CHAPTER 7.

WHAT PROFESSIONAL ACADEMIC WRITERS WANT FROM WRITING COACHING

Beth L. Hewett

Abstract: *I examine why professional academic writers seek external coaching to address writing and publication challenges, focusing on advanced scholars using Defend & Publish services. The study reveals that writers often turn to coaching when institutional support is insufficient, primarily for time management, project organization, and handling complex tasks. This chapter illustrates how coaching addresses specific gaps in academic support, offering vital assistance for writers struggling without institutional resources.*

Academic writers, particularly new ones such as those Tarabochia and Madden (2019) called "emerging scholars" (p. 423), may "struggle" (p. 424) to write and publish their ideas.[1] Emerging scholars generally include dissertation writers and early-stage academics. Studies that have considered some of the writing and publication issues encompassing this problem address the sheer challenge of writing as a difficult act (Tulley, 2018), the strategies needed to see academic writing as a practice of lifelong development (Tarabochia & Madden, 2019), first and other language interference (Sharma, 2018), and the challenges authors face from the COVID-19 pandemic (Cahusac de Caux, 2021).

To date, these studies have been conducted by interviewing and otherwise examining dissertation writers (Bloom, 1981; Chanock, 2007) and eminent academics in the writing studies field (Tulley, 2018). Others have considered established academic writers in comparison with graduate student writers (Tarabochia & Madden, 2019), international graduate students (Sharma, 2018), upcoming scholars in the nursing field (Steinert et al., 2008), and academics and faculty more generally (Boice & Jones, 1984; Geller & Eodice 2013; Wells & Söderlund, 2017). To add to the data these studies provide, I have examined the written requests of advanced, postgraduate scholars—also called *professional*

1 Since this article was written, Defend & Publish, LLC was sold and rebranded under the name Defend, Publish, and Lead, LLC. Now owned by Dr. Christine Tulley, the company has a broadened mission to support academic leadership.

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academic writers—who sought specific coaching at Defend & Publish, LLC (D&P) to assist their writing and publication goals.[2]

One reason it is important to understand these scholars is because approximately 90 percent of postgraduate D&P clients, as evidenced anecdotally in our payment discussions, use their own funds rather than departmental or other grants for writing coaching. There is a seriousness of purpose involved in spending one's own (often sparse) resources to improve academic writing production and publication, which, as Tulley (2018) stated, is an investment in becoming prolific from which the university itself will gain as much as the academic writer. Tarabochia and Madden (2019) indicated that "relatively few universities offer sustained and systematic support for advanced writers," by which they seem to mean both graduate level and faculty writers (p. 424). In fact, to argue for such support would require some sense of what these academic writers state they need for help as well as what writing coaches discern they need through reading drafted text and talking with the writers.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

To study these clients' needs systematically, I asked two research questions:

1. What stops academic writers from writing?
2. What support do they say they need to write productively for professional and personal purposes?

I theorized that these research questions might be answered in ways similar to the need of less experienced writers. *Fluency of content* as honed through a reading, writing, and revision process; *form* as determined rhetorically through audience-sensitive organization or persuasive arrangement; and *correctness* via editing are key features in much writing, as often attributed to Shaughnessy (1979), but these ideas are as old as the ancient rhetorical canon of invention, arrangement, and style central to Greek and Roman rhetorical education (see, for example, works by Cicero). These also are composing challenges of fluency and dysfluency that generally might resemble concerns of less experienced writers but that would increase in complexity as writers become professional academics and delve deeply into multifaceted intellectual and rhetorically sophisticated problems (Britton et al., 1975). And while writing failure can have important lessons for any writer (Brooke & Carr, 2015), I suspected that professional academic writers might minimally need assistance with fluency, form, and correctness to meet their goals.

2 Despite its new ownership and rebranding, the major mission of D&P remains sufficiently similar to D, P, & L that I will refer to D&P in the present tense in this article.

Yet their very professional lives also seemed likely to affect their ability to begin and complete writing projects such that publication, if that was their goal, could be achieved. The need to engage with scholarly writing involves much investigation and research, processes that busy academics must build into their lives. Those with academic jobs theoretically have time built in although many are in overwork situations in which they must teach too many courses or their teaching is combined with heavy leadership or service workloads that preclude time for research and writing (see, for example, Association of Departments of English, 1992; Bourelle, et al., 2022). Thus, researching, writing (and rewriting), and publishing an article—several of which may be required to achieve job security—must be worked into an already-tight schedule. Books, which are more complex still, need to be shoehorned into one's schedule but also may be such an unfamiliar genre that the processes involved in creating a saleable book would seem daunting, indeed.

I decided to draw data from questionnaires required of all new D&P clients, involving only the postgraduate scholars whose projects include articles, books, and job-search and career-focused materials from 2019 to 2021. To report on patterns stemming from these academic writers' expressed needs, using these questionnaires alone enabled me to conduct an internal investigation without violating information stipulated as private in client contracts or overstepping ethical concerns (Bogdan & Bicklen, 1992).

The patterns I found strongly suggested an encompassing composing fluency and dysfluency problem in which all these clients' other writing needs reside or to which they are connected. Composition fluency regards people's ability to express orally and in writing the main point of the project—its thesis or argument—as well as its purpose as attendant to a particular audience (Ong, 1975; Porter, 1996). Many writers are unable to express themselves fluently at the inception of a project because they are still working out their ideas, something that social constructivists recognize as a process often aided by discussion and collaborative thinking (Bruffee, 1983, 1994). That's the practical reason for drafts but also for writing coaching overall. Writers often experience composition dysfluency when they are beginning to understand data or reasoning in terms of their research question(s), main points, or argumentative claim. In brief, I surmised that postgraduate clients may come to coaching because the broad view of projects with many moving parts and layers of argument is too complex for some writers to comprehend at once—particularly when time deprived—suggesting that peer-based coaching assistance can help. In fact, the results of this study's analysis strongly indicate that all the issues with which the writers in the study requested help were connected to an overarching sense of composition dysfluency that could be addressed only by grappling with various aspects of

writing, attending to writing through attention to fluency, form, and correctness at its base. Writers could not finish struggling until they were finished writing, and they could not be finished writing until they had wrestled their thinking *and* writing from composition dysfluency to fluency. Albeit not writing per se, finding time for reading, thinking, writing, and building individually helpful writing habits also were key to fluency. Coaching supported all these outcomes.

COACHING SETTING

Positionality

I am a white scholar and the first and former owner of D&P (now D, P, & L under owner Christine Tulley), which is an academic writing coaching company that for 20 years has provided writing support to graduate students writing articles and dissertations and to professional academic writers producing articles and books as well as promotion and tenure documents and other career-focused documents. Although I have worked at several institutions of higher education, I was not thus employed when I started D&P. Nonetheless, I consider myself to be a working academic scholar, not an "alt-ac," a term that demeans those without the increasingly less available traditional, full-time, tenure-line academic positions.

