

July 2014

Reconciling Apples & Oranges: A Constructivist SoTL Writing Program

Nancy L. Chick

Vanderbilt University, nancy.chick@vanderbilt.edu

La Vonne Cornell-Swanson

University of Wisconsin System Office of Professional and Instructional Development, lcornell-swanson@uwsa.edu

Katina Lazarides

University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, katina@wi.rr.com

Renee Meyers

University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, yoga.chick.lit@gmail.com

Follow this and additional works at: <http://digitalcommons.georgiasouthern.edu/ij-sotl>

Recommended Citation

Chick, Nancy L.; Cornell-Swanson, La Vonne; Lazarides, Katina; and Meyers, Renee (2014) "Reconciling Apples & Oranges: A Constructivist SoTL Writing Program," *International Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*: Vol. 8: No. 2, Article 13. Available at: <http://digitalcommons.georgiasouthern.edu/ij-sotl/vol8/iss2/13>

This Essay about SoTL is brought to you for free and open access by the Centers for Teaching and Technology (CT2) at Digital Commons@Georgia Southern. It has been accepted for inclusion in International Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons@Georgia Southern. For more information, please contact dskinner@georgiasouthern.edu.

Reconciling Apples & Oranges: A Constructivist SoTL Writing Program

Abstract

Faculty new to SoTL, especially when they consider writing for publication, often react by focusing on how different it is—apples and oranges—from their familiar disciplinary processes and products. Although there are indeed significant differences between individual disciplines and SoTL, appealing to the similarities can demystify SoTL as disciplinary experts reach out of their comfort zones and into areas of research and writing that often make them doubt themselves. We fill a gap in the SoTL literature by describing *how* to go from data analysis to publication in SoTL. We also report on our descriptive study delving into the complexities of participants' experiences, helping us come to a greater understanding of how to support this work.

Keywords

scholarship of teaching and learning, writing, publication, writing programs

**Reconciling Apples & Oranges:
A Constructivist SoTL Writing Program**

Nancy L. Chick, La Vonne Cornell-Swanson, Katina Lazarides,
and Renee Meyers

A research culture is a writing culture. If we are to build a research culture then we have to see writing as central to that process.

—*Dickson-Swift, James, Kippen, Verrinder, & Ward, 2009, p. 229*

The price we pay for the practice of solitary writing is that we often doubt ourselves, we feel as if we lack courage or commitment, we find writing lonely and hard, we can't get into it. By re-fusing the boundaries between individualism and community, between the public and the private...we can learn much about ourselves and our writing that can make a difference to the experience of writing in general. Most significantly this experience can help us forge new, more pleasurable and productive writing selves.

—*Grant, 2006, p. 494*

A cartoon from many years ago pictures an apple and an orange, with text in the middle that reads something like "fruit, fist-sized, round, warm color, good juiced." A NASA researcher also documents their similarities in "Apples and Oranges—A Comparison" by showing that both fruits have a similar infrared transmission spectra when dried, crushed, mixed with potassium bromide, and pressed into a pellet (Sandford, 1995). A *British Journal of Medicine* article added specific measurements to the growing list of shared traits, as well as the fact that they both grow in orchards on flowering trees and are vulnerable to damage by both disease and insects (Barone, 2000, p. 1569). This metaphor is useful in talking about the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL). Faculty new to SoTL, especially when they consider writing for publication, often react by focusing on how different it is from their familiar disciplinary processes and products. Although there are indeed significant differences between individual disciplines and SoTL, appealing to

the similarities can demystify SoTL as disciplinary experts reach out of their comfort zones and into areas of research and writing that often make them doubt themselves, feeling like “amateurs” (Pace, 2004, p. 1171; Hutchings & Huber, 2008, p. 239; Felten, 2013, p. 121). This metaphor thus effectively introduces a constructivist approach to practicing SoTL by connecting the new experiences inherent in practicing SoTL to the solid ground of disciplinary experts. It is both dissimilar and similar, both unfamiliar and familiar.¹

Across definitions of SoTL, there is a consensus that the results need to be disseminated, or made “public,” a word used ubiquitously in SoTL descriptions (Martin, Benjamin, Prosser, & Trigwell, 1999, p. 328; Bass, 1999; Shulman, 1999, 2004; McKinney, 2007, p. 83; Gurung & Schwartz, 2009; Felten, 2013, p. 123, et al.; cf. almost any university teaching center website that includes SoTL). Perhaps the most quoted instance is from Shulman (2004): “it is only when we step back and reflect systematically on the teaching we have done, in a form that can be publicly reviewed and built upon by our peers, that we have moved from scholarly teaching to the scholarship of teaching” (p. 166). McKinney (2007) notes that one of the key characteristics that distinguish SoTL from assessment is this broader purpose; specifically, assessment tends to be local, whereas “SoTL, by definition, is public,” which she clarifies as for “wide public external use” (p. 11). The goals of this broader dissemination range from promoting a culture of teaching on campuses to being validated by peer review to building a knowledge base among higher education teachers, who can then apply that knowledge to their own classrooms. This fundamental expectation raises a few questions. If a project is never shared publicly, is it SoTL? How public is “public”? What does “going public” look like, in its variety of forms?

As suggested in Dickson-Swift and colleagues’ coupling of research and writing culture (epigraph above: 2009, p. 229), the most common expectation for going public is publication (Murray, 2009; Weimer, 2006; Weaver, Robbie, & Radloff, 2013). Several key figures in SoTL, however, remind us that peer-reviewed journal articles aren’t the only way—or even the best way—to go public (Clegg, 2008; Peseta, 2009; Felten,

2013). Presenting a project at a SoTL conference is another possibility. Within these venues, presentations and posters are the primary genres, with the poster session often highlighted as a key event of the gathering.² Presentation at institutional events is another form of going public and is often the final step in campus-based SoTL programs. Such presentations are simpler, faster, and cheaper, and they can demonstrate (local) impact more immediately and visibly for sponsoring offices and administration.

However, the current reality is that publications are necessary for most hiring, retention, merit, promotion, and tenure decisions. While SoTL publications may not count equally for all campuses and departments, those with foregrounded teaching missions are increasingly including them, and at the very least a publication gives the instructor something to show for the effort, documenting and validating (in a mode currently valorized by academic culture) the amount of time spent on SoTL. Those who do the work of designing and carrying out a project without publishing “miss out on a professional and career benefits that are associated with a publication record in peer-reviewed journals” (Weaver, Robbie, & Radloff, 2013, p. 2).

Another reality is the relative infrequency of SoTL projects moving from data analysis to publication. Good research designed to advance teaching and learning often sits in the files of scholars instead of the desktops of publishers.³ Many faculty don't have access to SoTL programs on their campuses, and few SoTL programs devote much time, content, or support to the writing stages. Whether on their own or in programs, the reasons cited for this stalling out are many, especially the lack of time, momentum, experience, mentors, support, structure, motivation, confidence, good writing habits, and knowing where to start (Boice & Jones, 1984; Boice, 2000; McGrail, Rickard, & Jones, 2006; Grant, Munro, McIsaac, & Hill, 2010; Burns & McCarthy, 2011; Weaver, Robbie, & Radloff, 2013, p. 4).

Plenty of resources offer advice on scholarly publishing in general (cf, Felder, 2008; Belcher, 2009b; Murray, 2013). Other resources provide accounts and some assessments of programs supporting this more generic path to scholarly publication (Hall, Mueller, & Stahl, 2003; Benson, 2006; Brown, 2006; McGrail,

Rickard, & Jones, 2006; Murray & Newton, 2008, 2009; Belcher, 2009a; Dickson-Swift, James, Kippen, Talbot, Verrinder, & Ward, 2009; Friend & Gonzalez, 2009; Konchar Farr, Cavallaro, Civil, & Cochrane, 2009; Grant, Munro, McIsaac, & Hill, 2010; Burns & McCarthy, 2011). However, as we know from those who do SoTL and especially those who don't try to publish, there are distinct issues in SoTL writing and publishing that remain unaddressed in generic or disciplinary publication materials.

There are some materials on publishing SoTL. McKinney's "Getting SoTL Articles Published—A Few Tips" (2008) is widely circulated among programs and practitioners. Meadows, managing editor of *The Canadian Journal for the SoTL*, summarizes what he learned from three panels of journal editors at the 2009 conference of the International Scholarship of Teaching and Learning in "Writing for a SoTL Journal" (2009). Grauerholz and Zipp devote half of "How To Do SoTL" (2008) to publishing advice for *Teaching Sociology*, the journal for which Grauerholz was editor. *The International Journal of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning* devoted part of its January 2011 issue to articles on getting published, some specifically focused on this journal (Rogers, 2011; Bernstein, 2011; Simmons, 2011; Stefani, 2011; Maurer, 2011; Tagg, 2011). The current books on how to do SoTL (McKinney, 2007; Gurung & Schwartz, 2009; Bishop-Clark & Dietz-Uhler, 2012) devote multiple pages to the goal of publishing and potential venues, but only Bishop-Clark and Dietz-Uhler devote text to how to produce a publication—in a single paragraph. *Faculty Focus* has offered a "20 Minute Mentor" CD by Milt Cox, editor of *The Journal on Excellence in College Teaching*, entitled "How Do I Prepare a SoTL Article for Publication?"⁴ Weaver, Robbie, and Radloff (2013) move us closer to providing specific resources and assessments for SoTL writing programs. They describe a 12-week program largely for "non-research-active staff," guided by a workbook for publishing general scholarly articles in 12 weeks (Belcher, 2009b, p. 2). However, there is a need for more detailed information that shows *how* to make this transition from disciplinary writing to SoTL writing, a "curriculum" that can be used by a single scholar, a writing group without resources, or by a formal program or course. This essay offers such a resource

and some preliminary, descriptive explorations of participants' experiences in such a program.

