CHAPTER 3.

FACULTY WRITERS AS PROXIMAL WRITERS: WHY FACULTY WRITE NEAR OTHER WRITERS

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Abstract: *Based on a survey of writers in both formal and informal settings, such as retreats and coffee shops, I examine motivations behind "proximal writing," where writers work near each other. Findings reveal that writing in proximity fosters accountability, enhances focus, and builds community. This chapter identifies the appeal and efficacy of proximal writing among faculty and underscores its role in creating supportive, low-stakes environments conducive to productivity, especially in academic contexts.*

For a few years now, I have been hosting a faculty writing time in the writing center I direct. Every Friday morning before the center opens for feedback sessions, faculty sign in, find a spot and write. As host, I go each week to turn on some background music and write alongside the dozens of other writers. Over the years, I've asked myself many times: What makes these faculty members get to campus so early to write in one another's presence? More broadly, *what makes anyone with a writing task decide to do that task in the presence of others who are writing?* From making writing dates with others online or in person, to joining a writing retreat, to using a hashtag like #amwriting or #nanowrimo, to going to a coffee shop to write knowing other writers will be there, writers often opt to write in the presence of other writers. Why? This curiosity has led to a study on what I call *proximal writing*: writing done purposefully in the presence of others who are writing.

In this chapter, I begin to answer this question as I report on a survey of people who have used proximal writing. Survey participation was not limited to academics/faculty, but a majority of respondents identified as such; those participants will be the primary focus of this chapter. Participants in the study have used formal and informal proximal writing: a writer who pays to attend

a planned writing retreat with other writers would be a formal arrangement. Less formal would be finding your way to a space where others are likely writing—perhaps a coffee shop, library, or other public areas. Participants have also engaged in proximal writing with differing degrees of proximity. Some proximal writers work in proximity, sitting at the same physical table with another writer, or, as one person in my study noted, sitting on the couch next to her partner. Other proximal writers might be more distant: in the same room, on the screen via video conferencing (Zoom is popular for long-distance writing dates), or even more loosely proximal when connected by a shared goal document (like a spreadsheet where a writing group tracks their progress) or a hashtag like the aforementioned #amwriting or #nanowrimo. Though many in the study have had both successful and unsuccessful proximal writing experiences, participants note the importance of proximal writing for their productivity, accountability, time on task, and emotional well-being.

As a writing teacher, scholar, director of graduate writing projects, and a writing center director who programs faculty and graduate student writing times, I was curious what writers say they gain from proximal writing, particularly if we consider proximal writing one way that a writer shapes a writing environment. As such, this study aligns with other recent scholarship in writing studies, which focuses on the materiality, spaces, and geographies in the writing process (Craig, 2019; Faris, 2014; Hedge, 2013; McNely et al., 2013; Pigg, 2014a; Pigg, 2014b; Prior & Shipka, 2003; Reynolds, 2007; Rule, 2018; Spinuzzi, 2012). Understanding the motivation to shape one's writing environment to include the presence of other writers could help shape my practices as a teacher, administrator, and writer, and could help the discipline understand more about "world-shaping" habits of proximal writers (Prior & Shipka, 2003). Furthermore, as I got into the data, I found that participants attribute many significant, positive outcomes to proximal writing—outcomes worth understanding better for anyone who works with writers.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Proximal writing, as defined for this study, is writing done intentionally in the presence of other writers, a choice a writer makes when shaping their writing environments. I concede that there are proximal writing situations that are less intentional, such as when students are given an in-class writing prompt and expected to write alongside classmates during the class period or when roommates happen to be writing simultaneously. However, participants for this project were asked to opt-in to the survey only if they had intentionally sought out proximal writing situations.

Proximal writing as I've defined it here is *not* synonymous with collaborative writing in which two or more writers work on the same product (Ede & Lunsford, 1990, 2001; Hunter, 2011). It is also *not* about getting feedback from others in writing groups (Gere, 1987, 1994; Maher et al., 2008; Mosset al., 2014; Nelson & Murphy, 1992; Spigelman, 2000) or peer feedback (Connor & Asenavage, 1994; Lockhart & Ng, 1995).[1] However, a writer's prior experiences with any or all of these might affect their experiences with proximal writing and might come before or after a proximal writing experience.