My goal in forming the company was to provide necessary academic support services to scholars who otherwise might not meet their goals of successfully writing and defending dissertations or publishing academic articles and books. My motivation was a strong desire to see struggling people—particularly those who had a later start in academics—succeed. In addition to having been successful in both these skills in my early forties, I had been a primary developer of the writing theory and practice for undergraduate online-based writing coaching at both Smarthinking and TutorVista, which are online tutoring programs. Yet I wanted to improve on those approaches (Hewett, 2015b), believing I could create a company that satisfied both coaches and clients, one that is constrained not by larger corporate goals but by goals that directly address individual writers' needs based on their personal situations and steeped in contemporary rhetoric and composition theory, particularly theory that considered the characteristics of online writing instruction (Hewett & Ehmann, 2004; Hewett, 2015a). D&P works remotely with adult writers from all disciplines. I chose to develop D&P as an online company that uses phone, video, email, text, shared text through software like Google Docs for asynchronous and synchronous interactions, and (rarely) onsite modalities (Hewett & Ehmann, 2004; Hewett et al., 2022; Selber, 2004). Online interactions increase potential accessibility for clients (Oswal, 2015; Oswal & Hewett, 2013)

as well as useful professionalization in online instructional settings for coaches as (future) faculty (Hewett & Ehmann, 2004; Rice, 2015).

D&P Philosophy

The company's coaching philosophy is that writing is a skill that can be taught and learned. The general D&P goals are for clients to complete their desired projects successfully; to write with confidence; and to use their writing skills in varied settings, for different topics, and with multiple audiences. Although clients may return to D&P for additional support with new projects, the company's goals are to teach, mentor, and support writers toward a sense of independence and mastery.

D&P Coaches

Regardless of their other working circumstances, coaches in D&P are recognized as academic scholars who choose to individually coach their academic peers in a wide range of writing challenges. In hiring coaches, I sought a diverse pool of rhetoric and composition or other communication studies PhD holders who teach or had taught in higher education settings. It is critical to the company's mission that coaches be experienced *writing* instructors who can work collaboratively with those whom they coach. Unlike companies that hire psychologists, for example, to assist graduate students with emotional issues connected to dissertation writing, D&P coaches are published academic writers (many with books), seasoned instructors, and have successfully completed and defended their doctorates in writing or other closely related communication disciplines. As new coaches, they are mentored in addressing the emotional aspects of writing under pressure, *and* they teach the writing skills that their clients need, addressing but going beyond the psychology of writer's block, for example. To be hired, coaches need to be sufficiently steeped in rhetoric and composition theory and practice to be able to assist adult writers with a wide range of skill levels and expressed needs (CCCC, 2013, 2015). To that end, they need to be open to learning some adult education theory (Knowles et al., 1998; Marshak, 1983). Coaches also need sufficient educational flexibility to recognize when writers' expressed needs are not their actual needs at specific times in the writing process, and they must be able to approach and potentially convince adult writers—both novice and seasoned— that another direction might be fruitful. Finally, they need to understand something about reading in a digital age, because more often than they might originally think, the client's writing problem is one of reading for comprehension and the ability to analyze reading for their topic's purposes,

synthesize it, and theorize from it (Hewett, 2015a; Hewett et al., 2022, see Chapter 6; Keller, 2014).

In the past, these requirements unfortunately produced a somewhat narrow coaching pool. Although I actively sought to hire coaches from minority sectors, not as many scholars of color or scholars from different cultures have applied as white scholars; nonetheless, all who so self-identified were at least interviewed and given the initial training tasks (CCCC, 2016a). Some people of any background have chosen not to continue training while others successfully completed the practicum. More bilingual speakers and intercultural candidates have applied than people of color (NextGen, n.d.). Similarly, more white women than men of any background have applied, although the company now boasts of a somewhat more balanced women to men ratio. The pipeline for diversity in rhetoric and composition is narrow, and these coaching demographics appear to match it (McClain & Murray, 2016).

To support hiring a strong coaching faculty, D&P offers four specific benefits to coaches. First, coaches are paid a high hourly wage for what is known as contract labor. For ethical reasons, their hourly wage far exceeds that of most coaches in the writing industry (see, for example, Smarthinking wages for PhD instructors, which from my anecdotal experience has been as low as $15.00 per hour with little chance for raises) and exceeds the payment that adjunct instructors receive for working with multiple courses (CCCC, 2016b; MLA, 2023a, 2023b). At the time this chapter was written, new D&P coaches started at $30 per hour with rapid incremental increases upward of $60 per hour to honor their skills and abilities. Some coaches have enough clients to live on their wages (Christine Tulley, personal conversation, 7 June 2023). Second, all coaches receive the same training in coaching skills relevant both to writing instruction and working with adult writers in online settings. Such training, taken from contemporary writing and online writing theory (CCCC, 2013, 2015; Hewett et al., 2022), involves:

1. close reading of draft writing for strengths and weaknesses;
2. articulating in writing both opinions about that writing and educated suggestions for revising it, which can be decidedly more difficult to do in writing than orally because such suggestions require mature, tactful approaches to little-known clients;
3. discerning, naming, and teaching strategies for fluency, which includes modeling revision and talking through client questions; and
4. determining when and how to teach time management and realistic expectations to overscheduled, often perfectionist writers.

For all these coaching concerns, new coaches are assigned a seasoned coach mentor to assist them with their first several clients. Third, once trained and

mentored, coaches have a great deal of autonomy in when and how they coach their clients, reporting once monthly on their progress and client needs. This autonomy honors the skill level of PhD holders in rhetoric and composition while supporting them whenever they have questions or problems. Finally, D&P coaches have additional professional opportunities to develop and teach webinars, compose and publish writing blogs and podcasts, and participate collaboratively in other company work. All combined, D&P is a legitimate, theory-driven faculty development venue of as much value to coaches as to their clients.

D&P Clients

Clients come from a wide variety of demographics, including both novice academics and seasoned scholars of all ages. Although D&P does not collect such information as it is unnecessary to working individually with clients, clients have at times self-disclosed their ages, races, ethnicities, cultures, sexual preferences, and gender identities. Nonetheless, coach training does involve working with a diverse clientele (NCTE, 2020, 2023; Pimentel et al., 2017). D&P does query them about their language/s fluidity and learning challenges such as ADHD, dyslexia, and reading disabilities, which are central to assisting them (Franke et al., 2012). Clients come from both traditional and for-profit universities and colleges; dissertating students from the latter institutions often struggle from insufficient committee support, inexperienced dissertation chairs, or exceptionally rigid, lockstep dissertation instructions and requirements. Many clients succeed at their goals and return for additional support or recommend D&P by word of mouth. Others leave coaching before completing their work with the coach, but some later report they finished their writing successfully, occasionally crediting a D&P coach for the support that got them moving forward in a useful direction.

D&P has had clients who work with coaches for merely weeks and others who dig in with coaches for months and years on ongoing manuscripts of varying lengths, sometimes more than one at a time. A few clients have worked on revising dissertations into books and others have used coaching to develop books geared toward a popular audience. In my tenure leading and coaching at D&P, some clients stand out. One of my clients, a gay scholar of color, has completed and published five articles and one book regarding racial trauma; during these years, he has also worked with me on tenure and other job-focused documents, advancing from assistant to associate to full professor and serving two years as department chair. I found myself unable to assist one international client whose writing was so strong that I could not find appropriate ways to help her edit it to a briefer manuscript; she was deeply unhappy with me. Only one client, a busy school administrator, failed her dissertation attempt (mentored well under

another coach) because the client was unable to bring herself to tighten her focus and make the document sufficiently her own; in other words, she could not see her occasional plagiarism of major documents, could not use advice about her apparent thesis, and ran out of time after apparent procrastination.[3] Only one unrepentant client had a contract terminated for services due to obvious plagiarism and his stated desire that I do the writing for him.

