



# Scholarly Publication During Doctoral Candidature: Obstacles, Benefits, and Strategies for Success

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## Abstract

There is little question that writing manuscripts and contributing to the scholarly literature in peer-reviewed outlets is a valued activity for college and university professors. Expectations have risen to the point that, in growing numbers of doctoral programs throughout the world, publication has become a formal part of the curriculum, an alternative to the traditional dissertation, or even a condition that must be met prior to graduation. The premise of this conceptual and practical article is that engagement with varied publication projects early, during doctoral candidature, provides an important opportunity to learn the practices, policies, and processes of scientific communication. The argument presented here in favor of publication during doctoral study is grounded in a review of the relevant research literature. Key points are illustrated through vignettes based on 25 years of experience teaching a writing for publication course to doctoral students and co-authoring/publishing a wide array of manuscripts with them. The article begins by describing the growing diversity amongst doctoral students and numerous obstacles confronted by novices seeking to publish their work in scholarly outlets. Next, it describes the importance of being socialized into the academic writing community and building the requisite skill set of academic authors. It then offers recommendations based on a review of the research as well as 25 years of experience as the editor-in-chief of *Early Childhood Education Journal*. The conclusion asserts that, when doctoral candidates participate in varied writing projects, acquire the writing habit, and collaborate with faculty members and peers, they become socialized into the norms of academic publication and are better prepared to launch careers as productive scholars.

**Keywords** Scholarly Writing · Writing for Publication · Novice Academic Authors · Doctoral Students · Doctoral Candidates · Early Career Researchers · Doctoral Programs

During the final session of a swimming class for children, their coach asked the students to respond to the statement, “The most important thing I learned in swim class this summer was ...” One six-year-old girl wrote “not to drown.” For doctoral students, a similar perspective may apply because they view successful program completion as a form of survival (Spronken-Smith et al., 2018). Doctoral students often grapple with numerous stressors such as work/life balance, long commutes, financial constraints, health problems, forming an identity as a scholar, issues with supervisors/committee members, and worries about securing

employment in Academia (Barry et al., 2018; Cornwall et al., 2019; Jackman et al., 2021). Indeed, life as a doctoral student can be stressful due to feelings of isolation, role conflicts, job insecurity, low pay, uncertainty about future employment, poor advisor relationships, pressure to publish, lack of support systems, and challenges in achieving work–life balance (Pretorius et al., 2020).

There is little question that many doctoral students fail to successfully complete their programs. Based on national survey data gathered by the Council of Graduate Schools, ten years after initial enrollment, slightly more than half of Ph.D. students in the United States had graduated from their programs (Okahana & Zhou, 2018). Attrition in doctoral study is particularly high for part-time students who retain employment (Devos et al., 2017; Rooij et al., 2019), and noncompletion of online doctoral programs tends to be 10–20% higher than face-to-face programs (Graham &

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Massyn, 2019). In recent years, doctoral program completion was adversely affected by the global health pandemic COVID (Levine et al., 2021), and Ph.D.'s awarded declined by 5.6% (Flaherty, 2022; Wang & DeLaquil, 2020). Furthermore, successful completion of a reputable doctoral program is a relative rarity among the general population. Census Bureau (2020) statistics indicate that, even though the percentage of people with doctorates more than doubled over the past 20 years, only 4.5% of the population has earned a doctoral degree. Findings such as these suggest that students who earn the doctorate are indeed survivors, yet expectations—including success with publication prior to securing initial employment as higher education faculty—continue to rise (Jones, 2013).

This is a conceptual article, defined as well-reasoned reactions or responses to previously published articles (Watts, 2011, p. 308). It is organized around three main points related to publication during doctoral candidature. First, it describes the growing diversity in the doctoral student population and identifies common obstacles—both from the students' and the faculty members' perspectives—to writing for publication. Next, it draws upon the relevant theory/research to build a rationale for equipping doctoral students with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that support their success in writing for and publishing in scholarly outlets. It is also a practical article because the third section consists of recommendations, based on a review of research, that are associated with more successful publication outcomes early in the career trajectories of university faculty members. The vignettes that introduce the main sections of the article are accounts of my experiences while teaching a course in writing for professional publication to doctoral students and mentoring doctoral candidates for 25 years.

## Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Doctoral Students

In their recently published book, Clegg et al. (2024) call for a “cultural revolution” that invites everyone with a vested interest in doctoral education to enhance supervision practice and ensure the production of original research conducted by a diverse demographic. Arday (2020) reports that just 3% of full-time doctoral students residing on campus in the United Kingdom are Black; thus, addressing the needs of an increasingly diverse student population calls for “a tectonic shift to counteract the discriminatory and exclusionary topography” that has dominated doctoral education (p. 979). In the United States, the most current national survey of doctoral students for which data are available found that 53.5% of students enrolled in doctoral degrees were

female, 23.9% of graduate students were underrepresented minorities, 20.9% were international students, and 57.7% were enrolled part-time (Okahana & Zhou, 2018). Furthermore, many contemporary doctoral students are the first in their family to pursue graduate education and may need additional support during orientation and induction activities (Bastalich & McCulloch, 2024a; McCulloch & Bastalich, 2023). A commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion needs to be reflected in recruitment, curriculum, policies, and practices so that future doctoral program graduates—who are the main source for future higher education faculty—are socialized into these values and norms (Perez et al., 2020).

As Hill and Conceição (2019) point out, growing numbers of doctoral students are pursuing degrees part-time (or online), retaining full-time employment, and/or have responsibility for their families. As a result, accommodations are necessary to provide them with acculturation to academic life, frequent interactions with faculty members, and supportive relationships with peers. Taking the mental health of doctoral students into consideration and making deliberate efforts to rectify situations that could lead to feelings of isolation can aid retention efforts (Pretorius et al., 2020). When faculty members responsible for doctoral education are considering what course of action to take in supporting doctoral students, an emphasis on fulfilling novice scholar's basic psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness can serve as a guidepost (Janssen et al., 2020).

The circumstances for doctoral students in education and those specializing in early childhood education can be especially challenging. Many of these doctoral students may be nontraditional in multiple ways—first, because the field is predominantly female and higher education tends to be gender biased (Minello, Martucci & Manzo, 2020); second, because they sometimes study part-time or pause their programs and later reenroll; third, because they may have primary responsibility for the care of young children (Bender et al., 2021), and fourth, because they might also be minorities and international students (Hu & Hancock, 2024). Within Academia, there is a persistent tendency for content in the “hard” sciences to be afforded higher status because the subject matter is intellectually challenging, and research conducted in those fields tends to rely on experimental methods. Even within the field of education, hierarchical perspectives can result in “looking down on” the early childhood field because it focuses on the care and education of the very young with which many people have some level of familiarity. Collectively, these influences can compound the difficulties encountered by doctoral candidates in education.

## Obstacles to Successful Early Publication

*One required course in a doctoral program in curriculum and instruction focuses on writing for professional publication. The students have had the opportunity to go over the syllabus and discuss the two major assignments—writing a conference proposal and producing a good, working draft of a journal article. While some are eager to learn the “secrets of getting published,” others candidly voice their concerns to the professor responsible for teaching the course. One student remarks, “Isn’t it enough to just complete our program and graduate? This sounds like asking us to walk before we have learned how to crawl.” Another student says “No wonder they call it the terminal degree! We are already stretched to the breaking point.”*

The suggestion that scholarly publication commence early, during doctoral candidature, may be met with trepidation, reluctance, or protestations from graduate students. They are engaged in an extended period of intense, in-depth study and that, in itself, can be daunting. When graduate students initiate doctoral-level study, that decision exerts an impact on:

- the individual (knowledge, skills, literacy, self-efficacy beliefs, prior experiences).
- interpersonal/interprofessional relationships (family, mentors, peers).
- the community (school/department/faculty influences, the larger social/ecological context) and.
- the organization (institutional support, policies, practices) (Merga & Mason, 2020; UNICEF, 2013).

The pressure to perform as an intellectual, scholar, researcher, and academic author may cause doctoral students to feel as though they have “gone out on a limb” -- one that could give way at any moment -- with humiliating results. Such insecurity is so commonplace among graduate students and other professionals that it has a name: the imposter phenomenon (Clance & Imes, 1978). It refers to the fear of being exposed as incompetent and a pretender. The imposter phenomenon has been documented in men, women, and various ethnic or racial groups across the professions; it also affects higher education faculty (Hutchins, 2015) and is prevalent in graduate students (Cohen & McConnell, 2019)—particularly those who are first generation doctoral students (Holden et al., 2024). For example, in a study of 631 Austrian doctoral students, about one-third of them doubted their intellectual and academic writing abilities. They reported worrying that they would be “unmasked” as a fraud and perhaps shunned by their peers (Jostl et al., 2012).