Proximal writing does *not* necessarily constitute a relationship or even what would be considered interaction between writers. Instead, the writers situate themselves among other writers for what that presence or environment provides or provokes. It calls to mind Micciche's (2017) conception of "writing partners," which she says might include "animals, feelings, technologies, matter, time, and materials interacting in both harmonious and antagonistic ways" (p. 44). Micciche emphasizes how environmental and material conditions can greatly influence texts and textual production but do so without attention or recognition; likewise, there has been plenty of attention paid to relational and interactional work between writers, but not as much on how writers use one another's presence to shape their work.

It's useful, also, to consider proximal writing arrangements as what Prior and Shipka (2003) have called ESSPs, environment selecting and structuring processes, which are "the intentional deployment of external aids and actors to shape, stabilize, and direct consciousness in the service of the task at hand" (p. 219). For example, one writer in their study said she purposefully did laundry while she wrote so that the dryer buzzer every 45 minutes or so forced her to get up and walk away from the draft. Prior and Shipka note, "ESSPs involve not only setting up a context, but also the ways the writer inhabits and acts in the space" (p. 222). Of course, with proximal writing, the writer joins a context but cannot necessarily predict or control how the other actors in that space will act. People—other writers in this case—are less predictable than dryer buzzers.

Related is the relatively recent phenomenon of freelance and other mobile workers who opt to work in shared co-working spaces—often for monthly fees (see for example Gandini, 2015; Garrett et al., 2017; Spinuzzi, 2012). Those who work in co-working spaces include writers but aren't limited to writers. Similar, too, is the concept of behavioral synchrony, which is the tendency of animals (including humans) to synchronize their actions with others around them (Tarr et al., 2016). Both of these areas of study overlap with proximal writing but are not entirely similar.

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1   Some participants in this survey did note asking a question or pausing for feedback during a proximal writing session. I've made distinct writing times vs. feedback times for emphasis, but in practice, many writing partners/groups do both as needs arise.

This study builds on others that have started to cohere under the umbrella "new process studies" or simply a more broadly understood materialism in writing studies—such as Rule (2018), who makes the case for understanding where writing is physically done, and Haas (1996), who showed how tools significantly alter text production. Rule (2018) writes, "Writing is social, expressive, cultural, political, affective, historical, cognitive, *and* it is also fundamentally physical and material, the orchestrated and improvisational activity of bodies and things" (p. 429). Proximal writing is concerned with the "orchestrated and improvisational activity" of bodies among other bodies.

Of the different iterations of proximal writing experiences, only one type has been studied extensively: the participation in writing retreats by faculty and early career academics (Bozalek, 2017; Grant, 2006; Kornhaber et al., 2016; MacLeod et al., 2012; Moore, 2003; Murray & Newton, 2009; Paltridge, 2016; Petrova & Coughlin, 2012; Rud & Trevistan, 2014; Schendel, 2010; Schendel et al., 2013) and in so-called "dissertation bootcamps" (Blake et al., 2015; Lee & Golde, 2013; Powers, 2014; Simpson, 2013). Overall, the research on retreats and bootcamps marks their effectiveness in improving both writers' productivity and sense of well-being. The impetus for this study was to understand proximal writing for faculty inside and also outside of formal arrangements, like writing retreats, as many faculty do not work in institutions where retreats are offered or they cannot attend because of their schedule, care responsibilities, or work preferences. Further, I wanted to understand more deeply what is gained from proximal writing experiences for faculty in general.

SURVEY METHODS AND PARTICIPANTS

Given that I wanted to cast a wide net to see *what makes anyone with a writing task decide to do that task in the presence of others who are writing,* an online survey made the most sense for data collection. I created the survey in Qualtrics with the aim to create a survey that would be relatively short, would address my research question, and would be comprehensible to anyone 18 or older. I drafted the survey and piloted it with a few colleagues; it was too long. So I dropped and combined some questions together in a revised version and ended up with a total of 22 questions. Eight of the questions were multiple choice, 7 were short and open-ended (gender, occupation, etc.), and the remaining 7 were long and open-ended. See Appendix A for the survey instrument.