METHOD

To research what clients have requested as writing project support and why, I used a qualitative, grounded theory approach, allowing categories to emerge from the data (Creswell, 2014; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). These categories often involved the same data viewed from differing perspectives. At times, the data was cross-referenced. The data came from 19 (of an original 20) randomly selected client questionnaires from 2019 to 2021, which means many former clients' needs were not captured in the study. These questionnaires were completed by postgraduate academic writers seeking coaching support primarily in scholarly articles and books, as well as job search materials.

Although they had many similar concerns regarding fluency and dysfluency, I eliminated dissertation writers from the pool of possible participants for this study, preferring to focus on professional academics. Dissertation writers certainly have needs beyond merely researching and writing: learning how to navigate their committees, meeting timelines for an extensive book-length monograph, presenting original material in dissertation defense and conference settings, and offering oral rebuttals and additional information to interested parties to these presentations. Presumably, however, the professional academic writers in the participant pool had navigated these more novice issues and were engaged with other concerns that affected their desired, new, or ongoing employment.

In addition to article and book writing, I included job search and career-focused documents for promotion and tenure because several clients specifically referenced these needs in their new client questionnaires. As part of D&P new client protocol, I also provided a 30-minute, no-cost, phone or video consultation to each of these clients. However, in the data collection and analysis, I used only their written questionnaire responses and not my contextualizing notes from the consultation; to the degree possible, I wanted to study the research questions from their own words and not from notes filtered through my understanding of the interaction (Creswell, 2014). Because D&P promises complete

3 She seems to be one of the rarer clients who, in retrospect, might have benefited more from a weekly onsite appointment that might have been harder to skip than an online meeting.

confidentiality to clients, which includes not revealing any personally identifying information and intellectual property, in this study I offer no personal or professional details that, while contextualizing, might breach clients' privacy. Additionally, I quote only the most generic of coaching requests as any more specific requests might leave clients open to identification.

All new clients complete a new client questionnaire to assist in a proprietary process that includes the Initial Reading Report. Questionnaires provide space for such information as (1) name; (2) institution; (3) degree-level desired or held; (4) discipline; (5) languages in which the client reads and writes; (6) learning challenges or accommodations needed; (7) project on which the client is working; (8) desired or required deadlines; (9) why the individual is seeking a writing coach; (9) writing, time management, or interpersonal concerns that are interfering with finishing the project; (10) types of help the client desires; and (11) any other information the client wishes to share.

Client needs typically do not fall into tidy categories despite the questionnaire's organized questions. Often, clients do not constrict themselves to the textboxes identified for each question; they might talk about first-language interference under more than one question, for example. For this study, I organized the data into two overarching categories of (1) the type/s of desired assistance in coaching, including actions the client wanted from a coach, and (2) the contextualizing concerns that may affect completing a project and the coaching interactions. After completing this categorization of the data, I then broke down the information into more discrete analyzable chunks. Finally, I synthesized all the data under the overarching category of challenges related to composing fluency and dysfluency (including strengthening writing and reading), as shown below.

Requested Coaching Actions for D&P Professional Academic Writers

- Overarching Challenges
  - Composing Fluency and Dysfluency
  - Strengthen Writing
  - Strengthen Reading
- Desired Coaching
  - Publishing Processes
  - Formula Development
  - Genre Transitions
  - Writing Processes
  - Time and Project Management

- Contextualizing Concerns
  - Original and Additional Languages
  - Disclosed Disabilities
  - Life-work Balance

Figure 7.1 conceptualizes the overarching *dysfluency to fluency* challenges with *writing* and *reading* as their primary concerns even when their words do not specifically articulate writing and reading as their issues in achieving fluency. I make this distinction through observation of hundreds of clients and thousands of student writers whose fluency problems emerge specifically in muddled writing and who often cannot describe, summarize, paraphrase, analyze, or synthesize what they had read to reach their thesis or main point, hence rendering them unable to cogently theorize for an audience (coaches or other readers) what sometimes seems clear in their minds. Although reading at higher levels of intellectual pursuit often is dismissed as unnecessary to teach or discuss, the differences between digital and traditional paper-based reading as well as increasingly more challenging material can interfere with fluency and compromise writing fluency (Hewett, 2015b). In Figure 7.1, this study's clients *desired coaching* and *contextualizing concerns* are nested within the overarching category of fluency from dysfluency. In this chapter's Data section, many of these stated concerns are subcategorized as well.

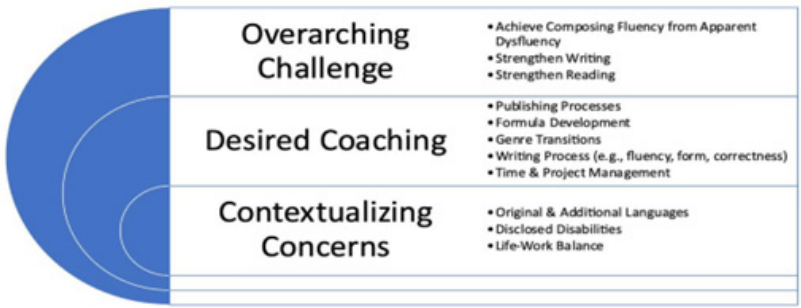

Figure 7.1. D&P Professional academic writers' reasons for seeking coaching

Demographics

I randomly selected 20 client questionnaires from D&P clients who entered coaching from 2019 to 2021 and were internally filed as working on scholarly articles and books specifically. I discarded one outlier, a client with an MS degree who sought entrance into a PhD program that required a published paper for admittance. The rest of these clients held PhDs and held or sought faculty positions. Clients identified themselves as being in humanities (e.g., writing

studies, history, English literature), social sciences (e.g., nursing, psychology, social work, business management), and STEM (e.g., biology, chemistry) disciplines with some cross-disciplinary approaches. Of these, five were male and 14 were female. At the time of completing the questionnaire, all 19 either were part-time or full-time faculty or seeking a position in a postsecondary institution with ranks from assistant, associate, and full professor; a few clients indicated that they held academic leadership positions. Several clients with jobs in academia were seeking new jobs and considered themselves to be on the market or desiring to be on the market soon. Two clients identified themselves as working internationally and 17 worked in the United States.

DATA

Desired Assistance

The desired assistance that clients requested consisted of six overarching categories: fluency and dysfluency, publishing processes, formula development, genre transitions, writing processes, and time and project management. These categories tended to entail additional subcategories for understanding clients' needs, as I outline and describe below.

Composing Fluency and Dysfluency

I coded only clients who explicitly requested help with composing fluency and dysfluency under this category. Composition fluency is the ability to express one's ideas clearly and cogently both orally and in writing. This oral aspect holds the primacy of orality over writing, as Ong (2002) indicated, suggesting that although one might not be able to express an idea orally prior to writing, that expressive ability is part of a composing process in which orality and writing are intertwined. Composition dysfluency often occurs early in the project when writers are sorting through their ideas. With argumentation, a prominent scholarly genre, writers must understand their logical reasoning in the context of data from many sources, research question/s, main points, and argumentative claims, among other concerns. Clients may come to coaching because the broad view, so to speak, is far too large or the many competing points of a project appear to be floating in front of them much like disconnected clouds. These are issues of finding fluency in writing. Seven clients indicated a need for assistance from composing dysfluency to fluency.