Beyond the solitary, unsupported writer, there are four models for faculty writing initiatives. Many are designed as retreats, short-term immersive experiences with perhaps a little instruction but focused on structured writing time, and often at a location away from the workplace (Dickson-Swift, James, Kippen, Talbot, Verrinder, & Ward, 2009; Konchar Farr, Cavallaro, Civil, & Cochrane, 2009; Murray & Newton, 2009; Burns & McCarthy, 2011; see online samples from Indiana University Bloomington, 2004; Stonehill College, 2010, 2013; & Seattle University, 2013). Others are described as courses, bounded programs—from one day to six months—with a curriculum led by someone with publishing expertise (McGrail, Rickard, & Jones, 2006; Murray & Newton, 2008; Belcher, 2009a; Weaver, Robbie, & Radloff, 2013). The most common are writing groups or circles, informal, ongoing, and generally requiring no resources beyond participants (Hall, Mueller, & Stahl, 2003; Brown, 2006; McGrail, Rickard, & Jones, 2006; Friend & Gonzalez, 2009; Grant, Munro, McIsaac, & Hill, 2010). Finally, the least formalized model is the writing coach or mentor, or someone available to help with writing issues as needed (Berger, 1990; Baldwin & Chandler, 2002).

Background

The materials we describe represent a hybrid of these four models. The content or curriculum has been used as part of a three-day workshop (2013, 24 faculty) and of a nine-month course (2011-present, from 5 to 18 graduate students). It's also been used as the focus of a two-day workshop (2009, 30 faculty), a one-year mentoring relationship (2012-13, 5 faculty) with a group of faculty collaborating on an article in another state, and a nine-month course (2011, 6 faculty) that began with a combined retreat and short-course and then progressed as a primarily online writing group with some structure and mentoring. It's also hybrid in the sense of blending both face-to-face gatherings and online activities to support the ongoing writing and feedback processes of faculty in different cities. (The short-term workshops were fully face-to-face, the mentoring

across state lines occurred online, supplemented by two phone calls.) The 2011 nine-month course is the subject of the study in this article, so the descriptions of the curriculum will reflect that structure but can be (and has been) easily adapted to a variety of durations and collapsed into a single-location program more typical of faculty development work.

Chick, author of the curriculum, was a professor of English and co-director of the Wisconsin Teaching Fellows and Scholars (WTFS) Program, a year-long statewide SoTL program for pre- and post-tenured faculty across the 26 campuses of the University of Wisconsin (UW) System. She is now assistant director at the Vanderbilt University Center for Teaching (CFT), affiliated faculty in the English department, and director of the CFT's SoTL Program. La Vonne Cornell-Swanson is director of the UW System's Office of Professional and Instructional Development (OPID), the system-wide faculty development unit that offers the WTFS Program and sponsored this project. During the nine-month iteration of program, Lazarides was the communications and project specialist at the UW System's SoTL Leadership Site, and Meyers was the coordinator of the UW System's SoTL Leadership Site.⁵

Participants

The multi-campus nature of the UW System called for a hybrid model. With a common President and Board of Regents, the UW System is distributed across 26 campuses, 13 of which are considered comprehensive institutions connected by a top-level administration and a curriculum, and then connected to the other 13 campuses through transfer agreements. As a result, faculty development in the UW System occurs locally if the individual campus has the resources, but also across campuses and often at a distance through OPID. For instance, the WTFS Program is OPID's signature professional development program that dates back to the 1980's. By 2000 the WTFS program began focusing intentionally on promoting SoTL, following the lead of the Carnegie Scholars program of the Carnegie Academy for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (CASTL). The WTFS Program targets and connects outstanding early career and later career teachers. The yearlong program with 30 slots available

across the campuses includes intensive, collaborative workshops, discussions of teaching and learning and the completion of a SoTL project. The program has been described as exceptional in many respects: it's system-wide approach and impact; the diversity of disciplines and institutions represented in each year's group of participants; and its development of a community of teacher scholars within and across the 26 institutions (Voelker & Martin, 2013).

This Writer's Collaborative—so named by participants about halfway through—was a mid-year project we began planning during the fall semester, so in September we invited 14 faculty members who'd completed the WTFS Program with promising projects, and six accepted. All of the participants were women,⁶ two pre-tenure and four tenured, one of whom was also the chair of her department. Chick developed and taught the curriculum and, with Meyers, responded to participants' questions and drafts, and all four authors conducted the study. OPID funded travel, accommodations, and a small stipend for the workshop facilitators. For prerequisites, we simply looked to the WTFS Program for scholars who had analyzed their data and were ready to write. This brief description by Calder and Kelly (2006) enumerates the basics of "A Finished SoTL Project":

1. It has a beginning, a middle, and an end.
2. It's situated in a conversation among scholars.
3. It has some sort of "data."
4. The data has been analyzed.

Weaver, Robbie, and Radloff (2013) recommend an additional set of prerequisites: "Ensure participants are ready, motivated, and have the time to devote to the program (easier said than done)" (p. 12). More on this last recommendation later.

The Curriculum

Since we were bringing faculty together for some hard work during their semester break, our first gathering combined the retreat and course models by meeting in a lodgy setting in the Wisconsin Dells, a centrally located town with vacation appeal, and offering most of the instruction on getting started.

Self-Assessment: Reflections & Elevator Speeches

In the spirit of good writing pedagogy, we began by doing some writing. First, we asked the authors to take 15 minutes to write reflections on their sense of self-efficacy. Although some programs are designed to orient “non-research-active staff” to the research, writing, and publication processes (Weaver, Robbie, & Radloff, 2013, p. 2), we’ve encountered enough research-savvy faculty who are confident and ready to write within their disciplines but stall at publishing their SoTL work because they see it as so different, are unfamiliar with the venues, and lack confidence in their ability to reach broader audiences. This is where introducing the apples and oranges metaphor and a constructivist approach is most useful. We asked them to write “a few paragraphs about the following, including what contributes to or detracts from each: your desire, preparedness, ability, confidence, and commitment to write (and complete) a SoTL article for publication.” They posted these reflections in a private forum (visible only to the four authors of this article) in our course management system to give us a sense of their specific concerns, and volunteers shared a few responses to launch a discussion of these motivations, vulnerabilities, and challenges. These reflections helped us identify where they needed the most support and potentially how they may be paired as supports for each other. They also initiated a conversation of participants as “writers” and “authors,” an identity we wanted them to embrace as one way of overcoming their feelings of uncertainty with the process. Grant and Knowles (2000) explore this writerly identity and its challenges especially for women. They highlight the importance of this awareness of the identity as writer above and beyond the act of writing: “In *being a writer*, by regularly doing the practice of writing, we may also come to think of ourselves as writers, that is we *become* writers in our own and each other’s imaginations” (p. 8). Konchar Farr, Cavallaro, Civil, and Cochrane (2009) intentionally use the term “scholars” rather than “writers” because, on their teaching-focused campus, being a teacher is “a large part of our self-definition,” so they wanted to re-envision themselves as “scholars” who conduct research, including but not limited to writing for publication (p. 5, 3).

Other faculty writing programs have reported the shift in identity to “the self as writer” as a significant outcome (Grant & Knowles, 2000; Grant, 2006; Murray & Newton, 2009, p. 547; Weaver, Robbie, and Radloff, 2013, p. 7), a shift we intentionally encouraged from the beginning.

Next, we launched into their specific projects by asking them to write an elevator speech explaining their projects to “a colleague from another department [in an elevator] who asks, ‘Oh, I hear you’re working on an article. What’s it about?’” They then performed these elevator speeches for the group, with two goals: to help their memory, synthesis, and identification of the essential elements of their projects, making them more prepared with something to write on the all-too-intimidating first blank page, as well as to acquaint all participants with their colleagues’ projects.

Essential Elements of Early Prewriting: Why Write, and Why Publish?

Again, to integrate effective writing pedagogy, the workshop provided an opportunity for authors to work through the basic prewriting strategy of articulating the purposes and audiences for their articles (Gebhardt, 1983, p. 294). Reviewing the taxonomy of SoTL questions from the introduction of *Opening Lines* (Hutchings, 2000, p. 4-5) helped participants articulate the design goals of their projects: a description (“what is?”), an intervention or comparison (“what works?”), an exploration (“visions of the possible”), or the development of a theory (“new conceptual frameworks”).