Research in psychology has concluded that attempting to accomplish a difficult task for the first time tends to raise

self-doubt and can generate negative emotions. Three features of tasks that make them unappealing include.

- (1) risk—future outcomes that seem random or indeterminate,
- (2) ambiguity—inadequate, unreliable, conflicting/confusing information about task completion), and.
- (3) complexity—multiple causes/outcomes for the task that make it difficult to comprehend (Han et al., 2011).

Given that writing for publication includes all three of these aspects, it can become an aversive experience.

Such difficulties can be compounded by doctoral faculty members who are resistant to providing systematic, universal instruction to candidates in writing for publication. They argue in favor of a “natural selection” approach in which the most capable students rise to the top and figure it out for themselves. The problem here is that publication by students becomes the exception, rather than the norm (Bartkowski et al., 2015). If successful academic writing is the survival skill it is purported to be in doctoral education, then democratizing the process and making it part of *all* students’ learning experiences is a more defensible approach (Carter et al., 2020). Doctoral candidates, both those in more traditional and those in online programs, need explicit guidance, instruction in classes, participation in less competitive outlets (e.g., newsletters, blogs), writing groups and retreats (Kim & Wolke, 2020; Tremblay-Wragg et al., 2020; Vincent, Tremblay-Wragg, Déri, Plante & Mathieu Chartier, 2021), and opportunities to co-author with more experienced academic authors in order to hone their writing skills (Kirkpatrick, 2019).

When direct instruction in academic writing is proposed as part of the curriculum, some doctoral faculty will protest that they had no such training in their own doctoral programs, question who is qualified to teach such a course, and insist that students do not need it. Yet when doctoral students themselves are asked if they want to learn about writing for publication, they are decidedly in favor of gaining experience throughout their graduate programs (Cisco, 2020; Jalongo et al., 2014). A recent study in clinical psychology, for example, found that publication in a peer-reviewed journal based on a dissertation seldom occurred and, if it did, one of the strongest predictors of success was working with a “research-productive supervisor” (Herbert et al., 2022)—a finding corroborated by Zhuchkova and Bekova (2023). As Kamler (2008), a long-time advocate of more enlightened practices in doctoral education contends, “Emerging scholars need to be supported in more explicit, strategic, and generous ways than currently happens, so that we produce more confident graduates who know how to publish in a variety of contexts, including international refereed journals” (p. 292).

When deciding whether to make instruction in academic writing and publishing a part of the curriculum, it is helpful to reflect on the purposes for doctoral study. One valued outcome would be to produce program graduates who demonstrate in-depth knowledge of the current research literature in an area and pursue a research agenda that makes a significant, original, and independent contribution to the scientific literature (Wilson, 2002). Nevertheless, most traditional dissertations are not published as articles or books (Aitchison et al., 2010; Francis & Mills, 2009). For example, in a study of 910 psychology Ph.D. dissertations, only about one-quarter had been converted into a professional journal article and published seven years after graduation (Evans et al., 2018). This study also concluded that approximately 10% of dissertations in applied fields of psychology yielded journal articles, while those in experimental research resulted in publication almost 60% of the time, usually through co-authored work with a dissertation advisor or research team. It is important to note that publication from dissertations typically occurred within three years of graduation. Given the time lag between manuscript acceptance and publication, what this really means is that successfully published manuscripts were most likely submitted shortly after graduation, at the latest. One further argument in favor of teaching doctoral students the skills of scholarly publication is that these programs are more likely to have better reputations in Academia and alumni who are better satisfied with their experiences as students.

While there are obstacles to publication by students during their doctoral studies, it is important to consider that immersion in the culture of graduate study offers many opportunities and possible sources of support for engaging in academic writing tasks. Although it is a valid concern that publication can be premature (Pare', 2010), one way to counteract this is through an apprenticeship model (Tribble, 2019) that aligns doctoral candidates' interests and strengths to various facets of writing for publication tasks (Badenhorst et al., 2014; Kamler & Thomson, 2014). It is helpful to conceptualize doctoral studies as "formative years" (Kamler, 2008, p. 292) because, as is the case with young children, early experience exerts a powerful influence on later experience. A strong predictor of who will become a productive mid or late career scholar is early success with publication, while still a doctoral student (Horta & Santos, 2016; Laurance et al., 2013; Williamson & Cable, 2003). Postponing involvement in scholarly publication until after graduation is not only inadequate and inefficient but also results in frustration for early career professionals.

