AFTERWORD.

RESEARCHING AND RESTRUCTURING THE "SCENE(S)" OF FACULTY WRITING

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Twenty-five years later, I remember the moment so well. A late Friday afternoon English Department meeting. The manilla envelope I picked up from the mailroom hidden from view under the meeting materials. The anxiety I felt, the rejection I thought was represented with the words "revise and resubmit" in the decision letter from a journal. Though there was a faculty development office on my campus focused on teaching, learning, and technology, there were no faculty writing groups to help me process the editorial commentary. It was an isolating moment for a new faculty member in a new department, not even three years out of graduate school. The panic about the tenure and promotion process clouded my logic to see the potential a revise and resubmit represented, a viewpoint I later encouraged among the doctoral students with whom I worked in a course on scholarly publication I would teach in the years to come. But in that moment, I was isolated and alone, an imposter who didn't belong in the academic club.

The essays within *Faculty Writing Support: Emerging Research from Rhetoric and Composition Studies* document not only the anxieties of academic writing but also the social and material conditions that enable and shape them. Equally important are the contributors' representation of the efforts among faculty developers, academic administrators, and faculty and graduate students to create supportive spaces to develop and sustain scholarly and writerly identities. In an earlier canonical essay, "Modernism and the Scene(s) of Writing" (1987), Linda Brodkey invoked a vision of the "writer" alone in a garret as part of the academic mythos of the solitary toil that contradicts the realities of our social and professional lives as writers and as teachers of writing. Although I was familiar with Brodkey's essay when I sat in that meeting 25 years ago, I had already internalized the institutional pressures to publish. Yet Brodkey wisely "exorcised" the image of the writer as individual genius, a lone literary studies archetype that in no ways aligns with the process-based pedagogical practices of peer response and revision that are the hallmark of the discipline.

DOI: https://doi.org/10.37514/PER-B.2025.2555.3.2

Such an exorcism also extends to how we conduct research about writing, for as Brodkey (1987) asserts:

> Research on composing that isolates individual writers in laboratories and asks them to interact with a text under the observation of a researcher effectively recreates the scene of writing as a thoroughly modern romance: a scientific narrative in which the garret is now a laboratory, the author a subject, the reader a researcher, and reading an analysis of data. (p. 397)

For Brodkey, and for the contributors to this collection, whether we write in a kitchen, a coffeeshop, in a private office, or with a larger group, academic writing is a social process enabled and constrained by material and cultural conditions often ignored by the numerous popular books on the topic. And while literacy technologies have evolved and the writing process has been remediated through digital tools and genres, all too often the culture of the academy is as static and unchanged now as it felt for me then as an early career assistant professor of rhetoric and composition.

The irony within a profession so focused on the socially constituted nature of student writing processes has been the longstanding lack of focus on the presumed to be expert practices of the faculty teaching those students. Just as scholars such as Thomas Kent (1999) advocated a turn from process to post-process, understanding that there is no one way to teach writing, no one set of rules for students' success, and no one context for defining what constitutes good writing, these research-driven essays seek to refocus our attention to faculty processes *in situ*, with methods and methodologies as varied as the spaces in which faculty compose, and with a contemporary understanding of the equally varied positionality and subjectivity of faculty identities. While the academy itself represents a common setting, what diversifies university spaces for these authors is the way in which faculty colleagues, program administrators, and other stakeholders interrogate the working conditions that support faculty writers, understanding the cultural ecologies of academic labor are ones that impact overall research productivity, whether it be a teaching- or research-intensive university. An important model of that space is the writing group, one that dominates numerous chapters in this collection and further attests to the social nature of writing for both novice and expert writers, not to mention the faculty and staff who facilitate these important forums. This model is designed to help writers in impactful, longitudinal ways and counteracts the popular understanding that writing can be mastered and difficulties conquered, evidenced through resources such as *Writing Your Journal Article in 12 Weeks: A Guide to Academic Publishing Success* (Belcher, 2018).