This coaching request seemed implicit. None of the clients outright said, "Please help me become fluent with my topic and data." Instead, I discerned the need for composing fluency assistance primarily from the stated need for

conversation with a coach about the project in process. One client specifically asked for "intelligent conversations" while another requested to "have productive, involved conversations about how to best move this piece forward." This second client also expressed a sense of being "capable" but "I really just need someone who can see the big picture of the piece." A third person similarly indicated needing to talk about the project, stating that it was essential to "verbalize to someone what I am trying to argue and what I'm thinking" and to receive "help with talking out arguments and chapters." The fourth client said: "I'd like to talk through my ideas with someone who can ask pointed questions."

Composing fluency is not only an issue of orality; dysfluency tends to underlie writing that appears to be disconnected or lacking cohesion. Other requests for fluency indicated a sense of being confused about the project's direction or endpoint rather than need for oral conversation. The fifth client in this category requested that the coach help with determining material that should and should not be kept within the project, expressing a sense of being "lost in the many ideas that research generates" making "writing them out very challenging because I keep understanding things differently." A sixth client expressed lack of "clarity in writing" while making a specific transition from one discipline's writing requirements to that of another discipline: "I really need help understanding why I'm not good at communicating my ideas in writing." Finally, the seventh client in this category expressed that the book project did not have a "throughline," insofar as "It takes me a long time to discover my argument. I get absorbed in analysis, in many possible directions." These three stated dysfluency issues seemed to indicate a sense of being perplexed about how to compose when ideas are not fully developed.

Publishing Processes

Publishing and the publication process is new to many clients who seek to understand what a manuscript should do, how to target a journal and/or its audience, and the steps one must take to write a potentially successful manuscript. These issues often occur for newer academics who have little to no experience with publishing but find themselves needing to publish either to secure an academic job or to keep it. Continuing contracts, tenure, and promotion often require journal publication in well-regarded, field-specific journals. However, more experienced academics also may request assistance with the revision process of a rejected or long-neglected "revise and resubmit" piece.

Seven clients asked for assistance with publishing or the publication process. One expressed a sense of being "overwhelmed and clueless" given insufficient "mentorship in my [graduate] program" and needing assistance from the "very basics." Like the first client, the second client asked for support in "preparing and reviewing the submission packet," a process that can eliminate authors who do not

pay attention to the details. Similarly, the third client requested coaching to assist with "identify[ing] places I can publish and help me with the application." Another requested support with revising manuscripts that had received a revise-and-resubmit response from a journal; additionally, this client indicated that other manuscripts had been rejected outright, suggesting that the manuscript was unsound or that the selected journal hosted the wrong audience for its message or style. This client mentioned not knowing how to read and address reviewer feedback. A fifth client was employed in a position that required frequent publication of scholarly articles as well as successful grant writing. For this person, the article manuscripts and grant applications were "at different stages of preparations" with some in review and others due within two months. Finally, the sixth and seventh clients were interested in coaching for book publication, expressing needs for "help understanding the book publishing cycle, editor expectations, proposal-writing norms" and "help in the crafting of the book proposal/proposal process."

Formula Development

Writing studies professionals sense that writing is an organic process in which different projects develop uniquely. However, people from other disciplines may see writing as just another process in a series of professional processes that comprise a career. If writing is just a process consisting of steps A-Z, there logically should be some concrete steps one can take to circumvent difficulties and to make any project move forward more efficiently. Time is an issue in such cases as academics have competing tasks to which they can devote only so many hours. Therefore, one might consider it reasonable to fashion a specific formula for developing and completing a writing project.

Two clients specifically asked for assistance in cultivating formulas for writing more efficiently and effectively. In the first case, the client desired "some sort of formula, process, or technique" that would help in developing more than one scholarly article from a larger project. The client indicated that the formula would "hopefully" be useable "in the future, too." In the second case, the client was interested in "improving my writing productivity" through an increase of "the number of typed pages" to a specific "unit of writing time," a mathematical proposition for writing. Productivity was important to this client as this person experienced spending "too much time finishing the projects," estimating as many as six hours daily and five days per week. Specific parts of the writing process, such as "early drafts … [take] too long."

Genre Transitions

I use the term "Genre Transitions" here to include overarching project types. Specifically, clients expressed themselves as desiring support in moving the

dissertation to articles, article writing generally, moving the dissertation to a book, book writing generally, and multiple genre requests. Such project types represent some of the major genres that academics attempt to write. Others, such as grant writing and job search and career documents, are not included here because these genres were not indicated as separate, major project goals, although they were mentioned in some client questionnaires as part of multiple projects in which the clients were involved. Furthermore, a different form of genre transitioning could occur when writers moved from the composing style and conventions of their home disciplines to that of another discipline; two clients mentioned this goal.

Dissertation to Article

In the first subcategory of "Genre Transitions," 6 of the 19 clients requested support with moving the dissertation to one or more articles. In this subcategory, the requests were remarkably similar in terms of the need to break down the larger project into smaller parts that, once separated, would comprise an argument. In this situation, the dissertation might have been completed recently or years earlier.

The first client requested help with "understanding where to put the lines in my existing project to break it down"; such actions of taking apart a larger project like a dissertation required knowing what data to include in which potential article/s, whether specific chapters could be taken wholesale to develop cogent articles, and "how do I know if I have done enough new writing?" This last issue suggests a need to understand what specifically comprises an article of the kind the client was envisioning (e.g., literature review? methods? discussion? theories?). The second client also needed assistance with deconstructing the "long dissertation chapters" to write "high impact journal articles" as well as determining where to publish them because of going on the job market within one academic year. Similarly, a third client asked for support with "develop[ing] an article from a broader piece such as a diss chapter" given that a dissertation often has or appears to have "multiple arguments" from which a "core thesis" or narrowed focus must be determined. Another client had tried already to publish an article from a dissertation chapter; the manuscript, which the writer had been crafting and recrafting for two years, was rejected and needed to be fully revised. The fifth client wanted to develop two articles from the dissertation and requested assistance with the entire journal manuscript process from determining "topics," to "deciding on potential journals," and learning "how to approach writing a journal article" as "a new process for me." Finally, the sixth client requested help with creating five articles from the dissertation, each of which would be developed from models that the writer found within the project's data. This client

also saw potential for "possibly a few other ideas I see from my dissertation," which was an unusual number of articles overall to be imagined from a dissertation project that might, instead, have been a candidate for a book project.

Article Writing

Six clients requested assistance with article writing generally. These clients had been working on projects beyond the dissertation, and they were seeking support with various processes in developing articles. For example, the first client had been working on an article project for more than 18 months and expressed "need[ing] help getting it over the finish line." Among the tasks the client highlighted were the article's structure, the "right writing tasks for each part," "flow," editing, and developing a potentially successful "submission packet" for the completed manuscript. This client had a particular submission timeline in mind. The second client, a scientist, expressed a career need for constant publication. The requested assistance was: "To guide me through generative writing and organizing steps. To optimize my editing process." A third client, whose manuscript had received "lots of bad reviews," wanted help with "clarity" in revising the piece. The fourth client had a large item list for writing a publishable article from research that had occurred post-dissertation. This individual also indicated not "receiv[ing] support with publication in my PhD program" as teaching, not research, was its focus. A few years into a tenure-line program, this client had no publications and wanted assistance with "shaping" newly researched "ideas/data" into "a journal article in reasonable time." Concerns included the order in which one should write and how to narrow down or weed out a great deal of material. This client mentioned a future desire to develop one article from the dissertation but that the current project was newer and therefore more important to publish first. A fifth client sought to publish two articles by the end of the year as well as some "creative" writing. In particular, "Academic publications could be the ladder to begin finding a better job elsewhere." Finally, a sixth client was working on a specific article that this individual considered to be a "larger project" and had completed another "article-length manuscript" submitted for review at the discipline's premier journal.