After obtaining IRB approval, I distributed the survey to those who attended the faculty writing time at my institution, my departmental colleagues, and those in my professional and personal networks via email and social media in the spring of 2019. I encouraged recipients to take the online survey and then

to share it within their professional and personal networks—a sort of snowball sampling technique. A total of 361 participants began the survey, but 16 of those did not complete any questions beyond the initial informed consent question; thus, 334 surveys were usable.

Because of the sampling technique, survey participants skew toward those in my networks and the networks of my connections. Participants resemble the population of higher education (and maybe more specifically writing studies) more so than the general population. To this point, about 90% of survey participants are under the age of 50, about 80% identified as female, and about 85% as white. All participants had at least a high school degree, over 60% had a master's degree, and just under half (48%) had doctoral degrees. The vast majority of the participants list occupations that confirm their status in higher education; 80% list at least one of the following: faculty/instructor, graduate assistant/teaching assistant, higher ed administration, academic advisor, and/or writing consultant. As such, the findings here are not necessarily generalizable to or representational of the general population.

Said differently, my invitation to participate in the study reached and compelled participants who mostly work in the same industry and fit the same demographic categories as me, so my findings should not be seen as the "norm." As an academic myself with a Ph.D., who is also a white woman under 50, there's no doubt that my own identity and ways of being in the world limited who participated in the survey, who even saw the survey, and thus the study more broadly. Moreover, as someone who led and even championed proximal writing opportunities as part of my job, I had a stake in what I would find in this survey. That said, the stakes were pretty low. This study had no direct consequences for my work as a writing center director because proximal writing sessions fell outside of my official reported duties, nor on my faculty status as I was fully promoted prior to beginning this project. Though one can never set aside worldviews, identities, or positionality to put on a neutral, objective researcher stance, I was conscientious about leaving as many questions as open-ended as possible to not force participants into a particular set of responses I could imagine, and likewise used emergent analysis in order to not squeeze their open-ended responses into codes or categories I had set before data collection began.

The recruiting texts instructed only those who had experience with proximal writing to take the survey. Participants were asked if they had a "productive or good" proximal writing experience (98% said yes) and if they had ever had an "unproductive/not good" proximal writing experience (60% said yes). When participants were asked to check the types of proximal writing they have experience with, most selected more than one type. At least three-quarters of participants have met other writers in person for writing, have gone to a location to write where there

would be others writing and have participated in writing hours/writing retreats. Thus, to generalize about participants in this study: they have had positive experiences with proximal writing and have tried multiple ways of proximal writing.

Participants were generous in their responses; most answered all questions with specificity. For example, for Question 16 (describe a positive proximal writing experience) respondents collectively wrote over 26,000 words. All told, if I printed the responses to the long, open-ended questions in manuscript format, I would probably need more than one ream of paper (over 500 pages). For this chapter, I pulled out the responses from participants who identified as faculty or instructors in higher education (n=138) for the purposes of this collection. These participants largely resembled the larger population of all respondents; however, 87% of these respondents have doctoral degrees and 98% were below the age of 60.

Additionally, I'm focusing my discussion on just four of the long, open-ended questions:

- Q10. Why did you (or do you) write in the proximity of other writers?
- Q11. What would you say are the effects of proximal writing on your writing process, products, and/or progress?
- Q16. Describe a proximal writing experience that you participated in that was productive/good.
- Q18. Describe a proximal writing experience that you participated in that was unproductive/not good.

To analyze the faculty responses to these four questions, I downloaded the responses into a spreadsheet, and I read through all of them. The number of responses varied by question. I then went through and assigned each response one or more codes based on patterns that emerged in my first reading; codes were both emergent and, sometimes, *in vivo*. For example, for Question 10 (why use proximal writing?), some codes that emerged or came from the responses were: motivation, accountability, set time, fun, and not alone/lonely. Doing so allowed me to notice the variety of responses and the frequency of particular codes. Next, I did a second round of coding to group codes into categories. Finally, I looked across questions to notice any themes that emerged when looking at faculty responses to all four questions.