Indeed, for contributors J. Michael Rifenburg and Rebecca Johnston, writing is inherently "a communal art" that fosters reflection about one's own processes and the social influences on both process and product. In their chapter "Leading Faculty Writing Academies: A Case Study of Writerly Identity," they strongly encourage a resistance against neoliberalist structures of marketability and competitiveness to promote "methods to emphasize community and slowing down as a method for supporting faculty writing development but also countering neoliberal impulses that repeatedly shout more, more, more, faster, faster, faster—that seek to pit faculty against faculty." Part of that emphasis on competition, productivity, and speed is tied to extrinsic motivations and anxieties that typically include tenure and promotion for faculty and time to degree and the job search for graduate students. Similarly, research like that found in Jackie Grutsch McKinney's "Faculty as Proximal Writers: Why Faculty Write Near Other Writers" demonstrates the benefits of writing in the presence of others, even when not as formal as a writing group or writing academy. Her findings foreground the sense of motivation, accountability, inspiration, and overall companionship this proximity can foster among writers all too often isolated, an affective response I felt many times throughout my scholarly career. McKinney concludes that "respondents felt insecure about their struggles especially because the struggles of fellow faculty writers were typically invisible to them. Others talked about their mental health and how writing alone activated their anxiety."

Despite these clear challenges, notably for early-career writers, contributors to this collection are careful not to pathologize their participants. Instead, they deploy surveys, interviews, focus groups, and other methods to describe how writerly identities are shaped by factors that impact labor, work-life balance (including child and elder care), privilege, or lack thereof, within academic and cultural structures that are all too often implicitly and explicitly biased on the bases of gender, ethnicity, academic rank, and professional status. Such factors can promote a lack of belonging to that traditional academic club and, as a result, many contributors stress an implicit ethic of care in attending to the needs and differences among writers. To that end, Beth Hewett's "What Professional Writers Want from Writing Coaching" provides a detailed overview of the numerous concerns among the clientele of Defend & Publish, a consulting and coaching company. These go beyond the dissertation, as the company name implies, to include a range of genre transitions and the need for time and project management skills. Hewett concludes that the latter is the largest impediment given the ways work-life balance is a common barrier to maintaining progress. Through these and other chapters, the emphasis on description as opposed to prescription of practices for faculty, faculty developers, and graduate educators is a significant one. Mentors, advisors, peer coaches,

and supervisors cannot and should not impose a uniform model of "what works for me will work for you."

Several chapters also focus on the needs of graduate students and the understandable anxiety they face in a far more competitive 21st-century academic job market than past cohorts experienced, tied to the elusive nature of the tenure-track job that those prior cohorts took for granted would be available to them. Citing data on graduate student attrition, Charmian Lam's "Institutional Support for Future Faculty: A Focus on Grant and Professional Materials" connects graduate student success to that sense of belonging to their academic community and the need for mentoring, particularly for historically underrepresented groups. For Lam, knowledge of genre conventions, from grants to articles, doesn't just happen. Instead, it requires a dedicated effort from individual advisors and more structural accountability on the part of institutions to ensure mentoring is consistent within and across programs. Lam's research identifies an important issue related to the static nature of academic genres; while graduate students may develop awareness of article- and book-writing conventions, knowledge of other important genres such as grants or remediation of those genres for external online audiences is far less consistent. Yet securing funding for research through a fellowship proposal or sabbatical application is a standard way to counteract the time constraints that keep faculty at all levels from making progress on their research and resulting writerly identities, which impacts the way they are perceived by disciplinary peers and the way they perceive themselves.

Compounding the genre problem is the reality that with newer technologies of literacy and communication, the modalities in which scholarship is produced, distributed, and consumed have changed (impacting the important role of collaboration), while the definitions of scholarship have remained static in many institutional contexts, reinscribing the privilege of single-authored print books and articles. Just as research processes, including field work and data analysis, often represent invisible labor that impacts the timetable to publication, digital composing contexts are equally invisible. Thus, faculty review committees do not recognize the challenges of creating born-digital texts or migrating existing print content to digital form in ways that move beyond the static *save as .pdf*, as Paul Muhlhauser's and Jenna Sheffield's "Complicating Techno-Afterglow: Pursing Compositional Equity and Making Labor Visible in Digital Scholarly Production" suggests. By documenting the labor of digital composing through interviews with authors, these contributors foreground not only the learning curve and time management challenges but also the difficulties in navigating a culture in which digital, multimodal scholarship is seen as inferior to its print, alphabetic counterpart, often leading to an authorial choice to "resort to print" publishing genres and venues.