To situate the individual projects within the broader set of conversations we join through publication, we revisited the development of SoTL and how others have theorized it. Most relevant are some of SoTL’s central features. First, it’s grounded in question-asking, inquiry, and investigation, particularly around issues of student learning—with impact goals well beyond improving one’s own classroom practice. This larger purpose requires a project to “go public,” be open to critique and evaluation, and be presented in a form others can build on. Noting even a few of the passages at the opening of this article demonstrate that these characteristics have been a cornerstone

of SoTL from its early days, and sharing them early in the process helps participants locate their projects within a larger community of readers that values teaching and learning and actively seeks ideas, methods, and tools for improvement.

After this larger contextualization, authors turned to their own projects and wrote for five or ten minutes about their goals for taking this step of going public. To help authors identify the readers that would most benefit from their projects, we also encouraged participants to think about these readers' identities, expectations, and goals. (See our prompts in Appendix 1.) The language here is specifically "readers" (not "teachers" or "instructors") because, in the same way that we called participants "authors," we wanted to shift their identities to writers who want to use their articles to reach specific readers. This attention to audience serves as a way to talk about Flower's classic concepts of writer- versus reader-based prose (1979). While writer-based prose is written in with only the writer in mind, reader-based prose is "a deliberate attempt to communicate something to a reader. To do that it creates a shared language and shared context between writer and reader" (p. 20). This distinction is both useful and critical, as readers of SoTL may be from any discipline, any institutional type, and any country. Building on this concept, participants then discussed the implications of their identified purposes and audiences—specifically, how these choices should affect the actual writing. For instance, if their projects are useful to readers beyond their disciplines, they should avoid jargon. If they're writing for an international readership, they should also avoid Anglicisms and offer greater contextual information. This activity introduced early on the notion that writers should be as attentive to *how* they present their ideas as they are to the ideas themselves.

Identifying Potential Venues for Publication

Now that they had identified their goals and ideal readership, participants explored possible venues for their work. Some came to the program with a specific journal already in mind; others weren't aware of the possibilities. Those who had identified a venue either applied this activity to that journal or explored a back-up journal in case their first choice didn't accept

their manuscript. Rather than randomly distributing titles among participants, we were intentional with some preliminary assignments, based at least on the elevator speeches. This list can include the major SoTL journals (*Teaching & Learning Inquiry, IJ-SoTL, JoSoTL*), as well as some more thematic ones (*Active Learning in Higher Education*), or even those within their own disciplines (*Arts & Humanities in Higher Education, Pedagogy* [literary studies], *CBE* [biology], *Teaching Sociology, Teaching Psychology* and now also *SoTL in Psychology*).

Each participant investigated one journal and shared it with the group. We made these analyses available to everyone, but discussion centered on the journals that are possible for and least familiar to everyone (typically, the SoTL journals). For each journal, they used some evaluative measures, such as a recognizable editorial board, where the journal is indexed, how long it's been published, the quality of the papers, and whether they're being cited. They also identified the fundamentals of the journal and the manuscripts it publishes: its mission or vision, publication frequency and any deadlines, the different article types and length requirements, citation style, and formatting [social science research report format or free-form essays]. Some participants, particularly those in the arts and humanities, weren't used to writing in the social science report format of introduction, lit review, methodology, results or findings, limitations, and discussion. Other participants, particularly those in the sciences, initially struggled to appreciate and thus resisted the free-form essay style that didn't follow their familiar conventions in structure. A useful discussion for everyone involved unpacking this template's sections, addressing the purpose of the flexibility of the alternative form, and identifying the parallel moves in the two types of articles, finding similarities across the differences. Whichever structure they selected, we wanted them to become familiar with the fact that there was such diversity and choice. As Cruz (2010) notes in "How do YOU SoTL?" "A healthy appreciation for alternatives and 'paths less travelled by' is an attitude also engendered by many SoTL studies, but it is one that could perhaps be more productively applied to its scholarly products" (p. 3). This activity, like the others in the program, not only did the practical work of helping

participants produce manuscripts; it also enhanced their awareness of the broader field and activity of SoTL as something that engages a range of their colleagues in ways that aren't quite as mysterious as initially assumed.

Essential Moves of SoTL Writing

The next sessions were designed to demystify SoTL writing. First, because so many who engage in SoTL tell us that every discipline has its own standards and conventions of writing, it's helpful to make explicit the common ground shared with participants' own disciplinary writing, building on the previous activity with different types of articles. The textbook *They Say / I Say: The Moves that Matter in Academic Writing* (Graff & Birkenstein, 2006) is a perfect foundation for this discussion. After reviewing selections from the book,⁷ participants identified how—regardless of format or discipline—their writing typically begins with what others are saying and then offers a response, ranging from agreeing but noting a difference, disagreeing and explaining, and agreeing and disagreeing at once, as well as justifying the significance of their response. In spite of the perceived polarity of some fields and their publications, this universal pattern grounds writers in what they already know. Calder has developed a useful tool based on this premise, presented at the 2006 CASTL Institute. It reflects the rhetorical templates from *They Say / I Say*, meant to be “generative” by “prompting [writers] to make moves in their writing they might not otherwise make or even know they should make” (p. xiii). Over the years, Chick has gently adapted Calder's tool⁸ to the following:

In recent discussions of _____, a controversy has been whether _____. On the one hand, some argue that _____. On the other hand, some argue _____. Even others say _____. In sum, then, the issue is whether _____ or _____.

My own thought is that perhaps _____. To find out, I designed a project to _____. In terms of types of SoTL inquiries, my project was a *what is / what works* (circle one) type of project with the goal of _____ (tied to

project type). My central question was _____.

To help me draw conclusions, I relied on the following kinds of data/evidence of student learning: _____. My key methods for generating this data were _____. Some of the problems I ran into were _____. But it was also quite exciting when _____ happened.

I analyzed my data by _____. What I discovered is that _____. These findings are important because _____. Colleagues near and far will find my work helpful because _____.

The template is written in simple language and syntax—not the language of publication—because its purpose is solely to call attention to the different content requirements for SoTL writing, so a key follow-up is to explore illustrations of these moves and the variety of ways they can be articulated. Distributing a handful of models in the form of effectively written SoTL articles served this purpose well. Participants chose one written in the social science report format and one in a free form—again to see some of the variety of written SoTL genres in case they ultimately submit to a journal with a preference, and to help participants become more comfortable with the format more familiar to their colleagues from across campus. For some questions to guide such an analysis, see Appendix 2. This two-step activity—first unpacking the template, and then carefully analyzing a variety of articles for how the template’s moves can be articulated—took longer than some other steps but allowed participants to more fully understand what SoTL writing can look like.

Literature Reviews

At some point early in the process, a discussion of literature reviews is necessary. Of course, authors won’t be new to this part of the research process, but they may be unfamiliar with and even anxious about doing effective research in the research outside of their specific fields. (Indeed, this anxiety proved to be high, as we will discuss later.) Thinking of this process as beginning a lit review in a larger field or shifting out of one’s expertise makes participants somewhat akin to savvy

novices, so Bruce's (1994) map of dissertators' conceptions of their lit reviews may be helpful (p. 223-225). It illustrates the increasingly direct and advanced relationship between the researcher, the research literature, and the larger project, helping participants locate their SoTL lit review process on common ground with the sophisticated and integrative approach they use in their disciplinary research.

To remind authors of the broader purpose of this lit review, Burke's (1941) metaphor of the ongoing conversation connects well with Graff and Birkenstein's dialogic notion of "they say / I say": Imagine that you enter a parlor. You come late. When you arrive, others have long preceded you, and they are engaged in a heated discussion.... You listen for a while, until you decide that you have caught the tenor of the argument; then you put in your oar. Someone answers; you answer him; another comes to your defense; another aligns himself against you.... The hour grows late, you must depart. And you do depart, with the discussion still vigorously in progress. (pp. 110-11)

This passage captures the necessities of both including a variety of voices in the conversation and keeping their lit review up to date. The first paragraph in Calder's template above also foregrounds the importance of a strong and varied lit review, as does criterion 2 in Calder and Kelly's description of a completed SoTL project, "It's situated in a conversation among scholars." Discussing these passages makes explicit the importance of contextualizing their specific projects within the questions others have asked and the work others have been doing—and continue to do. This process also helps them argue more meaningfully about the significance of their studies to a variety of readers, particularly those not teaching similar courses in similar contexts.