FINDINGS

The faculty participants report using proximal writing for 44% of their writing tasks. They have used proximal writing for work (94% of respondents), for research (90%), for reflection (54%), for fun (41%), for civic duty (17%), and for school (17%). More have participated in physical proximal writing experiences

than online experiences, and more have participated in synchronous versus asynchronous experiences, as seen in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1. Types of Proximal Writing Experiences for Faculty Participants (n = 138)

	# of respondents	% of faculty respondents
Met another writer at shared physical specific location and time for a writing "date"	105	76%
Participated in writing hours or writing retreat with other writers at the same physical location	103	75%
Went to a location to write where others would be writing	90	65%
Used email, social media, or other digital means (e.g., a shared google doc) to asynchronously plan writing time/goals with other writers or to record writing	61	44%
Participated in an online writing retreat or challenge with other writers	58	42%
Met another writer online for a synchronous writing "date"	84	61%
Used social media/hashtags to participate in a writing challenge (like NaNoWriMo) or shared writing experience (#amwriting)	29	21%
Other	6	4%

Q10. Why did you (or do you) write in the proximity of other writers? (n = 125)

Faculty are typically required to write for their jobs—research, reports, teaching materials, internal documents, and the like. Therefore, this question did not ask why they write what they have to—but why they decide to write near other writers. Faculty writers gave many reasons for opting for proximal writing experiences. However, a handful of reasons emerged as important to many respondents; faculty respondents to this survey use proximal writing because they want accountability, motivation, support, a set time/focus, and to not be alone or lonely. Many use proximal writing to get more than one of these results, as illustrated in these responses:

> Response 1: I think better with others. I'm also motivated both by thinking with others and also by the "energy" I get when I am writing and others are writing, even if we're not writing together. It's like parallel play. I might see them really cranking something out or scribbling or typing and it helps me stay motivated to keep working. It's also sometimes helpful emotional support when the writing I'm working on is stressful or anxiety-provoking.

> Response 2: It's motivating, there's accountability, and you just feel the energy and "brain pulse" flowing!

> Response 3: Accountability, inspiration, companionship. It is easy to procrastinate so having to be somewhere at a certain time can help with structure. Writing can be isolating, so this makes it seem less lonely. I also like to have someone I can bounce an idea off if I get stuck, and some people to celebrate the small accomplishments with, whether at the end of the day or end of a larger project.

We don't know the degree to which faculty get any of the benefits from proximal writing elsewhere—for example, how else are faculty motivated to write? But the responses here potentially speak to gaps in the way faculty jobs are imagined and structured. For instance, faculty often have responsibilities to teach, but teaching is much more structured and scheduled than writing. Faculty know when and where to be for their classes, and classes have specific start and end dates. Moreover, that teaching schedule is sacrosanct: faculty wouldn't be asked to miss a class for a quick phone call, a meeting, or a university function. But faculty have no guard rails around their writing time: it isn't scheduled by the institution and if scheduled by the individual, it is seen as interruptible. To this point, some respondents noted needing to have a place to write other than their assigned faculty office to hide from others and to focus. Thus, the responses to Q10 suggest that faculty are using proximal writing, in part, to make writing more like their teaching; they say they want a set time, a place, accountability, focus, and other people participating in the same activity.

Q16 and Q18: Positive and Negative Experiences with Proximal Writing

Question 16 asked writers to describe a proximal writing experience including questions such as: How did you meet writer(s) you write in proximity to? How did your proximal writing begin? What was the proximal writing plan/rules? Did

you meet in person and if so where? Why? How long did each session last and how long did the arrangement last? Question 18 asked about negative and unproductive proximal writing experiences. These questions included: How did you meet writer(s) you write in proximity to? How did your proximal writing begin? What was the proximal writing plan/rules? Did you meet in person and if so where? Why? How long did each session last and how long did the arrangement last?

Q16 and Q18 were written to see what participants would name as positive and negative about their previous proximal writing experiences. Almost all faculty respondents (97%) said they have had a positive experience with proximal writing, and many (55%) say they've had a negative experience. I was curious if positive and negative evaluations would map onto the degree of formality and the closeness of the experience. For instance, would respondents favor structured, in-person meetings with people they knew, versus looser arrangements like just showing up at a coffee shop to write? In some ways their responses did and in some ways they did not map to the degrees of formality and proximity.