Dissertation to Book

One client of 19 indicated a desire to create a book from the dissertation, a process that often requires a great deal of revision and reimagination of the project's audience and purpose. This client had been working on the revision from dissertation to book for more than five years, and a "goal for achieving publication of my book is tenure and career advancement." As a social-sciences scholar, this client was focusing the book to a humanities audience, which is a form of

crossing genres and requested "help in the crafting of the book proposal/proposal process" particularly.[4]

Book Writing

Conceptualizing a book project that is not from a dissertation differs from proposing and completing a dissertation in form, audience, and purpose. Four clients specifically requested coaching with book projects. These request statements tended to be more about describing the overall project, but I discerned some specific writing-focused desires from them.

The first client expressed: "I need to [get] help conceptualizing my book project and keeping the theme consistent throughout the various chapters as well as assistance with editing." The second client was more verbal about the entire project's inception, research and data collection that had occurred over several years' time. This person indicated a personal desire to publish the material given promises made to study subjects. Requested support included how to manage a book project particularly within a heavy job "workload," how to find and articulate the most "valuable points," "honest" coach feedback, learning when new data is needed and when to let go of unnecessary information, and "understanding the book publishing cycle, editor expectations, proposal-writing norms." The issue of writing a book while working an academic job (as well as for the purposes of maintaining an academic job) emerged for one dean, the third client in this category, who requested "feedback on my writing. Revising with the readers' reviews in mind." Finally, the fourth client, who had been working on the manuscript for four years, wanted a coach to "to assist my tenure requirements" while also wanting "copy editing help" and "keeping the chapters connected with the overall book thesis," in addition to stated fluency-based opportunities to talk out ideas.

Multiple Projects in Different Genres

Three clients indicated that they were working on several genres at once, making it important for coaches to use the questionnaires to proffer a first understanding of their goal priority. The first client in this subcategory requested "coaching in article development" toward tenure, desiring "start to finish work" in using "explanatory detail and researched support," clarity of writing, revision, and editing. Beyond this project, the client waned to work on the tenure file to "deep-[en]" the "next draft for possible contract after review." The second client, a seasoned academic with multiple publications, sought coaching to develop stronger

4 Another client sought to make such a disciplinary-based genre movement, this time from a science to a social science writing approach.

accountability for both article completion and a book, primarily from a desire to achieve promotion but also from a desire to clear the desk to focus on the book alone. A third client also desired coaching assistance with both articles and a book project to develop consistency of writing and progress on all the projects.

Writing Process

Many of the 19 writers in this study indicated a need for coaching with various writing processes. I categorized these discretely to better understand what these academic writers considered important for their projects. These processes—of which clients tended to request more than one—are content, organization, style and correctness, research, length, and drafting and revision. Readers may notice that some of these quoted statements have been used in support of other categories for client support requests as writing processes often are entangled with, for example, genre or fluency.

Content Generation

Thirteen clients either overtly or obliquely mentioned a need for content development or other content-focused assistance in coaching. Examples of overt requests regarding content generation include:

- "to guide me through generative writing"
- "narrowing the focus; determining core definitions; … determining a core thesis from multiple arguments"
- "also need to discuss narrowing my thesis and reframing my introduction"
- "deciding on topics"
- "coaching in article development, use of explanatory detail and researched support for argument"
- "help articulating the most valuable points, then drawing upon the findings to illustrate them"

Examples of content-focused comments that are more oblique may appear more mechanical in nature; however, underlying them is the ever-present need for content with which to work. These examples include:

- "how to research, write, and publish"
- "high-level academic writing"

Organization

Four clients made specific requests for assistance with the organization of their writing. Organization references might address how to arrange the

overall project to section-, paragraph-, and sentence-level issues, but organization also included when to begin writing particular portions or sections of text. The first client asked for help with "set[ting] the right writing tasks for each part [of the structure]" along with advice on "flow and structure." The second client simply mentioned "organizing steps." The third client expressed a problem with organization relative to the article's disciplinary conventions for an argument:

> Order of information can be a challenge for me, as the [XYZ] I'm writing about is a minor work by a major [XYZ], so I'm never sure how much summary to provide or where to place it. Most critical essays I've read on this piece open with a summary of the [XYZ], but this necessarily delays the thesis by at least a paragraph. Need help managing how much of which information should be here and in what order.

The client's understanding of the disciplinary conventions required specific coaching feedback for various ways this writer might construct the written argument. Finally, the fourth client requested "guidance in what order to write things," which, in the context of the questionnaire, seemed to indicate not where something would appear in the text necessarily but more likely the process of when to write particular parts of the text.

Style and Correctness

Issues of style and correctness occurred in 10, or nearly half, of the clients' questionnaire requests. Three clients asked more for support with style insofar as they sought concision, sentence structure assistance, and clearer writing: "concise writing, sentence structure," "clarity in writing [in the context of communicating ideas better]," and "advising on flow and structure." Regarding style in a more mechanical sense—but one that is important for publishing—one client requested coaching assistance with "citation styles for particular journals" and moving from the previously familiar style (e.g., MLA) to a newer one for that person (e.g., APA). Six clients specifically asked for assistance with editing their finished work. One of those six requested support in "writing clearly, revising, and editing," which suggests a concurrent interest in style. Other requests for editing were brief:

- "helping to edit"
- "to optimize my editing process"
- "editing"
- "assistance with editing"
- "I also could use some copy-editing help"

Research

Two clients asked for coaching support with issues of research for larger projects. They seemed to want assistance with finding how researched data and published literature fit within a larger project. The first client asked for "help knowing whether to gather new data, help letting go of some of the findings for now so I can focus on this project." The second client sought to talk about research and research methods with a coach in order to start a new project well: "I'm in a bit of a lull as I start to search through a series of interconnected ideas and plans to consider, what next I should focus on, and how I should proceed (research methods)." Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, something I touch upon later, the client expressed a need to "talk through research methods with someone" because, despite "a general familiarity with a variety of research methods," the pandemic had caused functional challenges with "travel and human subjects research" that needed to be surmounted.

Length

Issues of article length emerged for only two clients. The first client indicated a generalized "need to trim down and refocus the article," while the second took that need further into decision making: "I need someone to help me make decisions about what to keep and what to do."

Drafting and Revision

It can be difficult to separate the often-concurrent processes of drafting and revising those drafts. In general, clients tended to see drafting as a process of writing new text, taking text apart, and putting it together. They most often discussed revision as a process required by journals or editors before publication would be possible. One client indicated that drafting, particularly the early drafting process, was a tedious practice that simply "takes too long" to finish. Two other clients focused on the breaking apart of earlier text as in taking a dissertation and dismantling it into chapters (i.e., "Can any chapters be stand-alone publications?") and the putting together of apparently fragmented text (i.e., "It looks more like a set of articles than a cohesive book with a focused argument"). All clients who specifically mentioned revision or intimated a need for it did so in the context of reviewer feedback and whether and how they were revising with feedback in mind:

- "Please let me know if … I frame the narrative in the revision according to the feedback."
- "revising R&R and not accepted article ms, to include addressing reviewer feedback"

- "revise and publish a previously rejected article draft"
- "lots of bad reviews"
- "approaching reviewer feedback and making necessary alterations"

Time and Project Management

Time management is intimately connected to project management—sometimes seemingly inseparable—and together they are the final subcategory in this overarching category of desired assistance and coaching actions. Time and project management were such major issues that 15 of the 19 clients in this study raised it as at least a partial reason for seeking a writing coach. Client requests for coaching assistance with time management tended to fall into three primary categories: (1) how to find time for writing within heavy workloads, (2) how to schedule writing profitably, and (3) how to balance cognitive work with other life demands. Requests for coaching support toward project management tended to involve (1) the size or number of projects and (2) being held accountable to someone outside of oneself.