Some participants had previously done this research, some of which was incomplete—focused on disciplinary research through participants' familiar databases, for instance. Expanding their searches into broader databases to intentionally draw from educational, psychological, and sociological research, among others, may not have occurred to some, but neglecting these searches may leave gaps in the studies that harm their

credibility for many readers. Others didn't know which databases to use. A few years ago, this was a greater challenge, as many SoTL journals weren't yet included in the common databases, and journals were known primarily to a discipline-specific readership. Now, many databases include more of the SoTL journals, pedagogy journals from across the disciplines, and materials from a variety of social sciences, but there are still gaps. To make the process easier, setting up a library guide with the relevant databases can significantly improve participants' lit reviews.⁹

Conditions for Effective Writing

After laying this multi-layered groundwork, participants were almost ready to write. Some discussion and guidance in planning their conditions for writing was helpful in alleviating some writing anxiety and setting up a plan they're more likely to complete. Jack London's oft-paraphrased quote "Don't loaf and invite inspiration; light out after it with a club" captures two important acknowledgements at this stage (1905, p. 143): writing is difficult work for most of us, and we have to be fiercely intentional about it. Boice's (2000) classic advice to new faculty about writing is also worth sharing, especially since participants felt relatively new in the context of writing SoTL. He offers ten "mindful ways of writing" to increase one's ease, momentum, confidence, and ultimately productivity, including writing early, regularly, and moderately; stopping early; and limiting wasted efforts (p. ix-x). Writers can pick and choose from his tips, but the goal is to have them identify strategies that will help them do the writing—and keep doing the writing.

While some are effective binge-writers—not because of procrastination but because these conditions actually work well for them—other authors will appreciate planning for their best writing environment (location, time of day, noise level, temperature, materials, etc.) and creating a basic schedule that facilitates constancy and moderation. During the semester, when is their writing time during the week? Will they write on weekends? What about during the summer? Some wanted strategies for creating schedules to keep track of their writing, using a calendar or a spreadsheet. A more guided approach

would be to use a writing journal to record the date, goal amount of writing time, completed writing time, notable efficiencies and inefficiencies, and plans for a starting point the next time. Those requesting even more structure or accountability paired up as writing partners committed to reporting their progress to each other at appropriate intervals. For small programs, facilitators can meet individually with authors. Benson (2006) describes these regular meetings between writer and facilitator—in this case, actual editors, an ideal situation—as the most important lesson learned from an experimental program on book manuscript development at Emory University (p. 133).

Finally, it's helpful to establish deadlines for drafting specific parts of the manuscripts, such as introduction; explanation of design or methodology and evidence used; lit review, etc. (Because some weren't using the preset format of social science reports, keeping the language fairly generic is more inclusive.) We created goals and deadlines for drafting publishable equivalents of individual paragraphs in Calder's template, which is effectively divided into incremental writing tasks. After all of these prewriting activities, we gave them three months—during the semester—to expand their lit review and then to draft the ideas mapped in the template's first two paragraphs (essentially the summary of that lit review and their methodology or project design). They then had one month to complete a facilitated peer review, an activity that can take a single day or less if participants are in the same location. (We were now working together on a course management system and email.) Now into the summer months, we stepped up the pace and asked for the final two paragraphs and any revisions to the earlier sections two months later, followed by another peer review session, and then the final drafts were due one month after that. We then read and responded to the drafts with recommendations only for final touches, returned them to authors within two weeks, and asked them to submit to their chosen journal within six weeks. Again, because our schedule was primarily designed to meet the parameters of a pilot project grant, we recommend adapting this schedule to the specific contexts of individual programs and campuses.

(Re)Introduction to Peer Review

Before they first exchanged drafts, we talked about the ethics, good practices, and logistics of formative peer review. Since they're sharing unpublished writings, a commitment to not share beyond the group establishes trust and respect for each other's work. Additionally, during these formative phases of writing, we wanted to introduce a level of civility and even gentleness, given the vulnerability many of the authors expressed at writing outside of their disciplinary comfort zones. Since they were still writing and revising, at each exchange, we emphasized that they should respond to each other in a way that encourages the author to continue writing. We talked about the difference between *what* they say and *how* they say it: they could and should be critical, but constructively so—and carefully so. We connected these moments of peer review (especially during the early stages) to peer teaching evaluations, complete with the stresses and worries of being judged (or judging) while also wanting to preserve the collegiality and integrity of the peer relationships. Some of us shared our experiences of receiving harshly written reviews and how difficult the reviewer's tone (not necessarily the content) made attempts at revision. Finally, we talked about the responsibilities of the author in receiving the feedback, trusting in the reviewer's intentions and committing to fully hearing the feedback before responding. We also practiced with a sample draft shared with the group. We started by simply talking about it, and then we considered that discussion. How could they express our evaluations and recommendations in a constructive way? If they'd been the author, how would they feel about the feedback? Encouraging this kind of empathy was critical to our ethos of the workshop and one reason the participants asked to rename it from a "SoTL Writing Workshop" to a "SoTL Writing Collaborative."

Beyond this conversation, a few additional steps made this process most effective. As reviewers, they used the rubrics from relevant journals¹⁰ to remind them of the ultimate, external expectations and to guide their feedback, rather than the less than helpful request for unspecified "feedback" or "help." Authors also write a cover letter for context and guidance. (For suggested prompts, see Appendix 3.)

We used a variety of peer review modes to accommodate our geographical distribution. The first practice session with a sample draft was together in free-form discussion, followed by a meta-discussion of the process and feedback. After authors returned to their different campuses, peer review was done largely at a distance. The first began in our course management system, where authors posted their drafts in a single discussion forum and then, as reviewers, read two of their colleagues' drafts. At this stage, we asked them to focus on simply one strength and one recommendation for revision—to make this feedback easier, to acknowledge the difficulty of capturing constructive tone in online communications, and to preview their feedback. We then brought them together for a more extended conversation, as reviewers explained their feedback in greater detail and authors asked questions and talked through potential revisions. Many had questions for us facilitators as well, and we ended with a discussion of the process to gauge their emotional experiences and to assess their readiness for continued writing. Participants so strongly preferred the conversations with each other that the next peer review session—using near-complete or complete drafts—was a conversation on the phone or Skype, about one week after they emailed their drafts to each other.

The final peer review occurred at the very end and was framed as help with editing and proofreading, so authors sent their completed drafts through email and used the marginal comments and tracked their changes in Word, with no expectation for conversation unless needed. (This occurred near the beginning of the semester, so we also wanted to be sensitive to schedules.) We also recruited a few colleagues with relevant expertise to serve as outside readers at this stage, ensuring that authors again provided cover letters and, if appropriate, one of the journals' rubrics. The very last step was submitting their manuscripts. We set a deadline to provide structure and reinforce the goal of the program. Participants copied us on the submission emails or sent us brief reports of the submission if done online or through the mail.

Program Assessment

To assess the SoTL Writing Collaborative's effects and

learn more about the participants' experiences, OPID sponsored a descriptive study of the program during its pilot year. After receiving IRB approval, we collected and analyzed data through surveys, reflective writings, and interviews. We also tracked their manuscripts after the program. Our approach mixed guided and open-ended questions, as well as quantitative and qualitative methods to measure participants' changes in perspective about themselves as writers and their experiences of writing—in general and specifically as part of a small group. The surveys focused on three topics: general writing assessment, self-regulation assessment, and writing preferences and time-management assessment. Participants rated each of the 32 statements on a scale of 0 (Not at all true) to 10 (Always true). The final two questions were open-ended, asking about the “three biggest challenges in getting your papers written and submitted for publication” and “two to three goals” at that point in the process. The surveys were administered three times: prior to the first workshop, and after the second and final workshops, through SurveyMonkey®. Each participant was provided a four digit code to keep her survey responses anonymous, and we investigators have sole access to the survey data and their writings. Additionally, at six intervals throughout the project, we asked participants to write private reflections on any current obstacles, successes, epiphanies, aids, discoveries, or experiences of being in the writing group. Finally, after the last step in the program (final manuscript reviews), we conducted phone interviews with each participant. The interviews consisted of seven standard questions with additional follow-up questions to explore answers in more depth. (See Appendix 4 for our reflective writing prompts and interview questions.)

While our numbers were small and thus don't offer generalizable results, our goals for this pilot year were preliminary, largely descriptive, and intended to be generative. Similar studies on faculty development programs have also relied on small numbers (e.g., 7 in one of the studies in Grant & Knowles, 2000; “a few authors a year” in Benson, 2006; 9 in Dickson-Swift, James, Kippen, Talbot, Verrinder, & Ward, 2009; 11 in Clarke & Reid, 2012; 9 participants in Weaver, Robbie, & Radloff, 2013).

