it, have faith in me, and guide me a little bit just like what Dr. Faculty did, 'Submit it here to this conference, check this out, think of publishing this piece over here,' etc. Without that, I don't think I would have been able to publish anything. I wouldn't have had the confidence. Mentorship is everything for me."

On the importance of faculty mentoring, Sara observes, "It's really huge and important. Since [faculty member] gave me that feedback about conference proposals and I remember [they] were like, 'You said you weren't getting things accepted and I can see why, and this is why.' … I was like, 'Well, thank you for telling me. Now that makes sense. I've applied to four other conferences since then and I've gotten into all of them. … I think of it as demystifying. That's something that I think of when I'm a teacher and I feel I've experienced that in being mentored, it's just demystifying these processes." Wade describes a similar situation with his advisor, where, after receiving difficult feedback, he was able to

normalize it due to the advice of his advisor. "My advisor was extremely supportive throughout the whole process. I sent him the drafts, I also sent him the editor comments, I sent him my revisions … Basically, what was helpful for me was that when something happened that I didn't like throughout the process, he would always say two things. He would say, 'Yeah, that sucks' and 'that's annoying. But it's also normal and that happens to everybody.'" Every emerging scholar in this study shares similar stories of faculty "demystifying" and "opening doors."

Collaboration and Co-authorship with faculty mentors: Four emerging scholars had the opportunity to co-author works with their more experienced faculty mentors, allowing them to learn how to publish through social apprenticeship. These well-published faculty mentors offered firsthand modeling of the entire process from idea conception to drafting and how to navigate peer review. Khaled, who had a prominent and well-published scholar as a mentor, describes this:

> My initial mentor was my advisor. I co-wrote with him a few times and that was very helpful because of his particular skill that you don't see till you see how it being worked out. Because I actually saw under the hood … He's particularly good at summarizing and synthesizing the nature of whatever is going on, and then articulating this is what it means in terms of the field. I saw that firsthand where I would do the analysis, I would post it in there and then he would write the discussion. The discussion articulated the analysis in a disciplinary way that I could see. I see exactly why this would be published in a disciplinary conversation because it's connecting to A, B, C like this. I learned by seeing that and I would say that's definitely showed up in my writing.

What Khaled describes is how this mentor was able not only to jumpstart his career by offering social apprenticeship in publication but also teach him things he can now do independently as a scholar. This modeling of disciplinary thinking and reasoning patterns was critical for Khaled.

Rose, likewise, recognizes that collaborative writing, particularly with senior scholars earlier in her career, were "foundational" and she credits much of her success to starting early in these experiences. She describes her difficulty with the proposal genre and how her mentor and co-author as

> I think having a coach … for my project with [Mentor]. [Mentor] was the leader and I was the apprentice, I'm helping out, I'm ready to do the work, and then over time as we continued to work on that project, I was able to take more of a leading role because I gained that expertise. But I think I really needed some of that hands-on training, like with training wheels essentially.

This idea of training wheels supports both social apprenticeship and the ways that many emerging scholars—in all disciplines—learn how to write for publication.

Individual Peer Readers and Professional Connections

All expert scholars and the majority of emerging scholars used individual readers—almost always peers—to offer feedback and support usually at two stages: always after an initial draft had been completed and frequently at the revision stage: either after blind peer reviews and editor feedback was received or after the work was revised. Even the most well-published and experienced scholars have extensive discussions about how they employ peer feedback in their writing. These peers helped shape drafts, offered emotional support, and sometimes suggestions for next steps for a piece that had been rejected.

One key distinction between emerging and expert scholars was that while emerging scholars relied on faculty mentors for their expertise, expert scholars developed networks of professional connections that led to peer support, mentoring, and co-authorship opportunities. These professional connections were almost always field-wide and beyond their local institutional contexts. Expert scholar Stephanie describes how she went to CCCC in 2000 and met another scholar studying creative writing, Kelly Ritter. They both attended a creative writing special interest group, recognizing that Kelly was engaged in similar work, which led to Stephanie approaching Kelly at breakfast at the conference. This started a series of conversations which eventually led to them collaborating on several articles and an edited collection on creative writing. Stephanie notes:

> Working with her was also really important because she and I worked really well together, but she also helped to give I was thinking focus. At the same time, I think we got the edited collection published because I contacted Wendy Bishop and said, "Would you please say you'll be in our book and that would help to get in published," and she did. She's really helpful that way and also gave us some advice. We had an original title and she was like, "Don't call it that."