Finding Writing Time

Finding the time to write challenged nine clients with a heavy or especially varied workload. For the first client in this subcategory, a varied workload looked like applying for jobs, beginning "a post doc in one month," "teaching online" daily, and developing a new media forum for dispersing some of the research. These tasks were combined with a desire to publish two to three articles within eight months. Altogether, the desired series of tasks may have seemed insurmountable for clients and, likely, were an unsustainable goal for a short time even for an employed and established academic. The second client indicated a potentially more doable scenario because of having "set aside the summer with no teaching to work on this project as much as possible," yet admitting to "juggling a lot in a little amount of time"; having "been working on the book for 4 years," this person wanted to submit "first draft of manuscript to publisher by" a date that was less than six months out. A third client indicated having "a heavy teaching load," and this individual planned to "make time for this [writing] work but [I] need that time to be purposeful and productive because there is simply not much extra to go around." Coaching, therefore, could not be an adjunct to the academic work but a core part of its success. Other client indicators of a heavy or varied workload included

- "associate professor chairing 2 university committees, global pandemic …, teaching and on a job hiring committee"

- "full time job; academic job, kids"
- "challenging workload (4/4), parent to a preschooler"

Three more clients requested coaching help to improve their general productivity by seeking to make bigger projects more doable in the time available. One declared a need for: "Help creating bite-sized chunks of writing to do that push the work forward more formally than research memos do"; such "bite-sizes need to fit in short enough time blocks that I can realistically make progress on them during a normal working week. 2-hrs-ish chunks would be logical. Smaller bites too." A fifth client with a similar need expressed a desire for coaching in "developing a more detailed and structured writing practice and schedule. I would like help developing a consistent writing practice, self-accountability, deadlines, and writing toward specific journals." Finally, a sixth client, a self-described "productive writer," requested that the coach "help me make some decisions about how I might concentrate my energies in a productive way…."

Scheduling Writing Time

Scheduling writing time takes "finding time" a step further; placing writing time on a calendar and prioritizing it as having value beyond the many must-dos that can knock it off the calendar is something five clients wanted. The first client in this group indicated having worked on the manuscript for more than a year and a half and "need[ed] help getting it over the finish line." This client had "blocked out" five weekdays on the calendar and was "asking for coaching to get me to a place where I have manuscript ready for submission by the end of that week." To meet that goal of honoring the scheduled time required not only that the client honor the internal deadline but also that the coach be able to offer moment- and point-of-need assistance when requested by the client. A second client indicated a narrow window of time during which this person experienced "mental acuity" and for writing in conjunction with the physical energy expended daily workouts and the need for good sleep, resulting in the exclamation: "I need a schedule!" A third client similarly found a need "to set my goals—timewise." This client also had what might appear to be an ambitious schedule for writing production: completing a "cv and cover letter overhaul" by the end of July that year, finishing "two articles for publication" by the end of November and concluding an unnamed number of "creative writing" projects by December. Therefore, "time management once we resume teaching in September" was a stated scheduling desire. For two other clients, scheduling of writing was a requested concern. One, on sabbatical with "large stretches of time available to me," wanted to complete "a second article-length manuscript by January." A second client admitted to having "a large backlog of work I committed to and cannot face this

on my own; and the semester is starting. Time management: I teach and have various administrative duties. Time management is generally a problem."

Balancing Cognitive Work with Other Demands

Any of the clients already considered in this subcategory of time and project management might be considered to have unstated issues related to balancing the highly focused intellectual work of academic disciplines with a wide variety of other demands. Working on more than one paper at a time could cause dysfluency, for example, whenever one switches from one project to another. In this grouping, two clients specifically mentioned that intellectually focused cognitive work could be derailed by other demands. The first client noted mental interference particularly: "I could be distracted by teaching responsibilities when fall semester starts, especially that we still don't know how it is going to be managed with the current [pandemic] situation." The second client, who worked at a particularly stressful public university, mentioned that "the teaching and service responsibilities can crowd research and writing time into a tiny corner unless I insist otherwise."

Despite expressing being deeply connected to the study this person had developed and carried through, at the level of writing the book, "I struggle to put this work first." And, regardless of having "improved my time management by using a modified Pomodoro method starting several years ago," the client's "heavy load at my job includes teaching [four courses] and interim directing a writing center." This individual recognized "hav[ing] let other work creep into my writing group time, but I now plan to reserve at least one 3-hr block per week (with my group) for the book project." This expression of renewed purposeful engagement was not unusual among the clients in this study.

Working with Large or Multiple Projects

Academics may work on more than one project at a time, and often one of those writing projects is larger than the others. Therefore, setting priorities for work in terms of personal energy and time can be challenging. Seven of the 19 clients indicated they were attempting either a large writing project—typically a book or major grant application—or multiple projects at a time—sometimes including career-focused materials like CVs, application letters, and tenure files. Clients referenced these projects in ways already noted, such as the client described above who claimed that working from inspiration and deadlines do not always coincide. For the second client in this group, it had "been some time since I've taken on a project of this size," suggesting that the dissertation might have been the largest project before this book-in-progress. Such projects, as the third client indicated, required a coach's help "to set the

right writing tasks for each part." The fourth client described the problem of working on a book in greater detail:

> I honestly don't know what's realistic for completing the whole manuscript. I therefore need external drivers. I have no successful experience since the dissertation of handling a long form manuscript. … Insights about managing a book manuscript and prioritizing writing, given my existing workload.

The fifth client declared that this individual was working both on a journal article and a book—at least mentally sorting them out—and finding that "help [was] definitely needed in taking all these ideas/data and shaping them into a journal article in reasonable time," with the pandemic having "amplified my need for support." The sixth client in this grouping commented on constant publication needs, leading to a number of pieces in the hopper: "My job requires me to constantly publish and submit grants. At this point, I have one paper in review. Two more that are at different stages of preparations. Two grants under review. Two grant deadline[s] in the next two months." Such a vast number of intellectual projects at any one time suggested a "need to improve my writing productivity" because other life aspects seemed to be ignored. Finally, the seventh client expressed a desire for a formulaic approach to get at "multiple distinct articles from my project," a process that might be useful "in the future too."

Being Held Accountable

Accountability concerns knowing that it matters when a project is not completed, is not completed in a timely manner (especially for the topic and data), or is not completed on time, such as for a requested revise-and-resubmit deadline or other promised date. After academics complete the PhD—and even before for people in programs with lackadaisical attitudes toward degree completion—there are few people who will care what that scholar does or when. When individuals are job seeking or desiring tenure or promotion, they often turn up the heat and reprioritize their writing projects. Therefore, it was not surprising that six clients indicated a desire for coaching support with self- and other-based accountability. The first client had sought to build in accountability through a writing retreat, but the COVID-19 pandemic led to its being cancelled: "Trying to get myself through the process has not been effective." The second client in this grouping indicated that time and "inspiration" affected accountability, or "deadlines." Particularly, working "40+ hours a week" was challenging for both time and energy; therefore, "I have often worked on inspiration or deadlines. The lack of deadlines has been really hard because inspiration isn't always there." External deadlines appear to have more sticking power than internal ones, as this client and others revealed:

- "Looking for someone to hold me accountable and have productive, involved conversations about how to best move this piece forward."
- "Accountability with regular meetings and 'homework' between so I can make progress with an interested witness."
- "Possibly some accountability and use as sounding board if anxiety creeps in."
- "Accountability, work on issues of perfectionism/procrastinations, goal setting, etc."