Survey Results

Table 1: Selected Survey Results

General Writing Assessment			
Question	1 st survey	2 nd survey	3 rd survey
I worry so much about my writing that it prevents me from starting.	4.0	2.17	2.5
I need encouragement and support to do my best writing	5.29	3.83	5.50
Having my writing evaluated by colleagues I know intimidates me	3.71	4.00	3.25
Having my writing evaluated by journal reviewers intimidates me	5.43	6.17	6.33
I like to work in small groups to discuss writing or do revisions	5.43	7.33	7.50
I am familiar with the components of a disciplinary research paper	7.71	7.67	7.75
I am familiar with the components of a SoTL research paper	4.71	7.17	8.25
I feel confident that I can write a disciplinary paper without help	7.14	7.67	6.25
I feel confident that I can write a SoTL research paper without help	4.14	5.83	6.25
Writing Preferences and Time-Management Assessment			
I create a time table for the writing projects I want to accomplish	5.86	6.50	6.00
I try to do some writing every day	2.86	3.83	4.75
I allot a specific time for every writing task	3.14	5.17	5.00
I isolate myself in quiet places whenever I do my writing tasks	8.86	7.83	8.25
I prefer to have people around when I write so I can get feedback	2.43	3.67	2.50
I like to multi task whenever I write	1.43	1.83	0.75
I avoid watching television when I am writing	6.29	8.33	7.75
I write whenever I find some time in the day	5.14	6.33	6.75
I set a specific time in which I will	5.71	7.33	7.25

 write

0=Not at All; 5=Moderately True; 10=Always True

The survey responses indicate a variety of successes from the participants' perspectives. As a result of the SoTL Writing Collaborative, they reported being less worried about starting to write (37% decrease), less intimidated about colleagues evaluating their writing (12% decrease, contrasted with a steady and understandable increase in their anxiety about journal reviewers' evaluations), and more appreciative of small writing groups (38% increase). Before and after the program, they reported a greater need for support and encouragement with their writing, but in the middle, as they were working with their groupmates and getting plenty of feedback, they said that they were 45% less likely to need more. Although they indicated a strong and consistent familiarity (if not confidence) with disciplinary research writing, both their familiarity and confidence with SoTL papers steadily rose throughout the program (almost 75% and 51%, respectively).

They also reported that the program positively influenced their writing processes and environments—at least during the program. The numbers indicate the amount of structured time to write increased by an average of 28% as a result of participating in the program. Their use of timetables for writing projects grew a bit while the program was active (11%), but dropped again afterward. Their attempts at daily writing were rare when they began the program, increased by 33% midway, and rose to 66% by the end, suggesting that they had developed and hoped to continue a habit of writing—and specifically whenever they could find the time in the day. In the first half of the program, they started allotting a specific time for each writing task (a 65% increase) but then slightly dropped in this planning by the end of the program and as the semester approached—a pattern reflected also in their commitment to scheduling writing at certain times of the day. Their preference for isolating themselves while writing was also consistently high, and their preference for multitasking while writing was consistently low throughout the program

These quantitative results are supported and further

developed at the end of the survey by their open-ended responses about current challenges and goals. When asked to describe the biggest challenges in writing and submitting their SoTL articles, three clear themes emerged: the literature review, time, and confidence (or the lack thereof). We were surprised to see that the literature review was their most common response in the beginning. The concerns about their literature search included uncertainty about being comprehensive enough and using the best sources. Unsurprisingly, finding and maintaining time in their schedules to write—without distractions—remained a major concern for all of them. Finally, they consistently described a sense of insecurity in both engaging in data analyses outside their discipline and writing for the broader SoTL field, feelings echoed in their quantitative responses of improving but still remaining only in the middle or just above “moderately true” range for the questions about confidence.

The goals identified in the first survey were about participants' desired outcomes: to write and complete a publishable paper. This was broken down slightly to specify learning how to do a literature review. Participants' goals in the middle of the collaborative were about giving and receiving good peer feedback, moving forward with their writing, becoming comfortable with their writing and leaving the program with confidence. By the third survey when asked if they accomplished their goals, they wrote about how close they were to being done. They had drafts that still needed improvements but, as one author indicated, they now had a map for completing their articles.

Reflective Writings

The six sets of private reflective posts spread throughout the nine-month program allowed participants to reflect on what was most pressing or noticeable at each date: obstacles, successes, epiphanies, aids, discoveries, or experiences of being in the writing group. Their first-day self-efficacy writings to their final blog entry reveal an arc in their reflections about the program. Several themes emerged, giving us greater insight into their motivations, their fears, their greatest challenges, and what helped them the most.

First, the most prominent explanation for their motivations to write is worth highlighting. In addition to a sense of “stick-to-it-iveness,” most described being aware of the significance of their specific projects, thus feeling compelled to share their work more broadly. One noted that her project is relevant to “many educators,” and while she’s “disseminated my findings at numerous conferences,” publishing her project will make the findings “more accessible to all who are interested.” Another described feeling a “strong commitment” because of her project’s “meaningful impact.” A third acknowledged that she’s “truly interested in the project and the outcome,” but also that “others more experienced than myself” have told her that her project is “interesting and worthy of publication.” This commitment is reminiscent of Bass’s observation that in SoTL, “What matters most is for teachers to investigate the problems that matter most to them” (1999, p. 7).

Most frequently, the blogs recorded a sense of insecurity as participants described themselves as novices in SoTL and more specifically in writing SoTL. As Simmons and colleagues (2013) outline in their study of SoTL scholars’ identity development, there is an early sense of “insecurity and risk... complete with multiple identity crises and self-doubts...often triggering feelings of being an imposter” (p. 13). As they allude to here, these moments are reminiscent of imposter syndrome (Clance & Imes, 1978) but more acute because, while imposter syndrome involves feeling vulnerable in one’s regular work and area of expertise, this SoTL-based fear of being “amateurs” (Pace, 2004, p. 1171; Hutchings & Huber, 2008, p. 239; Felten, 2013, p. 121) results from stepping *outside of* that familiarity and confidence into less familiar spaces where the relative lack of expertise is more pronounced and an objective reality.

All but one of the participants wrote from this perspective—and did so at multiple times throughout the program. For instance, they contrasted their confidence in their other roles with their feelings of inadequacy in the program. One, after acknowledging her “30 plus years of teaching experience” and her recent collaborations on five articles, distinguishes her sense of competence with previous work (“math teaching pedagogy article,” “sharing teaching ideas” without “quantitative nor

qualitative data [research]”) from SoTL (“SoTL research article,” “sharing my SoTL research”). Another confessed to being “worried...about my ability to write in this discipline” despite her confidence and self-knowledge “as a writer” in general, similar to the one who said she was “extremely scared” about writing this paper: “I do not normally write research papers that are non-[disciplinary], so I feel very unprepared on how to start and what ‘makes’ a good paper.” Yet another wrote, “I believe that I’m a very good writer but I do not have a sense of ‘how to write’ for the purpose of publication in a journal. I will need assistance.” The most junior faculty member called attention to her position as a novice in SoTL in each and every blog (“I haven’t ever published in SoTL before,” “I am not experienced in SoTL,” “This is my first attempt at writing a SOTL article,” “I am making a foray into unknown territory,” and “I have little experience with SoTL,” “writing a SoTL paper is a bit out of my realm of expertise,” “I have never published a scholarly article as a single author before, so the confidence to be solely responsible for this paper”). Again, comments like these reinforce the need to help authors connect the new task of SoTL writing to what they already know about professional writing. Harnessing their feelings of competence as disciplinary scholars, researchers, and writers may give them strength during these moments of feeling weak.

It’s worth noting, however, that near the end of the program, several participants reflected on and revised these earlier feelings. One wrote about “how smoothly the journal format worked for the research that I had done,” found the writing much easier than anticipated, and regretted waiting. Another wrote, “This workshop experience has really taught me the steps to writing for a SoTL project. It has broken it down for me in a way I understand and can remember, which will make it easier when I go to write another article next year.” Additionally, the junior faculty member who felt the least experienced and thus the least prepared is one of the participants who successfully published her article in her target journal.

Drilling down into the specific issues that make them wary in this work reveals their worry about conducting a SoTL lit review. One entry pinpoints the source of this concern: “I am

afraid I may be missing a key article, theory, or researcher and I don't want to make a rookie mistake by leaving out information—especially information or ideas well known in the SoTL realm. That would be bad.” Another insightfully connects this worry to her less experienced work as a graduate student: “I am aware that this sounds like what everyone says when they write dissertations, and I know that someone has to finally tell them it's time to stop researching and start writing. I know all this. But somehow I'm still not over my feeling that I'm missing important pieces,” reinforcing the potential usefulness of Bruce's (1994) research on dissertators' view of their lit reviews.

Finally, all participants described the pressures of work-work and work-life balance throughout their writings, but it was most pronounced near the end of the program as the fall semester approached. Their ability to negotiate their regular workloads (already overloads in some cases) with writing was a source of anxiety, but the realities of life circumstances became even more impactful. The work of teaching itself proved to make their writing about teaching difficult, both logistically and intellectually. As one participant wrote, “I am often working with students, even if just for a minute or two, and lose focus,” emphasizing the need to be free from distractions in order to write. She also reflected, “It's a strange relationship—writing about teaching and ACTUAL teaching”: writing about her project made her aware of “what I'm NOT pulling off in my teaching, and there's guilt attached to this.” The pressures of the varied work roles were already difficult to manage, and the addition of writing threatened to upset that delicate balance: “I keep choosing to let other things get in the way and I end up working on teaching lessons, or committee work, and such and before I know it my writing hour is up and I'm on to new things. I keep telling myself I can catch up later, but 'later' never comes.”