Through Stephanie's stories we can see how these layers of professional connections function and grow over time—as a more novice scholar at the time, Stephanie sought out other scholars who was working in a similar area for mentorship, collaboration, and support—and those opportunities paid off for her in terms of networking and publications. Stephanie's story further illustrates the importance of emerging scholars working to put themselves out there and build professional connections beyond their graduate programs to others in the field. Conferences are a critical place for this kind of work to happen.

Emerging scholar Gina describes how her revision process was shaped by mentoring and support, both from her faculty mentor as well as a more experienced peer who had gotten published, "I was a little confused and overwhelmed by the feedback at first. They were able to help me break it down into manageable steps."

Another common approach is to seek out peer feedback for specific perspectives surrounding wat one is writing about. In the case of expert scholar Alice, she not only has a peer reader who she regularly exchanges drafts with to provide her feedback (another senior scholar who had also been the editor of a book series), but she goes to specific experts for feedback on areas that they have lived experiences or expertise, including those who represent key groups in her book.

With a current emphasis in many fields on diversity, both emerging and expert writers seek feedback from individuals based on their ability to share unique perspectives on their work. Kathy, who is Chinese by nationality, is writing from what she describes as a "Chinese perspective" in her article exploring a conference in 2020. She was concerned as early in the pandemic when she was writing, COVID-19 was contributing to a growing anti-Chinese sentiment in the US. Thus, she seeks the advice of a senior faculty member in her program, who she specifically identifies as "representative of my ideal audience because she is American and she has been in the field long enough to know well about this field or about this community. She's also white. The idea was to get a sense of how well she understands my writing whether I have done a good job contextualizing it." The scholar is able to help Kathy with revision suggestions. Likewise, emerging scholar Brita, who is white and is examining cookbooks from various minority cultures, describes how she engaged in conversations with minority peers from graduate school both to see if it was acceptable for her to pursue the topic and how she was portraying it:

> Having sought out some friends of mine who belong to some of these communities as … the sensitivity reader. I guess I didn't really think of it that way but it was more just like "can you tell me if I'm doing something wildly offensive or ignorant; I don't want to do that." I don't want to publish unethical scholarship in that regard. But of course, then I feel the mixed feelings. Like, I'm asking people of color to do additional labor. There's that whole thing too, but my advisor was like "I'm white, almost everyone in our department faculty is white."

Thus, while individual readers can help provide unique perspectives and support emerging scholars, Brita's concern about labor is an important one.

Writing Groups

Both emerging and expert scholars described, often in great detail, the value and importance of their writing groups. These groups functioned in multiple ways, which could include any of the following:

- **Accountability**: which may include regular check-ins, shared online spreadsheets, or even dedicated writing time on a regular schedule (login to zoom, turn off monitor, write or go to the same place and write)

- **Feedback:** including exchanging drafts, talking through ideas, and providing input to help shape ideas
- **Perspective:** on peer reviews and editor communication, giving second opinions and advice about how to proceed with revision or reading to see if revisions were successfully accomplished
- **Emotional support**: in navigating peer review, managing difficult rejections, and finding a way forward with the publication
- **Professional support**: in the form of advice and suggestions, often beyond publishing, including job searching, professional advice, seeking an outside perspective

Many scholars found writing groups extremely helpful—and those that did not use a writing group either had co-authors or long-established individual readers. With the exception of one university-sponsored writing group hosted by a writing center for advanced students, all other writing groups discussed by participants were self-formed by groups of peers. Some expert scholars had writing groups that had been functioning for over a decade, comprised of people from graduate school, while others had writing groups of people that focused on similar areas of inquiry.

For people engaged in social justice work, writing groups took on another important dimension. Two emerging scholars needed support for the work they were doing because of an ideological clash with their family. One emerging scholar who was working on critical race theory discussed the importance of cultivating writing groups and other supports external to their very conservative family who was hostile towards their work. They describe, "I'm the black sheep, the one who went off to higher education and got liberalized. There's a lot of tension there … A lot of arguing about, apparently even though I draw from critical race theory, for example, I don't know what it is. But my parents do because they watch Fox News, right?" They go onto describe how they formed a writing group with some peers who had similar life circumstances both for accountability and support. They discuss, "I was really worried that if I didn't have that [group] I wouldn't be able to produce anything. So, for me, it was creating this space where I'd have a supportive accountability network." In this case, these groups provide support for the complex identity work that accompanies public sharing of ideas.