## A Rationale for Publication during Doctoral Candidature

*After successfully defending her dissertation in the spring semester, an international doctoral student co-authored a research article with her dissertation chairperson serving as the second author. They newly graduated doctoral student was the corresponding author—the one the journal editor would communicate with about the status of the manuscript. When the reviewers' comments came in, she was stunned. Her advisor was widely published, and she expected prompt and uncritical acceptance. Instead, the reviewers raised numerous questions and the editor's decision was "revise and resubmit." When the student met with her mentor to discuss the project, she was surprised by his response. Instead of being offended, angry, or defensive, the senior professor immediately got to work categorizing the comments and noting ways to address each one. They revised the manuscript accordingly, agreed that the modifications had improved the work, resubmitted their paper, and it was accepted for publication in a prestigious journal.*

As this experience illustrates, maturing as a scholar entails much more than content area mastery, as important as that is. If the professor had erred at either extreme—sending an indignant email to protest the editorial decision or, conversely, feeling wounded by the criticism and quietly withdrawing the manuscript—then the research might never have been disseminated. Responding diplomatically, thoroughly, and thoughtfully to recommendations for revision is a survival skill in academic publishing. In the field of Teaching of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL), Paltridge and Starfield (2016) reported that 64% of the manuscripts submitted to *TESOL Quarterly* yielded a "revise and resubmit" decision and 75% of authors who revised ultimately succeeded in publishing their articles. Over the years, Henson (2006) arrived at similar conclusions for academic authors in education: when authors reflect on the feedback, do the extra work, and try again, their chances of acceptance increase dramatically. Authors who lack experience with scholarly publication often misinterpret recommendations for improvement as an outright rejection and abandon the project entirely rather than responding appropriately to peer and editorial critique. Another common mistake is to assume that persistence alone will yield success. When authors decide to ignore recommendations for revision and just keep sending out the same manuscript to various outlets, they are likely to encounter frustration, repeated failures, and may ultimately decide to give up on attempts to get published.

It is important to consider that "Motivation to perform research and publish results is a complex phenomenon, influenced by factors such as peer networks, institutional

support, intrinsic and economic motivations” (Savage & Olejniczak, 2021, p. 4686). In their inquiry into faculty members’ scholarly productivity across the career trajectory, Hardré, Beesley, Miller and Pace (2011) identified three categories of influences.

1. Personal. Self-efficacy, defined as individuals’ perceptions of their ability to accomplish goals despite challenges, was predictive of the effort invested in research. This effort, in turn, predicted who would generate publications and presentations.
2. Motivational. Intrinsic motivation, defined as pursuing research publication based on interest and enjoyment rather than based on external pressures or incentives, predicted who would write for publication. Intrinsic motivation also was associated with greater willingness to generate innovative ideas.

**Table 1** Doctoral students’ motivation to write for publication

Intrinsic Motivation	Extrinsic Motivation
Extending the professional sphere of influence beyond the local context	Gaining acceptance from respected peers
Enhancing oral and written communication skills	Joining and belonging to a community of teacher/scholar/researchers
Learning to construct a logical argument and arrive at keener insights	Building a reputation for doing good, honest work and meeting deadlines
Having the freedom to select projects and pursue interests	Developing a more impressive curriculum vitae
Establishing a foundation for productive scholarship across a career	Securing employment commensurate with the doctoral degree
Networking and building interprofessional relationships	Earning recognition from others with no vested interest in professional success (e.g., awards, grants)
Using writing to support more effective college-level teaching	Being invited to participate in intellectually stimulating writing projects
Mastering essential academic writing tasks	Gathering evidence of success as a scholar (e.g., citation counts, acceptance in high impact journals)
Becoming oriented to the entire process of writing for publication, from identifying a focus to the final, typeset manuscript	Noticing that published work is respectfully cited by other scholars
Realizing how the time devoted to painstaking revision of writing has led to continuous improvement as a researcher	Moving through the review/tenure/promotion process successfully
Gaining satisfaction from the successfully completed and published product	Acquiring a reputation for producing high-quality manuscripts amongst fellow scholars

Sources: Aprile et al., 2020; Choi et al., 2021; Lei & Hu, 2019; Mizzi, 2014; Wellington, 2010

3. Contextual. The determination to write and publish was affected by such influences as the values communicated by leadership, explicit/implicit social norms of the group, and the support provided by supervisors and others.