The participants classified a wide variety of experiences as productive—planned and not planned, in-person and virtual—though many noted leaving their home or office to write in coffee shops, cafes, libraries, writing retreats/residencies, writing centers, and study rooms, and most participants knew their fellow writers in productive experiences (calling them "friends," their "cohort," "partners," or "colleagues" in responses). For positive experiences, most people described formal arrangements. They often talked about a repeating, scheduled meeting where goals would be shared at the beginning of the session. Some arrangements had built-in rewards (breaks, talking, or food were common). Many respondents wrote about arrangements forged in graduate school/while dissertating/with their graduate school cohort. Many respondents (unless describing a writing retreat) said the proximal writing experience was typically 1-2 hours or 2-3 hours. Here are some examples of the formal proximal writing experiences participants described:

> Response 1: I take part in the Shut-up-and-write sessions at my university. We meet in person or virtually, which works well for me because I'm often off campus. If we meet in person, we meet at a venue on campus. The facilitator brings snacks. We use WhatsApp to meet virtually. We'll get together / get a WhatsApp message 15 minutes before we start just to prepare and get settled. We then write in 25-minute bursts (pomodoro technique). The facilitator and other participants are encouraging and supportive. We usually do 2 to 4 pomodoros (total of 1 to 2 hours) depending on how many writers can stay.

Response 2: My best proximal writing arrangement was with a friend in grad school. She was not in my department, but we met through graduate life activities, including weekly writing sessions organized through the grad life office. We started writing together during those dedicated times organized by the university but later started writing together informally because the rules of our prior group changed but we still wanted to write together under the old rules. We planned weekly times and made appointments on our calendar for "writing dates." We met at coffee shops or sometimes our homes (because having caffeine and sustenance is important for long writing sessions!) and both knew that the other was counting on us to be there. Our sessions started with sharing what we would be working on that session and setting goals to work toward. We checked in periodically and sometimes talked through ideas we were struggling with, but most of our time was spent writing. Then at the end of our time, we reported back what progress we made. We met in person about 95% of the time and were most productive that way (versus checking in at the start and end via text). Typically, we met for about 4-6 hours at a time. We continued this arrangement for about 18 months, until I relocated for my new position after graduation. We have continued to share our experiences and recently started meeting virtually via Skype. I have had several other writing groups that were also structured this way (sometimes with more people), but I believe this relationship was the most productive and positive for me because I was able to depend on this individual to be there and hold me accountable for my writing and also because we were (and still are) able to be vulnerable with one another and share in the fact that it is hard to do this work sometimes! Knowing that someone else was in the same position was good for my mental health.

Unproductive proximal writing experiences also described some similarities with the productive ones. These experiences often included friends or colleagues writing together in coffee shops and libraries at regular meeting times. However, participants note unproductive experiences involve "too much chatting!" a space/group with too many distractions, outside stress, and members who stopped showing up. Many suggest there weren't clear ground rules or shared

expectations about the experience and goals. Several also note that distant proximal writing did not sufficiently motivate them. Of all of these, however, the amount of talking or timing of talking was the most prevalent theme followed by a more general "noise" complaint. As illustrated below, many unproductive arrangements suffered several of these pitfalls:

> Response 1: Proximal writing goes rogue when people chat and don't actually come to do work. I've had that happen with friends I've tried to write with, so we don't write together anymore. Trying to write bi-weekly on Saturdays with a group of friends/colleagues at a coffee shop this past academic year was nice, socially, but not particularly productive for me. It was set up by a friend who was hoping to make better progress on her dissertation, but because it has functioned mostly as a drop-in format without clear ground rules about how we would spend the time, what we would work on, or how we would hold ourselves accountable, it hasn't been very effective. Too much of the time is spent catching up on the past two weeks, and it is very easy to avoid writing even while there because we didn't set up processes for mutual accountability and commitment. I think it works for some participants in terms of fighting some feelings of isolation, but I'd like to see it be more.