Contextualizing Concerns

All the writing-focused issues described under Desired Assistance are deeply interrelated, as readers can see from the repetition of some clients' words in various categories. That said, no writing-focused issues existed for these clients outside of the contexts of their lives. The D&P questionnaire asked specifically about such individual backgrounds as language, disabilities, or other challenges as well as miscellaneous information to provide coaching with potentially deeper and more immediate understanding of clients' needs, allowing them to work together more quickly and effectively. Efficiency is no small goal either, given that clients pay for the coaches' services. Therefore, this section offers three categories of contextualizing material: clients' original and additional languages, disclosed disabilities, and life-balance issues.

Original and Additional Languages

The questionnaire was written to learn something about potential language interference if such might exist, given that many clients are international and/or otherwise multilingual scholars whether they live abroad or in the United States. The clients in this study tended to offer simple statements regarding the languages they speak, read, and write. Eight of 19 clients indicated they had multilingual backgrounds. First languages included French, Neapolitan, Farsi, Italian, Arabic, Hindi, and German. Other languages besides English included Swedish, Spanish, Russian, and Latin. Of language interference, one client stated, "Farsi is my native language. I think my speaking abilities are symmetrically better than my writing skills." Given the general propensity of orality in a language to be learned earlier than reading and writing skills (per Walter Ong), this statement was not surprising. Another client, whose "first language is Arabic," claimed to "read and write mostly in English," also not surprising for an international academic. A third client possessed reading skills in "English, French, Spanish, and Russian" but wrote primarily in English. Finally, a fourth client who expressed speaking, reading, and writing fluency in both their native German and in English, reads in French, Italian, and Latin. However, this individual's sense

of language interference is that having these many languages "slows me down. My style is a bit pedestrian and not very interesting. I write better in German."

Disclosed Disabilities

In the questionnaire, there is a textbox for clients who choose to do so to disclose disabilities that may require accommodation on the coaches' parts. Although this textbox can be left blank if desired, two clients in the study were frank about having what might be called learning disabilities or challenges. They provided little information beyond that, however, insofar as they did not suggest what accommodation they found helpful. One client indicated a diagnosis of a "visual processing disorder learning disability that often results in typos." The second client merely stated, "I have ADHD and have trouble sticking to deadlines!"

Interestingly, nine clients noted that they or family members had mental health challenges that affected their writing. The most frequently cited of these was anxiety, as referenced by five of the clients. Additional diagnoses they indicated were depression, bipolar "habits" that could lead to either "euphoria" or "complete loss of hope," and perfectionism that in combination with anxiety led to procrastination. The final client in this group expressed experiencing "some sort of mental, psychological block that deters me from proceeding ahead that emerged in complacency towards doing anything academic." One client mentioned a depressed spouse and another noted feeling "dispirited" by a denied promotion.

Life-Work Balance

Finally, there were several contextualizing client concerns that were categorizable as life-work balance issues, ones that could delay or completely derail a writing project. 13 of the 19 clients in the study referenced concerns that challenged their ability to balance life and work, particularly completing writing projects. Three clients directly mentioned or alluded to the lockdown and online/onsite teaching challenges wrought by the COVID-19 pandemic. Their ability to complete writing projects was therefore compromised: "The pandemic has amplified my need for support," "I could be distracted by teaching responsibilities when fall semester starts, especially that we still don't know how it is going to be managed with the current [pandemic] situation," and "but I'm struggling to think about what might be quickly available and possible given difficulties with travel and human subjects research during a pandemic."

Children were often mentioned as a challenge in balancing life and work. Among these responses was the challenge of pandemic-based homeschooling in conjunction with potty training: "I also have younger children who are at home with me a few days a week. Reading/writing while also teaching second

grade and potty training hasn't been the easiest thing." Other children-focused responses included making space for work among small children: having a "20-month-old toddler," being "parent to a preschooler," and being "the co-parent of a toddler. We share childcare evenly and have an extra 12 hours of coverage a week from a grandparent." Older and multiple children, too, were cited as challenging the life-work balance: "I have a heavy teaching load, 3 teenagers, and have not completed a journal article before" and "I am stuck. Full time job; academic job, kids, confidence." Living with a "a partner and his children in my life that requires attention to family" also indicated a need to balance life and work. Not to be outdone, there was the next phase of parenting: "I'll be a new grandma … which may shift my attention a bit." Finally, there was the challenge of the "8-month-old puppy." Teaching, being on a job hiring committee or chairing other committees, seeking tenure or other promotion, working as an associate professor or assistant dean, and being on the job market seemed to present additional challenges that contextualized the lives of these clients in the study.

DISCUSSION

Academic life brings with it many challenges, not the least of which is the rapidly shifting ground in any day or week from wearing the different hats of a scholar, teacher, or service provider to the institution. Research remains an important factor in contemporary academia, and its production and publication can lead to new or different jobs and a solid career; the lack of published research and the development of other essential writing can make a career difficult to maintain even in a primarily teaching institution. Therefore, it is important to understand lived experiences in the writing lives of academics who seek coaching or other support with their writing projects. For this chapter, I have analyzed information from the entrance questionnaires for 19 D&P clients to discern what they expressed they wanted and needed in coaching. Their needs fell into two specific major categories of the assistance and coaching actions they desired and the other concerns that contextualize their writing lives.

Here, let's pause as I switch genre conventions. I don't want to bore you with repeating the results you've just read for yourself. So far, this chapter has been traditionally composed of data from studying 19 D&P clients' initial questionnaires to get at their lived experiences of stalled writing projects. Your next expectation might be that I'll contextualize this data with contemporary published literature. But I'm not going to do that. Instead, I'm going to rely here on my many years of experience with both novice and experienced academic writers to hazard an educated guess as to what's happening in these

scholars' writing lives. To be sure, as I transition from the more comfortable scholarly genre to this less frequently used (for me, at least) speculative approach, I've been struggling with how to express what I think—what I speculate—connects all these expressed needs from the writers in this study. This struggle has caused me to hesitate, feel frustrated, talk out, start and stop writing by hand to move to the computer, scratch out and delete text, take many more hours than I'd planned (and more hours than I really have time for) to write this piece, and feel like I'm working with a foreign language. In short, my need to express my thoughts differently from what I originally planned has caused me to struggle deeply with fluency and dysfluency just like the scholars who were the study's subjects. I'll begin again.

This study suggests multiple ways that academic writers can go off track and that coaching can help them. However, even though only 7 of the 19 clients directly indicated a need to address factors of *composition fluency and dysfluency*, I believe all the clients' needs are connected by a single thread: the struggle for composition fluency in the context of the many factors that might cause genuine dysfluency, or a lack of ability to express the message.