Significantly, the participants called attention to the challenges of work-life balance—nothing new when talking to faculty. However, what was most pronounced here was the nature of their life pressures. One described her “inability to concentrate” and “profound sadness that I had never experienced before” because of her ailing mother and the ending of her 21-year marriage. Another struggled because her

"attention has been significantly divided these days" and "I've learned that buying a house, moving, and medical situations are not conducive to writing. :)," later announcing that she was pregnant with her first child. Yet another noted that her daughter isn't in daycare during the summer, so she had to "work with my husband to make sure I set aside time for this project." A fourth had "health issues" for an entire month. With such a small group, it's dangerous to generalize, but we were keenly aware of the seemingly gendered nature of these circumstances. We wondered how a male faculty member's experience might be different.

Their reflective writings also noted the specific characteristics of the program that supported their progress. Most pragmatically, all but one cited the necessity of externally imposed deadlines. One admitted, "if I'm left on my own to do further revisions they won't happen," and another said she is "confident in my ability to...complete a project when given strict deadlines." A few located humor in this need for accountability: in one entry, the first bullet under her program "positives" is "structure, including DEADLINES :)" and the first under program "negatives" is "DEADLINES, which create anxiety :)." Another put it simply: "Peer pressure does have its upside!"

The group structure of the program was frequently cited as a both source of anxiety and of support. One referenced the program as her first experience with peer review, which she found "time consuming and emotionally 'testing'" but also recognized that it resulted in "significantly stronger" writing. In fact, she reports subsequently asking a colleague outside of the program to read and respond to her essay and had another good experience. As noted earlier, we tried to create a critical but compassionate peer review process. This tone seemed to be part of the effectiveness for the participants. The writer who acknowledged being "extremely scared" about writing her article later wrote, "I have enjoyed hearing about their projects and seeing drafts. It is nice to work and sometimes struggle together. I would never have done this paper without the workshop and group support." The participant most experienced with sharing her writing before publication described being used to more "aggressive" peer review but found this process "really

lovely”: “The best part of working with this group is the sense of general well-wishing for one another. The critiques we offered really were about making one another’s work better, clearer, stronger.” Another attributed her emerging confidence to the group: despite inexperience and nerves, she says, “I’ve surrounded myself with the BEST and I should be most able to complete this article for publication.” Yet another “thought peer review would be scary but it is actually the most helpful thing I needed at this point in the process.” Grant and Knowles (2000) identify these “social aspects of writing” as essential in this “emergent sense of community and the discussions around be(com)ing a writer” (p. 16). As mentioned earlier, about halfway through the process, the participants renamed the program the SoTL Writing *Collaborative*.

Interviews

After the program’s final deadline (submitting their article somewhere), Cornell-Swanson conducted phone interviews with all participants. (See Appendix 4 for the questions.) The themes that emerged confirmed our earlier results about the benefits of peer review and structuring writing time, as well as the continued challenges of time (both personal and professional) and the lit review.

The participants described this process as by far the most important and valuable aspect of the program. Because they were accountable to their peers, they created time to write. In addition, they felt we had created a safe environment for the peer review process, helping them feel supported and increasingly confident in their writing.

The challenges to creating time to write in their academic calendars continued to be difficult for all of the participants primarily because they prioritized teaching over writing. One participant indicated that prior to this experience she viewed writing as “extra curricular.” They describe high teaching loads (4/4 for four participants and 3/3 for two) as part of the difficulty finding time to write and one had to negotiate the added pressures of teaching a course overload while also completing her tenure portfolio. In addition to these professional demands on their time, they described circumstances relevant to their

roles as women (divorce with custody of three children and an ailing parent, first pregnancy, a difficult home remodel). They described feeling overwhelmed by their primary responsibilities for managing their households, partnerships, and families with multiple dependents.¹¹

Another theme that emerged consistently in the interviews was the differences experienced in writing a SoTL article as compared to an article in their discipline. The most challenging aspect of writing the SoTL article was searching the literature for relevant research and feeling confident that their search was comprehensive and credible enough. One participant described the literature search as “humongously” different than the literature review in her discipline.

The good news was that participants reported that their experience in the Writer’s Collaborative influenced the conscious choices they began making about how to create time to write. Once they prioritized creating structured time to write, they found they could accomplish more. When asked about the impact, participants reported a better understanding and an increased confidence in writing a SoTL publication.

Manuscript Results

If we had granted our authors sabbaticals and taken them to a desert island, less than a 100% submission rate would be disappointing; however, these authors entered the program mid-year and maintained their full teaching loads, committee assignments, administrative roles, and personal lives as primary caretakers of their households and even multiple generations of family. Measuring the success of the program solely by publication, though clearly important, is problematic in that it obscures a constellation of identities and lived difficulties that make reaching that singular outcome so complex. The rate of publication is, however, an important part of the story. By the end of September (the deadline for our study), three of the participants had submitted their manuscripts for publication, while the other three were dealing with family situations that they described as preventing them from completing the final stages of writing. One subsequently explained that new family demands meant that all of her research efforts should be

disciplinary to guarantee promotion and tenure, and another was called upon to help roll out the new “common core standards” federal education initiative, which consumed most of her time and even dated her data, so she chose not to submit for publication. All three of the manuscripts submitted to journals were published in the journals of their first choice: *The International Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, *Advances in Physiological Education*, and *Academic Exchange Quarterly*.

Recommendations

As a result of our exploratory study, we offer several recommendations for faculty developers and institutions to build effective SoTL writing programs:

- Connect the newness of this work to the familiarity of writers’ disciplinary work, their existing expertise (constructivism), especially the literature review
- Offer support for the lit review (bring in a librarian—for assistance but also for confidence)
- Rekindle the writers’ recognition of the larger significance of their projects
- Establish a schedule with clear deadlines
- Facilitate safe, supportive, varied, and challenging group feedback in the spirit of formative assessment, not summative
- Advocate for institutional recognition of SoTL publication for promotion, renewal, and tenure

Writing programs for groups of faculty (women and men) “interrupt the dominant culture of writing in isolation,” part of “a deeply transgressive change” in university culture (p. 486, 494). And as with any change, some challenges are harder to address. It seems that, 85 years later, Virginia Woolf’s claim that “A woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction” extends well beyond fiction and is still painfully relevant (1929, p. 4). The difficulty of writing while teaching, for instance, would be alleviated with lower teaching loads, course-release grants, and even writing sabbaticals for SoTL writers after the data analysis phase. These solutions are not meant to mirror the priorities of research-intensive institutions but instead

to allow faculty who are devoted career teachers to participate in the sustained, in-depth reflection, analysis, and dissemination of that work. Our study also reminds us that there is much work to be done to make the profession more family friendly. Practices include changing the nature of the work week through flex time, telecommuting, and job sharing; expanding opportunities for paid leave; instituting more supportive policies on parental leave, tenure rollback, and modified duties; and offering accessible, affordable child- and elder-care (Leister & Sallee, 2009; Novotney, 2010). Distributing committee assignments more evenly across faculty members would also alleviate some of the gender-imbalanced workload on many campuses.¹²

Conclusion

As we wrote this essay, we noticed how our experiences as writers have in some ways mirrored those of the study's participants. Our progress from data analysis to publication was forestalled by life circumstances—most significantly, the death of our co-author, colleague, and friend, but also the closing of major university offices, job changes, divorce, caretaking of children and aging parents, deaths in the family, and breast cancer and other serious illnesses, to name a few. Scattered in different locations and missing Renee reminded us how difficult and solitary this process can be, making the writing of this article even more bittersweet—for our friend, colleague, and co-author, and also for ourselves and each other as we wrestled with the isolation of writing without the community we enjoyed.

Grant and Knowles (2000) look to faculty developers to take “a role in assisting women in negotiating those relationships [between individuals and their writing] so that they come to write more productively and with more pleasure” (p. 15). (While acknowledging that there are differences in the experiences, we would like to include men as well. The nuances of apples and oranges applies here as well.) This notion of “negotiating [internal] relationships” underscores our constructivist approach that affirms not a separateness but a similarity and a familiarity between our disciplinary selves, our writing selves, and our SoTL selves.

References

- Albers, C. (2008). Improving pedagogy through action learning and scholarship of teaching and learning. *Teaching Sociology, 36*(1). 79-86.
- Baldwin, C., & Chandler, G. E. (2002). Improving faculty publication output: The role of a writing coach. *Journal of Professional Nursing, 18*(1), 8-15.
- Barkley, Elizabeth F. (2009). *Student Engagement Techniques: A Handbook for College Faculty*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Barone, JE. (Dec, 2000). Comparing apples and oranges: a randomised prospective study. *British Medical Journal, 321*(7276). 1569-1570.
- Belcher, W.L. (2009a). Reflections on ten years of teaching writing for publication to graduate students and junior faculty. (2009). *Journal of Scholarly Publishing, 40*(2). 184-189.
- Belcher, W.L. (2009b). *Writing your journal article in twelve weeks: A guide to academic publishing success*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Berger, R.M. (1990). Getting published: A mentoring program for social work faculty. *Social Work, 35*(1), 69-71.
- Bernstein, J.L. (Jan. 2011). Identifying high quality SoTL research: a perspective from a reviewer. *International Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, 5*(1).
- Bishop-Clark, C., & Dietz-Uhler, B. (2012). *Engaging in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning: A Guide to the Process, and How to Develop a Project from Start to Finish*. Sterling, VA: Stylus.
- Boice, Robert. (2000). *Advice for New Faculty Members: Nihil Nimus*.
- Brown, A.B. (2006). Where manuscript development meets faculty development. *Journal of Scholarly Publishing, 37*(2). 131-135.
- Bruce, Christine Susan. (1994). Research students' early experiences of the dissertation literature review. *Studies in Higher Education, 19*(2). 217-229.
- Burke, Kenneth. (1941/1973). *The Philosophy of Literary Form: Studies in Symbolic Action*, Berkeley: University of California Press.