More specifically, Table 1 examines reasons for doctoral candidates to engage in writing for publication as well as the implications of those decisions across the career trajectory of professors. It is categorized into intrinsic and extrinsic sources of motivation to write. Increasingly, researchers are advocating emphasizing the satisfactions associated with scholarly writing (Zahrin et al., 2022)—a “publish and flourish” approach (Yeo et al., 2022) rather than the angst-ridden, outdated “publish or perish” mantra.

A major influence on doctoral candidates’ knowledge, skills, and dispositions to write for publication is the graduate program in which they are enrolled. There is a growing, international trend encouraging publication during doctoral studies or even making it a requirement for graduation (Lei & Hu, 2019; Powell, 2004; Ruano-Borbalan, 2022). Sometimes, as is the case in Australia, research and publication replace traditional coursework. In other instances, doctoral candidates are given the option of writing for publication rather than completing the traditional, five-chapter dissertation (Mason et al., 2020). Usually three to four articles—at least some of them accepted for publication—are used to meet the purpose of a dissertation; namely, demonstrating the ability to conduct independent research. Conferral of the degree is based on a series of peer-reviewed academic papers which have been published or accepted for publication and the document often includes an explanation of the student’s research agenda, an introduction and a conclusion.

Initially, requiring publication from doctoral candidates was associated primarily with the Ph.D. and seen more frequently in the sciences where research teams are commonplace; however, in recent years, it has extended to more practice-oriented doctorates and the social sciences, including education. Although doctoral candidates might presume that investing time in writing for publication will delay the completion of their programs, just the opposite outcome has been documented. Churchill and others (2021) found, for example, that doctoral students who elected to publish in peer-reviewed outlets rather than write a dissertation took less, not more time to complete their programs. Proponents of publication as a graduation requirement have identified other advantages of “graduation by publication” for doctoral candidates that include: (1) gaining insight into all phases of the publication process (Jackson, 2013), (2) allowing for collaborative writing projects (unlike the traditional dissertation), and (3) enhancing the success of early career faculty (Lei, 2023). The next section describes the conditions that

are associated with more successful publication outcomes for doctoral students.

#### Evidence-Based Strategies for Success with Publication.

Making the transition from student to published scholar is a complex and challenging task. Such efforts need to address at least three key dimensions: (1) changing counterproductive mindsets, (2) acknowledging the importance of identity work, and (3) understanding academic writing.

#### Modify Counterproductive Mindsets.

*A professor has read and responded to doctoral students' written assignments and begins handing them back. One student glances down at his paper and quickly stuffs it into his notebook. In a later conversation, he says, "When I saw all that writing on my paper, I just panicked. I assumed it was going to point out my mistakes and deficiencies as a writer. But, after I got home, I sat down and read the comments and saw that they were showing me how to improve the paper, not just passing judgment on it. It would be more work, but I felt I could do it."*

Successful graduate students often are accustomed to getting positive feedback on their papers. Yet many assignments are a way of demonstrating knowledge within a discipline rather than advancing thinking, and the latter is what is expected in publishable work. Thus, class papers and even successfully defended dissertations fall into the category of "It's good enough for now, but it would need more work to get it published" (Ferris, 2019, p. 229). While doctoral faculty members might view the time and effort invested in responding to students' writing as a form of support, students who are uninitiated into scholarly writing might think it forebodes failure. A qualitative study of 16 doctoral students' responses to feedback on their writing, for example, reported that negative reactions (e.g., anxiety, confusion, and frustration) predominated (Geng & Yu, 2022). In a systematic review of 40 peer-reviewed articles published between 1997 and 2017, Inouye and McAlpine (2019) concluded that there were complex relationships among feedback, critical thinking, writing, and identity of graduate students. Therefore, doctoral candidates can benefit from learning to accept constructive criticism, developing better emotion regulation strategies, and amassing practice with giving and processing feedback (Bao & Feng, 2023).

If master's degree students are completely candid, chances are that they did not undertake multiple, major revisions of their class papers prior to turning them in. This "one and done" mindset about writing is at odds with expectations for academic writing. Scientific communication is routinely subjected to multiple levels of critique, raises many questions, and requires multiple revisions. In Boice's (1990) research with faculty members, he described the unsuccessful author's motto as "I want my writing to be fast, easy, and brilliant." Successful academic authors have

acquired a different mindset. They often describe making *major* revisions to their papers ten times or more, a situation that led Germano (2021) to assert that, in scholarly writing, *rewriting* is what really counts. Doctoral students need to be socialized into these norms of peer-reviewed publication before they become faculty members who are assembling their credentials for submission to review, tenure, and promotion committees.