Fluency is the ability to talk and write about the ideas that are fighting to get out of one's head. A nice analogy for fluency is that of telling a joke, a humor genre that is formulaic and offers structure, much like the *formula development* some of the clients sought. The first time I try to tell a new joke, it tends to fall flat, and listeners are not sure what to laugh at, if anything. By the third or fourth time I tell that joke, I am better at it, and listeners usually laugh. After I have gotten the hang of telling that joke, I begin to add a few new elements of tone, register, or words and the joke has become my own to tell. I am in control of the joke. People laugh. Fluency of a joke—an oral form—is then compromised when I then try to write out the joke. How can I convey in words alone the tone and register necessary to make it laugh-worthy? Once again, I'm dysfluent. Becoming fluent in the written joke, an altogether new process, also takes my time and effort. It also takes understanding and developing the language of laughter.

When I provide workshops to educators, I share that each course students take as undergraduates and graduates requires them to grapple with new ideas. Each subject stresses them cognitively as they try to figure out what they are learning and to assimilate information into knowledge. In postsecondary settings particularly, students are in three to five courses a term, meaning they must convert information into knowledge in all those courses. Many teachers ask students to demonstrate knowledge through written papers, sometimes multiple papers a term. That is a lot of information conversion! The very process of writing, as writing studies professionals know, is one in which writers can take

unfamiliar material and transform it into something familiar, which is one reason we teach students about *drafting and revision*. This writing process enables writers to discover their ideas and work with them more deeply; eventually—if time, life, and thinking allow—writers become able to express what they really think or want to say with some degree of confidence and clarity.

Therefore, I share with educators, if students only write one draft, their writing will seem to be fuzzy and their point unclear simply because the ideas *are* fuzzy and the point *is* unclear. Time and (re)working of the ideas are needed for composition fluency to emerge. Anything less is dysfluent. When students are writing multiple papers a term on multiple new and intellectually challenging topics, they may, by the end of the term, merely begin to become truly fluent with just a few of the ideas they have been struggling with. When they begin with new material in the next term, students genuinely need to seek fluency with new ideas, information, and knowledge. That is one reason professors of other disciplines complain that students apparently were not taught to write in their writing courses; those professors simply do not understand the serious cognitive and writing work that transforms composition dysfluency to fluency in every single course and for every single topic covered in each of those courses! Postsecondary education is a lot about composition fluency and the necessary dysfluency that precedes it.

So, too, with dissertating writers. They not only are attempting to produce "new" and "original" knowledge, but they are doing so in an unknown, often untaught, and high-stakes genre—the dissertation—that they will never use again. Dissertation writing, which I do not address in this chapter, harbors its own major challenges with fluency stemming from the genre itself, its high-stakes nature, and often unrealistic expectations. Then, when the dissertation is complete (or sometimes as part of the dissertation itself), academia expects publishable scholarly papers from it; these papers also necessarily must pass through phases of composition dysfluency to reach fluency and potential for publication. The expectation for learning *publishing processes* makes these papers high stakes, too. The *genre transitions* from dissertation to articles and/or books or from new research to articles or books again force writers to learn new high-stakes genres. This work requires what one of the clients cited in the study above called a "throughline," again necessitating that writers make fluent arguments. The academy complicates these high-stakes knowledge and genre concerns with the need to make insightful or so-called "original" arguments, the requirement to contextualize any new ideas within the discipline's tradition of using others' published scholarship, and the necessity of being crystal clear—well, composition dysfluency reigns for quite a few drafts and deep revisions.

Writing processes that emerge in seeking composition fluency certainly include *content generation*, *organization* with frequent attempts at rearrangement of content, and *style and correctness* preceded by a great deal of *drafting and revision*. For example, academic writers who think they only need "editing" may not realize that by "editing" they mean deep revision, often guided by astute coaches or mentors as readers. Of course, when, where, and how to *research* typically is early work in the search for how to delineate and then express one's own ideas, but the "re" in "research" calls upon scholars to search again and again over the course of a project's development. *Length* commonly is a genre issue, but it is also an issue of being clear, as composition fluency may require a divergence or two from the main idea to fully clarify that main idea—first for the writer and then for the readers.

There can be no question that issues of *time and project management* interfere with academic writers' abilities to meet their project goals. Academic writers, whether they have part-time or full-time positions, tend to have ample concerns regarding *finding writing time* amidst multiple work tasks and family needs. For that, some really benefit from *being held accountable* by coaches who care about their success. Although I nested *life-work balance* within the major category of *contextualizing concerns* in this study, these clients' own words revealed that children, teaching, and pandemic adjustments certainly impacted their writing. The inability to keep up strenuous intellectual work daily when combined with other serious endeavors—like families, *mental health concerns*, and self-care (which was addressed only by one client who insisted on physical workouts, revealing by its absence elsewhere in the responses that lack of attention to self-care is another reason academics may suffer when writing)—strongly indicates that scholarly writing requires some *scheduled writing time*. Not finding writing time or having scheduled is part of the need to *balance cognitive work with other demands* and, in combination, these suggest that composition fluency again is at risk in academic writers' lives.

Cognitive work may be enjoyable—it certainly is for me—but it is hard work that can be exhausting. Particularly using larger chunks of time to get into flow work, one's mind and body may become tired; moving on to another cognitively challenging task like teaching becomes harder over time (or is that age?), requiring more rest and balance of life and work demands. It is crucial to the academic "life of the mind" that it also must be a life of the body and the heart. Otherwise, burnout and lack of productivity are the inevitable results. People who are *working with large or multiple projects* may find themselves especially taxed because their cognition is being challenged in multiple areas. There can be no question that finding and keeping a sense of composition fluency is affected when one is pulled from one intellectual task to another; returning to one of

those tasks on another day means beginning in a state of dysfluency while, minimally, reminding oneself of the previous session's work and discovered meaning in the drafted writing. Those with learning or other cognitively experienced *disabilities* may struggle even more to recover earlier fluency and to stay on task with it in a new session.

Finally, the issue of *original and additional languages* arises. Many writers are linguistically fluent in speaking, reading, and writing multiple languages. It is challenging enough to find linguistic fluency in a single language like English; to be a native writer in a different language means that one likely is a native thinker and speaker in that language. Such multilingual capability necessarily interferes to some degree with finding clarity in English, an issue of composition dysfluency even for those who know exactly what they want to say should they be able to say or write it in the native language (CCCC, 2020; Lu & Horner, 2016). One coach told me that we are all nonnative speakers in the language of writing. Of course. Orality is primary; reading and writing are secondary and tertiary (Ong, 2002). Undoubtedly, matters of original and additional languages create composition fluency challenges for many academic writers.

CONCLUSION

Given my premise that challenges with composition fluency and dysfluency are common to all the writers in this study, additional research would be helpful in seeing how coaches support them. Such research into these or other academic writing coaching clients would usefully involve data from consultations, interviews, coach perspectives, and the writing itself. Additionally, viewing this study data through the lenses of my colleagues' ideas expressed in this book also would yield new understanding of professional academic writers' needs.

That said, it would be especially helpful for coaches, mentors, editors, and reviewers to bring to their reading of unpublished academic scholarship and their interactions with academic writers a variety of strategies for identifying how other conditions and contexts might lead to composition dysfluency. Editors and reviewers especially might support writers with good ideas by offering a response that encourages those ideas and supports them with specific suggestions for revision. Among their suggestions might be to access a mentor or professional writing coach who can assist with finding the keys to fluency for the piece. Writers who seek publication have something to say and may need support in bringing that message to the forefront. Those who assist academic writers can help them by understanding what is interfering with composition fluency and then working with the writers to eliminate the roadblocks they can, map ways to circumvent the roadblocks they cannot eliminate, and build new roads to writing with clarity.

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