- Burns, B., & McCarthy, D.S. (2011). Working together to ease the pressure to publish in higher education. *Academic Leadership*, 8(4).
- Calder, Lendol. (2006). Template. *CASTL Institute*. Columbia College Chicago, Chicago, IL.
- Calder, Lendol, & Kelly, Mills. (June 10, 2006). "A Finished SoTL Project." *CASTL Institute*. Columbia College Chicago, Chicago, IL.
- Chick, Nancy. (2013). *Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Guide*. Vanderbilt University Center for Teaching. <http://my.vanderbilt.edu/sotl>
- Clance, P.R., & Imes, S. 1978 (1978). The impostor phenomenon in high achieving women: Dynamics and therapeutic intervention. *Psychotherapy: Theory, Research, and Practice*, 15(3). 241-247.
- Clark, Catherine, & Reid, Jacqueline. (2012). Foundational academic development: building collegiality across divides? *International Journal for Academic Development*, 18.4, 318-330.
- Clegg, Sue. (Oct 17, 2008). The struggle for connections: Keynote address at ISSOTL08. International Society for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning. Edmonton, Ontario.
- Cox, Milt. (2013). How do I prepare a SoTL article for publication? *20 Minute Mentor* [CD]. *Faculty Focus*. Madison, WI: Magna Publications.
- Cruz, L. (2010). How do YOU SoTL: The past, present, and future of writing about SoTL. *MountainRise*, 6(2).
- Dickson-Swift, V., James, E., Kippen, S. Talbot, L. Verrinder, G., & Ward, B. (2009). A non-residential alternative to off campus writers' retreats for academics. *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 33(3). 229-239.
- Felder, R.M. (2008). How to write anything. *Chemical Engineering Education*, 42(3). 139-140.
- Felten, Peter. (2013). Principles of good practice in SoTL. *Teaching & Learning Inquiry*, 1(1). 121-125.
- Flower, L. (Sept. 1979). Writer-based prose: A cognitive basis for problems in writing. *College English*. 41(1). 19-37.
- Friend, J. I., & Gonzalez, J.C. (Jan-Feb. 2009). Getting together

- to write. *Academe*, 95 (1).
- Gebhardt, R. C. (Oct. 1983). Writing processes, revision, and rhetorical problems: A note on three recent articles. *College Composition and Communication*, (34),3. 294-296.
- Graff, G., & Birkenstein, C. (2006). *They Say / I Say: The Moves that Matter in Academic Writing*. New York: Norton.
- Grant, B.M. (2006). Writing in the company of other women: exceeding the boundaries. *Studies in Higher Education*, 31(4). 483-495.
- Grant, B., & Knowles, S. (2000). Flights of imagination: Academic women be(com)ing writers. *The International Journal for Academic Development*, 5(1). 6-19.
- Grant, M.J., Munro, W., McIsaac, J., & Hill, S. (2010). Cross-disciplinary writers' group stimulates fresh approaches to scholarly communication: A reflective case study within a higher education institution in the North West of England. *New Review of Academic Librarianship*, 16. 44-64.
- Grauerholz, L., & Zipp, J.F. (2008). How to do the scholarship of teaching and learning. *Teaching Sociology*, 36(1). 87-94.
- Gurung, Regan, & Schwartz, Beth. (2008). *Optimizing Teaching and Learning: Practicing Pedagogical Research*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Hall, J. Mueller, I., & Stahl, B. (2003). How does a writing circle help faculty members? *MountainRise*, 1(1).
- Hutchings, Pat, & Huber, Mary Taylor. (2008). Placing theory in the scholarship of teaching and learning. *Arts & Humanities in Higher Education*. 7.3. 229-244.
- Hutchings, Pat, & Shulman, Lee. (Sept/Oct. 1999). The Scholarship of teaching: new elaborations, new developments. *Change*, 31(5). 10-15
- Konchar Farr, C., Cavallaro, J., Civil, G., & Cochrane, S. (May-June 2009). Taming the publishing beast: The College of St. Catherine scholars' retreat. *Change*.
- Leister, Jaime, & Sallee, Margaret. (2009). *Establishing the Family-Friendly Campus: Models for Effective Practice*. Sterling, VA: Stylues.
- London, Jack. (1905). Getting into print. *Practical Authorship*, Knapp Reeve, James, Ed. New York: The Editor Publishing Company. 140-143.

- Martin, E., Benjamin, J., Prosser, M., and Trigwell, K. (1999). Scholarship of Teaching: A Study of the Approaches of Academic Staff. In *Improving Student Learning: Improving Student Learning Outcomes*. C. Rust, Ed. Oxford: Oxford Brookes University. 326-331.
- Maurer, T.W. (Jan. 2011). On publishing SoTL articles. *International Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, 5(1).
- McGrail, M.R., Rickard, C.M., & Jones, R. (2006). Publish or perish: a systematic review of interventions to increase academic publication rates. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 25(1). 19-35.
- McKinney, Kathleen. (2008). Getting SoTL articles published—a few tips. <http://sotl.illinoisstate.edu/resources/materials/publishing-tips.shtml>
- McKinney, Kathleen. (2007). *Enhancing Learning through Scholarship of Teaching and Learning: The Challenges and Joys of Juggling*. Boston: Anker.
- McKinney, Kathleen & Chick, Nancy L. (2010) SoTL as women's work: What do existing data tell us? *International Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, 4(2). 1-14.
- Meadows, Ken N. (Oct 2009). Writing for a scholarship of teaching and learning journal. *University of Western Ontario Teaching Support Centre*.
- Misra, Joya, Hickes Lundquist, Jennifer, Holmes, Elissa, & Agiomavritis, Stephanie. (2011). The Ivory ceiling of service work: service work continues to pull women associate professors away from research. What can be done? *Academe*. 97(1).
- Murray, Rowena. (Sept. 6, 2013). Writing for an academic journal: 10 tips. *The Guardian*.
- Murray, R. & Newton, M. (2008). Facilitating writing for publication. *Physiotherapy*, 94. 29-34.
- Murray, R. & Newton, M. (2009). Writing retreat as structured intervention: Margin or mainstream? *Higher Education Research & Development*, 28(5). 541-553.
- Novotney, Amy. (2010). A more family-friendly ivory tower? *Monitor on Psychology*. 41(1). 54.

- Pace, David. (Oct 2004). The amateur in the operating room: History and the scholarship of teaching and learning. *American Historical Review*. 109(4). 1171-1192.
- Peseta, Tai L. (Oct 25, 2009). For whom do we write? The place and practices of writing in developing the scholarship of teaching and learning. Keynote address at ISSOTL09. International Society for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning. Bloomington, Indiana.
- Rogers, P. (Jan 2011). What makes a great article for *IJ-SoTL*. *International Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, 5(1).
- Sandford, Scott A. (1995). "Apples and Oranges: A Comparison." *Annals of Improbable Research*, 1.3.
- Shulman, Lee S. (July/August 1999). Taking learning seriously. *Change*, 31(4). 10-17.
- Shulman, Lee S. (2004). Lamarck's revenge: teaching among the scholarships. *Teaching as Community Property: Essays on Higher Education*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. 164-172.
- Simmons, N. (Jan 2011). Exemplary dissemination: Sowing seeds in *IJ-SoTL*. *International Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, 5(1).
- Simmons, Nicola, Abrahamson, Earle, Deshler, Jessica M., Kensington-Miller, Barbara, Manarin, Karen, Moron-Garcia, Sue, Oliver, Carolyn, & Renc-Roe, Joanna. (2013). Conflicts and configurations in a liminal space: SoTL scholars' identity development. *Teaching & Learning Inquiry*, 1.2, 9-21.
- Stefani, L. (Jan. 2011). What makes for a high quality *IJ-SoTL* research article? *International Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, 5(1).
- Tagg, J. (Jan. 2011). What makes for a high quality SoTL research article? *International Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, 5(1).
- Voelker, David; Martin, Ryan (2013). University of Wisconsin System Teaching Fellows and Scholars Assessment Project Final Report. Unpublished document; University of Wisconsin System, Madison, WI.
- Weaver, Debbi., Robbie, Diane, & Radloff, Alex. (2013).