Evidently, one of the most common difficulties among novices is responding appropriately to peer critique (Shvidko & Atkinson, 2019). This makes it particularly important to experience both sides of the review process from start to finish of a published manuscript (Watts, 2013). Close examination of someone else's work affords more distance between manuscript and author than early attempts at self-editing (Caffarella & Barnett, 2000). In the absence of such experiences, much of what needs to occur when preparing a manuscript, submitting it, responding to reviews, and getting it published is not part of doctoral students' preparation. When future members of the professoriate gain confidence and skill in editing, they are better prepared to bounce back from criticism of their manuscripts. Obtaining feedback from a small, known group of peers and mentors prior to subjecting manuscripts to anonymous peer review is a valuable activity (Aitchison et al., 2010) because the amount and kind of feedback supplied to doctoral students can be pivotal in getting a manuscript published (Can & Walker, 2011). Senior faculty responsible for doctoral program curriculum need to ensure that all students are getting helpful comments on their work, not only at semester's end when the final paper is submitted but also while it is in progress. Teaching the skills of peer review is especially important (Jalongo, 2023b). In the absence of careful coaching on how to review others' manuscripts, mistakes are common. Some students will decide to be "nice" and merely give compliments; some will function like a copy editor and correct mistakes only; and, worst of all, some may decide, out of a sense of competition, to be harshly critical. Providing students with scoring rubrics for various types of manuscripts is a start (Jalongo & Saracho, 2016). Sharing examples of particularly well written peer reviews and authors' responses to them is another valuable tool (Jalongo & Saracho, 2023).

#### Acknowledge the Importance of Identity Work.

*At the start of a writing for publication course for doctoral students, each class member is asked to write a (confidential) statement of concerns about writing, questions they might have, and goals they hope to accomplish. Some of their statements include: "I've never been a good writer and I'm concerned that this will be a big stumbling block for me." "I want to learn the secrets of getting published." "It takes me so long to write a paper. I'm hoping to learn how to make it more efficient." and "One of our other professors*

said that dissertations need to make an ‘original contribution’ and I wonder if I’m capable of doing that.”

Attempts to publish are deeply affected by professional identity issues because students may doubt that becoming a university professor and productive scholar is within their reach. At first, as Appiah (2018) notes, “Not all identities fit their bearers like a glove; sometimes we’re talking oven mitts” (unpagged). Identity work is the process of attempting to improve that fit.

Identity as a future professor/scholar/researcher is fragile, at best (Badenhorst & Guerin, 2016). That identity is forged only if doctoral students “fulfill the expectations of the role, coordinate with role partners, enact behavior consistent with the role, and see others responding appropriately to the behavioral enactment” (Stets & Burke, 2014, pp. 69–70). More specifically, in the education sciences, a systematic review of the empirical literature in the education sciences conducted by Choi et al. (2021) concluded that “identity as scholar emerged as recognition by self and others of possessing and exhibiting adequate levels of competence, confidence, autonomy, and agency with respect to scholarly activities” (p. 89).

Publishing in professional journals and books is undeniably challenging for novices (Bosanquet & Cahir, 2016). Self-doubt and strong emotions often surface when doctoral students are confronted with new academic writing challenges (Cameron et al., 2009). Some typical defense mechanisms are procrastination, avoidance, and excuses. It is common, for example, to search for reasons why other academic authors do not appear to be struggling as much. During a doctoral-level course on writing for publication, students made comments such as: “You wrote a thesis, so you have a lot more practice than those of us who took the nonthesis option,” and “Didn’t you say that you were an English major as an undergraduate? You must already like writing and be good at it.” Hyland (2019), who has studied academic discourse extensively, recommends resisting the “demoralizing discourse of disadvantage.” He challenges the assumption that native speakers with English as their first language are positioned to excel while nonnative speakers are excluded from Anglophone outlets. Why? Because discipline-specific terminology and academic discourse constitute, in effect, a second language for everyone. Novice academic authors need to learn to situate their writing in a body of literature, synthesize/comment knowledgeably in their discipline, and build a convincing and coherent argument (Casanave, 2019). Therefore, quality of thinking and fulfilling the role of an expert, scholar, researcher, and published author may be equally, if not more, important than writing skill alone (Darvin & Norton, 2019; Lei, 2023).

Watts (2013) asserts that doctoral students need guidance about selecting an outlet, rejection rates, the review

process, and typical timelines from review to publication. Furthermore, such things as assigning copyright, using the technology tools of the publisher (e.g., Editorial Manager), composing a cover letter, writing the abstract, selecting keywords for indexing purposes, responding to reviews, making decisions (e.g., whether to pay for full color figures or open access in a hybrid print/online publication), and correcting the proofs should be part of doctoral students’ preparation.

Approach writing as a sociocultural, interdisciplinary process.

*As a doctoral class convenes, their professor informs students about the state National Association for the Education of Young Children conference that will be hosted by their university. She encourages them to volunteer as reviewers of conference proposals and to submit proposals of their own; then she distributes the scoring rubric used and the guidelines for writing the evaluations. One student says, “What right do I have to critique someone else’s work? I am not an expert.” The professor responds with “As teachers, all of you have attended workshops, trainings, and various professional development activities. Think about the most and least successful characteristics of those experiences and look at conference proposals from an audience perspective. I have examples that will help. Several previous doctoral students graciously gave permission to share copies of their accepted proposals with you.”*

Doctoral students need to develop confidence and skill in analyzing others’ written work and use the insights acquired to improve their own writing. The stereotype of authors who work in self-imposed isolation, await inspiration, and suffer from writer’s block has more applicability to novelists writing works of fiction and less applicability to scientific communication. For most academic authors, publication is not purely a matter of individual striving. Instead, many of them build networks that include scholars at different levels of experience. Some important sources of support for novice academic authors include:

1. Model texts. The required and recommended readings that students encounter during their studies can serve as exemplars. Li and Hu’s (2018) review of the research reported that novice academic authors often turn to highly regarded, peer-reviewed, published journal articles as models to follow when constructing their own manuscripts. Even articles that are not necessarily about the same topic can be a breakthrough in organizing a manuscript effectively; for example, looking at multiple examples of research articles based on online surveys prior to writing an article of this type.
2. Paper mentors. Students are sometimes unaware of the many scholarly articles and books written about academic writing and publishing. These publications can

function as a sort of paper mentor that helps students to avert many beginners' mistakes (Matzler, 2022). Textbooks on writing for publication (Jalongo & Saracho, 2016), articles about publishing specific types of articles (e.g., the practical article) (Jalongo, 2013, 2023a), and edited collections on writing for publication can be helpful in this regard.

3. **Wisdom of practice.** Another valuable resource consists of advice from prolific authors and respected editors. This type of information is widely available online from virtually all the leading academic publishers (e.g., Springer Nature, Elsevier). Authors can search by topic and locate material that guides them in more successful publication outcomes.
4. **Peer feedback.** Studies of doctoral students' satisfaction with their doctoral programs and intentions to quit suggest that institutions would do well to emphasize cooperation rather than competition (Merga & Mason, 2021). Peer review offers a different type of input. Students may feel obligated to accept any critical feedback from a faculty member due to concerns about evaluation/grades, while peer review positions them as equals so that authors can decide what is most useful to them in improving the work. In addition, developing reciprocal trust and respect among doctoral students does a better job of preparing them to engage in collaborative writing ventures in the future.
5. **Mentors.** A mentor in writing for publication is anyone who is more knowledgeable/ experienced and is both capable of and willing to lend support to another writer. In doctoral education, mentors (e.g., Ph.D. supervisors) play many different roles during the doctoral journey of students (Bastalich & McCulloch, 2024b). In their research on doctoral students' perceptions of their faculty advisors, Roy et al. (2023) concluded that the four advisor behaviors associated with program completion by students were (1) encouragement, (2) accessibility, (3) dependability, and (4) expertise. Rather than severing these ties upon graduation, recent research suggests that early career faculty often return to these writing arrangements to continue their collaborative research (Merga & Mason, 2020). Even though mentor/protégé relationships are traditionally serendipitous, there also have been efforts to assign mentors to doctoral students (Geesa et al., 2018). Opportunities for mentorship need to be explored more expansively. For instance, it is common to allow the dividing lines between departments and colleges to run deep, yet writing arrangements with colleagues from different backgrounds can stimulate innovative thinking, provide insight on clarity, raise important questions, and improve manuscripts (Cuthbert et al., 2009). Facility in communicating effectively

with those outside the discipline can be particularly useful, both when writing grants that will be reviewed by nonspecialists who review grant proposals and when sharing implications of research with general audiences from the larger community (Merga & Mason, 2020).

Writing well and publishing is a career long, perpetually challenging endeavor that cannot be expected to become effortless. Even the most celebrated and prolific scholars humbly accept this fact and dedicate themselves to continuous improvement as academic authors.

## Conclusion

During my doctoral studies, I had the following quote from the influential German thinker, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (2023), posted on my bulletin board: "Do not hurry. Do not rest." I have also seen it translated from the original as "Do not *wait*," and that might capture the sentiment of this article even better. The underlying concept is that you should neither do things carelessly nor be idle; instead, you should persist at doing things that are useful and good. For a future professor, one of those useful and good things is acquiring academic writing skills. For a doctoral candidate, accomplishing this lies somewhere in between the extreme of expecting to immediately revolutionize the field through groundbreaking work and, at the other end of the spectrum, abandoning all hope of entering into scholarly discourse. As prominent researchers on the topic of expertise conclude,

The journey to truly superior performance is neither for the faint of heart nor for the impatient. The development of genuine expertise requires struggle, sacrifice, and honest, often painful self-assessment. There are no shortcuts. It will take you at least a decade to achieve expertise, and you will need to invest that time wisely, by engaging in "deliberate" practice—practice that focuses on tasks beyond your current level of competence and comfort. (Ericsson et al., 2007, unpagged)

If it does take ten years to become an expert, start the clock early by acquiring diverse experiences with the policies, practices and processes of scholarly publication during doctoral candidature. Doing this will not only help doctoral students to decide if Academia is the right match for their interests and talents but also do a better job of preparing them for careers in higher education. When professionals are inadequately prepared for the expectations of their roles, disillusionment is the predictable result (Maher et al., 2020). For academic authors, a good example of this is



the expectation that large, uninterrupted blocks of time will be provided to them as professors. Yet after becoming new faculty members in colleges and universities, former doctoral students usually report feeling overwhelmed (Hollywood et al., 2020). In education, tasks such as preparing for teaching, evaluating student tests and assignments, supervising preservice teachers in the field, developing curriculum, advising students, serving on numerous committees, preparing accreditation reports, forming partnerships with basic education, and engaging in service activities in the profession and community are just a few of the obligations. These urgent demands tend to take precedence and push aside the goal of contributing to the field through writing so that, when it becomes time for review/tenure/ promotion, failure to publish is the most commonly cited deficiency in an applicant's credentials.

Even though the number one reason that university faculty members give for neglecting to publish is a lack of time, time alone cannot address the issue adequately (MacLeod et al., 2012). First of all, the concentration demanded of high-level thinking tasks usually lasts for only about four or five hours, so writing marathons are unlikely to yield the best outcomes. In studies of exceptionally productive scholar/authors, the majority relied on smaller blocks of time but were consistent—for example, getting up one or two hours early almost daily to write. As with other important habits, writing needs to become part of the routine, and what better time do this than during doctoral study? Secondly, other deterrents frequently are incorrectly attributed to time constraints. To highlight this problem, ask yourself, “If you were *guaranteed* that the manuscript you are developing would be published, would you find the time then?” If so, then fear of failure is masquerading as a lack of time. The plain fact is that everyone, no matter what their role, has a 24-hour day to work with. Apportioning that time to various tasks is up to the individual and acquiring the writing habit during doctoral candidature offers important lessons in time management.

There is much to be learned from doctoral programs that require publication from doctoral students; data collected about these programs suggest that attaining the desired levels of student research productivity and efficiency depends on consistent writing and publication-focused training as well as support from peers and mentors support (Churchill et al., 2021; Roberts et al., 2019). When writing for publication is treated as a “distant mysterious goal” (Ferris, 2019, p. 215), early career faculty may become demoralized by multiple failures and disenfranchised from the academic community. Just as educators provide a sequence of supervised field experiences for undergraduates enrolled in teacher preparation programs, doctoral students need to amass many different experiences with various aspects of academic writing

projects. Ideally, publishing during candidature provides “the opportunity to receive and give mentorship, work on oral and written communication skills, organize ideas, network with established and emerging scholars, socialize with like-minded individuals, and learn of the publication process from start to finish” (Mizzi, 2014, p. 58).

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