When I sat in that meeting with my "revise and resubmit," I couldn't have imagined I would approach the end of my career as a liberal arts dean charged with the ongoing assessment of faculty across the humanities and social sciences. In this role, I can attest to the constant theme of the collection that the academy must acknowledge the impact of workload and work-life balance on the scholarly productivity of its faculty. This is especially true in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, where course loads have been increased and sabbaticals and other forms of research support are harder to secure. Many chapters consistently make visible the need to provide that support, to use research to assess the success and efficacy of that support, and to acknowledge the intersectionality of the faculty and graduate students with whom they work. As with the research methods we deploy in rhetoric and composition, these efforts must be triangulated at multiple levels through varied types of professional development as we determine the equally varied writing needs of faculty across the disciplines. This process also includes expanding the mission of units such as centers for faculty excellence, which are often more commonly focused on teaching; university writing centers, which can sponsor faculty and graduate student writing groups; and offices of research, which should promote a broader definition of research to move beyond external funding and to provide incentives and rewards for a diverse range of scholarly writing projects.

In addition, graduate schools and university libraries must advocate for multimodal methods and multigenred dissertations that employ the use of audio, video, and other assets so that graduate students, as future faculty, do not "resort to print" as the sole mode of meaning- and knowledge-making in the academy. For faculty across the discipline, this can also include campus digital commons to house and showcase scholarly artifacts. And as academic leaders, our provosts, deans, and chairs must themselves reform incentive and reward structures that enable rather than constrain a more capacious conception of faculty productivity and associated literate practices. These efforts, along with the resources to support them, will undoubtedly benefit the many faculty whose work does not and should not fit into the model Brodkey herself found so limiting in its emphasis on a singular authorial subject known as a writer. For Valerie Lee and Cynthia Selfe (2008), this capaciousness aligns with the compositional equity for which Muhlhauser and Sheffield call. Both administrators and faculty play an important role in revising tenure and promotion guidelines to, as Lee and Selfe advocate, "insist on parity for scholars producing digital media work by removing language that privileged print-based forms over digital forms of scholarship and thus marked digital work unfairly" (p. 57).

Avoiding privilege also mandates recognition that we do not all experience the university in the same way and those concerns about isolation and lack of

belonging are heightened for faculty of color, especially as they are expected to mentor students of color in what can easily become an uneven balance of workload that negatively impacts their productivity and retention. Laura Micciche and Batsheva Guy affirm this in their chapter "Writing Support for Faculty of Color," aligning the lack of support to concerns about attrition among diverse faculty, who often persist by going it alone to secure mentoring and other forms of professional support. One way to address these concerns is to involve faculty in this process by not just conducting formalized needs assessments and developing success plans but also viewing them as co-equal creators of the types of programs from which they will benefit, as peer facilitators, mentors, and evaluators of the success of those initiatives. For instance, in stressing the importance of Black women's inclusion in antiracist initiatives, Temptaous Mckoy (2021) argues that "intersectional identity offers the lens to truly see and implement antiracist practices in the humanities and other fields alike." In this way, faculty and administrators are collective agents of change as faculty have more power over the "scene(s) of writing," a process that calls for administrators and faculty to hold themselves accountable for the success and retention of diverse colleagues and create an intersectional scholarly and educational community dedicated to that goal.

Finally, like the researchers in this collection, our larger discipline must develop methods and methodologies for faculty and future faculty needs to be heard and addressed, so that they don't feel as if they must go it alone in what for so many is still an academic club, empowering to some, alienating to others. Overall, the institutional contexts represented in *Faculty Writing Support: Emerging Research from Rhetoric and Composition Studies* powerfully honor Brodkey's call to action for us "to shape and construct and critique their understanding of what it means to write, learn to write, teach writing, and do research on writing" (p. 415). These researchers emphasize, as all good researchers do, those external variables both material and cultural that impact writing processes and products, as well as the overall personal and professional well-being of writers themselves, in the 21st-century academy.

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