Demystifying the publication process—a structured writing program to facilitate dissemination of teaching and learning scholarship. *International Journal for Academic Development*. 1-14.

Woolf, Virginia. (1929). *A Room of One's Own*. NY: Harcourt, Brace, & World.

Appendix 1: Purpose and Audience Prompts

To help participants to think about their goals, we provided them with the following prompts:

- To enter the wider conversations about ____.
- To affect others' teaching and their students' learning about ____.
- To elucidate what is, argue for what works, posit what's possible, or offer a theory about ____.
- To _____ (challenge common knowledge about ___? make visible/explicit what had been invisible/implicit [scholars' assumptions about __, students' thinking about __, something that happens in the classroom]? demonstrate the effectiveness of ____? other?).

Our audience prompts were as follows:

- Who are the audiences for SoTL publications (disciplinary venues for pedagogical articles; cross-disciplinary SoTL venues)?
- What is their goal for reading SoTL publications (expectations, needs, hopes)?
- How can you meet some of these readers' goals?

Appendix 2: Guiding Questions Guide for SoTL Article Analysis

1. If the article is divided into sections with subheadings, what warrants a new section?
2. Identify the author's research question(s). (Be aware that it's not always written as question.)
3. Identify some instances of the "They Say" move in the article, particularly its lit review of prior researchers, big thinkers in the field, conventional wisdom, and others. What does this move look like? Where does the author place this information in the article?
4. Identify some instances of the "I Say" move in the article, or the thesis/hypothesis/main assertion/argument. Where and how does it appear? Is there a clear, explicit thesis early on? Is it just implied? Is it delayed until later with findings? What does it look like?

5. What is the theory/conceptual framework(s) leading to the hypothesis or guiding the analysis?
6. Situate the study within the scholarship of teaching and learning. Specifically, how can you tell it's SoTL? Does it refer explicitly to SoTL? Using Hutchings's taxonomy, what kind of SoTL inquiry is it ("what is?" "what works?" "visions of possible"? "Theory-building"?)?
7. How frequently does the article include directly quoted material—from other studies or theorists? From students?
8. How does it present a model for defining terms central to the study, if at all?
9. What does the explanation of its methodology look like (how the author gathered evidence of student learning, and how the author analyzed this evidence)?
10. How does the article present its evidence of student thinking and learning (excerpted passages, charts, graphs, etc)?
11. Where in the article does the author analyze, interpret, or explain the meaning of this evidence of student learning? What does this explanation look like?
12. What does it look like when the author articulates the ultimate findings or conclusions of the study?
13. How does this article offer some kind of product that readers may apply to their own classrooms: a taxonomy, a description, or new way of understanding a phenomenon, a set of recommendations or advice, etc.?
14. Describe the syntax and style used in the article (e.g., presence of active vs. passive voice; 3rd-person "the authors"/"researchers" or 1st-person "I"/"we"; shorter, simpler sentences or longer, complex sentences; etc).

Appendix 3: Prompts for Author's Note for Peer Review

The cover letter for drafts given to a peer reviewer responds to the following questions:

- Who is your target audience, and what is your purpose or goal—of the article, not just the project?
- What are the strengths of your draft?
- What are its weaknesses? Where do you most need help?

- What questions do you have to guide your reviewers?

Appendix 4: Reflective Writing Prompts

The following helped us gather participants' written reflections at six intervals throughout the project as we asked them to describe

- an obstacle in recent attempts to work on your article.
- a moment of success in working on your article.
- an epiphany or breakthrough realization in working on your article.
- something helpful in your recent attempts to work on your article.
- something new or meaningful that you're learning about a) SoTL, b) scholarly writing, or c) the writing process in general through this writing workshop and/or the process of working on your article.
- your experience of being in a group context as you work on your article.

Appendix 5: Interview Questions

Our interview questions included the following:

- Describe how the Writer's Collaborative experience impacted your writing.
- Describe how the Writer's Collaborative impacted your experience writing your SoTL article. How did that experience compare to other professional writing you have engaged in?
- Describe any differences about your approach to writing as the result of the Writer's Collaborative experience. Please compare the differences to where you are now.
- What will you carry over from this experience into your writing in the future?
- One of the responses to both surveys that emerged frequently was the concern over having enough time to write. Why do you think you don't have enough time to write? What other demands on your time come before writing?

Endnotes

¹ To some, this approach may sound like having one's cake and eating it, too; however, we embrace such "both-and" thinking as a characteristic of the complexities of reality.

² See "What Are Posters?" on the Vanderbilt University Center for Teaching *SoTL Guide* for more information about SoTL posters (Chick, 2013).

³ There isn't (yet) any data on the number of SoTL projects that make it to publication, but we echo Weaver, Robbie, and Radloff (2013) in asserting that the drop-off rates from project to publication are very high, citing "personal experience of authors and colleagues" (p. 2). We four authors have long been involved in SoTL, SoTL programs, and SoTL publishing—as practitioners and as faculty developers supporting many, many SoTL projects. Bishop-Clark and Dietz-Uhler (2012) note that only one-third of participants in their programs moved from data analysis to writing. Additionally, Belcher (2009) looks to UCLA's Higher Education Research Institute's survey of 40,000 US faculty to point out notes that "only a quarter of faculty are doing what everyone imagines professors do easily—write regularly," and this is any professional writing, so SoTL writing is presumably even less (p. 185).

⁴ In the interest of full disclosure, the first author of this article is co-editor of a major SoTL journal as well.

⁵ Unfortunately, the SoTL Site was closed due to budget cuts in the UW System, and Renee Meyers passed away in March 2012. We were all very close, so we needed time to grieve before writing this article.

⁶ In "SoTL as Women's Work: What Do the Existing Data Tell Us?" (2010), McKinney and Chick found that "women are disproportionately represented in SoTL activities that are self-selected or primarily self-selected.... In opportunities that are primarily awarded, invited, or selected by others, participation is closer to equal and closer to the comparison data for men and women in faculty/academic staff in higher education" (p. 5-6). It's worth noting here that the SoTL Writer's Collaborative is this second, more equal category of SoTL activities, and only women

responded to our invitations. The implications of this research on the gendered nature of SoTL were increasingly on our minds as the program progressed and participants' life circumstances became increasingly relevant.

⁷ Participants skim the preface and introduction, as well as chapters 1 ("They Say: Starting with What Others are Saying"), 4 ("Yes / No / Okay, But: Three Ways to Respond"), and 7 ("So What? Who Cares? Saying Why It Matters") as the most relevant across disciplinary writing styles.

⁸ Calder's precise 2006 template was as follows—taken from Chick's notes from the event and also published in Barkley (2009, p. 194):

In recent discussions of _____, a controversy has been whether _____. On the one hand, some argue that _____. On the other hand, some argue _____. In sum, then, the issue is whether _____ or _____.

My own thought is that perhaps _____. To find out, I designed a project to _____. In terms of other SoTL inquiries, my project was a _____ type of project. My central question was _____.

To help me draw conclusions, I relied on the following kinds of data: _____. My key methods for generating this data were _____. Some of the problems I ran into were _____. But it was also quite exciting when _____ happened.

My findings are important because _____.

It has been the most useful tool in Chick's support of others' SoTL work. She simply added a few components to respond to some common misconceptions and questions she encountered over the years. For instance, a third "they say" with "Even others say____" in the first paragraph reflects the frequent presence of more than two sides to any issue. In the second paragraph, the clarifying choices of "*what is / what works (circle one)*" maintains the SoTL scholar's focus on earlier design choices, as does the note that the goal should be "tied to project type." Finally, the last paragraph now includes prompts to explain how the evidence of student learning was analyzed and clearly state the

ultimate findings. “Why colleagues near and far” may use the work ensures a connection between the specific project to the larger context and conversation of SoTL.

⁹ Vanderbilt University Center for Teaching’s *SoTL Guide* (Chick, 2013; <https://my.vanderbilt.edu/sotl/>) includes a robust research guide. The specific databases available will vary by institution, so consult with your librarians.

¹⁰ See collection of SoTL journal rubrics in “Considering Quality: Assessing Your Manuscript” on Vanderbilt University Center for Teaching’s *SoTL Guide* (Chick, 2013).

¹¹ Clearly, men also struggle with work-life balance and family relationships. Grant and Knowles (2000), though, note another layer of struggle for women in the academy, namely that they don’t fit the “culturally enduring yet romantic idea of what it means to be writer”: “a deeply gendered image—the individual outside of relationships and carefree of physical needs, the implication being that someone else will provide for them” (p. 9). Thus, the goal isn’t just the “access to power and prestige that published academic writing brings, but also the sense of a self who has something to say, who takes up the mantle of writer to actively contribute as an intellectual” (p. 7).

¹² In “The Ivory Ceiling of Service Work,” Misra, Hickey, Lundquist, Holmes, and Agiomavritis (2011) found the imbalance is most distinct among associate professors: “women associate professors taught an hour more each week than men, mentored an additional two hours a week, and spent nearly five hours more a week on service.”

Copyright of International Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching & Learning is the property of Georgia Southern University and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.