

PART 2.

CASE STUDIES AND PROFESSIONAL PROFILES OF FAILURE IN ACTION

Contributors to Part Two bring the concept of failure to practical light with case studies and professional profiles. The first two chapters offer empirical research studies, including case studies of how fail memes can influence students' beliefs about failure, and original research on mindsets in relation to writing development and failure. The next two chapters provide detailed professional and personal profiles, including how feminist rhetorical resilience can offer a lens to scrutinize very personal feelings of failure, and narrative accounts from three women who share their research-framed personal and professional experiences with the effects of failure to achieve high-scoring student evaluations of teaching.

Ruth Mirtz, in **Chapter 4**, “Fail Memes and Writing as Performance: Popular Portrayals of Writing in Internet Culture,” offers a taxonomy of types of “writing fail” memes to analyze and suggests ways that our writing students' work is influenced by the notion of failure as represented by these memes. This chapter also suggests ways to study memes with students to deepen their rhetorical understanding of digital information and strengthen their ability to transfer notions about writing to many rhetorical situations. Memes are a particularly expressive way our students learn and express what failure means, both in writing and in wider fields of life. This chapter positions memes as a genre and mode of writing, drawing on research on memes from sources within and beyond composition studies. Thus, Mirtz contends that our students' constant exposure to meme-thinking about writing and failure has to be taken into account if we want them to grow as writers.

In **Chapter 5**, “‘I’m a Bad Writer’: How Students’ Mindsets Influence Their Writing Processes and Performances,” Laura K. Miller seeks to illuminate the connections between students' mindsets and their writing processes and performances by presenting empirical findings that highlight growth-minded students' writing practices. Drawing on a larger research project assessing engineering students' literature review essays and exploring how an embedded writing tutor influenced students' mindsets and writing performance, the author uses mindset theory to make sense of their interview and survey data in order to understand how writers' beliefs impact their writing processes and performance. Miller argues that a better understanding of the consequences of students' mindsets could

help explain and mitigate challenges writing instructors face, such as students' reluctance to revise, resistance to feedback, and poor response to failure.

In **Chapter 6**, "Recognizing Feminist Resilience Rather Than Seeking Success in Response to Failure," Karen R. Tellez-Trujillo shares some of their experiences with writing struggles that result in failing and resilient responses to adversity in relation to times they failed at writing and labeled themselves a writing failure. They ground these experiences in the concept of feminist rhetorical resilience, the ways that common definitions of resilience and feminist rhetorical resilience differ, and the potential ways that we can use feminist resilience to frame writing prompts for students that can help them balance failing at writing with acknowledging the ways their writing has had an impact on themselves, and the people around them.

And in **Chapter 7**, "Teaching to Fail? Three Female Faculty Narratives about the Racial and Gender Inequalities of SETs," Mary Lourdes Silva, Josephine Walwema, and Suzie Null round out Part Two and prepare readers for Part Three, with their narratives confronting the question: What does it mean to function in an inequitable culture of failure framed by the values and metrics of student evaluations of teaching (SET)? Failure to perform well on SETs can result in some form of administrative action, as well as impact self-esteem, labor conditions, teacher-student relationships, departmental work relationships, and job marketability. After a comprehensive literature review of the problematic nature of SETs—especially for female faculty and female faculty of color—the three authors share their personal accounts with SETs and the psychological, emotional, pedagogical, professional, personal, and health consequences of working in this culture of failure. In the first narrative, Walwema writes about the shame and anxiety experienced while serving multiple leadership roles in faculty development while repeatedly receiving lower evaluations in comparison to her white male subordinates. Next, Silva describes her experience in an almost all-female department, where gendered expectations in the field combined with departmental culture compel her to choose between upholding syllabus policies, a research agenda, and a manageable workload or risk getting lower SET scores. And Null shares her experiences of shame and its heavy toll throughout her academic career, where low SETs even compelled her to withdraw from a job search. These narratives will begin a conversation in our field about the psychological, professional, and pedagogical consequences of navigating a field that leaves intelligent, skilled, experienced female experts constantly negotiating the conundrums of failing in one or more areas of their professional lives.