> Response 2: I thought I might be more productive in a location other than my office (where there's lots of ambient noise and interruptions) or home, so I went to Panera one morning. Three other people were also there working on their laptop computers, and initially I was productive. Unfortunately, about 10 minutes into my writing session one of the other patrons was talking loudly and impossible to ignore. I tried to work for about 45 minutes, hoping she might leave, but when she didn't leave, I did.

As is perhaps to be expected, the data doesn't show just one successful or unsuccessful arrangement for faculty proximal writing experiences. No magic formula bears out because writers have different preferences when shaping their writing sessions. In retrospect, it would have perhaps been interesting to also ask faculty what their optimum proximal writing experience would look like, as many respondents suggested a sort of compromise in working conditions to work in the presence of other writers.

Q11. WHAT WOULD YOU SAY ARE THE EFFECTS OF PROXIMAL WRITING ON YOUR WRITING PROCESS, PRODUCTS, AND/OR PROGRESS?

In asking what effect proximal writing had on their writing, I was trying to gauge benefits and drawbacks faculty noticed on their writing when using proximal writing. Though there was some overlap in what participants named as effects and how they answered Q10 (why use proximal writing?), such as motivation, mostly faculty responded more directly about production. In brief, faculty in the survey report overwhelmingly positive effects of using proximal writing. In fact, out of curiosity, I did a third round of coding for the responses to this question and marked responses as positive, neutral/mixed, or negative effects. Of the 125 responses, 94% were positive; none were negative. Specifically, many report being able to better focus, to write for longer periods of time, to write better, to write more, to form a more consistent writing habit, to be more motivated to write, and to feel better (about writing), as seen in these responses below:

> Response 1: It helps me focus (different location/less distractions), it motivates me (I'm with colleagues doing the same work/going through the same experience), and it helps me feel productive (I set goals and check my progress after each session).

> Response 2: I work longer. I stay more encouraged and motivated. I am more likely to bring projects to a close because I have encouragement to finish and SEND rather than keep working toward perfection (that never arrives or exists!).

> Response 3: Before joining my writing group, I had never gotten scholarly work done on such a regular basis during the semester (while teaching). I have gotten *much* further with my current book project than I otherwise would have. I rarely get completely blocked, I work on multiple projects at once, and I take reflective notes on my reading.

I was surprised and not surprised by the responses to this question. As someone who has led different proximal writing experiences, I had participants over the years tell me how being involved had helped them complete projects, stay on task, and prioritize writing. I had seen similar effects in my own practice. However, I had suspected that participants overall might be more neutral on the effects—that they would name both benefits and drawbacks. The responses here affirm that faculty respondents work through the challenges of proximal writing because they gain a lot from shaping their writing environment to include others who are writing.

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

So, *what makes anyone with a writing task decide to do that task in the presence of others who are writing?* In short, for faculty who participated in this study, they use proximal writing because they believe it greatly benefits their writing and productivity. Most of the respondents who have tried it have had both positive and negative experiences, but they still opt to do it for almost half of their writing tasks. As detailed above, proximal writing experiences can help faculty shape the time, space, focus, structure, and connectedness for writing that they likely have in their teaching and other faculty responsibilities. Previous research on formal proximal writing arrangements (retreats and bootcamps) showed positive outcomes, and this study shows similar positive outcomes for different types of proximal writing arrangements.

Moreover, throughout the data, the idea of writing as an emotion-laden activity emerged. Many named writing time as lonely and isolating, echoing Faris (2014) who says he writes in coffee shops "to make writing less isolating" (p. 23). Respondents felt insecure about their struggles, especially because the struggles of fellow faculty writers were typically invisible to them. Others talked directly about their mental health and how writing alone activated their anxiety. Similarly, Craig (2019) found that affect plays a significant role in the writing processes and writing environment selection of the writers in his case study. Faculty in this study use proximal writing to combat the negative feelings associated with the pressure to write and publish and the isolation of the act of writing.

For those who aim to support faculty writing, this study draws our attention to what faculty want in their writing experiences: space, time, structure, colleagues/peers, and camaraderie (and, yes, food and coffee are appreciated). The survey does not tell us that all faculty would benefit from proximal writing experiences, but it does suggest that some will. It does not tell us who fares better—those who use proximal writing or those who do not. However, faculty in this survey self-report that using proximal writing improves the quality and quantity of their writing. Also important, for many faculty in this study, the use of proximal writing experiences to shape their writing environments began in graduate school; several note an ongoing proximal writing arrangement with graduate student colleagues. Thus, consideration should be given to how supporting faculty begins in graduate school programs.