Expert scholar Heather has a longstanding writing group made up of other well-known scholars. Her group meets every two weeks, where they typically read and comment on shorter amounts of text (1,500–2,000) words. They also provide framing and other forms of support. Heather describes an article she wrote five years ago that was rejected. She gives it to the group:

> So, I said to them yesterday, I'm giving you this article that I wrote five years ago. I'm sure things have changed in terms of publications and there might be new stuff to add in here, but I want your ideas on what this looks like in today's rhet-comp

> world because I feel like I did myself a disservice by just shelving it. … I'm actually sharing the review with Reviewer 2 with my writing group who are very seasoned scholars with the hopes that they can help me unpack it a little bit more and separate the wheat from the chaff because there are parts of it that I don't know, is this personal, is this something else.

What we can see from Heather's description is that she's using her writing group to help her better contextualize the work and reviewer comments and offer a new set of eyes.

Part III: Concepts and Activities for Developing Social Support Networks and Collaborative Opportunities for Publication

The above has demonstrated that successful scholars employ a wide range of social supports that provide them with feedback, emotional support, and ongoing perspective in the field. Different writers—depending on their projects, personality, and preferences—can use any number of effective strategies. These findings are articulated in this threshold concept:

> ***Threshold Concept:*** *Expert writers leverage social support networks (mentors, peers, and writing groups) to stay current, gain feedback, share encouragement, and offer support throughout the entire writing publication process.*

As we have seen from both expert and emerging scholars, writing is a social activity and those who are successful find their support by seeking mentoring, learning how to cultivate support networks and be a good reader for others' work, networking, and cultivating social relationships that can help create the support network necessary to succeed.

Emerging Scholars Seeking Faculty Mentoring

One of the most important things you can do now is to seek a faculty mentor who can support them through the publication process. Faculty members, including those teaching in graduate programs and/or dissertation directors, are generally very accessible to emerging scholars, because a big part of a doctoral faculty member's job is to help graduate students gain entry into the field. Given this, consider how you can find opportunities to seek out mentoring relationships that go beyond the classroom. Sometimes, it can take courage to go talk to your faculty but remember that they are there to help you! Here are some suggestions for how to approach potential faculty mentors:

- Meet a faculty member one-on-one during office hours and begin by asking for advice on publishing.
- Talk through your ideas for possible publications with faculty; see if they are willing to mentor and sponsor projects.
- Ask faculty to offer you feedback on course papers and projects towards publication.
- Ask faculty to share their own experiences and wisdom in publishing.
- For faculty who are working in similar areas, ask if there are opportunities to collaborate or assist with their ongoing work (in some programs these may be formal opportunities like graduate assistantships, while in others, less formal opportunities are possible).
- Talk to faculty about what journals are appropriate to submit your work to.
- Ask faculty about conferences they are attending and see if you can attend and allow them to introduce you and help you network.
- Talk with your graduate program director about your aspirations for publication; they may be able to offer support or suggest faculty members to reach out to.
- Go to optional events that your program holds, as all events are an opportunity to connect with potential faculty members.
- Attend events that your university or program is holding surrounding writing or publication (e.g., publishing roundtables, social opportunities, and presentations); these are outstanding opportunities to engage in conversation about publishing and find mentors.

What is clear from the above is that graduate students who take extra time to meet faculty and cultivate relationships beyond the classroom are usually those who have opportunities for deeper mentoring and co-authorship. Taking an active role in seeking mentorship will benefit you tremendously!

Establishing Professional Connections in the Field

A second area that is critical to begin to cultivate, even while still in graduate school, is establishing professional connections in the field. I point out Stephanie's story for how she was able to build professional connections by A) being present at conferences; B) attending sessions of people whose work she was interested in; C) reaching out and opening up conversation with people she wanted to work with; and D) asking directly for opportunities for co-authorship and collaboration. Stephanie had the courage to go up to Kelly during breakfast towards the end of the conference and have a conversation. This conversation led to many different opportunities and helped shape her early career. All conferences offer some kind of professional networking opportunity. Just like the advice above on reaching out to faculty, learning how to make the most of these opportunities and having courage to engage are critical.

Additionally, to be active in publishing, it is important to be aware of, and active in, the broader conversations of the field. Conferences represent one of the best opportunities for building such connections—conferences are where scholars share their newest work, work that often won't see publication for a year or more. Thus, attending conferences allows you to get a pulse on where the field is heading in the next two to five years.

Here are some tips for networking at conferences or other professional events:

- Review the conference schedule and sessions before you arrive. Select sessions that you are particularly interested in seeing, with scholars and topic ideas you may want to connect with.
- Always have a business card—this is an easy way for people to get in contact with you at the conference or beyond. Usually if you offer a business card, they will offer one too, and that's an invitation to follow up later.
- Take opportunities to introduce yourself to presenters at the end of the session—exchange contact information, see if they are up for a longer chat (lunch, coffee, etc.). If you are able to network more at the event, great. If not, follow up with them the week after the conference to see if you can continue the connection.
- Make it a point to attend any social events that the conference offers (happy hours, socials) as these are all great networking opportunities. When you attend, mingle, introduce yourself, and talk to as many people as you can.
- If the conference has an opportunity for scholarly roundtables, formal mentoring opportunities, editor roundtables, or any kind of publishing-related even, you should always attend this, take notes, and ask questions.
- If your faculty members or more experienced peers are attending the conference, ask them to help introduce you during social events, etc.
- Work to branch out and network with people beyond your graduate program or immediate social network. This may include sharing cabs to the airport, making small talk, and generally be as social as possible. (And yes, this is hard for introverts! But it is a learned skill.)
- Asking people about their work (e.g., "what are you working on now?) is a great way to have folks open up and can lead to deeper connections.
- If at all affordable, stay in the conference hotel. The hotel lounge, elevators, and social spaces are often great ways to meet people in the field and network.
- Practice talking about your work and articulating your scholarly agenda (see the elevator pitch, below). You can practice this with peers and friends. The goal is that you'll be able to smartly and concisely talk about the stuff you are working on when you are engaged in networking conversations (which may be quite short).
- Look for volunteer opportunities at the conference or in the field—serving on boards, joining an editorial team, learning how to be a peer

reviewer—these are also great opportunities to build professional connections beyond your university.

As you can see from this list above, being an active member of the field means just that—being active. Reaching out, making connections, and being social, even if it is outside of your comfort zone. Writing for publication does not exist in a vacuum—it exists in a community of people who are also writing and engaging in scholarship. Learning how to be part of that community is critical for your long-term success. Beyond conferences, many professional organizations also have summer institutes, research seminars, or other retreats or workshops for professionals—these are another fabulous networking opportunity to learn, grow, and share.

Writing Groups for Accountability and Support

Another area of great benefit to scholars is forming a writing group. As explored in the study, there are a number of different possibilities for creating a writing group. Here are some of the most common:

- **Writing Productivity Group:** A group that is formed around the goal of helping writers meet productivity goals and have accountability for their writing. This can include:
  - Regular check ins (text message, email, video chat, in person) on goals, writing time, word counts, etc.
  - Shared accountability materials (shared spreadsheets that everyone in the group updates with their writing productivity)
  - Silent writing time, where everyone either comes to the same place to write and/or logs in and turns off video/audio to silently write
- **Writing Support Group:** A group that is formed around the goal of providing feedback discussions, and support towards writing for publication.
  - Meets regularly in person or online to share work (usually weekly, bi-monthly, or monthly depending on the group)
  - Work may be sent in advance; may be shorter segments or work if talking about multiple people's work or may focus on one person's longer work
  - Members can also share outlines, notes, and ideas and use other group members as a sounding board
  - May share blind peer review feedback and/or article revisions for suggestions and support
  - May also include regular goal setting, check ins, and other productivity measures
  - May support members with other professional issues or goals

Some of the expert writers I studied have had groups that have been around for almost a decade; group membership may evolve over time, but these groups

are highly effective in providing both professional and social support for ongoing publications and scholarly work.

Exploring Co-authorship

A final aspect critical to all scholars' success was the value of co-authorship. Writers shared a number of suggestions for how to build successful collaborations with others. For this section, I draw upon those as well as the work of Kelsey Hixson-Bowles and Enrique Paz (2015) who interviewed six prominent scholars who have considerable records of collaboration, as well as my own study data.

Table 9.3 Benefits and Drawbacks of Co-authorship

Benefits of Collaboration	**Drawbacks of Collaboration**
Collaborative work allows scholars to accomplish larger-scope work than working by themselves (larger scope projects, multi-institutional work, larger datasets).	Collaborative work may count for "less" than solo-authored work, especially in job searching and/or tenure and promotion. If you are in a situation where you are regularly reviewed, understand how co-authorship is valued the entire way up the chain (department, college, university) to avoid problems later.
Collaborative work allows authors to play to their strengths, where some collaborations include a specialization of roles (e.g., one person handles literature review writing while another writes about data and results).	Some fields and disciplines undervalue collaborative work (while others may value it); it is generally less valued in more humanities-oriented disciplines.
Collaborative work can be faster and more effective than working alone, including solving difficult problems and thinking through revisions (two heads are better than one).	Personality differences can be considerable in collaborative work, including potential clashes over authorship order or who is doing what work.
Collaborative work offers built-in accountability, support system, readership, and a writing group	Differences in time management (e.g., people who write primarily on break vs. those that do not) can cause difficulty; have good conversations early on.

In terms of facilitating successful collaborations, consider the following:

- Look for opportunities to collaborate with others, particularly across shared interests, shared work, other fields, or complimentary skillsets.
- Find people you'd like to spend more time with and see if there is opportunity to collaborate.
- Don't collaborate with someone you don't like or don't get along with; this will lead to difficulty.
- Consider asking faculty/mentors for collaboration; this can be extremely productive for you at this stage in your career.

Once you find a potential collaborator, you will want to ensure that you have a smooth experience, and all collaborators understand their roles and have a shared vision of moving forward. Here are some tips and suggestions:

- Have conversations with your collaborators about their work, their schedules, any upcoming reviews, and so on. If one collaborator wants to finish a piece in three months but the other is too busy to work on it till summer, that will be challenging.
- Set up regular times to check in and meet (at least once a month).
- Talk about how you write and what might work best—some prefer to do silent writing or collaborative writing together, others prefer to split up the work, focusing on the areas that they are both strongest in.
- Typically, authors will **split up the work of an article** and write separate sections, giving each other feedback.
- Another option is that authors may collaborate on shared data collection and analysis, with each author taking on a different aspect of the project.
    - On larger projects, each author or pair of authors may work on separate articles as **first or primary author.**
    - Authors may also set aside time for writing collaboratively on a shared document, such as through Google Docs or other collaborative programs.

Activity 9.1: Your Elevator Pitch

When you are attending conferences or introducing yourself to other professionals in the field, it can be helpful to prepare a short "elevator pitch" that describes what you are interested in, your scholarly identity, or the work you are currently doing (such as your dissertation). I call this an elevator pitch because it can literally happen in the elevator at the conference—someone says "oh, you are a graduate student? What are you working on?" and you have about 20 floors (or 30 seconds) to explain.

To create your pitch, you can write out a set of bullet points or literally memorize what you want to say. Then, just spend time practicing it, thinking about how you'd describe what you are doing to someone working in your area/field vs. someone outside of your field. I like to prepare pitches for both: pitching my keywords and topic to members of my field. But I also like to be able to talk to someone who is not in my field or may not even be in higher education about the work I do. Having this in your "back pocket" can help you feel more prepared and ready to engage.

This is one of the things that I frequently teach my graduate students in my Writing for Publication and Research Design and the Craft of Writing courses—and many of them have reported back using their pitches in a variety of circumstances—at the car dealership, the dinner table, and even at the elevator

of the conference hotel, where they met the big name scholar and were able to successfully connect!

Activity 9.2: Starting a Writing Group

Anyone can form a writing group. Ask a few peers who are interested in publishing and committed enough to form a longer-term group. A good group is manageable in size—no more than three to four members—with all members in agreement about the goals and purposes of the group and committed to dedicating some time and energy to the group. And groups work best if you like the people who are in the group. To form a group, you might consider the following questions:

- Which of your peers would you like to spend more time with?
- Who might be a good support for publication goals?
- Who is likely to reciprocate their time and energy for the good of the group?
- Who offers insightful feedback and responses?

When asking, you might also share the different ways that groups can function to find what would be most appealing to the group members.

Activity 9.3: Being a Good Reader and Responder

A theme in the first part of this chapter is reciprocation—people who are in writing groups share, respond to each other's work, and are good readers and responders. Faculty mentors, whose job and passion are to help graduate students succeed, once had their own mentors supporting them in their journeys and are passing that nurturing on. This is a big part of the literacy sponsorship and social apprenticeship of learning writing for publication. Thus, it is important as part of learning how to write for publication to be a good reader and responder to others' work because this is part of how the work of the field happens. It happens through mentoring and support, with readers, and it happens during the peer review process. But you might ask, what does this look like?

The feedback that was most helpful to participants, shared with me through their drafts, has similar principles to the field's research on what makes a good response to writing. This includes:

- **Emphasis on Higher Order Concerns (HOCs).** HOCs are concerns that are integral to the cohesion, purpose, and goals of the article (Keh, 1990). They include argument and synthesis of the literature in the field, overall organization, adherence to audience expectations, and lexico-syntactic errors that interfere with understanding.
- **Direct feedback.** Direct feedback can involve both offering explicit suggestions as well as offering background information or "why" you are suggesting making the suggestion, which facilitates learning (Driscoll & Powell, 2020).

Saying something is "confusing" is not as useful as saying "I am finding this confusing because you have jumped from X idea to Y idea."

- **Responding as a reader.** Describe your reactions to the text as a reader of the text. What confuses you? Excites you? What are your reactions and expectations? These can be incredibly helpful to writers as they allow them to see how the text is being responded to and where areas are strong or weak.
- **Being honest yet encouraging.** Because of the rigors of the peer review process, it is better for a writer to hear what you really think the problems are in the draft, rather than hear that later from peer reviewers. A stronger draft now equals more likelihood that a writer will receive a revise and resubmit or acceptance rather than rejection. Thus, it is important to be clear, honest, and yet also encourage the writer.
- **Carefully examining argument.** One of the challenges that many emerging scholars have with writing for publication is the specificity and clarity of building a field-specific argument surrounding the previous work in the field, the role of the present article, and the specific data/theories/analysis that is being fronted. Pay close attention to the specifics of the argument.
- **Carefully examining core contributions and how those are signaled.** Another area that is often a struggle for emerging scholars is signaling a clear contribution (in the abstract and in a purpose statement early in the article) and then offering clear contributions to the field. This involves, as Khaled's story above shows, how the specific work of the article leads to general conclusions that apply to the field. These commonly are clearly signaled in the latter parts of the article.
- **Examining the overall structure and reader aids for text clarity.** Tied to the argument and contributions is the overall structure: what the piece is accomplishing, if everything in the article makes sense, and how the structure helps the argument come forth. This also includes things like having clear topic sentences, clear organizational headings, markers, and other reader aids.
- **Articulating Audience expectations.** Sharing your knowledge about audience expectations—what do audiences expect and want to see? What would you want to see as a member of the field? This is one of the more challenging areas for emerging scholars, and thus, can be a very useful thing to focus on.
- **Being considerate of the person behind the text.** Memes and discussions abound about Reviewer 2: A mean-spirited blind peer reviewer who rips apart one's work and treats a manuscript disrespectfully. One of the most helpful things many participants discussed was having reviews that were direct, useful, but also constructive. Consider your own tone carefully when you are providing feedback (whether this is to peers in a writing group or as a blind peer reviewer). Consider the *human* behind the review and think about how you would like to be addressed. It is easy to get

> caught up in the text itself—but to create equitable and accessible fields for emerging scholars, it is critical that we treat others with respect, even if their texts still require some revision.

In a writing group, with peers, or in a classroom setting, we often have an opportunity to provide feedback to others. This kind of feedback experience can then lead to developing the skills of a blind peer reviewer. Apply the above heuristic to a text to practice your peer review skills.

Activity 9.4: Reach out!

Based on all of this information in the chapter, take time today to reach out to one or more mentors, collaborators or co-authors.

As this chapter has explored, many different options exist for you to begin developing a rich social network to support your development as an expert writer. Expertise is social, writing is social, and the more you are able to build your relationships with others in the field, the more you will have opportunities to strengthen and grow as a writer.