In closing, one challenge of programming proximal writing experiences for faculty is allowing for different levels of formality and proximity in the programming. Though there was more discussion of formal and close proximal writing arrangements in the responses to "good experiences," there was also reference to distant, asynchronous arrangements as positive. Nonetheless, this study points

to the potential for faculty to benefit from proximal writing arrangements generally, so any proximal writing programming offered will likely be utilized.

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APPENDIX A: SURVEY INSTRUMENT

1. Are you 18 years or older and consent to participate in this survey?
   - Yes, I agree. [2]
2. Why do you write? (Select all that apply.)
   - for work
   - for school
   - for research
   - for fun/hobby
   - to archive/keep track
   - for reflection/introspection
   - for an organization/club
   - for civic duty
   - other _____
3. What's your age?
   - 18-24
   - 25-29
   - 30-39
   - 40-49
   - 50-59
   - 60-69
   - 70 or older

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2   The informed consent form was the first page of the survey but is not shown here for brevity.

4. What is your occupation or occupations? (Students can list "student" as occupation.)
5. Gender:
6. Race/Ethnicity:
7. Where do you live? (City, State/Province, Country)
8. Degree(s) completed (select all that apply):
   ◦ High school
   ◦ Associate's degree
   ◦ Bachelor's degree
   ◦ Master's degree
   ◦ Doctoral degree
   ◦ None of these
   ◦ other _____

This is a study about proximal writing: people who opt to write around or at the same time as another person or persons who are writing their own texts. It is NOT a study about collaborative writing (two or more people working on the same writing). Proximal writing, as defined here, includes writing in close proximity (meeting at a physical place to write) and distant proximity (connecting with other writers online through activities like NaNoWriMo and using hashtags like #amwriting).

9. What proximal writing (writing alone together) experiences have you had? (Select all that apply.)
   ◦ Met another writer at shared physical specific location and time for a writing "date"
   ◦ Met another writer online for a synchronous writing "date"
   ◦ Participated in writing hours or writing retreat with other writers at the same physical location
   ◦ Went to a location to write where others would be writing
   ◦ Participated in an online writing retreat or challenge with other writers
   ◦ Used social media/hashtags to participate in a writing challenge (like NaNoWriMo) or shared writing experience (#amwriting)
   ◦ Used email, social media, or other digital means (e.g., a shared google doc) to asynchronously plan writing time/goals with other writers or to record writing progress.
10. Why did you (or do you) write in the proximity of other writers?
11. What would you say are the effects of proximal writing on your writing process, products, and/or progress?
12. What percentage of your writing do you typically produce while proximal writing?
    [slider from 0-100%]

13. What kinds (genres) of writing do you typically do while proximal writing?
14. What kinds (genres) of writing do you typically do when you write alone?
15. Have you ever had a productive/good proximal writing experience?
     ◦ Yes
     ◦ No

If Have you ever had a productive/good proximal writing experience? = yes

16. Describe a proximal writing experience that you participated in that was productive/good. How did you meet writer(s) you write in proximity to? How did your proximal writing begin? What was the proximal writing plan/rules? Did you meet in person and if so where? Why? How long did each session last and how long did the arrangement last?
17. Have you ever had an unproductive/not good proximal writing experience?
     ◦ Yes
     ◦ No

If Have you ever had an unproductive/not good proximal writing experience? = Yes

18. Describe a proximal writing experience that you participated in that was unproductive/not good. How did you meet writer(s) you write in proximity to? How did your proximal writing begin? What was the proximal writing plan/rules? Did you meet in person and if so where? Why? How long did each session last and how long did the arrangement last?
19. Anything else you'd like to say about your experiences with proximal writing?
20. Would you be willing to participate in an interview about your proximal writing habits/experiences?
     ◦ Yes
     ◦ No

If Would you be willing to participate in an interview about your proximal writing habits/experiences?

21. Name:
22. Email address: