Utah State University

DigitalCommons@USU

Dismantling Barriers to Publishing: Identifying Types of Negative Review Experiences and Strategies for Mitigating Them

Hannah L. Stevens
Utah State University, hannah.stevens@usu.edu

Utah State University
MERRILL-CAZIER LIBRARY

DISMANTLING BARRIERS TO PUBLISHING: IDENTIFYING TYPES OF

NEGATIVE REVIEW EXPERIENCES AND STRATEGIES

FOR MITIGATING THEM

by

Hannah L. Stevens

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree

of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

English

Approved:

_____   _____
Rebecca Walton, Ph.D.   Beth Buyserie, Ph.D.
Major Professor   Committee Member

_____   _____
Jared Colton, Ph.D.   rylish moeller, Ph.D.
Committee Member   Committee Member

_____   _____
Tammy Proctor, Ph.D.   D. Richard Cutler, Ph.D.
Committee Member   Vice Provost of Graduate
                                            Studies

UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY
Logan, Utah

2024

ABSTRACT

Dismantling Barriers to Publishing: Identifying Types of Negative Review Experiences

and Strategies for Mitigating Them

by

Hannah L. Stevens, Doctor of Philosophy

Utah State University, 2024

Major Professor: Dr. Rebecca Walton
Department: English

This dissertation research focuses on academic publishing, particularly the peer review process, investigating gaps between journal guidelines and guidelines of inclusive publishing policy and processes. Additionally, this project investigates the potential for supplementation of policy documents to cultivate a positive publishing experience. In this presentation, I report on three research studies where I used a combination of research methods, including textual analysis, surveys, and focus groups, to better understand peer review experiences of scholars in the field of writing studies and the strategies scholars and editors have used to mitigate problematic peer review experiences. This research continues the work of cultivating connections among authors, reviewers, editors, etc., in the drive to increase the accessibility and inclusivity of the publication process.

(206 pages)

PUBLIC ABSTRACT

Dismantling Barriers to Publishing: Identifying Types of Negative Review Experiences

and Strategies for Mitigating Them

Hannah L. Stevens

This dissertation research focuses on academic publishing, particularly the peer review process, investigating gaps between journal guidelines and guidelines of inclusive publishing policy and processes. This project investigates the potential for supplementation of policy documents to cultivate a positive publishing experience. Moreover, this research continues the work of cultivating connections among authors, reviewers, editors, etc., in the drive to increase the accessibility and inclusivity of the publication process.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First and foremost my deepest gratitude to Dr. Rebecca Walton, my dissertation chair, my mentor, my colleague, and my friend. Without you this dissertation would not exist. I truly would not have made it this far without you. I am so glad you are in my life.

To my committee members: Dr. ryan moeller, thank you for your kindness, patience, and amazing feedback throughout this journey. Dr. Jared Colton, thank you for offering your expertise with ethics. The way you break down such difficult theory is nothing short of amazing, and I appreciate you so much. Dr. Beth Buyserie, thank you for being the first kind face I met here at USU. Without your mentorship in that first year, I'm not sure I'd still be here. I appreciate you serving on my committee. Dr. Tammy Proctor, thank you for stepping up as an outside committee member and reminding us about the intricacies of peer review in various disciplines. I appreciate your time so much. And Dr. L. Wynholds, thank you for being part of the committee in the beginning and offering me sage advice on writing a dissertation. I truly wish you the best! I am eternally grateful to you all.

To my PhD cohort, Drs Sam Clem and Rachel Bryson. Thank you for taking me under your wings when I was alone and lost in the program. To Dr. Jamal-Jared Alexander, thank you for always being there for me and supporting my research in so many ways! To Wes Mathis and Margaret Hsiao, thank you for being two of my biggest supporters along the way. And to the newest PhD cohorts: Elle, Dorcas, Rebecca, and Cara. Thank you for always inspiring me. I wish you all the best in your academic careers.

Finally, to my husband and best friend. Thank you for putting up with late night writing sessions and *Bob's Burgers*. You are my sun, my moon, and all of my stars.

Hannah L. Stevens

CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Research Exigence

My story

In September 2021, I received reviewer feedback on a solo-authored article manuscript under consideration for a journal special issue. I included a positionality statement within the manuscript to convey relevant aspects of my identity concerning the article topic. However, one reviewer took issue with this content, writing that my positionality statement, "look[ed] like a white scholar virtue signaling alliance." As a first-generation, early-career scholar, I had trouble understanding this feedback, and to me, the reviewer was essentially questioning my ally-ship. I had no idea how to respond to the review feedback or modify the positionality statement. Regardless, if I was virtue-signaling alliance, I would definitely want to know about that, but without knowing how to address the feedback was halting my career progress. This was an exceedingly complex moment for me.

As someone new to the publishing process, I did not consider myself in a position to question feedback from either reviewer. However, much of my education thus far warned against research in which a researcher does not position themselves and, in my mind, it was unquestionable that while studying marginalized communities (in my work on the racial implications of law enforcement policy) I needed to reflect upon my positionality. In a panic, I consulted with my mentor who helped me better understand what the reviewer was taking issue with.

It wasn't until I began further investigating academic publishing (and the experiences of other authors) that it became clear to me that many scholars, particularly early-career scholars, may be less likely to reach out to editors, or others when faced with what feels to them like discriminatory or otherwise unproductive reviews. Academic publishing remains an integral and high-stakes process because publications are a major factor in a scholar's ability to 1) get a tenure track job, 2) get tenure, and 3) build a reputation in the field, which assists in getting a job and getting tenure. However, academic publishing also remains an uncertain, confusing, and sometimes, unfair process. I couldn't help but wonder why a process that was so integral remained so harmful?

What I found initially was that many in academia are working hard to change the process. Academic publishing, particularly in the field of writing studies, has pushed for more inclusive policies and procedures to mitigate some of the problematic aspects of the publication process, including peer review. This push is evidenced by multiple guideline documents, such as the "Anti-Racist Scholarly Reviewing Practices: A Heuristic for Editors, Reviewers, and Authors" (ARRH) and the Conference on College Composition and Communication's (CCCCs) Statement on Editorial Ethics. Both guideline documents discuss multiple aspects of the publishing process including editors synthesizing/editing peer review feedback, mentoring/support of authors through the publishing process, and discussions of ethical concerns in publishing.

However, through my personal experience and hearing others' experiences, it seemed as if negative peer review experiences continue to occur, despite this push toward inclusive publishing policy. I sought out to better understand how we got here regarding a

process that represents the premier fact- and quality-checking system that continues to

discriminate against new knowledges in particular.

Research Questions

This dissertation project addresses the following research questions:

1. In the context of writing studies (e.g., rhetoric and composition, technical and professional communication, writing program administration), what can turn a "negative" review experience into an overall positive publishing experience?
    a. What "negative" review experiences do academic publishing guidelines aim to prevent or mitigate?
    b. What types of "negative" review experiences do authors in writing studies experience?
    c. What strategies have authors employed to turn a negative peer review experience into a positive publishing experience? What strategies have editors employed to turn a negative review experience into a positive publishing experience for authors? What other actors have been involved in turning a negative peer review experience into a positive publishing experience for authors?
2. How can the guideline documents (ARRH, CCCCs, COPE) in the field of writing studies be usefully supplemented to cultivate positive of academic publishing experiences, particularly when reviews are unproductive, problematic, or otherwise harmful?

This project investigates the potential for supplementation of policy documents to

cultivate a positive publishing experience. Moreover, this research continues the work of

cultivating connections among authors, reviewers, editors, etc., in the drive to increase

the accessibility and inclusivity of the publication process. Thus, this project contributes

to the field, and academia at large, by investigating the moves academic publishing has

made toward inclusivity, and future directions, which will be particularly important for

graduate program coordinators/graduate directors/instructors/etc., who have the potential

to be interventionists/mentors/supporters/etc., particularly for early-career

scholars/authors.

The remaining sections of this chapter will provide the reader with background and context for the primary ethical framework used within this dissertation: care ethics, which, I argue, is a framework academic publishing needs to embrace. Readers will learn about the ways that publishing, in particular, has considered ethics. Readers will also learn about the basics of care including caring about versus caring for, and vulnerability. In Chapter 2, I discuss the conversations surrounding peer review that have been taking place in and around the writing studies community with a comprehensive literature review. These conversations revealed several findings which I used to situate the research studies I describe in Chapters 3 and 4. In Chapter 3, I describe two research studies. The first, is a textual analysis where I sought to find overlaps between inclusive guidelines documents (The Anti-Racist Reviewing Heuristic) and academic journal guidelines. The second, is a survey that asked respondents to reflect on their review experiences and the strategies they have used to mitigate problematic peer review experiences. In Chapter 4, I describe another research study, focus group sessions with editors in the field of writing studies. These focus group sessions asked current editors in the field to reflect on experiences they've had with reviewers and ways that they have mitigated and intervened against negative review experiences for authors. Finally, in Chapter 5, I discuss the conclusions and recommendations I made after conducting and reporting on these research studies. In the final chapter I forward actionable recommendations for the academic community.

Situating Peer Review Within an Ethics of Care

Before tackling an issue that has long-standing implications, such as peer review, it's important to establish some sort of ethical framework that can help us to better identify,

evaluate and engage in ethical issues regarding the process. And before fully investigating peer review and similar processes, it's important to understand what just and unjust peer review processes look like. As Walwema, Colton, and Holmes (2022) state, "Ethical frameworks help us understand how to enact justice and identify the behaviors, actions, and policies that should be considered just or unjust" (p. 259). In other words, an ethical framework can help to define both how we can enact more just peer review practices, as well as identify the behaviors, actions, and policies that will lead to just behaviors.

Before discussing ethics, it is also important to acknowledge, as Walwema et al. (2022) state, the "well-founded critiques of the problems with past and present ways in which some ethical frameworks have reflected individualism, Eurocentrism, patriarchy, or racism" (p. 261). Many ethical frameworks are rooted in Euro- and Westerncentrism and written by Western male philosophers, thus, as Walwema et al. (2022) relay, ethics "could seem irredeemably tarnished by historical institutions and epistemic forms of ongoing cultural oppression" (p. 258). These criticisms of ethical frameworks are justified, however, discussing peer review, a process that primarily involves humans who are, as we know, inherently biased without an ethical framework that works to define just peer review would do a disservice. Additionally, to guard against a Westerncentric viewpoint, it's important to interrogate the perspectives utilized and work to critically, intentionally, and meaningfully read and include diverse perspectives in the conversation.

It's also possible that some scholars in academia may be reluctant to change the system and may reject what I am proposing throughout this dissertation as it relates to care ethics, inclusion, etc. I want to acknowledge the complex nature of the situation

when some reviewers may not view their role as a reviewer through a lens of care. Or that they might not recognize this relationship as one that has the potential to be performed with care (as I describe further below). As peer review has traditionally functioned as an evaluative process, I agree that reframing the process through care will not be an easy task. However, I argue that many scholars may be reluctant because they may lack training in what it means to review with care. Or they may have not been trained to begin with, which is its own problem. In Chapter 5 I discuss actionable ways forward for the field of writing studies in particular that work to reframe the peer review process through this lens of care. If after training, some reviewers, editors, authors, etc. are not on board, then it's important to also recognize they might not be the type of reviewer that many journals, editors, etc. are searching for. Continuing to have these conversations of ethics and peer review/publishing is of utmost importance and involving all stakeholders, even those who may disagree, in this process is key. Below, I articulate the ethical framework of care ethics, which frames the ideas throughout the rest of this dissertation.

The formation of the Committee on Publication Ethics

Ethics is not a new conversation in academic publishing, particularly in peer review. In 1997 three editors, Mike Farthing, Richard Smith, and Richard Horton met to discuss the issues of research misconduct, and the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) was formed. By 2000 COPE had over 90 total members and a constitution was drafted (History of COPE, n.d.). In 2004, COPE drafted the first Code of Conduct for Editors in consult with the COPE council, editors, and publishers (History and context of the COPE guidelines, n.d.), which was subsequently retired and replaced with the Core Practices in 2017.

Today, COPE and its council is comprised of 40 members across the globe (Council Members, 2023) who continue to publish guidelines and are "committed to educating and supporting editors, publishers, universities, research institutes, and all those involved in publication ethics" (About COPE, n.d.). COPE aims to "move the culture of publishing towards one where ethical practices become a normal part of the culture itself" (About COPE, n.d.), and works to achieve this mission with best practices and guidelines that often include related scenarios and case studies to assist editors and authors in making tough ethical decisions.

COPE primarily achieves this mission via the Core Practices which "are applicable to all involved in publishing scholarly literature: editors and their journals, publishers, and institutions" (Core Practices, n.d.). COPE's Core Practices state that journals and publishers should include all of the following areas in their publicly documented practices:

- Processes for handling allegations of misconduct
- Requirements for authorship and contributorship and processes for managing potential disputes
- Processes for handling complaints against the journal, its staff, editorial board or publisher
- Definitions of conflicts of interest and processes for handling conflicts of interest
- Policies on data availability and encouragement of reporting guidelines
- Ethical oversight including policies on consent to publication, publication on vulnerable populations, ethical conduct of research using human subjects, etc.
- Policies on intellectual property, including copyright and publishing licenses
- A well-described and implemented publishing infrastructure including business models, policies, processes, etc.
- Transparent and well-managed peer review processes
- Mechanisms for correcting, revising or retracting articles after publication.

Additions to the original set of core practices, such as policies on data availability, may be additions in response to an ever-changing publishing technological landscape. For instance, the inclusion of policies on intellectual property, and policies on data

availability may speak to how COPE is aware of ways our current technological

landscape is influencing the ways we approach the publishing process, particularly with

ethics in mind. I imagine COPE will revisit these core practices in the future and include

areas related to generative AI, for instance.

Ethical complications that technology adds to the publishing process

The embracing of technology in higher education poses certain ethical problems. As

Vallor (2016) states, "Ethics and technology are connected because technologies invite or

afford specific patterns of thought, behavior, and valuing; they open up new possibilities

for human action and foreclose or obscure others" (p. 2). Though publishing has had

long-standing discussions of ethics, the onset of a technological world has complicated

the process. As Vallor (2016) furthers,

> 21st century decisions about how to live well– that is, about *ethics*– are not
> simply moral choices. They are *technomoral* choices, for they depend on the
> evolving affordances of the technological systems that we rely upon to support
> and mediate our lives in ways and to degrees never before witnessed. (p. 2)

Peer review, which was previously an analog process, has moved almost entirely to a

technological space, which has many affordances, such as the ability to quickly send

reviews via email (rather than mail). However, this embracing of technology for

publishing processes also poses many constraints. For instance, new ethical dilemmas,

such as using AI to review (described more in Chapter 5) are considerations editors,

reviewers, and authors need to now be aware of. Vallor describes technomoral choices as

being a type of moral choice, which are best described as "dispositions such as honesty,

courage, moderation, and patience that promote the possessor's reliable performance of

right or excellent actions" (Vallor, 2016, p. 18). These ideas and performances of right or

excellent action can be affected by technology. Kugler (2022) states that "technology has a profound influence on how we think and act, an influence we are only just beginning to understand" (para. 14). Moreover, "a focus on high-level principles and abstraction might ignore the role of both embodiment and emotion in determining the right thing to do in particular circumstances" (Markkula Center for Applied Ethics, 2022, p. 11). Thus, the more humanity relies on technology, the less we might recognize the role of emotion and relationships in deciding what is right and what is wrong. Technology might make it more difficult to *care*.

Care ethics: What is care?

Gilligan (1982) describes moral problems as, "problems of human relations" (p. xix), and this argument around morality and relationships, gave rise to what we know now as care ethics or ethics of care. Care ethics is a feminist approach to ethics that opposes the idea that moral decision making is inherently rational and logical, and thus void of emotion. In early work on care ethics, women were presented as having a different moral approach to men, an approach "that is relational, and contextual in its orientation, which takes seriously the practitioner's own emotions and those of others; emotions are intelligent and telling" (Vosman, Baart, & Hoffman 2020, p. 25). However, the early theories of care are not without critique. As Graham (2007) notes, "research has paid scant attention to black women's experiences in the public domain where care work continues to characterize their position... the same concerns apply to ethical issues surrounding the concept of care" (p. 195). Moreover, "The idea of 'woman' as a universal category seemed unable to appreciate the differences between women and in particular their experiences of oppression" (p. 199). In other words, care ethics, as an early theory, may

not have attended to the complexity of what it means to be a woman beyond what it means to be a white woman.

Care has thus been continuously reframed and redefined to better present a wider perspective on the view of human nature and morality, which further considers interdisciplinary research into care and the differences in cultural perspectives (Graham, 2007). For instance, and as Graham notes, "Black feminist thought emerged as a specific perspective of black women's experiences shaped by race, gender and cultural attributes" related particularly to care (p. 195). Theorists such as Patricia Hill Collins "[have] placed black women at the centre of analysis by formulating a distinct feminist consciousness to better understand black women's unique standpoint" (Graham, 2007, p. 195). Care continues to evolve beyond early perspectives of what it meant to care.

'Care' is most often defined as a practice or value and is often portrayed as concepts that overlap to produce care. For example, Held (2006) notes that care is a form of labor, but also an ideal that guides judgment and action on an everyday basis. Moreover, in considering an ethic of caring (Collins, 1989; Collins, 2000) "caring labour is transformed into a source of power rather than victimization and devaluation" particularly for Black women who have often been stereotyped in society (Graham, 2007, p. 201). Care is needs-based and can be enormously complex (Braybrooke 1987; Noddings, 2015; Tronto 1993). However, as Noddings describes, the concept of needs is more basic than that of rights, but needs are more complex than wants or desires, as "rights begin as expressed needs (or wants) and become rights when claimants finally can exercise the power to satisfy their needs" (Noddings, 2015, p. 72). Rights begin as expressed needs and become rights when people have the power to address their needs.

Overall, it requires attentiveness and responsiveness to extend rights to others. It also

requires care to perceive and understand that others may not evaluate a "right" as we do.

Care ethics is a relational ethic, whereas the justice approach is anchored in the

individual's rights, duties, and liberty. Care ethics and justice may work hand-in-hand to

assist in the expression of needs and rights. But what does it mean to care?

As Tronto (1993) states, "Care is a common word deeply embedded in our every

day language" (p. 102). On its most basic level, care relates to some kind of engagement.

However, the "kind of engagement connoted by care is not that same kind of engagement

that characterizes a person who is led by [their] interests" (p. 102). In other words, to say

that you "don't care" about something and to be disinterested are not mutually exclusive.

An interest, according to Tronto, is something that engages our attention. But to care

implies more than interest. Care implies "reaching out to something other than the self"

and leads to some sort of action (Tronto, 1993, p. 102). As Tronto furthers someone who

"cares about world hunger" but does nothing about it, does not know what it means to

care (p. 103). Care requires some sort of action that shows the care. Care ethics also

recognizes the universal experience that all of humanity has, which is the dependence on

others for survival. As Kwan (2023) states, "in contrast to other ethical theories that

present an image of humans as wholly independent, atomistic, or simply in competition

with each other…[Care ethics recognizes that] all people depend on and require care

from others to flourish and meet their needs" (para. 6). In other words, care ethics

recognizes that people *need* care in order to meet their needs, which brings up interesting

questions when considering a care ethics framework for peer review. What type of care

do authors require? And is it the job of the editor to care about or for the author, the

reviewer, the editorial board, etc.? Is it the job of the reviewer to care about or for the author?

Care and vulnerability

Vulnerability is understood as "a state of constant possibility of harm" (Engster, 2019, p. 101), and is a characteristic that no human can escape (Cavarero, 2011). Thus,

> each of us is always vulnerable to physical, mental, and emotional harms and cares from others, though this vulnerability differs in degree depending upon a variety of kairotic factors affecting our relational exposure to others, such as one's age, health, and the social and material conditions in which the relation is embedded. (Colton, Holmes, & Walwema, 2017, p. 63)

Vulnerability cannot be ignored and is "a central fact of the human condition and one of the primary reasons human beings create political institutions" (Engster, 2019, p. 101). In a process such as peer review, the concept of vulnerability becomes an important consideration because of the power differentials between authors, reviewers, editors, editorial boards, etc. As Engster (2019) states, regarding research ethics, "[vulnerability] usually connotes special susceptibility to being harmed or taken advantage of because of power differentials between the researchers and prospective subjects (Macklin 2003; Sieber and Tolich 2013, chapter 2)" (p.103-104).

Often, within this concept of vulnerability there are two responses: "Caring and wounding" (Cavarero, 2011, p. 20). What Cavarero describes is that all relationships produce a response of either caring or wounding and "no relation to others is neutral" (Colton, Holmes, & Walwema, 2017, p. 64). Moreover, our actions, either caring or wounding, may differ from relationship to relationship. As Colton et al. (2017) describe "our relations to others may not be the result of intentional action, and that the same act may be one of wounding in one relation and one of caring in another, depending upon the

degree of vulnerability of those in the relation" (p. 64). Our vulnerabilities, and thus our ability to be wounded, stems from our uniqueness: "Each of us has different beliefs, bodies, attitudes, histories, and ways of knowing the world" (p. 64). Each of us has very different experiences and very different reactions based on these experiences.

In my survey data (Chapter 3), for instance, many respondents noted harmful peer review experiences where reviewers were unnecessarily critical, or commented on unnecessary aspects such as race, disability, etc. In considering this idea of vulnerability, this wounding the authors felt could have been the reviewer attempting to care. However, in the case of peer review, where positionality is paramount, it's important for the person in power (the reviewer) to privilege caring over wounding because the author, in this case, represents a dependent. As Engster (2019) defines "dependency is a form of vulnerability where individuals are highly susceptible to imminent harm, suffering, loss, or blight without the immediate care or direct assistance of others" (p. 104). In all care relationships it's important to recognize when we are dependent on the assistance (and care) of others and when someone is dependent on our care and assistance. In peer review, as authors, we are dependent on multiple people: the reviewers who review the manuscript, the editor who ultimately makes the decision, the editorial board who assists in multiple ways, etc. As I argue through the rest of this dissertation, framing peer review through an ethics of care will work to remind all stakeholders of the importance of these dependency relationships.

To care 'about' vs. to care 'for'

There are also multiple ways to care, which include distinct differences between "caring-for" and "caring-about." As Tronto (1993) states, "caring about involves the

recognition… that care is necessary. It involves noting the existence of a need and making an assessment that this need should be met" (p. 107). Caring about often requires an assumption of needs (discussed more in Chapter 5), and as Noddings states, "It is possible… to care-about—to be concerned for—multitudes at a distance" (2015, p. 74). Caring for, however, "requires the attention and response cultivated in relation" (p. 74). In order to care for someone, we have to have a relationship with them in some form. Different relationships carry different expectations, and some relationships are more important than others. According to the Markkula Center for Applied Ethics, technology tends to differentiate between different relationships. For instance, on Facebook people are considered "friends" if they follow your updates and have access to what you post, whereas on Twitter (now X) people are considered "followers," which implies a different relationship from that of a friend. Friendship, as Hansen and Quek (2023) argue is anything "but a casual, temporary, or random relationship, but is often hard won through time, compromise, misunderstandings, and so forth" (p. 17). To foster a caring friendship requires different expectations and different levels of care.

In considering the intricacies of peer review, I continued to come back to this idea of "peer." What kind of relationship is a peer? And is this relationship important? Traditionally, as discussed further in Chapter 2, peer review has remained an evaluative relationship. However, perhaps review work can be reframed through an ethics of care to be a position that cares about not only the author, but the text (manuscript) itself.

Ethical Elements of Care

As Tronto (1993) describes, there are four ethical elements of care: attentiveness, responsibility, competence, and responsiveness. Good care, as Tronto argues, requires

"that the four phases of the care process must fit together into a whole" (p. 136).

Regardless, care requires more than good intentions, and integrating all four phases of

care requires deep, thoughtful engagement and knowledge of the situation, all of the

people involved, and everyone's needs. Tronto further argues that the kind of care

described requires assessment of social, political, and personal needs. To further consider

the ethical intricacies of peer review, I breakdown each ethical element and describe the

capability of a peer to attend to that ethical element in the review process.

ATTENTIVENESS

The first moral aspect of care is an attentiveness, particularly to the needs of others. As

Tronto (1993) states, "If we are not attentive to the needs of others, then we cannot

possibly address those needs" (p. 127). Tronto complicates the idea of attentiveness

further by describing the dimensions of inattentiveness versus ignorance: "if I do not

know that rain forest destruction happens in order to provide the world with more beef,

am I ignorant or inattentive" (p. 129). Inattentiveness is perhaps more morally

reprehensible, and the more serious aspect is "the unwillingness of people to direct their

attention to others' particular concerns" (p. 130). Moreover, in order to be attentive, a

person needs to be attentive to their own needs and be in a position to recognize the needs

of others.

In a peer review context, I argue that reviewers are in a position to recognize, as

they are typically scholars themselves, but are also, at times, inattentive to the needs of

others. For instance, some scholars lean on the legacy aspects of peer review (i.e., I went

through the process and it was difficult, therefore everyone else needs to as well), which I

argue is beyond ignorance and leaning into inattentiveness. Reframing peer review

through an ethics of care can work to better focus the process on attentiveness to the publishing needs of other scholars, as ultimately, publishing is what "makes or breaks" a scholar's ability to make a career in academia.

RESPONSIBILITY

The second dimension, responsibility, is a concept that may not have formal rules or set practices, and is a concept that requires constant evaluation. Responsibility to care Tronto states, "might rest on a number of factors; something we did or did not do has contributed to the needs for care, and so we must care" (p. 132). Tronto uses the example of parents in this case, "having become parents entails the responsibility of caring for these particular children" (p. 132). However, responsibility can have different meanings based on someone's class status or racial grouping as well, which further complicates the idea. In the case of peer review, perhaps the accepting of a peer review request entails the responsibility of caring for those who we review. However, currently, academia is not framing review as a responsibility. As described further in Chapter 2, peer review remains an evaluative process where someone (the privileged person) evaluates a various aspects of the manuscript and overall decides whether or not it will be published. The responsibility is there in theory, in that the person is *responsible* for something, but the framing is that of labor responsibility and not moral responsibility. Reframing the process through a moral responsibility, and constantly evaluating that responsibility, could refocus peer review toward a relational, empathetic, and caring process.

COMPETENCE

The third phase of caring is competence. As Tronto (1993) describes the intention to accept the responsibility to care, but not providing *good* care is a competence problem that results in the need for care not being met. Tronto states further that "sometimes care will be inadequate because the resources available to provide for care are inadequate" (p. 133). Regardless of resource, Tronto argues that caring work needs to be competently performed in order to demonstrate care.

Competence is particularly interesting in the context of peer review. Reviewers, when asked to complete a peer review, need to consider the level of competence required of a review. Or academia needs to work to define the levels of competency. For instance, what level of competency does someone need to have to be considered an expert, and thus able to review. Is it a doctorate in a certain field? Certainly, a doctorate does not equal one-to-one competency; someone who is competent in policy may not be competent in big data, though both apply to the field of TPC.

Moreover, when we consider labor and resource, how competent should a reviewer be regarding labor? How much time is required and does a reviewer feel competent enough to complete the review within the time requirement? And if the reviewer does not complete the review within the time requirement does that make them incompetent? Competency is one of the more complex dimensions of care as it relates to peer review work. As discussed further in chapter 3, many journals in the field of writing studies are increasing the ability for peer reviewers to be competent reviewers with more transparent peer review processes. However, they are not currently emphasizing humanity over production in the peer review process (with review extensions, etc.).

Currently, reviewers may not have what they need in order to be competent, ethically-speaking.

Finally, Tronto (1993) describes the fourth moment: responsiveness. Responsiveness takes into account the aforementioned condition of vulnerability. As Tronto states, "To be in a situation where one needs care is to be in a position of some vulnerability" (p. 134). Vulnerability further recognizes the difficult questions that arise when recognizing that not all humans are on equal standing in society. Thus, the moral concept of responsiveness "requires that we remain alert to the possibilities for abuse that arise with vulnerability" (Tronto, 1993, p. 135). However, is anonymous peer review, where a reviewer does not know the identity of the author, a site where reviewers can feel a responsiveness to someone else? Does the current structure allow for a responsiveness to vulnerability? I'm not sure I have an answer, but it's important to consider how the current structures allow for or block someone's ability to care for another.

Additionally, it's important to remember the need to keep a balance between needs of care-givers and needs of care-receivers. Within this framework of care, it's important to care for yourself as well as the people you are caring about/for. As Colton, Holmes, and Walwema (2017) forward, "an ethics of care recognizes moral value in the reciprocal and singular relations of caring between individuals that ensures one another's well-being" (p. 60). An ethics of care thus prioritizes everyone's well-being in a relationship.

Related to peer review, responsiveness may address the reciprocal structure of peer review. In a responsive ethical relationship "one is engaged from the standpoint of

the other, but not simply by presuming that the other is exactly like the self." (Tronto, 1993, p. 136). So, rather than proceeding with a peer review structure the depends on the idea of reciprocity, responsiveness may reframe the process toward responsibility; that is to the more vulnerable in academia. For instance, Itchuaqiyaq and Walton (2021) argue that anonymous peer review "is a rich site for activism," and utilize Gloria Anzaldúa's seven stages of conocimiento as a framework for contextualizing the reviewer's role as that of an activist (p. 379). Regarding peer review, particularly considering Tronto's four elements of care, I argue an ethics of care framing may help refocus the process on relationships, empathy, and more attentive, responsible, competent, and responsive moral peer review. However, it's important to continue to question the structures that are currently put in place within this process. Continuing to understand and analyze the peer review process may reveal that the structures itself prevent actors from performing the care work they want to.

Overall, I argue that peer review, based on Tronto's four elements of care described above, is a process that can work within an ethic of care. Moreover, a focus on care ethics will assist members of the academic community in finding and thinking "about moral justification in their tactical practices" (Colton et al., 2017, p. 63). Thus, if we reframe peer review through an ethics of care, focusing on emphasizing transparency, communication, and training for all stakeholders (discussed more in Chapter 5), I argue that peer review will be that much more helpful, compassionate, and inclusive.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Longo (1998) posits that technical communication was thought to be a "simple collaborative effort in which writers mediate technology for users" (p. 54). She goes on to show how it is anything but simple. Even so, such a definition legitimates certain knowledges and delegitimates others. All texts that technical communicators work with (create and critique) "reinforce certain ideologies" (Jones, 2016, p. 345). In addition to privileging and reinforcing certain knowledges (objectivity, empiricism) over others (experiential, local), Clark (2004) has argued that there is a disconnect between technical and professional communication (TPC) theory and praxis: "Practitioners often view theory with suspicion, and academics tend to produce theoretical research that practitioners wish was better attuned to the day-to-day decision-making on their jobs" (pp. 307-308). However, as Miller asserts, collaboration between industry and the academy should not be approached uncritically, as existing workplace practice does not always represent the best practice (Miller, 1989).

At the core of this disconnect between the theory and the practice of TPC is perhaps the "myth of neutrality, objectivity, and the apolitical impact of [TPC]" (Shelton, 2020, p. 19). The work of technical communicators: with technology (Haas, 2012), writing (Ornatowski, 1992), design (Tham, 2021), etc., is "never neutral nor objective" (Tham, 2021, p. 61). Moreover, with the turn in TPC toward social justice, technical communicators "must be aware of the ways that the texts and technologies that they create and critique reinforce certain ideologies and question how communication shaped

by certain ideologies affect individuals" (Jones, 2016b, p. 345), which is a strong argument against the idea of TPC as a neutral practice. Furthermore, as a field positioned as humanistic (Miller, 1979) "our focus should be squarely on improving the human experience for the oppressed" (Jones, 2016, p. 357), a focus that directly relates to advocacy.

Advocacy, especially on behalf of users, has largely become a core tenet of TPC (Jones, 2016) and this advocacy often takes on many different approaches including feminism (De Hertogh, 2018; Durack, 1997), decolonialism (Haas, 2012), and participatory design (Agboka, 2013). These approaches are typically theorized under the idea that technical communicators advocate on behalf of users. As such, research often focuses on the role of the technical communicator as an advocate (Jones, 2016). Recent TPC research has begun interrogating moments where marginalized users and groups employ TPC tactics to advocate for themselves (Colton et. al., 2017), particularly in technological spaces, thus becoming extra-institutional (Kimball, 2006) technical communicators. By combining the ideas of the technical communicator as an advocate with self- or group-advocacy methods, technical communicators are becoming attuned to unique tactical methods of design and advocacy particularly as it relates to community-built empowerment (Branham & Vie, 2018; Colton et al., 2017; Edenfield, Holmes, & Colton, 2019; Holladay, 2017; Ledbetter, 2018; McCaughey, 2020; Sarat-St. Peter, 2017; Yusuf & Namboodri Schioppa, 2022). For example, as Costanza-Chock (2020) states, "Social movements, especially those led by marginalized communities, are systematically ignored, misrepresented, and attacked in the mass media, so movements often form strong community media practices, create active counterpublics, and develop media

innovations out of necessity" (p. 288). Baker-Bell (2020) also describes how activist groups like the Black Youth Project (BYP) utilized counter-stories to expose the role media consistently plays "in the 'debasement of Black humanity, utter indifference to Black suffering, and the denial of Black people's right to exist'" (p. 4). Both moves represent clear engagement with TPC tactics and tools to advocate for underrepresented communities.

Scholars such as Frost (2016) and Ornatowski (1992) argued that, in its past, TPC valued efficiency— the efficient transmission of information, quick delivery of information, etc.— over other values like justice, inclusivity, and even safety. As Frost (2016) states, "efficiency is commonly understood as the balancing point at which we achieve the best result while expending the least amount of energy… technical communicators must rearticulate efficiency as focused primarily on audiences as a component of best results" (p. 16). For example, Zdenek (2015) describes that closed captioning is often developed quickly to be more efficient, rather than done ethically or even accurately. Captioning (as opposed to transcription) cannot be done quickly as the captioner has to recognize context in order to caption rhetorically and with inclusion in mind: "the captioner must choose the best word(s) to convey the meaning of a sound in the context of a scene and under the constraints of time and space" (Zdenek, 2015, p. 5). However, many technical communicators have begun researching ways to perform TPC work with efficiency, social justice, and inclusion in mind. For example, Gonzales and Turner's (2017) exploration of the translation of government documents not only valued efficiency, in translating documents as quickly and accurately as possible, but also community and culture by "Providing data that can be retrieved instantly to safeguard

patient safety further" (p. 133). In research on policy development, a focus on cultural methods and social justice theory could prove beneficial to more inclusive policymaking (Moore, 2013; Williams, 2009).

Policy is a form of technology developed to "provide a cure for problems that… are both 'universal and particular'" (Williams, 2009, p. 451), and has been an important research topic in TPC particularly relating to specific public policy issues such as sexual harassment policy or environmental policy (Cargile-Cook, 2000; Moore, Cundiff, Jones, & Heilig, 2017; Ranney, 2000; Sackey, 2019), public policy in pedagogy (Moore, 2013; Smith, 2000), and public policy discourse (Knievel, 2008; Petersen & Moeller, 2016). The common thread between these topics is communication. As Moore (2013) states, "Public policies are unique documents because they present a discursive act tied to concrete action, drawing attention to the social, cultural, and political effects of technical communication" (p. 64). In other words, technical communicators need to interrogate the functions and effects of not only public policy but communication of public policy.

Moreover, technical communicators are particularly adept at rhetorically investigating policy problems, and as many policy problems are considered "wicked" or are more difficult to define linearly (Wickman, 2014), technical communicators represent key players in defining, and working to address these policy problems. For instance, issues of police violence (Itchuaqiyaq, Edenfield, & Grant-Davie, 2022; Knievel, 2008; Moore, Cundiff, Jones, & Heilig, 2017; Stevens, 2022) and other social problems such as poverty, disease, and sustainability, though difficult to define, are entrenched in hegemonic ideology and rhetoric that enforces dominant perspectives and often contextualizes the issues as merely part of the structures of society. In academic

publishing, for instance, many characteristics of white supremacy culture and white male epistemologies (Buggs, Sims, & Kramer, 2020) continue to be the default. Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC), particularly women of color, face disparities in the publication process in multiple ways including the gatekeeping of what constitutes academic research (Buchanan, 2019; Delgado, 1984; Selfe & Hawisher, 2012). This gatekeeping of academic research relates to TPC's historically dominant narrative of what is and what is not technical communication research (Jones, Moore, & Walton, 2016), though this narrative has begun to broaden with the social justice turn in TPC.

Publishing Policy

Regarding publishing, many of these disparities are veiled by processes dictated by policies that are viewed as critical aspects of the publishing process and are more difficult to define as oppressive or discriminatory in linear ways (i.e., wicked problems). As Miller and Harris (2009) assert, "The publication process is complex and involves several different stakeholder groups… [who have] a different perspective on what is important in the publication process" (p. 12). These different perspectives result in a tense, conflicting process, where various stakeholders tend to have little to no "understanding of the perspectives and roles of the others" (Miller & Harris, 2009, p. 12). Peer review is one of these complex, and perhaps conflicting, publishing processes.

Though peer review remains an important and upheld publishing practice, it also functions "as a tool to promote and legitimate white male epistemologies" (Buggs, Sims, & Kramer, 2020, p. 1386). As Buggs, Sims, and Kramer (2020) relay in response to a particularly problematic article that made its way successfully through multiple rounds of peer review, "the problem is not an individual scholar and his individual

interpretation…The problem is a peer review process that has not adequately addressed the racial structure of knowledge" (p. 1388). Moreover, as Sciullo and Duncan (2019) state,

> reviews are often professionally incompetent on the basis of logic or disciplinary knowledge; they typically do not offer constructive criticism and maintain orthodoxy in thought rather than promote scholarly debate; identifying blinded authors is relatively easy to do with Internet searches; editors tend to be passive; and reviews are often slow in coming. (p. 248).

Mavrogenis, Quaile, and Scarlat (2020) describe peer review with three distinct categories: the bad, the good, and the rude. According to them, good peer review should be "objective instructional and informative," and "It should…include critical comments that would be helpful to the editor to make [their] decision and to the authors to improve their manuscript." Bad peer review, then, is "non-objective, non-organized and non-instructional or informative" (p. 413). Bad peer review "fails to identify major flaws, to communicate criticism to authors to improve their manuscript and to inform fraud to the editor, and…does not review all manuscript sections including references and illustrations" (p. 414). The final category, according to Mavrogenis, Quaile, and Scarlat, is rude peer review, which is "unfair and biased for reasons unrelated to the quality of the manuscript such as the nationality, gender, English language criticism, opposite theory or conflicts of interest" (p. 414). Moreover, rude peer review "is a discouraging, insulting, dishonest and unhelpful review with impossible requests to the authors" (p. 414). Mavrogenis, Quaile, and Scarlat, like many other scholars, note that there are rules and regulations that guide the review process, however, "peer-review should interfere in a positive way with the authors, and rude reviews with pervasive comments are unacceptable" (p. 415).

In other words, issues with peer review remain consistent and persistent. The key, perhaps, to many of these issues with peer review is how we develop, employ, and communicate about policy.

Academic peer review: How did we get here?

In 2012, Selfe and Hawisher published an article on the changing practices of peer review in the field of English studies, defining peer review as "the assessment of scholarly work by referees within a given field, usually in addition to the editor of a journal or press" (2012, p. 673). Shatz (2004) extends this definition by stating that peer review consists of "a scholar [submitting] a work to a journal, press, or conference committee" and the submission is "then evaluated by other professionals who are experts in the area covered by the work [and who determine] whether the work is published" (p. 1). Forsberg, Geschwind, Levaner, & Wermke (2022) define peer review as a "context-dependent, relational concept that is increasingly used to denote a vast number of evaluative activities engaged in by a wide variety of actors both inside and outside of academia" (Forsberg, Geschwind, Levaner, & Wermke, 2022, p. 4). The intention of peer review, in the context of academic publishing, as Allen et al. (2022) state, "is for experts of a specific topic area or field, to scrutinise the viability and quality of submitted work based on research integrity, rigour, and a broadly accepted ethos of what a high quality publication should look like" (p. 1). Thus, peer review represents a "system of certification" in that "acceptance to a journal or publishing house certifies a body of work" (Shatz, 2004, p. 1). Peer review remains a process that has far-reaching implications, as "Universities commonly view an academic's published research record as the main criterion for reaching decisions related to promotions and tenure" (Davidson,

2020). Not only does peer review certify a text as legitimate, but it also has the potential to certify a scholar as legitimate, or, in some cases, illegitimate (Shatz, 2004).

As Tennant and Ross-Hellauer (2020) relay, the tensions between various views of peer review "create a strange dissonant rationale, that peer review is uniform and 'the best that we have,' yet also flawed, often without fully appreciating the complexity and history of the process" (p. 2). Thus, before discussing the current intricacies of peer review, it is necessary to recognize where peer review began.

Many view peer review as a process as old as publishing itself, believing that peer review began in 1752 with the Royal Society of London's "review and selection of texts for publication in its nearly century-old journal, *Philosophical Transactions*" (Fitzpatrick, 2011, p. 20). Some scholars also argue that peer review began even earlier with the Royal Society of Edinburgh's scientific journal which may have had a system in place as early as 1731 (Kronick, 1990). Fyfe (2015), however, argued that "reviewing and (to some extent) evaluation did happen, but not at all in the way we would now [recognize] as 'peer review,'" where an editor "requests independently written reports from experts in the field for [their] (mostly) private use" (para. 3). And it wasn't until the late 20th century that 'refereeing' was "rebranded as 'peer review'" (Fyfe, 2015), with the words 'peer review' not appearing until 1967 in the US to refer to "The review of commercial, professional, or academic efficiency, competence, etc., by others in the same occupation" (OED). However, the phrase wasn't used in relation to publishing until 1975 by the *New England Journal of Medicine*: "The process by which an academic journal passes a paper submitted for publication to independent experts for comments on its suitability and worth; refereeing" (OED).

Regardless of the date of inception and usage of the phrase, peer review as a mechanism for "power and prestige" (p. 19) can be traced to seventeenth-century book publishing, a process that required a royal license for the legal sale of printed texts (p. 21). As Fitzpatrick (2011) relays, this view of peer review "leads us to understand [it] not simply as a system that produced disciplinarity in an intellectual sense, but as a mode of disciplining knowledge itself" (p. 21). In other words, peer review not only helped to produce knowledge but worked to regulate knowledge as well. Early peer review in scholarly scientific journals was meant to "augment editorial expertise rather than to exercise more conventionally understood modes of quality control" (Fitzpatrick, 2011, p. 22). In other words, the editor-in-chief was in absolute control mostly because they had control over editorial makeup (i.e., selection of reviewers). The authority of editors remained constant and uncontested for much of the history of peer review.

Contemporary Peer Review

Today, many scholars recognize peer review as an important part of the publishing process (Ware, 2008). Publishing peer-reviewed work is widely considered one of the most "prestigious forms of scholarly accomplishment" (Roberts & Shambrook, 2012, para. 3) that plays a central role in "defining the hierarchical structure of higher education and academia" (Tennant & Ross-Hellauer, 2020, p. 1). Moreover, articles that have not undergone peer review are "likely to be regarded with suspicion by scholars [and] professionals" (para. 3) as peer review functions as a "mechanism… for quality control" and protects academia, scholars, etc. from "contamination by error and poor argument, and affords us truth or contributions to attaining truth" (Schatz, 2004, p. 1). Peer review continues to be considered an integral and revered process by many in academia.

Academic publishing remains an integral and high-stakes process because publishing dictates a scholar's ability to 1) get a tenure track job; 2) get tenure; and 3) build a reputation in the field, which assists in getting a job and getting tenure. As Shatz (2004) states, "careers are often made or destroyed by the process [of peer review]" (p. 2). A process that is so integral to the success of academics, but equally difficult, ambiguous, and oppressive becomes a process that needs to be recognized, revealed, rejected, and replaced (Walton, Moore, & Jones, 2019).

Academic Publishing 2.0: The Rise of Electronic Communications

Contemporarily, the Internet and electronic communication have shifted "the nature of authority" (Fitzpatrick, 2011, p. 16) and the "advent of electronic journals has led to a… lack of uniformity in the industry" (Miller & Harris, 2009, p. 19). As Fitzpatrick (2011) relays this shift toward e-journals has been met with resistance from some in the academic community and "such resistance is manifested in the… academic response to Wikipedia… which seems to indicate a… misunderstanding about the value of the project" (p. 16). The resistance to wikis in academia seems to overlook the fact that a wiki undergoes constant peer review and that "not only the results of that review but the records of its process are available for critical scrutiny" (p. 17). To rethink the ways we approach peer review in online spaces, Fitzpatrick argues, requires a type of self-reflection that many in academia resist for a myriad of reasons.

However, this move toward electronic publishing has many benefits that tend to be overlooked by the arguments against embracing the electronic process. For instance, electronic publishing "has had a positive impact on… publishing business" such as "the shorter time now required for review of a manuscript" (Miller & Harris, 2009, p. 20). As

Miller and Harris state, "Editorial management of the peer review process is much more efficient if this process is performed using electronic means because the time lag inherent in using the postal system disappears" (p. 20). Moreover, acceptance to publication times are decreased because "accepted papers are available electronically and the date of record is the electronic date the paper is posted, not when… it appears in print" (Miller & Harris, 2009, p. 20). Despite arguments in support, many in academia warn against an electronic process arguing for the ways in which the peer review process, and ultimately publication, will be altered. For instance, in a 2014 issue of the Atlantic, Megan Garber wrote about a discovery shared via social media, and the article was published before undergoing peer-review. As Luetger (2014) states, "The idea of bypassing peer review to share ideas with a broad audience poses a question… Does peer review make sense in a digital age?" (para. 1). Moreover, the question of whether anonymous peer review makes sense in the digital age needs to be asked as well.

Peer Review, Anonymity, and the Bias Problem

Historically, peer review has remained an anonymous practice (often referred to as "blind" review[1]) as "the more objective the reviews seemed in the eyes of the academy, the more certain were tenure and promotion committees that an accepted article represented scholarship that was independently vetted by the scholarly community and

---

[1] I utilize this term carefully and note that many publishing contexts still use the phrase "blind peer review." However, I also want to recognize the problematic nature of disability metaphor and quote Dolmage (2005) in stating that "Discourse about disability has been framed and filtered by medical prose [which] poses as literal, non-metaphorical, and… poses for people, objectifying them. This language has then inscribed and controlled the experience of disability for disabled and non-disabled alike" (p. 108). Disability metaphor is othering, can be violent, and is often upheld by communities that do not identify themselves as experiencing disability (Dolmage, 2005). Publishing should rethink the usage of "blind" to refer to types of anonymized review.

thus appropriate for publication" (Selfe & Hawisher, 2012, p. 674). "Blind review" or "single blind review" is a review in which a reviewer knows the identity of the author whereas "double-blind review" is a review in which author identities are not known to the reviewers. In both models, reviewers are anonymous to authors, although many journals ask if reviewers would like to identify themselves to the author. "Double-blind" review tends to be the preferred model of peer review among scholars across disciplines (e.g., Mulligan et al., 2013; Regehr & Bordage, 2006; Rowley & Sbaffi, 2018; Taylor & Francis, 2015)

The widespread usage of anonymous peer review has also been recognized as a potential solution to the issue of bias in reviewing as "blind review suggests that reviewers, as a group, cannot be relied upon to eradicate their biases or cannot be relied upon to prevent the biases from playing a casual role" (Shatz, 2004, p. 48). Moreover, many proponents of anonymous peer review claim that it is the fairest option as de-anonymized review "allows for evaluations to be infected by bias and therefore not be judged on their merits" (Shatz, 2004, p. 49). However, as Tennant and Ross-Hellauer argue, "factors, such as author nationality, prestige of institutional affiliation, reviewer and nationality, gender, research discipline, confirmation bias and publication bias, all affect reviewer impartiality in various ways" (p. 4). Furthermore, there are multiple " social dimensions of bias" such as "relationships between authors and reviewers… whether or not they are rivals or competitors, colleagues, collaborators or even friends/ partners" remains virtually unknown. These relationships have the potential to introduce bias into the process in various ways. Regardless of anonymity, peer review bias may still be ever-present. To that end, many have argued for the elimination of anonymous

reviews indicating that the anonymous system takes humanity out of the equation and "erode[s] the humanistic values that are supposedly at the heart of the [academic] enterprise" (qtd in Shatz, 2004, p. 49).

Many scholars further argue that the pitfalls of anonymous peer review may outweigh the benefits (Sciullo & Duncan, 2019), with many recognizing the overall process to be disheartening (Yoon et al., 2020), and made up of those known as "gatekeepers" who may attempt to control and limit what research will be forwarded (Allen et al., 2022; Roberts & Shambrook, 2012).

Many academics have stated that they are "less likely to agree to review if their identities will be revealed… and are less likely to produce honest reviews" (Allen et al., 2022, p. 3). Moreover, as Shatz (2004) relays reviewer bias can be either negative or positive, and "the existence of referee bias should not dictate abandoning the peer review process entirely" (p. 37). Furthermore, the idea of objectivity or bias-free judgments is one that many social scientists argue about, and "if it is held to be impossible to eliminate bias, then in what sense does charging bias constitute a criticism" (Nozick, 1993, p. xii). Mavrogenis, Quaile, and Scarlat (2022) argue that peer review tends to be biased for a multitude of reasons, many of which extend beyond the anonymity of the reviewer: "some peer-reviewers are too young with limited experience, not all are equally skilled in the peer-review process, and very few have had a formal training and assessment methods for peer-review" (p. 413).

Beyond experience, many reviewers are less likely to reveal their identity during the review process because of other, more serious issues, such as retaliation. As Allen et al. (2022) relay, "reviewers prefer to review in safe environments without recourse for

their feedback…a retaliatory response can be incredibly harmful to early career

researchers" (p. 3). Though eliminating anonymous peer review may increase the

potential for less oppressive reviews, it also has the potential to put underserved

populations at risk. Eliminating anonymous peer review remains in tension with the

potential for biased reviews, but as Shatz (2004) states, "some biases are eliminated by

blinding and… a system in which biases are eliminated to the extent possible is fairer

than one in which no such effort is made" (p. 51). There is little to no consensus on

whether or not the peer review process should remain anonymous.

Peer Review from the Perspective of Labor

Beyond the arguments for and against anonymity, there are many structural issues related

to peer review, particularly as it relates to the unpaid labor of reviewers. As Gonzalez,

Wilson, and Purvis (2022) state, "Academic reward structures place a high value on

research productivity… yet, more often than not, the review process… is not recognized

or rewarded" (p. 1). Regardless, many academics believe that the system of peer review

functions because of the "traditional roots of reciprocity" (Allen et al., 2022, p. 4).

Reciprocity, as defined by Feder Kittay (2015), "When we receive, to the extent that we

can, we need to give" (p. 64). In other words, some scholars argue that your payment for

reviewing is having your work reviewed in return. However, as Feder Kittay furthers,

reciprocity cannot exist "Without social institutions" and "many are unable to enter into

the relationships… [referred] to as social cooperation" (p. 66) for a multitude of reasons,

including injustice.

Moreover, this reciprocal argument has multiple problems in regard to peer

review, particularly when considering the more vulnerable members of the academic

community such as graduate students and early career scholars who may be less securely employed and on short-term contracts. Scholars in this position likely view this reciprocity as mere exploitation "emerg[ing] from the greater number of review requests, pressures of time constraints to review, and increasing workloads" (Allen et al., 2022, p. 4). These pressures have some newfound consequences.

Scholars are beginning to become particularly attuned to a newly theorized issue referred to as "fake peer review," which may be the result of "the pressure-laden academic reward structure" (Gonzalez, Wilson, & Purvis, 2022, p. 2). Fake peer review refers to the systematic manipulation of the process and is defined by COPE as:

> an individual or a group of individuals…repeatedly us[ing] dishonest or fraudulent practices to: prevent or inappropriately influence the independent assessment of a piece of scholarly work by an independent peer; inappropriately attribute authorship of a piece of scholarly work; publish fabricated or plagiarised research. (COPE, 2021)

In cases of known peer review fraud, the article is often retracted. Retraction Watch, an independent blog that "Track[s] retractions as a window into the scientific process" (Retraction Watch, 2023), notes that there is a spectrum of reasons why publications may be retracted, including fake peer review or peer review fraud. Peer review fraud is, according to Retraction Watch, "the most titillating reason [for a retraction], and mercifully… rare, but when it happens the results can be devastating" (Oransky & Marcus, 2010). The pressures to "publish or perish" and labor issues may be to blame for the onset of this rare, but not impossible, contemporary issue of peer review fraud.

Beyond issues of labor, reviewers are also often faced with ethical dilemmas, and complex internal experiences, and placed in a position of power and privilege, where they are expected to be the neutral party; an expectation that is rarely realistic: "we would

assert that pursuing a goal of neutrality or objectivity as a reviewer is not even comfortable…This mundane work…[is] complex and difficult" (Itchuaqiyaq & Walton, 2021, p. 391). Additionally, Bryson and Clem (2022) reflect on the outcome of an anti-racist peer review training through a framework of virtue ethics. In response to a training participant's unkind review, Bryson and Clem recognized that this disconnect may have been the result of "assuming that everyone will interpret and enact virtuous behavior similarly" (p. 93). They argue that a shared definition of ethics and inclusive action would assist in cultivating more ethical peer review processes.

Regardless, issues with peer review remain consistent, and scholars have begun rethinking the ways in which we approach the process, but in praxis through policies, and in theory through communications and research.

Experiments and Futures for Equitable Publishing Processes

Given the oppressive and flawed structures of the publishing process, particularly peer review, how do we begin to rebuild more equitable publishing processes? Some scholars have argued for increased training or workshops for peer reviewers. For instance, Yoon et al. (2021) explored the possibility of a peer review process that was both academically rigorous and "motivating and joyous" (p. 207) through a hands-on workshop. The workshop intended to develop rules that the reviewers would follow as they reviewed a special issue of a journal. Participants were led through exercises, which worked to focus on the tensions inherent in the review process. However, Yoon et al. also reflected that though the workshop was a success, in that participants began to recognize and potentially rethink the issues with peer review, many tensions remain as it relates to the peer review process at large, including the power hierarchies of editing and reviewing.

Power remains an important factor in editorial work (Pemberton, 2022) and an editorial

decision has to be made in some way, which may presume the editor to be at the top of

the hierarchy. However, many aspects of the publishing process are dictated by pre-set

rules, guidelines, and policies that are often developed by a multiplicity of stakeholders

but are also often not communicated to the primary stakeholders (i.e., authors, reviewers,

etc.), including peer review processes.

Toward more Transparent Peer Review

Holst, Eggleton, and Harris (2022) proposed one such check related to power and

hierarchy through their idea of transparent peer review, "a method where readers can see

the full peer review history, including reviewer reports, editor decision letters and the

authors' responses alongside the published article" (p. 2). This approach allows authors

and reviewers to opt into the process. Though this particular option was successful, the

journals still offer the traditional "double-blind" review stating, "Combining the two

approaches will help mitigate against conscious and unconscious bias and will stimulate

greater diversity and greater accountability" (p. 4). Though alternative methods are being

considered, the traditional anonymous peer review process remains integral.

Arguments for Open Peer Review

Others have considered alternative forms of peer review, such as open peer review,

proposed by Ross-Hellauer in 2017 to be more in line with the ideas of open science,

which includes "making reviewer and author identities open, publishing review reports

and enabling greater participation in the peer review process" (p. 1). For instance, a top

journal in literary studies, *Shakespeare Quarterly*, in a 2010 special issue devoted to

Shakespeare and new media, offered authors the opportunity to take part in an open peer

review process (Cohen, 2010; Howard, 2010). Authors who opted in had their (not yet

accepted) essays posted online and "a core group of experts… were invited to post their

signed comments on the Web site MediaCommons, a scholarly digital network" (Cohen,

2010, para. 5). 41 people made more than 350 comments, many of which were responded

to by the manuscript authors. The essays were then reviewed by the editors assigned by

the journal, who ultimately made the final publication decision (Cohen, 2010). Though

open peer review is not utilized by many in the academic community, experiments have

proven successful, in that transparency in the process has been increased, and many

industry members participated, which resulted in the successful publishing of the revised

essays. However, authors would lack the privacy and confidentiality they would under

the anonymous peer review system (Shatz, 2004), which may increase the chance of

biased reviews. Moreover, critics of open peer review argue that commentators may not

be so-called experts on the topic: "are those who have nothing more pressing to do with

their time than this really the ones we want to trust to perform such a critical [quality

control] function for us all" (Harnad, 2000).

Inclusive Publishing Policies: The Most Successful Change?

Perhaps the most successful change has been the implementation of more inclusive

publishing policy. For instance, many in the field of writing studies have considered

rebuilding these flawed systems by arguing for the supplementation of policy with

strategies for ethical, anti-racist peer review practices. Policy is a form of technology

developed to "provide a cure for problems that… are both 'universal and particular'"

(Williams, 2009, p. 451). The institution of academic publishing relies on policy

documents often referred to as procedures and processes (e.g., peer review guidelines/reviewer guidelines, manuscript submission guidelines, production guidelines, etc.). The ARRH supplements policy by forwarding explicit guidance on anti-racist practices for editors, reviewers, and authors (specifically addressing academic reviewing). In addition, CCCCs has released a statement on editorial ethics, which was shaped primarily by the ARRH, with the goal of "[opening up] a conversation about the complicated ethical issues that often emerge in the process of soliciting work, reviewing contributions to journals and edited collections, providing feedback, and guiding authors toward publication" (CCCCs, n.d.). Both documents discuss multiple aspects of the publishing process including editors synthesizing/editing peer review feedback; mentoring/support of authors through the publishing process; guidelines on how to recognize the labor of multiple stakeholders involved in the publishing process; and discussions of ethical concerns in publishing. The ARRH is helpful for editors, journals, reviewers, and authors to consider: "What would a system of inclusivity, rather than gatekeeping and disciplining, look like?" (ARRH, 2021).

Moreover, there are specific interventions in the publishing process that are recommended by these guidelines, particularly as it relates to peer review. For instance, the ARRH recommends that "Editors send all reviewer feedback and editorial framing of reviews to authors and reviewers while applying anti-racist editorial judgment on if and how to send the feedback in cases of racist reviews." The ARRH thus supplements policy by forwarding explicit guidance on anti-racist practices for editors, reviewers, and authors, and begins the conversation of how to make the publishing process, particularly publishing policy surrounding peer review, more inclusive.

Despite a focus on the pitfalls of peer review and ways to supplement said pitfalls with policy, there is a gap in research as it relates to successful and positive publishing experiences despite unhelpful, problematic, or otherwise harmful peer review experiences. In other words, what can turn an unhelpful, problematic, or harmful peer review experience into an overall positive publishing experience? To answer this question, I, and the field at large, needed to understand what's at stake, which is the experiences of the most vulnerable in our field.

CHAPTER 3

STUDY 1 AND 2

Study 1: Textual Analysis

Introduction

To answer the research question: what can turn an unhelpful, problematic, or harmful peer review experience into an overall positive publishing experience? I performed a textual analysis on the publishing guidelines from a sample of academic journals in the field of writing studies. I looked for structures within the guidelines that the journals' put in place to mitigate negative review experiences. These could be policies like protecting the identity of reviewers or employing an anti-racist reviewing heuristic. Understanding what negative review experiences policies aim to mitigate is integral to being able to understand how to replicate positive publishing experiences. Moreover, understanding what experiences journal policies aim to mitigate is integral to understanding if any gaps exist between academic policies and author experiences (Study 2 explicated below). To that end, I focused on a textual analysis of the review procedures, guidelines, and policies of six journals in the field of writing studies:

- *Journal of Business and Technical Communication* (JBTC)
- *Present Tense: A Journal of Rhetoric in Society*
- *WPA: Writing Program Administration*
- *Kairos: A Journal of Rhetoric, Technology, and Pedagogy*
- *Communication Design Quarterly* (CDQ)
- *Technical Communication*

The selection criteria for the journals under analysis was 1) refereed, 2) within writing studies, and 3) have publicly available policies online (via the journal website).

Additionally, I sampled the journals under analysis for variation utilizing purposeful

sampling (Leavy, 2017) as it relates to field, publication history, publishing format, and

commitment to the ARRH (refer to Table 1). For instance, *Technical Communication* is a

journal with a long publication history, and *Present Tense: A Journal of Rhetoric in*

Society is a relatively new journal. Moreover, I chose two journals in the field of

technical communication, two journals in the field of rhetoric, a journal in the field of

writing program administration, and a journal in the field of communication, as well as at

least one journal that has signaled their commitment to the ARRH and at least one that

has not. For this research, purposeful sampling was important as "seeking out the best

cases for the study produces the best data, and research results are the direct result of the

cases sampled" (Patton, 2015). Moreover, the field of writing studies is large and many

journals approach publishing in a variety of ways. In order to make a generalizable claim,

I needed to sample for variety utilizing purposeful sampling criteria to maximize

efficiency and validity (Morse & Niehaus, 2009).

Table 1. Sampling of Journals under Analysis

Journal Name	Field of Interest	Publication History	Format (print/online)	Commitment to the ARRH
JBTC	Technical Communication	36 years (1987)	Print & Online	No public commitment.
Present Tense	Rhetoric	13 years (2010)	Online	No public commitment.
WPA	Writing Program Administration	45 years (1978)	Print & Online	Yes (Signaled commitment in materials & on ARRH Commitment page)

Kairos	Rhetoric	27 years (1996)	Online	Yes (Signaled commitment in materials & on ARRH Commitment page)
CDQ	Communication	10 years (2013)	Print & Online	Commitment made to general anti-racist reviewer practices. No explicit commitment to the ARRH.
Technical Communication	Technical Communication	66 years (1957)	Print & Online	No public commitment.

Through this analysis, I worked to identify the overlaps between the guidelines of inclusive publishing processes (The Anti-Racist Reviewing Heuristic) and the journal policies as these overlaps identify places in the process that journals in the field are already perhaps addressing regarding ways in which the publishing process is less inclusive (particularly peer review). For instance, if a journal states in their policies that they encourage citation practices that represent diverse canons (Theme A below) then they are working to address the issue of academia continuing to "cit[e] the same central homogeneous canon by default" (Moore, Cagle, & Lowman, 2023, p. 328). Moreover, and perhaps more importantly, the overlaps identify under-addressed areas. The overlaps thus reveal what "negative" review experiences do academic publishing guidelines aim to prevent or mitigate?

Coding by the Six themes of the Anti-Racist Reviewing Heuristic

To begin this textual analysis, I gathered the publicly available documents from the six journals in the field of writing studies and compared the documents to the six themes of the ARRH:

A. Recognize a range of expertise and encourage citation practices that represent diverse canons, epistemological foundations, and ways of knowing.
B. Recognize, intervene in, and/or prevent harmful scholarly work—both in publication processes and in published scholarship.
C. Establish and state clear but flexible contingency plans for review processes that prioritize humanity over production.
D. Make the review process transparent.
E. Value the labor of those involved in the review process.
F. Editors commit to inclusivity among reviewers and in editorial board makeup.

For context, the ARRH was developed by technical and professional communication (TPC) scholars and emerged directly from challenges made by three scholars of TPC, Angela Haas in her 2020 ATTW "Call to Action to Redress Anti-Blackness and White Supremacy," and Natasha Jones and Miriam Williams's 2020 blog post "A Just Use of Imagination." Haas (2020), as ATTW President stated, "I call on our non-Black membership to mobilize our (proximity to) white privilege and use our rhetoric and technical communication skills to redress anti-Blackness in our spheres of influence" (para. 1). Furthermore, Haas asked ATTW members to "plan" and "do" tangible tasks that "directly redress anti-Blackness in your spheres of micro, meso, and macro level influence, advocate for the human and legal rights of Black people, and support Black communities and organizations" (para. 2). Jones and Williams (2020) echo this redressing and call for a just use of imagination stating "The just use of imagination does not solely rebuild and reform. Instead, the just use of imagination simultaneously supports the deconstruction and abolishment of oppressive practices, systems, and

institutions" (para. 5). The ARRH works to redress anti-Blackness as Haas stated and supports the deconstruction of oppressive practices in academic publishing in particular.

Moreover, the ideas, stories and scenarios described in the ARRH are applicable to many publishing situations, which is perhaps best shown by the author's citing of Ibram X Kendi and the utilizing of Kendi's definitions of racist policies vs. anti-racist policies, racist ideas vs. anti-racist ideas, and racism vs. antiracism. Kendi, an author, professor, and activist, is perhaps one of the most well-known scholars of anti-racism. Not only are Kendi's definitions known and utilized by the academic community, but they are widespread across multiple other contexts including governmental and educational. The citing of Kendi at the beginning of the document furthers the applicability of the ARRH beyond the context of publishing in TPC.

The ARRH is split into six themes (a-f), with specific anti-racist moves for editors and reviewers that fit under each theme. For instance, under theme a: Recognize a range of expertise and encourage citation practices that represent diverse canons, epistemological foundations, and ways of knowing, the heuristic also lists a specific scenario: "Reviewers and editors mentor authors on how to frame articles within the context of field conversations." Other similar scenarios are also listed with each theme.

To perform this textual analysis, I first visited the website of each journal and searched for and read through the publicly available documents twice (submission guidelines, reviewer guidelines/criteria, information for authors pages, etc.). It was important to my analysis to approach the documents like an author or reviewer might. In other words, I wanted to analyze *just* the publicly available documents rather than analyze journal processes against their documents. It is possible that many of the journals

under analysis enact the themes below in process and they simply are not documented. As I explain further below action is just as, if not more, important than simply documenting inclusive procedures. However, when we consider early-career scholars, they may be less likely to reach out to editors or journals about their publication processes. Thus, I sought out to approach the publishing process much like how I hypothesize an early-career scholar would; by accessing publicly available documentation on the journal website.

On the first read-through, I memo-ed information (making note of direct quotes and highlighting) that I was noticing that may be related to the themes of the ARRH. On the second read through, I made more explicit note of which previously highlighted sections were *explicit* enactments of each theme of the ARRH. In this analysis, explicit refers to enactment that is very clear, and did not lead me to question whether the theme was enacted or not. As strategic ambiguity (Davenport & Leitch 2005; Edenfield, 2018; Eisenberg, 1984) continues to be a persistent problem in policy development, it was important to this analysis to pinpoint enactment that was explicit vs. strategically ambiguous.

To that end, I analyzed the texts for explicit inclusion based on each theme (i.e., a publicly available statement that increases the transparency of peer review). From there, I categorized and coded the information I highlighted and made note of which theme it related to and why. Overall, this initial analysis allowed me to begin to identify the overlaps between the guidelines of inclusive publishing processes and the procedures, guidelines, and policies of specific journals in writing studies.

Below, I explain how the journal guidelines overlap with the themes from the ARRH and provide each theme followed by a brief discussion of if specific documents/policies/processes, etc. from the journals address the theme, and end with a discussion of future research implications. This brief analysis will illuminate for audiences, and the publishing community overall, the ways in which the guidelines for academic publishing have already begun the process of addressing racism, discrimination, and overall unethical publishing processes (particularly peer review) as suggested by the ARRH.

Analysis

For each theme listed below, I include an assessment (enacted or not) of the guidelines and policies from each of the journals under analysis that relate to the theme. It's important to note that 'enacted,' in the context of this analysis, does not mean that the inclusive work of the journals is finished. As Stevens (2022) states, "policy documents cannot fully resolve implicit and explicit discrimination" (p. 115). However, the more inclusive publishing policy and procedure documents become, the more likely academia will be to follow suit. And much of this inclusive work must be iterative. It isn't enough to draft the documents once and move on; inclusion work is a continuous process and one that, like care, requires action.

The assessment mirrors my initial reading of each document, where I took note of each passage that spoke to the theme. In this initial read through, I made note of various moves including those that were inclusive, but perhaps less explicit, as well as the explicit documentation that related to the ARRH.

I then provide a discussion of whether the material *explicitly* addresses the theme of the ARRH. The discussion section mirrors my second reading of each document where I noted any *explicit* inclusion of each theme as described in the ARRH. At the end of each thematic analysis, I offer recommendations relevant to all the journals under analysis, and other journals in the field of writing studies, to further enact each theme of the ARRH.

Recognize a range of expertise and encourage citation practices that represent diverse canons, epistemological foundations, and ways of knowing (ARRH Theme A)

JOURNAL OF BUSINESS AND TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION

Finding: Not enacted.

In the *Journal of Business and Technical Communication's* (JBTC) publicly available document, "Review Criteria for Article-Length Studies (Research Articles)," the journal asks reviewers to assess "To what extent has the author cited and discussed the relevant literature? Please indicate any additional sources that should be consulted" (JBTC, n.d.). I initially analyzed this statement as one that begins to overlap with theme a of the ARRH. I did not find any additional statement in publicly available guidelines that related to theme a of the ARRH. This statement is not explicit in its encouragement of diverse canons, epistemological foundations, and ways of knowing, and there is no other statement recognizing a range of expertise or encouragement of citing diverse canons in JBTC's publicly available materials.

The advice to reviewers to "indicate any additional sources that should be consulted" is a strong transparency move that previews the type of review that 1) the reviewer might provide and 2) that the journal is looking for. In other words, the journal is interested in the reviewer evaluating the types of sources the author is utilizing in their

manuscript. However, it is up to the individual reviewer to recommend and encourage the citing of diverse sources. Some reviewers may very well take it upon themselves to encourage authors to cite diverse scholars/ways of knowing/etc., however, it is left vague and is not an explicit move toward theme a of the ARRH. I assessed theme a as not enacted.

PRESENT TENSE: A JOURNAL OF RHETORIC IN SOCIETY

Finding: Enacted.

In my initial analysis, I found that *Present Tense* includes multiple submission topics that the journal is currently interested in receiving, including social justice issues involving language, power, minority issues and minority rhetorics, rhetoric in national and international politics, and non-Western Rhetorics. These topics of interest seem to lean toward recognizing a range of expertise, as they explicitly encourage a wider breadth of submissions that *Present Tense* is interested in, particularly submissions on inclusion, justice, and topics related to anti-racism. The encouragement of a wider breadth of submission represents a move toward recognizing a range of expertise as inclusive topics may encourage more inclusive experiences. I assessed theme a as enacted.

WPA: WRITING PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION

Finding: Enacted.

I found that *WPA*'s publicly available reviewer guidelines document asks reviewers to rate whether the manuscript, "engages relevant perspectives and scholarship from diverse authors, including BIPOC, multiply-marginalized (gender, race, disability, sexual identity, etc.) and underrepresented scholars." Moreover, the reviewer guidelines

document asks reviewers, "What additional resources might help the author(s) strengthen the manuscript in this area?" and includes Cana Uluak Itchuaqiyaq's multiply marginalized and underrepresented (MMU) Scholar List and Bibliography for reviewers and authors to reference. Both of these moves relate to the encouragement of citation practices that represent diverse canons. Thus both statements represent explicit enactment of this theme. I assessed theme a as enacted.

KAIROS

Finding: Enacted.

Kairos's guideline documents make multiple moves toward recognizing a range of expertise and encouraging inclusive citation practices, including an encouragement to "consider expanding the repertoire of works [authors] cite to ensure a broader representation of voices, ideas, approaches, methods, and scholarship." *Kairos* includes three resources for authors to achieve this expansion: Cana Uluak Itchuaqiyaq's MMU Scholar Bibliography, Andrew Hollinger's Alternative Texts and Critical Citations for Anti-Racist Pedagogies, and Cruz Medina's NCTE CCCC Latinx Caucus Bibliography. This encouragement of diverse citation practices, plus the inclusion of resources, explicitly enact theme a of the ARRH.

COMMUNICATION DESIGN QUARTERLY (CDQ)

Finding: Enacted.

In my initial reading of *CDQ*'s document, I found *CDQ*'s reviewer guidelines document that states, "Are there any sources the reader should be citing (but is not) in examining the ideas covered in the manuscript, and do those sources include a diverse group of

authors and perspectives?" This statement begins the work of encouraging inclusive

citing practices in the articles that *CDQ* publishes. Thus this statement represents an

explicit enactment of this theme. I assessed theme a as enacted.

TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION

Finding: Enacted.

Similar to the other journals under analysis, *Technical Communication* includes, in their

publicly available reviewer guidelines, a statement on citation usage: "Does the

manuscript demonstrate a conscientious effort to be inclusive of new and

underrepresented authors in its citation of previous work on the subject? (Authors could

consult a bibliography such as MMU Bibliography by Cana Uluak Itchuaqiyaq." This

statement begins the work of encouraging inclusive citing practices in the articles that

Technical Communication publishes. Thus this statement represents an explicit enactment

of this theme. I assessed theme a as enacted.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Over half of the journals (n = 5) under analysis explicitly enacted theme a of the ARRH
(refer to Table 2).

Table 2. ARRH theme a in journal guidelines

JBTC	Present Tense	WPA	Kairos	CDQ	Technical Communication
No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Moving forward, regarding theme a, journals might choose to include an explicit explanation of what sources authors could cite with the goal of more diverse citation practices, and which sources reviewers could recommend, that relate to diversity and inclusive citation practices. For instance, many of the journals under analysis have included explicit references to inclusive/diverse scholar repositories such as Cana Uluak Itchuaqiyaq's MMU Scholar List, Andrew Hollinger's Alternative Texts and Critical Citations for Anti-Racist Pedagogies, and Cruz Medina's NCTE CCCC Latinx Caucus Bibliography. Providing inclusive lists, like those listed previously, provides an important inclusive resource for reviewers to reference when asked to assess the diversity of an author's sources, as well as a resource for authors to reference when asked to increase the diversity and inclusiveness of their references.

Regarding recognizing a range of expertise, journals could encourage reviewers to read a manuscript without inserting judgment related to methodology, positionality, etc., and editors in the field could resist accepting reviews that make these moves.

Recognize, intervene in and/or prevent harmful scholarly work—both in publication processes and in published scholarship (ARRH Theme B)

JBTC

Finding: Enacted.

In their submission guidelines, the journal claims that "JBTC's editorial staff charge themselves, reviewers, and authors to try to recognize oppressive language and to eliminate it at the manuscript stage." This statement represents a move toward recognizing, intervening, and preventing harmful scholarly work. Ideally, *JBTC*'s

commitment would result in preventing harmful scholarly works from being published by the journal. Thus, this commitment represents explicit enactment of theme b.

PRESENT TENSE

Finding: Not enacted.

In my initial analysis, I found that *Present Tense* does not currently include guidelines for recognizing, intervening, and/or preventing harmful scholarly work in their publicly available materials. Without an explicit statement recognizing, intervening in, or preventing harmful scholarly work, this theme has not been enacted. It's possible that the journal performs this work, but it is not documented in publicly available materials.

WPA

Finding: Enacted.

WPA's reviewer guidelines ask, "Are there aspects or areas of the manuscript that might unintentionally do harm to or create trauma for readers? How might the author(s) revise these areas?" This move represents an explicit one toward intervening in and preventing harmful scholarly work from being published by WPA. Thus theme b has been enacted.

KAIROS

Finding: Not enacted.

Kairos has many inclusive statements, particularly for anti-racist publishing. However, it was difficult to find an explicit statement that recognizes or intervenes against harmful scholarly work. Without an explicit statement recognizing, intervening in, or preventing

harmful scholarly work, this theme has not been enacted. It's possible that the journal

performs this work, but it is not documented in publicly available materials.

CDQ

Finding: Enacted.

In *CDQ*'s statement "on inclusivity and anti-racism for authors, readers, and reviewers,"

the journal makes several statements that relate to recognizing and intervening in harmful

scholarly work including:

> CDQ will not feature content that includes language that harms marginalized
> groups except in specific cases in which that language is being directly quoted
> from primary sources for evidence in a broader argument. In other words, unless
> you are directly quoting some kind of oppressive rhetoric to build an argument,
> CDQ will not publish that language… Harmful language may include but is not
> limited to, transphobic, racist, misogynistic, ableist, xenophobic, ageist, and other
> forms of oppressive language not listed here. Please be conscious of your word
> choice.

Both statements represent strong moves toward intervening in and preventing harmful

scholarship in published works. Thus theme b has been explicitly enacted.

TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION

Finding: Not enacted.

Technical Communication includes a few different inclusive statements in their publicly

available guidelines, such as: "As part of our mission, we acknowledge the value and

dignity of all individuals and strive for an environment of social justice that respects

diverse traditions, heritages, and experiences." However, *Technical Communication* does

not include any further statement related to intervening in and/or preventing harmful

scholarly works. Thus, this theme has not been enacted. It's possible that the journal

performs this work, but it is not documented in publicly available materials.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Half of the journals (n = 3) under analysis explicitly enacted theme b of the ARRH (refer
to Table 3).

Table 3: ARRH Theme b in journal guidelines

JBTC	Present Tense	WPA	Kairos	CDQ	Technical Communication
Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No

My strongest recommendation for the journals under analysis, and journals in the field of

writing studies, would be to increase the transparency of their editing processes and

include explicit statements of editing moves that the journal makes which intend to

prevent the publishing of potentially harmful scholarship.

Moreover, the journals could add guidelines for reviewers that asks them to assess

an author's methods, particularly when authors may be working with marginalized and

underrepresented communities, to prevent further harm related to communities who may

be consistently under research rather than in charge of the research (Chicago Beyond,

2019).

*Establish and state clear but flexible contingency plans for review processes that
prioritize humanity over production (ARRH Theme C)*

JBTC

Finding: Not enacted.

In their publicly available materials, *JBTC* does not include a statement about flexible contingency plans for review that prioritize humanity over production. In other words, JBTC does not currently include explicit explanation of flexibility, particularly for reviewers regarding deadlines, in their publicly available documents. As statement that values humanity over production would recognize the human behind the reviewer (who has job constraints, publishing constraints, etc.) and is a strong inclusive move. Without an explicit explanation of contingency plans or review plans that prioritize humanity over production, this theme has not been enacted. It is possible that the journal has peer review contingency plans, but they are not currently documented in policy.

PRESENT TENSE

Finding: Not enacted.

Present Tense makes the strong move to include an explanation of the review process for the journal and includes the following statement: "Reviewers strive to provide feedback to the Editor within 3-4 months in order to facilitate timely publication." However, there is no other statement about flexibility or contingency plans for reviewers.

Though an explanation of the review process, and this statement are both moves toward transparency with the review process, neither explicitly showcases the journal's peer review contingency plans and/or how they prioritize humanity over production. It is possible that the journal has peer review contingency plans, but they are not currently documented in policy.

WPA

Finding: Not enacted.

WPA makes the strong transparency move to include their reviewer guidelines publicly available on their website. However, *WPA* does not include a statement about flexible contingency plans for review that prioritize humanity over production. Though having their reviewer guidelines publicly available is a move toward transparency, without an explicit explanation of contingency plans or review plans that prioritize humanity over production, this theme has not been enacted.

KAIROS

Finding: Not enacted.

Kairos makes the strong move to include reviewer guidelines and specify that their review process is two anonymized reviewers for each manuscript. However, they do not include, in their publicly available materials, a clear statement for valuing humanity over production in their peer review processes.

Though including their reviewer guidelines and including an explanation of the process is a strong move toward transparency, without an explicit explanation of contingency plans or review plans that prioritize humanity over production, this theme has not been enacted.

CDQ

Finding: Not enacted.

CDQ includes reviewer guidelines and specifies that their review process is two anonymized reviewers for each manuscript, which begins the work of making the peer review process transparent. However, they do not include, in their publicly available materials, a clear statement for valuing humanity over production in their peer review

processes. Though including reviewer guidelines is a strong move toward transparency, without an explicit explanation of contingency plans or review plans that prioritize humanity over production, this theme has not been enacted.

TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION

Finding: Not enacted.

Like many of the other journals under analysis, *Technical Communication* includes reviewer guidelines and describes the specifics of their review process. However, they do not include an explicit statement valuing humanity over production, or contingency plans, in their peer review processes. Though including reviewer guidelines and specifying the review process are strong moves toward transparency, without an explicit explanation of contingency plans or review plans that prioritize humanity over production, this theme has not been enacted.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

None of the journals (n = 0) under analysis explicitly enacted theme c of the ARRH (refer to Table 4).

Table 4: ARRH Theme c in journal guidelines

JBTC	Present Tense	WPA	Kairos	CDQ	Technical Communication
No	No	No	No	No	No

The journals under analysis (and journals in the field of writing studies) might choose to develop and publish contingency plans that take into account the fact that peer reviewers

have multiple roles that they perform, in order to explicitly enact this theme. In addition,

such contingency plans might acknowledge the labor issues that surround the peer review

process and recognize that reviewers are performing unpaid labor.

For instance, the University Press of Colorado (UPC) includes the following

statement in their description of the publication process:

> Because we value the labor of both our authors and editors and the scholars who review our work, our timelines are often flexible. While we strive to move projects forward as quickly as possible, we recognize that the labor involved in reading and evaluating work can be in conflict with institutional labor, caretaking responsibilities, and unforeseen complications and, as such, acknowledge that timelines can extend. If there are external pressures, such as job market needs and tenure and promotion deadlines that we should be aware of, please communicate this to your editor and we'll do our best to assist with the timing in whatever ways we can. (University Press of Colorado, 2022).

This statement is an example of one way journals in the field of writing studies might

begin the work of enacting theme c of the ARRH.

Make the review process transparent (ARRH Theme D)

JBTC

Finding: Enacted.

In their publicly available materials, *JBTC* has included their reviewer criteria. This move

works to make the review process transparent for both authors and reviewers of the

journal. *JBTC* has begun to enact this theme and has made the review process a bit more

transparent for authors and reviewers. However, a breakdown of the process of peer

review/relevant timelines is not included in publicly available materials as further

recommended by the ARRH. However, as including reviewer guidelines is a strong

transparency move, I assess this theme as enacted.

Finding: Enacted.

On *Present Tense*'s "Submissions" webpage, they include a section on "Review Process," which includes the steps the journal takes to review each manuscript. The section describes not only the process (when the manuscript is sent to reviewers, the editor makes the final decision, etc.) but also describes the time it might take for each step. For instance, "Reviewers strive to provide feedback to the Editor within 3-4 months in order to facilitate timely publication." *Present Tense* has done the important transparent work of including information on their specific review process. Though the reviewer criteria/guidelines are not publicly available as further recommended by the ARRH. However, as including a breakdown of the process is a strong transparency move, I assess this theme as enacted.

WPA

Finding: Enacted.

WPA includes reviewer guidelines for both reviewers and authors publicly available on their website. *WPA* has done the important work of providing reviewer guidelines for reviewers and authors. Though a breakdown of the peer review process/relevant timelines is not included in publicly available materials as further recommended by the ARRH. However, as including reviewer guidelines is a strong transparency move, I assess this theme as enacted.

KAIROS

Finding: Enacted.

Kairos has included multiple moves toward transparency with review processes. For instance, in their "Editorial Board and Review Process" webpage, they break down their three-tiered review process, beginning with when editors receive a submission to assigning a staff member to work with the author toward publication. In addition, *Kairos* includes their "Peer-Review Heuristic," which gives authors an important preview of what reviewers will review for. *Kairos* has included both a description of the peer review process and their peer review guidelines and has thus enacted this theme.

CDQ

Finding: Enacted

CDQ includes the reviewer guidelines for both reviewers and authors publicly available on their website and relays that "All original research and experience reports go through a full double-anonymous peer review process." *CDQ* has enacted theme d of the ARRH by including the reviewer guidelines for prospective authors and reviewers. Though a breakdown of the peer review process/relevant timelines is not included in publicly available materials as further recommended by the ARRH.

TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION

Finding: Enacted.

Technical communication includes both the reviewer guidelines that the journal provides, as well as a breakdown of their "10-step procedure to assure consistency of manuscript reviews." By including both a breakdown of the process as well as the reviewer guidelines, *Technical Communication* has enacted theme d.

Conclusions and Recommendations

All of the journals (n = 6) under analysis explicitly enacted theme d of the ARRH (refer to Table 5).

Table 5: ARRH theme d in journal guidelines

JBTC	Present Tense	WPA	Kairos	CDQ	Technical Communication
Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Many of the journals under analysis include either a description of their peer review process or their reviewer guidelines, and only Kairos and Technical Communication included both. Though I assessed either option as a way to enact theme 4, the journals that do not include both moves may choose to increase their transparency and inclusivity by either including their guidelines or writing out their review process (whichever was not previously done).

Value the labor of those involved in the review process (ARRH Theme E)

JBTC

Finding: Not enacted.

JBTC does not include, in their publicly available materials, a statement valuing the labor of those involved in the review process. It is possible that the editor has chosen to include this statement elsewhere, but it is not currently available online and thus theme e has not been enacted.

PRESENT TENSE

Finding: Not enacted.

Present Tense does not currently have a publicly available statement valuing the labor of those involved in the review process. It is possible that the editor has chosen to include this statement elsewhere, but it is not currently available online and thus theme e has not been enacted.

WPA

Finding: Enacted.

In *WPA*'s reviewer guidelines, the first line states, "Thank you for agreeing to review a manuscript for *WPA: Writing Program Administration*. The journal would not exist without your work. We appreciate it greatly." This represents a move toward valuing the labor of those involved in the review process and *WPA* has thus enacted this theme.

KAIROS

Finding: Not enacted.

Kairos does not have a publicly available statement valuing the labor of those involved in the review process. It is possible that the editor has chosen to include this statement elsewhere, but it is not currently available online and thus theme e has not been enacted.

CDQ

Finding: Enacted.

In *CDQ*'s reviewer guidelines, the first line states, "Thank you for agreeing to review a manuscript for *Communication Design Quarterly* (CDQ). We appreciate your time." This

statement represents a move toward valuing the labor of those involved in the review process, and *CDQ* has thus enacted theme e.

TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION

Finding: Not enacted.

Technical communication does not have a publicly available statement valuing the labor of those involved in the review process. It is possible that the editor has chosen to include this statement elsewhere, but it is not currently available online and thus theme e has not been enacted.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A quarter of the journals (n = 2) under analysis explicitly enacted theme e of the ARRH (refer to Table 6).

Table 6: ARRH theme e in journal guidelines

JBTC	Present Tense	WPA	Kairos	CDQ	Technical Communication
No	No	Yes	No	Yes	No

Though I assessed *CDQ* and *Technical Communication* as enacting this tactic, all of the journals I evaluated, and journals in the field of writing studies can do more to value the labor of those involved in the review process. Similar to diversity statements, which have been critiqued for being merely performative (Carnes, Fine, & Sheridan, 2019), statements of appreciation/thanks do not necessarily represent an active valuing of labor. Moreover, in considering the idea of virtue signaling, it's important to remember that

"unless words are matched with actions – mere signaling is insufficient" (Beem, 2022,

para. 8). In other words, actionable valuing is the more important move journals can

make.

Ethically, monetary payment may not be appropriate for many reasons (discussed

below), however, labor can be valued in other ways. For instance, some journals have

offered reviewers a letter of thanks which can be included in a scholars' annual review or

promotion and tenure materials. Providing something of value to reviewers, and being

transparent about what is being provided, is a move toward more actionable, and less

performative, valuing of the labor of peer reviewers.

Editors commit to inclusivity among reviewers and in editorial board makeup (ARRH Theme F)

JBTC

Finding: Not enacted.

JBTC includes a webpage on its editorial board, including current editors, former editors,

and the entire editorial board. However, there is no statement of commitment to

inclusivity among reviewers and editorial board members. The editor of the journal could

very well have made this commitment elsewhere, but a statement committing to

inclusivity among reviewers and editorial board makeup is not available in the publicly

available guidelines for the journal at this time. Thus this theme has not been enacted.

PRESENT TENSE

Finding: Not enacted.

Like *JBTC, Present Tense* includes a web page that lists its editorial board, including

current editors, as well as review advisory board members. There is no publicly available

commitment to inclusivity among reviewers and editorial board makeup currently. The editor of the journal could very well have made this commitment elsewhere, but a statement committing to inclusivity among reviewers and editorial board makeup is not available in the publicly available guidelines for the journal at this time. Thus this theme has not been enacted.

WPA

Finding: Not enacted.

Similarly, *WPA* includes a breakdown of its editorial board members on the website. However, there is no publicly available commitment to inclusivity among reviewers and editorial board makeup currently. The editor of the journal could very well have made this commitment elsewhere, but a statement committing to inclusivity among reviewers and editorial board makeup is not available in the publicly available guidelines for the journal at this time. Thus this theme has not been enacted.

KAIROS

Finding: Enacted.

Kairos has included, in their Inclusivity Action Plan (last updated April 2022), that they will "continue to invite and train editorial board members from diverse races, ethnicities, cultures, and identities, adding and replacing members whenever a needed area for review presents itself, or annually, whichever comes first." This statement is a great move toward inclusivity, and *Kairos* has thus enacted this theme.

CDQ

Finding: Not enacted.

Like many of the other journals under analysis here, *CDQ* includes a breakdown of its editorial board members on the website. However, there is no publicly available commitment to inclusivity among reviewers and editorial board makeup currently. The editor of the journal could very well have made this commitment elsewhere, but a statement committing to inclusivity among reviewers and editorial board makeup is not available in the publicly available guidelines for the journal at this time. Thus this theme has not been enacted.

TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION

Finding: Not enacted.

Similarly, *Technical Communication* includes a breakdown of its editorial board members on the website. However, there is no publicly available commitment to inclusivity among reviewers and editorial board makeup currently. The editor of the journal could very well have made this commitment elsewhere, but a statement committing to inclusivity among reviewers and editorial board makeup is not available in the publicly available guidelines for the journal at this time. Thus this theme has not been enacted.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Less than a quarter of the journals (n = 1) under analysis explicitly enacted theme f of the ARRH (refer to Table 7).

Table 7: ARRH theme f in journal guidelines

JBTC	Present Tense	WPA	Kairos	CDQ	Technical Communication
No	No	No	Yes	No	No

Journals under analysis (and journals in the field of writing studies) might consider

committing to and signaling their commitment to a more diverse and inclusive editorial

board. To do this, journals might start by first developing a baseline understanding of the

diversity of the journal's editorial board, much like Walton and Itchuaqiyaq did for

Technical Communication Quarterly (Stevens & Walton, 2022). Editors can then identify

"thin areas" in the coverage of editorial board members (Stevens & Walton, 2022).

Results

Based on my analysis of *JBTC*, *Present Tense*, *WPA*, *Kairos*, *CDQ*, and *Technical

Communication's* publicly available materials according to the guidelines or themes set

forth in the anti-racist reviewing heuristic (ARRH), I observed, the following:

1. All six journals under analysis included publicly available materials that make the review process more transparent as suggested by the ARRH.
2. Half of the journals under analysis recognize, intervene in and/or prevent harmful scholarly work as suggested by the ARRH.
3. Only one of the journals under analysis, *Kairos,* included publicly available editor commitments to inclusivity among reviewers and in editorial board makeup as suggested by the ARRH.

Figure 1: Illustration of which ARRH themes have been enacted by which journals[2]
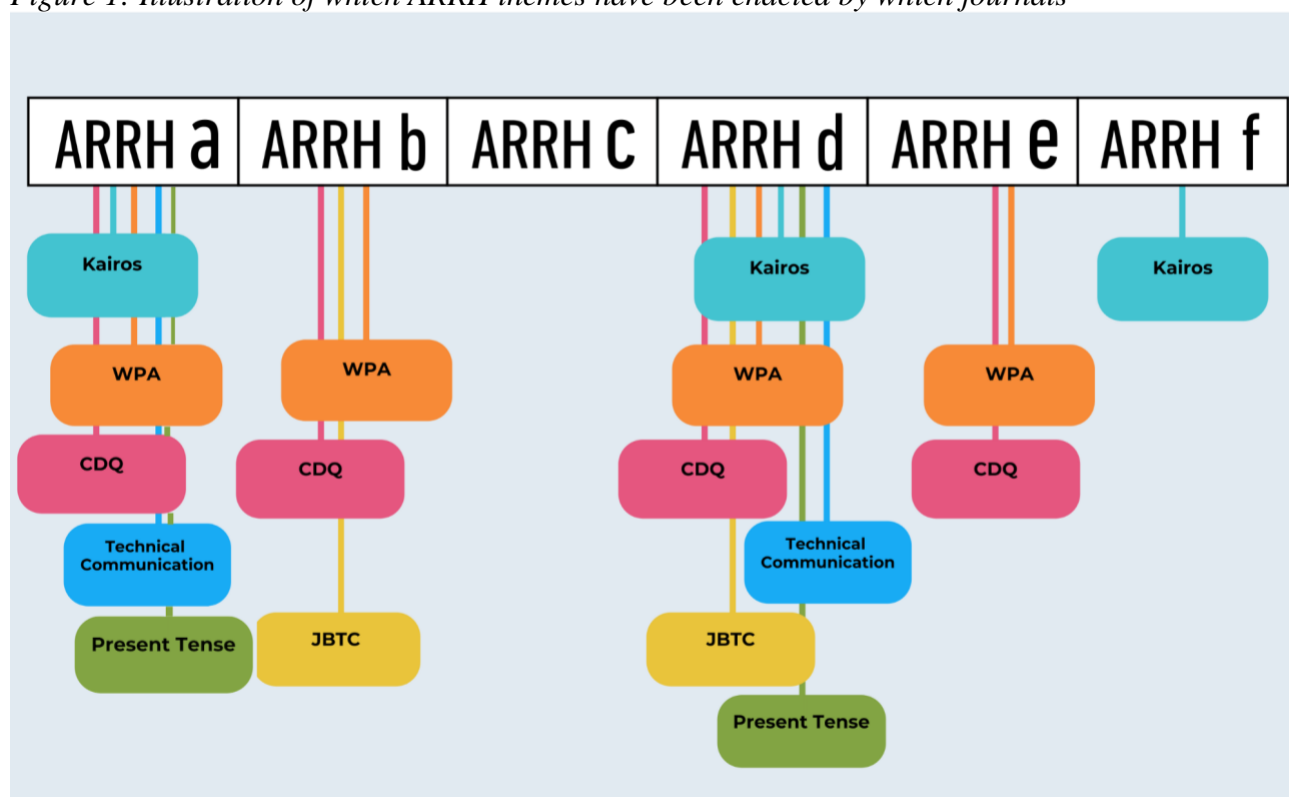
Discussion

Study 1 focuses on analyzing the publicly available materials of six journals in the field of writing studies, concentrating on the overlaps between academic journal guidelines and the guidelines of inclusive publishing practices and procedures.

Journals in the field of writing studies seem to prioritize peer review transparency with the goal of mitigating negative peer review experiences, as all six journals under analysis enacted theme d. However, that begs the question: is transparency enough to

---

[2] Six themes of the ARRH: a) Recognize a range of expertise and encourage citation practices that represent diverse canons, epistemological foundations, and ways of knowing; b) Recognize, intervene in, and/or prevent harmful scholarly work—both in publication processes and in published scholarship; c) Establish and state clear but flexible contingency plans for review processes that prioritize humanity over production; d) Make the review process transparent; e) Value the labor of those involved in the review process; f) Editors commit to inclusivity among reviewers and in editorial board makeup.

mitigate negative peer review experiences? Including peer review processes, timelines, and reviewer guidelines is a baseline move toward inclusion and journals in the field can work to further the inclusivity of the peer review process. For instance, in Chapter 5 I describe interventions into the process, where editors have intervened on behalf of authors to prevent harmful peer review experiences. One such intervention is the invitation for authors to speak with editors and discuss reviewer feedback. In study 2, I sought to find out if authors were reaching out to editors or how other parties were intervening for authors during the peer review process.

Moreover, none of the journals under analysis enacted Theme c: Establish and state clear but flexible contingency plans for review processes that prioritize humanity over production. One interesting finding (also explicated in the section below) is that all survey respondents (Study 2 below) served as reviewers in some capacity. It is important for the journals under analysis, and journals in the field of writing studies to remember that their authors are also their reviewers and prioritizing transparency for authors is a fantastic move, but so is valuing humanity over production for peer reviewers. This is not to imply that I don't recognize the balancing act a journal/editors must perform between recognizing the humanity of peer reviewers who may need extensions while also prioritizing swift publication processes that also value the demands placed on authors to publish and publish often. UPC's flexible policy (mentioned under "Conclusions and Recommendations" of theme c) that values not only the labor of reviewers, but their positionality as caretakers, authors themselves, etc., is perhaps the statement all journals should seek to write for their own contexts.

However, more research is needed, and my future research will expand upon this initial textual analysis, further revealing the key overlaps between journals in the field of writing studies and the guidelines of inclusive academic publishing processes.

The initial findings of this study will be of particular interest to journal editors and those who are part of the publishing community, particularly in writing studies, as the findings indicate areas of overlap between academic journals in writing studies and guidelines for inclusive publishing practices. These areas of overlap are important for all members of the publishing community to be aware of to understand the lengths that journals are currently going to in order to prioritize inclusivity with their processes and procedures. More importantly, this research begins to uncover areas where journal guidelines in writing studies and inclusive guidelines do not overlap, which will assist editors, and others in the publishing community, to begin to identify unfulfilled opportunities to make journal policies more inclusive. For instance, the journals in this initial example have begun to think of ways to "Recognize a range of expertise and encourage citation practices that represent diverse canons, epistemological foundations, and ways of knowing" (ARRH, 2021). Being aware of and working to change legacy, exclusionary (Moore et al., 2023), and overly political (Mott & Cockayne, 2017) citation practices is a step toward redressing oppressive publishing (and academic) processes and further overlaps with the recommendations of the ARRH.

Moreover, the results of this textual analysis establish the goals and best practices for both my survey questions in the next section and the design of the editor focus groups in Chapter 4.

Study 2: Survey

Introduction

> *I very much appreciated being told my piece was "littered with limitations" and "floating on entrepreneurial jargon." Thank you, Reviewer 2.*
>
> *I hope you publish this quote so that Reviewer 2 knows their alliteration has stuck with me for over a year now. Was their alliteration more important than actually helping me write better?*
>
> *That's the question I'd like them to stay up at night thinking about.*

-Study 2 Survey Respondent

In Study 2, I developed a survey (IRB # 13738) to understand what types of problematic review experiences those in the field of writing studies have experienced, to get a sense of the prevalence and variety of those experiences, and to ask authors in the field about their mitigation techniques. This survey was disseminated online via social media and writing studies listservs, and at two national conferences in the field of writing studies. All survey responses were collected anonymously, and respondents did not receive any incentive for their participation.

Methods

Survey Design

I designed and built the survey using the online survey tool Qualtrics. Questions on the survey were separated into four sections:

1. Negative Peer Review Experience(s)
2. Types of Problematic Peer Review
3. After Receiving Problematic Reviews, and
4. Demographic Information.

The survey asked 17 total questions, 8 questions about peer review experiences (sections 1-3), and 9 questions about demographic information (section 4). (Refer to Appendix A for survey questions). The first three sections of the survey focus on participants' negative publishing experiences. In other words, what made a review experience unproductive, problematic, and/or harmful?

It is important to note that I did not provide a comprehensive definition of "negative" or unproductive, problematic, and/or harmful within the survey or within recruitment materials. Rather, I invited respondents to indicate specific scenarios that they may have experienced, which were placed under three categories of "negative" review: unprofessional, discriminatory, and unhelpful/unproductive (refer to Table 8 below). These specific categories were drawn from my own experience working as a journal managing editor, as well as the Specific Knowledgeable and Kind (SKK) framework (Alexander et al., 2019), the ARRH, and Study 1 (described above). My experience and the documents began to develop a narrative for me of what types of review experiences authors may be having that could be considered unprofessional, discriminatory, and unhelpful/unproductive.

Table 8: Specific scenarios from inclusive guidelines and where they were placed categorically in the survey.

Category 1: Unprofessional	Category 2: Discriminatory	Category 3: Unhelpful/unproductive
The review comments were unclear and/or confusing.	The review included discriminatory and/or oppressive language such as racist or sexist language.	The reviewer unnecessarily compared the piece to another publication.

The review comments were exceedingly short.	The reviewer requested that the work be reframed through dominant forms of expertise.	The reviewer stated that the text was not relevant to the field (and did not offer revisionary feedback or explanation).
The review comments lacked thoughtful and/or helpful feedback.	The reviewer did not respect lived experience as a source of expertise.	The reviewer criticized the citing of texts such as social media posts, blogs, opinion pieces, etc.
The reviewer focused exclusively on the weaknesses of the piece and did not identify strengths.	The reviewer assumed the gender, nationality, ability, etc. of the author, and it seemed as if that assumption influenced the review comments.	The review comments were mean-spirited or cruel.
The review comments included unprofessional language.	The reviewer's comments focused exclusively on the writing ability, language proficiency, etc. of the author.	
Review comments made it seem that the reviewer did not fully/carefully read the piece.	The reviewer commented on unrelated qualities of the manuscript such as the nationality, gender, language, career level, etc., of the author.	
The review comments were exceedingly overdue by journal timelines.		
The reviewer requested I cite an irrelevant author/publication.		

Research suggests that scholars with marginalized identities may have more problematic review experiences (ARRH, 2021; Buggs, Sims, & Kramer, 2020; Yoon et al., 2020), so asking about identity categories is relevant to understanding problematic review experiences. I consulted multiple resources during the creation of the survey

questionnaire to ensure that the survey design remained inclusive and adhered to best practices. For instance, each demographic answer that was not a yes or no question provided an option for participants to self-describe, a move that research suggests works to empower the survey participant (Matsumoto, n.d.). Additionally, no demographic questions were required (i.e., forced answer), and all had options for "prefer not to answer," as recommended by multiple sources (Fisher, 2023; Frederick, 2020; Google Survey Help, 2023; Schusterman, 2020; University of Arizona, n.d.).

The pros and cons of open vs. closed questioning were also a consideration during design as "closed -ended questions often help with ease of scoring and coding responses" (Hughes et al., 2022, p. 233). However, is it also important to consider that "for closed-ended questions, participant responding may be influenced by the response options given, the order in which those response options are presented, and the number of response options" (p. 233). The response options were carefully weighed in each close-ended demographic question and multiple resources were consulted to assist in the decisions. For example, I included alphabetized response options for demographic questions were included to avoid "white" or "man" being the first option, which reinforces implicit bias (Schusterman, 2020). For each relevant demographic question, the phrase "Listed in alphabetical order" was also included to increase transparency in the survey design decision-making process (Schusterman, 2020). Also, "please select all that apply" was included for questions that are not yes or no answers (Fernandez et al., 2016).

Additionally, multiple sources recommended including a contextualizing statement at the beginning of the demographic information for both context and explanation (NCWIT). Thus, a short contextualizing paragraph at the beginning of the

demographic questions section was included to address this best practice and share with participants the reasoning behind asking for demographic information.

Overall, the survey demographic questions were kept short, with most answers appearing as multiple-choice, as "The sweet spot is to keep the survey to less than five minutes. This translates into about 15 questions. The average respondent is able to complete about 3 multiple choice questions per minute" (Fisher, 2023). Though demographic information is particularly important to finding intersections between the amount/type of problematic review experiences and intersections/types of marginalized identities, long surveys are less likely to be completed, so the questions on demographic information were limited.

Rather than combine gender identity and transgender identity characteristics, this survey follows the advice of Schusterman (2020) who states, "Upon further reflection and input from our partners, we have removed [the question that conflated gender identity and trans identity characteristics] as we believe it is a better practice to ask about gender identity and transgender identity in separate questions" (p. 33). This move is a more "inclusive and respectful way to collect this data" (p. 33). Multiple sources were consulted for information on gender identity in survey questions. It was then decided that rather than asking participants if they identify as LGBTQ+, which may cause confusion and/or not take into account certain identities (those who identify as both straight and transgender for instance), an additional survey question was included that asked participants to select which gender category best describes them and then if they are transgender (Matsumoto, n.d.; Schusterman, 2020). Additionally, I hypothesized that scholars who are heritage speakers of English may receive more negative peer reviews. A

question was included that asked what languages participants speak at home. Research

shows that phrases such as "'main language spoken at home" 'as opposed to "'mother

tongue… or 'primary language'" are easier "to translate and [help] to ensure that this

[question] focuses on language and not ethnicity" (Clear Global, 2023). US Census data,

that listed the most common languages spoken at home, was also utilized in the decision

of which languages to include (Dietrich & Hernandez, 2019; Dietrich & Hernandez,

2022). A write-in option was included as well.

Lastly, it is my experience that first-generation scholars may not have "insider

knowledge" (Alexander & Walton, 2022) particularly as it relates to academic

publishing, and may receive more problematic reviews as a result. Thus, the final

demographic question asked if participants identify as first-generation college students

and gave a brief definition, as definitions of "first-generation" have been contested as of

late (Center for First-Generation Student Success, 2020).

Survey Dissemination Rationale

My work analyzing policy to identify review-related problems addressed by policies and

the patterns that emerge (Study part 1) was shared in a poster research presentation at the

SIGDOC national conference where I then distributed the survey that expounds on those

patterns by asking scholars about their experiences and perspectives. Additionally, the

survey was distributed by my PI, Dr. Rebecca Walton, at another national conference in

the field, where she was available to answer any questions that participants may have

had.

In addition to distribution at academic conferences, I sent the survey to two

listservs in the field of writing studies, the Association of Teachers of Technical Writing

(ATTW) listserv (ATTW-L@attw.org) and the Council for Programs in Technical and Scientific Communication (CPTSC) listserv (cptsc@cptsc.org). I also posted the survey to my personal Twitter account where it received over 2,000 impressions.

Methods of Survey Data Analysis

Post survey collection, I analyzed the survey responses for patterns that supplemented, expanded upon, contradicted, etc. the textual analysis from Study 1. Qualtrics allows users to download survey data in an easily accessible form, with charts and tables that organize the data. This data breakdown also included any write-in answers from participants in a list format that provided more anonymity for respondents (as it was not connected to any demographic info, etc.). I primarily utilized this data breakdown for my analysis.

Overall, I did find notable disconnects between the textual analysis and the survey results which are discussed more in-depth in the following section. In what follows, I provide evidence of patterns in the survey response data. Rather than present data linearly, or report on linear data as it was collected, I present key findings strategically to advance arguments about the current state of peer review, particularly unhelpful, problematic, or harmful peer review experiences by scholars in the field of writing studies.

Survey Results

DEMOGRAPHIC BREAKDOWN

The survey asked respondents 9 demographic questions. Below, I explicate findings related to professional identity markers and personal identity markers.

Professional Identity Markers

The survey asked four professional identity questions:

1. Please indicate your current career role
2. In the context of academic publishing, have you served as any of the following? (Please select all that apply)
3. Which field(s) are associated with the academic venues in which you publish work? (Please select all that apply)
4. Do you identify as a first-generation college student (the first person in your immediate family to earn a Bachelor's degree)?

36 respondents answered question 1: Please indicate your current career role. 28% (n =10) of respondents indicated that their current career role is Assistant Professor, closely followed by 25% (n = 9) checking Associate Professor, and 19% (n = 7) indicating full professor. This data was particularly interesting as I initially hypothesized that early career scholars may be more likely to have negative peer review experiences, particularly ones that commented on "the writing ability, language proficiency, etc. of the author" or "unrelated qualities of the manuscript such as the nationality, gender, language, career level, etc., of the author." Moreover, when asked at what points in their career negative review experiences occurred, 55% (n = 22) of respondents marked "assistant professor." This particular demographic data supports the finding that negative peer review experiences may occur at any stage of a scholar's career.

Relatedly, I hypothesized that first-generation college students may have had negative peer review experiences related to less "insider knowledge" (Alexander & Walton, 2022) into the publishing process. 36 respondents gave an answer to the question: Do you identify as a first-generation college student (the first person in your immediate family to earn a Bachelor's degree)?. 64% (n = 23) marked no and 36% (n = 13) marked yes. Less than half of respondents noted their status as first-generation, which

supports the finding that negative peer review experiences may occur regardless of someone's level of insider knowledge.

The survey also asked respondents the ways in which they have worked within the academic publishing process. 36 respondents gave an answer to the question: In the context of academic publishing, have you served as any of the following? (Please select all that apply). 100% (n =36) of respondents noted that they had served as an anonymous peer reviewer and 42% (n = 15) checked that they had served as a named peer reviewer. When asked about their service work as editors (as opposed to research or teaching), 42% (n = 15) of respondents have served on an editorial board and 39% (n = 14) have served as a guest editor of a journal. One interesting finding from this demographic data relates to the editor focus group data (chapter 5) where the discussion of who makes a good editor was brought up. As one editor stated academics need to "not just tak[e] over journals because they're good scholars. Good scholars do not make good editors necessarily." Another editor chimed in to add that "[good scholars] don't make good reviewers either." Which begs the question, does experience in various positions of academic publishing make for good reviewers?

Personal Identity Markers

The survey asked five identity marker questions:

1. Which of the following [gender] best describes you? (Listed in alphabetical order; Please select all that apply)
2. Do you identify as transgender?
3. How would you describe your sexual identity? (Listed in alphabetical order; Select all that apply)
4. Which of the following best describes your race or ethnicity? (Listed in alphabetical order; Please select all that apply)
5. What language(s) do you use at home? (Listed in alphabetical order; Please select all that apply)

34 respondents answered question 1: Which of the following best describes you? 56% (n = 19) identify as a woman. 35% (n = 12) identify as a man. 6% (n = 2) identify as gender queer. 3% (n = 1) identify as gender fluid. 3% (n = 1) identify as non-binary. 6% (n = 2) preferred to not answer and 3% (n = 1) preferred to self describe. This demographic data implies that those who identity as woman may have more problematic review experiences than those who identify as men. This finding could be because of the demographic makeup of those who took the survey, or it could be indicative of another phenomena. However, more research is needed to say one way or the other.

Moreover, 35 respondents gave an answer to the question: Do you identify as transgender?. 97% (n = 34) indicated no and 3% (n = 1) indicated prefer not to answer. In the future, I would hope to include more transgender and non-binary identities in my data to further understand the overlaps between gender identity and negative peer review experiences.

Relatedly, 35 respondents gave an answer to the question: How would you describe your sexual identity? (Listed in alphabetical order; Select all that apply). 57% (n = 20) indicated that they identify as straight or heterosexual. 17% (n = 6) noted that they identify as bisexual. 11% (n = 4) identify as queer and 11% (n = 4) identify as pansexual. 6% (n = 2) identify as gay and 6% (n = 2) identify as fluid. 3% (n = 1) identify as asexual. 3% (n = 1) preferred to self describe and 6% (n = 2) preferred to not answer. Future research is needed to further understand the overlaps between sexual identity and negative peer review experiences.

Regarding race, 34 respondents answered: Which of the following best describes your race or ethnicity? (Listed in alphabetical order; Please select all that apply). 76% (n

= 26) describe themselves as white. 6% (n = 2) describe themselves as American Indian or Alaska Native, 6% (n = 2) describe themselves as Asian or Asian American, and 6% (n = 2) describe themselves as Hispanic, Latino, Latina, or Latinx. 3% (n = 1) describe themself as Middle Eastern or North African. 3% preferred to not answer and 6% preferred to self-describe. No respondents identified as Black or African American or Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander. I hesitate to imply that there may be no overlap between race and negative review experiences, as the results of this demographic question may reflect the racial makeup of the field as a whole instead. For instance, in the field of technical communication, "Eighty-one percent identified as White. Association with other groups ranges from 2 to 5 percent[3]" (Carliner & Chen, 2019). Racial makeup of the field may have influenced the data gathered; however, more research is needed.

Lastly, I hypothesized that authors who may speak multiple languages may have problematic review experiences where "The reviewer's comments focused exclusively on the writing ability, language proficiency, etc. of the author." 34 respondents gave an answer to the question: What language(s) do you use at home? (Listed in alphabetical order; Please select all that apply). 97% (n = 33) noted that they speak English. 12% (n = 4) noted that they speak Spanish. 6% (n = 2) noted that they speak French. 3% (n = 1) noted that they speak Chinese. 3% (n = 1) noted that they prefer to self-describe, and 3% (n = 1) noted that they preferred to not answer. Similar to racial makeup, I hesitate to imply that there is no overlap related to language proficiency. More research is needed.

---

[3] This article notes that "The overwhelming majority of participants in the census work in the United States." However, the article does not indicate where the census occurred. The location of where the data was gathered is important to take into consideration when considering racial makeup of a field.

Survey Findings

The survey received 56 individual responses with 34 respondents answering "yes" to the initial question "As an author pursuing academic publication (e.g., journal, conference proceeding, book proposal, etc.), have you ever had a peer-review experience that you considered problematic?" 8 respondents marked "Maybe/Unsure", and 14 responses were either "no" or left blank. Because question one was required (and an answer of 'no' sent respondents to the end of the survey) blank responses assume that the respondent left the survey before submission for a multitude of reasons. Because I want to understand the type and prevalence of problematic review experiences, respondents who marked "no" or left the survey cannot shed light on my research question and have been removed from the data.

Additionally, as an answer to question one of "Maybe/unsure" allowed respondents to continue on in the survey and answer additional questions, the 8 respondents who marked Maybe/Unsure have been added to the "yes" responses for a total of 42 respondents. Data for respondents who responded with "no" to the initial question or who left the survey have been eliminated from the data set.

In the following sections, I share findings from the survey data organized along the following lines of inquiry:

- What types of negative peer review experiences are authors in writing studies having?
- In what ways does the survey data overlap with the Anti-Racist Reviewing Heuristic and the guidelines of journals in the field of writing studies?
- What strategies are authors using to mitigate problematic review experiences?

Types of Peer Review Experiences

The survey data for the type of peer review experience were spread across the three aforementioned categories of review: unprofessional, discriminatory, and unhelpful/unproductive. Respondents were asked to check all that apply for each category, while thinking of specific peer review experiences from the last 10 years. In addition, survey respondents were invited to share their experiences that lay outside of the three aforementioned categories with a write-in question (Q5).

UNPROFESSIONAL REVIEWS

Survey respondents were offered eight unprofessional peer review scenarios that I developed based on the results of the textual analysis and the themes/guidelines of the ARRH (refer to Table 9).

36 respondents (85%) checked one or more scenarios in this category. The largest percentage marked "The review comments lacked thoughtful and/or helpful feedback" (72% of respondents; n = 26). In addition, 53% of respondents (n = 19) checked "The review comments were unclear and/or confusing." Less respondents marked "The review comments were exceedingly overdue by journal timelines" and "The reviewer requested I cite an irrelevant author/publication" (28% for both; n = 10).

Table 9: Results of Question 4a: Unprofessional Scenarios

Scenario	Percentage of Response	Number of Respondents
The review comments lacked thoughtful and/or helpful feedback.	72%	26
The review comments were unclear and/or confusing.	53%	19
The reviewer focused exclusively on the weaknesses of the piece and	42%	15

did not identify strengths.		
Review comments made it seem that the reviewer did not fully/carefully read the piece.	42%	15
The review comments included unprofessional language.	36%	13
The review comments were exceedingly short.	33%	12
The review comments were exceedingly overdue by journal timelines.	28%	10
The reviewer requested I cite an irrelevant author/publication.	28%	10

The data above indicates a prevalence of reviews that authors felt were unprofessional, particularly because "review comments that lacked thoughtful/helpful feedback." This finding is backed by my editor focus group data (chapter 4) as well, as many editors noted that reviewers were more likely to provide an unhelpful review than a mean or overly critical review. For instance, one editor reflected on a review that was "not mean-spirited just useless, and it doesn't help the author. There's nothing of value to this." Both editors and authors supported that negative review experiences can be defined as unprofessional.

DISCRIMINATORY REVIEWS

Survey respondents were offered six discriminatory peer review scenarios that I

developed based on the results of the textual analysis and the themes/guidelines of the

ARRH (refer to Table 10).

Table 10: Results of Question 4b Discriminatory Scenarios

Scenario	Percentage of Response	Number of Respondents
The reviewer requested that the work be reframed through dominant forms of expertise.	67%	10
The reviewer did not respect lived experience as a source of expertise.	53%	8
The reviewer assumed the gender, nationality, ability, etc. of the author, and it seemed as if that assumption influenced the review comments.	33%	5
The reviewer's comments focused exclusively on the writing ability, language proficiency, etc. of the author.	33%	5
The review included discriminatory and/or oppressive language such as racist or sexist language.	27%	4
The reviewer commented on unrelated qualities of the manuscript such as the nationality, gender, language, career level, etc., of the author.	27%	4

15 respondents (36% of respondents) checked one or more scenarios in this category. The

majority of respondents checked "The reviewer requested that the work be reframed

through dominant forms of expertise" with 67% response rate (n = 10).

The fewest respondents checked "The review included discriminatory and/or oppressive language such as racist or sexist language" and "The reviewer commented on unrelated qualities of the manuscript such as the nationality, gender, language, career level, etc., of the author" both with 27% response rate (n = 4).

Regarding the scenario "the reviewer required that the work be reframed through dominant forms of expertise" a few respondents offered specific situations that further defined why they viewed the feedback as unhelpful and/or discriminatory. For instance, one respondent noted their experience stating, "Working with an industry coauthor, I reached out to journal editor to alert them to the fact that coauthor did not have experience with academic decorum. Review blasted lack of academic decorum." Another respondent noted, "A reviewer stated that they were concerned about how X & Y (leaders in the field) would think about the claims. As if they were trying to discount ideas based on their perceptions of another peoples' POV." As most respondents marked that the reviewer requested work be framed through dominant forms of expertise, I concluded that this was the primary experience authors were having regarding peer review and discrimination.

UNHELPFUL/UNPRODUCTIVE REVIEWS

Survey respondents were offered four unhelpful/unproductive peer review scenarios (refer to Table 11) that I developed based on the results of the textual analysis and the themes/guidelines of the ARRH (refer to Table 1). 24 respondents (57% of respondents) checked one or more scenarios in this category.

Table 11: Results of Question 4c Unhelpful/Unproductive Scenarios

Scenario	Percentage of Response	Number of Respondents
The reviewer stated that the text was not relevant to the field (and did not offer revisionary feedback or explanation).	63%	15
The review comments were mean-spirited or cruel.	63%	15
The reviewer criticized the citing of texts such as social media posts, blogs, opinion pieces, etc.	33%	8
The reviewer unnecessarily compared the piece to another publication.	8%	2

Most respondents noted that the reviewer stated that the text was not relevant to the field and the review comments were mean-spirited or cruel; I concluded that these were the primary experiences authors were having regarding peer review and helpful/productive reviews.

Perhaps the most concerning data to come from this survey is the number of respondents who marked the scenario "The review comments were mean-spirited or cruel." Though some may argue 15 is not the largest number in the full survey data set, it is the largest regarding "unhelpful/unproductive" peer review scenarios, and thus no less important.

Overlaps with the ARRH/Journal Guidelines

The Anti-Racist Reviewing Heuristic provides guidelines for editors, reviewers, and authors as it relates to anti-racist publishing practices and multiple journals from my text

analysis (and others in the field of writing studies) have implemented these guidelines and signaled their commitment to anti-racist publishing practices.

However, question 4 of my survey asked participants to think of problematic peer review experiences they have had in the past 10 years and invited them to answer, "What made these peer review experiences particularly problematic?" The question asked participants in addition to "please select all that apply" regarding the categories: unprofessional, discriminatory, and unhelpful/unproductive. 44% (n = 15) of respondents indicated that their problematic peer review experience fell under the category of "discriminatory." This finding indicated to me that though journals[4] may be increasing the inclusivity of their procedures and guidelines, discriminatory peer review practices still occur, at least according to authors in the field. What this finding further indicates is the potential disconnect between what authors in the field find discriminatory and what editors or journals in the field find discriminatory.

In addition, 66% (n = 10) of those respondents indicated that what made the review problematic was that "The reviewer requested that the work be reframed through dominant forms of expertise," a problematic peer review response that is directly referenced in theme a of the ARRH: "Recognize a range of expertise and encourage citation practices that represent diverse canons, epistemological foundations, and ways of knowing." Moreover, 53% (n = 8) of respondents noted that reviewers "did not respect lived experience as a source of expertise," which relates to another best practice under theme a of the ARRH. 66% of journals (n = 4) in my text analysis included explicit

---

[4] It's important to note that I did not ask survey respondents to indicate what journals they have published in, or what journal their specific peer review experience was attached to. The journals under analysis in study 1 were chosen by specific criteria (described above) and there is no way to know which journals authors in my survey had unhelpful, problematic, or otherwise harmful experiences at.

enactment of this theme. According to authors in the field, despite a focus on a range of

expertise in journal guidelines, reviewers are still asking work to be reframed through

dominant expertise. Overall, this survey finding indicated to me that more work is needed

by journals in the field regarding theme a of the ARRH, particularly related to reviewer

guidelines. If multiple journals in the field are enacting theme a, but authors are still

having negative experiences related to theme a, something needs to change.

Strategies for Mitigating Problematic Review Experiences

Survey questions 6 and 7 invited survey respondents to discuss the ways that they have

mitigated negative peer review experiences. Question 6 asks: What strategies have you

used to mitigate problematic review experiences? (Please select all that apply). Survey

respondents were invited to select any of the 5 scenarios (refer to Table 12), as well as

"other" or "prefer not to answer."

Table 12: Results of Question 6: What strategies have you used to mitigate problematic review experiences? (Please select all that apply).

Scenario	Percentage of Response	Number of Respondents
Discussed the problematic feedback with colleagues, which assisted in how you moved forward with the publication.	57%	21
Approached a mentor to ask for advice about problematic review(s).	43%	16
Contacted the journal editor/special issue editor/book editor/etc., to ask for advice about problematic review(s).	43%	16
Removed the	35%	13

article/proceeding/book/etc. from consideration after the problematic review.		
Discussed the problematic feedback with friends, family members, etc., which assisted in how you moved forward with the publication.	19%	7

Of the 37 respondents, 51% (n = 21) selected "Discussed the problematic feedback with colleagues, which assisted in how you moved forward with the publication." 41% (n = 15) selected "other" and were then invited to describe the way(s) they mitigated the problematic review that fell outside the options provided.

One respondent noted that one strategy they use is to "Not [submit] articles again to the same journal and encourage others to avoid it as well." Another noted that they "Made fun of the review to everyone I knew, then wrote a fanfic about it."

An interesting finding from Question 6 is that more respondents discussed the feedback with a colleague or a mentor rather than reaching out to the editor of the journal. This finding is perhaps in conflict with my finding from the editor focus group sessions (Chapter 4), where many editors spoke of encouraging authors to reach out to them after receipt of peer review. For instance, one editor in the focus group noted "So one thing we do is… we say, we'd be happy to meet with you over Zoom to talk through these [reviews]. We can put it in a letter, but it helps again to kind of work like we're on your side, we want to help you with this." Perhaps authors feel their colleagues, who know them and their research, etc., may be able to provide better direction. Or perhaps authors are unaware that many editors in the field encourage authors to reach out to them. This finding feels particularly important to Study 1: The Textual Analysis, as explicit

invitations for authors to contact editors when faced with a troubling review should be

included in peer review policy based on this finding.

Question 7 asked respondents: Following the receipt of the problematic review(s),

what did you do with the manuscript(s)? (Please select all that apply). This question

offered respondents 3 scenarios (refer to Table 13) in addition to "other" "do not recall"

and "prefer not to say."

Table 13: Results of Question 7: Following the receipt of the problematic review(s), what did you do with the manuscript(s)? (Please select all that apply)

Scenario	Percentage of Response	Number of Respondents
Revised and resubmitted to the same venue	54%	20
Submitted the piece to a different venue	32%	12
Did not revise and resubmit and did not send the piece elsewhere	27%	10

Majority of respondents 54% (n = 20) revised and resubmitted to the same venue.

32% (n = 12) submitted the piece to a different venue, and 27% of respondents (n =10)

did not revise and resubmit and did not send the piece elsewhere. The latter data is

perhaps the most telling as the unproductive, problematic, and/or otherwise harmful peer

review experience prevented or delayed them from publishing a piece of research. As one

respondent noted: "[I] thought about leaving the field all together." Though these review

experiences may be more rare, they are not any less important, and finding strategies to

mitigate potentially career ending publishing experiences is of utmost importance.

Study 2: The Survey Findings

Majority of survey respondents (72%) answered the question "What made these peer review experiences particularly problematic?" with "The review comments lacked thoughtful and/or helpful feedback" under the category of "unhelpful." This finding is particularly interesting because helpful feedback has not traditionally been an integral aspect of peer review, as historically, peer review has focused on the assessment (Selfe & Hawisher, 2012) or evaluation (Shatz, 2004) of a manuscript. The finding leads me to question if peer reviewers know that authors, editors, and journals in the field are asking for a mentorship mentality when reviewers review? In other words, do reviewers know that many stakeholders in the process would prefer helpful, encouraging review feedback that helps the author get the work published (either in the journal submitted or to another journal in the field)?

Regardless, the survey results imply that helpful feedback is a cornerstone of the peer review process, which is supported by peer review guidelines in the field of writing studies. For instance, in their reviewer criteria, JBTC states: "Is the discussion well organized? Are the points clearly developed? Are key terms properly defined? Please suggest specific changes that might improve the organization and clarity of the manuscript." This criterion implies that the journal is seeking helpful, or at the very least, constructive reviewer feedback for authors. Editors in the field of writing studies support this idea as indicated by editors in my editor focus group (chapter 4). As one editor noted, "I sent [a manuscript] to someone…and I basically asked the person, what do you think about this piece? Is it a good fit? How can we help this author if it's not, what could make it a good fit?" This finding also reflects Sciullo and Duncan's (2019) explanation of five

of the problems with peer reviewing. They note that problem #2 with peer review is that "Reviews often offer no constructive criticism and maintain orthodoxy" (p. 250). This particular survey data provides further evidence of the issue of the unhelpful nature of some peer reviews. However, why might reviews often offer no constructive criticism? Is it a lack of training for reviewers? Or is there perhaps something else occurring? It is well known that reviewers are exceedingly busy, often asked to review multiple manuscripts a year, and may lack the necessary training to provide helpful, constructive reviews. I argue that the reason behind unhelpful reviews may not be as important as the strategies for mitigation that could be inserted into the process, such a training for early career scholars and editors discussed in-depth in Chapter 5. Additionally, in Chapter 5, I address the ways in which these sticky issues with peer review persist, and how it may be necessary for academia to sit with the complexity of the situation and look forward to ways in which we can enhance the process for the better.

Another finding was related to respondent categorization of review scenarios. Beyond the categories that were offered in the survey (Unprofessional, Discriminatory, Unhelpful/unproductive) I found that certain categories were further defined by respondents in the section of the survey where they were invited to expand on problematic review experiences that were not previously listed. For instance, one respondent noted: "One reviewer said, 'I don't know what I'm looking at here.' That was the whole comment and was problematic because I didn't know how to revise." This particular comment seemed to map closely with an unhelpful type of review in that no feedback was provided. Another respondent noted that a reviewer: "attempted to identify the research participants in the study I was discussing and discussed this in the review,"

which is representative of another potentially unhelpful review, but an example that also overlaps with unprofessional review practices. It seemed as if some review experiences were defined as beyond the scope of the provided categorization.

Finally, I found that in response to the survey question "Have you experienced reviews that were problematic in other ways not listed? If yes, please explain," a few respondents made note of problematic peer review experiences that involved editors. For instance, one respondent noted,

> I submitted a piece to a journal and rather than sending it out for peer review or desk rejecting it, the [Editor-in-Chief] gave me copious feedback that essentially amounted to a revise-and-resubmit request, but without the anonymity or triangulation of peer review. It was so odd and off putting that I pulled the piece, published it elsewhere, and have never submitted there since. I think it might have happened in part because I heavily cited the [Editor-in-Chief] and they felt personally called to action by that somehow.

Another respondent also reflected on a problematic review that involved an editor stating,

> I had an editor all but refuse to provide any sort of guidance on what to do with the peer review comments I had received. Two reviewers wanted vastly different things. When I asked the editor for help with what to focus on, the editor provided no direction or guidance. So, I rewrote for both sets of comments which made the original essay disjointed and less effective.

These stories are interesting in that they focus primarily on editors intervening in the peer review process in ways that the respondent found problematic, or perhaps, unhelpful. As one respondent aptly pointed out, "in my limited experience, sometimes the journal editor, not just the anonymous reviewers, create problematic reviews." From speaking with editors in the field (Chapter 4) it seems as if many editors enter the position with little to no training. This finding leads me to suggest that trainings for editors (particularly new editors) might be a step toward reducing the likelihood of editors being the cause of a problematic publishing experience. However, trainings may

not address helping editors recognize that what they might view as good faith, or constructive, etc., is actually harmful. And recognition in the ways we are complicit in harmful publishing practices has to be step one.

To this end, I recommend continual and early-intervention training for editors in the field. For instance, before an editor takes over a journal, they might do a preliminary job shadowing with the outgoing editor. Additionally, as per the ARRH, journals in the field might consider implementing "appeals process[es] for authors whose work has been subject to discriminatory reviewing" that involves the editorial board as well as the editor of the journal.

Overall, these findings lead me to suggest that though many journals in the field of writing studies are embracing and committing to the ARRH and other inclusive guidelines, and are increasing the transparency of the peer review process, unhelpful, problematic, and otherwise harmful peer review experiences still occur for many authors of various academic rank, gender, sexuality, race, etc.

Chapter 3 Conclusion

I want to begin my concluding thoughts with the following response to my survey:

> This project seems to not fully consider the variations of review. [That] is, what one person (or editor or reviewer) may think is a helpful non problematic review, someone else may find 'unprofessional,' and/or 'discriminatory.' While it is true, all academics need better and more training on how to write a peer review, it is also true that authors need… training on how to read (and not [overreact]) to peer reviews.

Initially, I interpreted this comment as a persistent idea that many in the field argue: This idea that it doesn't matter how we peer review an authors' work and that we (as reviewers, editors, journals, academia at large, etc.) have no ethical imperative to

change our practices. However, upon an additional reading, I believe this respondent is more so commenting on the idea of "good faith" in peer reviewing. In other words, in addition to cases in which reviewers and or editors are providing unhelpful, unprofessional, and otherwise harmful feedback, there are also cases in which all parties involved in the process are operating in good faith, but it may not seem like it from the author's point of view. As reiterated elsewhere in this dissertation, publishing is particularly high stakes for authors, and in the case of anonymous review, authors do not know who is providing them feedback, what kind of tone the reviewer is intending, whether the reviewer is intending to be overly critical or constructive, etc. Additionally, as brought up during the editor focus group (Chapter 4), reading peer review feedback can be like going through the stages of grief. As one editor reflected, "it starts with anger and disbelief and…it ends up with acceptance and…sometimes I wonder as I'm reading responses…from authors that they sometimes [haven't] completed that acceptance… they are still pushing back in different places, bargaining and things like that." The way that an author approaches review feedback (say defensively) contributes to the interpretation of the review feedback.

Moreover, there is the potential that authors and reviewers simply misunderstand each other, and that misunderstanding can feel harmful, when really it might just be another busy academic trying to balance their workload and quickly reading through a manuscript. All of this is not to disregard authors' experiences, as the 36 respondents to my survey have had problematic experiences whether related to misunderstanding, the grief cycle, defensiveness, etc. or not. Rather, I showcase this particular respondent comment to better illustrate the complexity of a situation that is much more complex than

rooting out the bad actors who approach peer review with the intent to harm. In the cases described above, perhaps education on how to interpret and respond to reviewers would be helpful (which I describe in depth in Chapter 5). If the field of writing studies takes away anything from this dissertation, I hope that it is the inherent complexity in not only peer review, but publishing at large.

However, I would also like to remind readers, and the field at large, that the authors who most need the academic currency of peer reviewed publications are often not in positions to enact change. Why is it that we (academia at large, the field of writing studies, etc.) still seem to expect the most vulnerable among us to endure and survive? In Chapter 4, I describe two editor focus groups where I spoke with editors in the field about their specific peer review processes, the ways in which they might edit peer review feedback, and their overall experience intervening on behalf of authors.

CHAPTER 4

Introduction

> *"Other people need to be thinking about this and not just taking over journals because they're good scholars.*
>
> *Good scholars do not make good editors necessarily."*
>
> -Carlie, Focus Group Participate

To share initial findings and further solicit strategies for intervention and mitigation, I scheduled two Zoom focus groups with editors in the field of writing studies (IRB #13738). Through these focus group sessions, I sought to answer my research question: What strategies have editors employed to turn a negative review experience into a positive publishing experience for authors?

Overall, I hypothesized that authors might reach out to editors–or be advised to reach out to editors–to describe their experiences, particularly after a problematic peer review experience, which may be a way to solicit advice but may also be a way to encourage the editor to rectify the situation. The data from my survey (Chapter 3) supports this hypothesis as 43% (n = 16) of respondents noted that to mitigate the negative review experience they "Contacted the journal editor/special issue editor/book editor/etc., to ask for advice about problematic review(s)." Moreover, through my work as the managing editor of *Technical Communication Quarterly* (Technical Communication's flagship academic journal), I am familiar with various policy-driven interventions, such as "the editor in chief [framing] and [interpreting] the review feedback" (TCQ Instructions for Authors, n.d.). This process is considered an important

anti-racist one as the ARRH indicates: "Editors reject review practices that are exclusionary and intervene before sending potentially traumatic reviews to authors" (ARRH, 2021). As I was designing the editor focus groups, I had this move as an important intervention in the back of my mind.

However, are there other interventions that editors have used that have been successful? In what ways can these interventions be documented in policy to replicate positive publishing experiences? In what ways have editors mitigated negative peer review experiences for authors at their journals? And to what extent are editors aware of whether authors have negative review experiences at their journals?

Methods

I chose focus groups as a methodology as it seemed the most likely to assist in gathering the information I was searching for. That is information related to interventions in the peer review process by editors in the field. I imagined that many editors might not view more common practices (such as editing or framing peer review feedback) to be interventions. As one editor expands upon a specific intervention, it might encourage other editors to chime in with their own experiences, which can help "confirm, contradict, complicate, or complement" (Leydens et al., 2004, p. 67) my other data. As Abbott and Eubanks (2005) state "Unlike other methods, focus groups provide a way of examining cognitive and social processes because they allow participants to elaborate on their views and to interact with other points of view" (p. 177). Moreover, as Hart and Conklin (2011) state, "Focus groups are a particularly rich technique for qualitative research because of the interaction of the participants and the multiplicity of viewpoints that they provide" (p. 113). The focus group format allowed for the type of interaction I was most hoping for.

I scheduled two focus group sessions in early December 2023. Each focus group lasted for an hour, and I served as a moderator, mostly thanking participants for sharing their perspectives and asking the next question if there was a lag in the conversation.

Participants

Rather than create focus groups or interviews with specific respondents to my survey, I chose to discuss with current editors in the field of writing studies. I did this for a couple of reasons. First, if I want to understand the internal workings of academic publishing in writing studies, I need to learn from those on the front lines, so to speak. Editors serve an important role in the publishing process, but their job is often misunderstood. For instance, as Eyman and Ball (2022) state, "Many authors think editors are gatekeepers meant to prevent their work from reaching its audience, but it's actually the opposite… editors serve authors and are at their best when they are shepherding an author's work to its appropriate audience through a publishing venue" (p. 213). Additionally, through my research, I found editors to be one of the more sought-after agents of intervention for authors. For instance, in my survey data, when asked about mitigation strategies, one respondent noted: "[I] Contact[ed] the editors--they are there as a resource to help authors and reviewers." Moreover, only 17% (n = 6) of my survey respondents have been journal editors themselves, so I needed to take into account the views of editors in the field.

To that end, I invited 19 current journal editors in the field of writing studies to participate in one of two scheduled focus group sessions. I started my recruitment with the six journal editors from the journals in my textual analysis (Chapter 3). I then began recruiting editors from some of the top journals in the field of writing studies. I referenced a few different sources in my search for journals in the field of writing studies

including the University of Pennsylvania's Library Guides on Writing Studies and the

WAC Clearinghouse's Scholarly Journals web page. Additionally, to locate editor

information, I took to the Internet and gathered information about editors from the

publicly available content information on their respective journal website. I utilized this

information to send recruitment emails. I sent personalized emails inviting them to

participate, noting that I was emailing and inviting them because they are the current

editor of a journal in the field of writing studies. Editors were asked to first respond via

email if they were interested in participating.

One interesting discovery during this initial stage was that over 15 editors

responded to my initial email. Still, many editors (5 in total) indicated that they did not

feel they were a good fit for the focus group as they had not intervened on behalf of

authors regarding negative peer review experiences. This response suggested to me that

perhaps my invitation was not as specific as it could have been regarding what I imagined

an intervention to be. However, I wanted to withhold defining intervention at this stage of

the research because I did not want to influence any of the stories that editors might tell

during the focus group session. Thus, I stand by the choice to not define intervention and

was still able to recruit editors to participate. Overall, eight editors offered their time, and

six were able to attend the scheduled focus group times.

Session Design

Zoom was particularly important for these focus groups because it allowed me to be more

flexible with schedules, meet with editors I may not have been able to (because of

location), and I was able to create a recording via Zoom. Additionally, accessibility-wise,

participants could turn on automatic captions during the Zoom session (which some

chose to do). During the one-hour session, I asked editors four questions related to the peer review process (refer to Appendix B). Each focus group participant was given a chance to share their perspective if they desired, in a round-table fashion. However, there was also much back-and-forth discussion between editors. I took on the role of moderator when there was a lull in the conversation to move the conversation on to another question.

Data Collection and Analysis

Both focus group sessions were video recorded utilizing the built-in Zoom recording software and audio recorded utilizing the built-in Apple recording software on my iPhone. Utilizing two recording methods ensured that there was less of a chance of equipment malfunction or data loss.

Participants were given the consent form before the focus group sessions and were instructed to fill out the form the Friday before the focus group. All participants filled out the form. However, I also chose to read the form to the participants before moving forward with each focus group session, so each participant was aware of the moves that would be made to protect privacy, as well as how to remove themself from the focus group if so desired. After reading the consent form, I asked if anyone had questions, paused and waited for questions, and if there were none, began the focus group. Both sessions had no questions on the consent form, so I moved on to question one, which asked for a bit of contextual information on the peer review process at each editor's journal. From there, I organically asked each additional question and gave time for conversation. Specifics of the focus group conversations will be discussed in the next section.

After the focus group sessions, transcripts were created using Zoom's built in transcription option. Video recordings were then deleted from Box.com and transcripts were uploaded. All data was stored in Box. I then edited each transcript accordingly and removed any identifying information (names, institutions, journal names, etc.). The focus group transcripts formed the data set for this part of the research. I approached the data considering grounded theory ala Strauss and Corbin (1990) who "stress the importance of listening to the voice of the informant" (Hallberg, 2006, p. 145). In other words, the findings and lines of inquiry emerged from the data, and I resisted (as much as possible) swaying the data toward one hypothesis or another. To that end, each transcript was read three times. During the first read-through, I simply read each transcript in full. During the second read-through, I highlighted parts of each transcript that directly related to my research question. During the third read-through I then more closely coded and annotated to develop thematic inquiries of participant remarks. Each theme was then recorded (on a Word document) and the highlighted excerpts from read-through number two and three were placed below each relevant theme in the Word doc. I then read through any unhighlighted sections and recorded relevant excerpts under a line of inquiry as appropriate.

Context for Editorial Work

Before continuing with the findings from the focus groups, it's important to provide context for editorial work, particularly concerning how an editor is chosen, training (discussed more below and in Chapter 5), and the complexity of the job. First, just as with peer reviewing and publishing at large, editorial work varies field to field. Defining editorial work is complicated. Overall, as far as day-to-day process, typically a journal

editor "Oversee[s] the manuscript publication process for a specific academic

journal...[and] are responsible for organizing peer reviews, maintaining quality control,

and shaping the thematic direction of the journal" (Master Academia, n.d.). Ultimately,

an editor "judge(s) the discipline... where it needs work, where it might be missing or

overshooting some mark—and [editors] judge what impact they are personally positioned

to have" (Spooner, 2022, p. ix). This definition clearly outlines the importance of

editorial work. However, in 2007, the MLA Task Force on Evaluating Scholarship for

Tenure and Promotion revealed that many institutions in their survey "seriously

undervalued editing in tenure and promotion decisions" (Spooner, 2022, p. ix). The MLA

Task Force writes,

> when we consider that editors disseminate new scholarship and further the arts,
> stimulate and direct inquiry in their fields of study, help produce new knowledge,
> and create communities for discussion and debate within and among disciplines.
> Undoubtedly, editors play a critical role in shaping their disciplines.

Editorial work is critical to the forwarding of scholarship in a field, but also undervalued

in multiple ways. It's important to keep in mind this disconnect between the perceived

importance of the role of an editor and the way it is undervalued.

Schoen and Giberson (2022) make similar remakes on the undervaluing and

misunderstanding of the role describing that when they took on their respective editor

roles, "one of the things we were really lacking throughout... was an understanding of

what it means to work as editor" (p. 5). Moreover, as discussed further below, many in

academia are pinpointing one of the potential reasons behind an overall lack of

understanding of what an editor's role is, which is a lack of training. Schoen and

Giberson further state that as new editors they "had to figure it out on our own, step by

step, sometimes forward, many times back" (p. 5). The trial and error nature of the role is particularly disconcerting when considering the importance of the role.

It's also important to understand how editors are chosen in the context of academic journals in particular. According to APA (2021),

> Editors-in-chief are typically solicited, reviewed and selected by journal publishers. Some publishers have very formal, lengthy and staged processes that involve broad searches and review/selection by committees, others are less formal involving simpler application and decision processes and still others fall somewhere in between. (para. 15)

However, some editors are also chosen based on who they know or are informally invited to the position. For instance, as Giberson (2022) describes, "I remember... bumping into her [a current journal editor]... and she pretty much informed me (and two other junior faculty peers...) that we were to be the new assistant editors of the journal" (p. 4). Overall, the job description, hiring process, and overall importance of editorial work remains "rather opaque and hidden" (Schoen & Giberson, 2022, p. 5).

Findings

In the following sections, I share findings from the focus group sessions organized along the following lines of inquiry:

- What interventions are editors implementing in their journal processes?
- What strategies are editors employing to help mitigate negative peer review experiences?
- What additional considerations did participants bring up during the conversation?

Though I rejected defining "intervention" and "mitigation" early on in the research, it is important to move forward with definitions that are informed by the previous research and the editor focus group data. Thus my definitions are as follows:

An intervention, regarding peer review, is an explicit move made by an actor (either external or internal to the process) to intervene and prevent problematic review experiences from occurring.

Mitigation, regarding peer review, refers to strategies employed by an actor (either internal or external to the process), often after a problematic peer review experience, that work to rectify a particular problematic review situation.

Additionally, for important context for myself and the focus group participants, I asked editors first to describe their journal processes regarding peer review (refer to Appendix B for full focus group questions). The journal processes for peer review at the journals varied. Some edited journals were published under the imprint of larger publishing companies (such as Taylor & Francis), whereas some journals were considered independent journals and not imprints of larger publishing companies. Some editors described what could be considered more traditional peer review (double anonymous, minimum of two reviewers, etc.), while others described the ways that their journals have expanded their process to align more with the tenets of open peer review: being transparent about reviewer and author identities, publishing review reports, and opening up the process for greater participation (refer to Chapter 2 for more on open peer review).

It is important to note that the ability of editors to make changes to their journal processes–particularly regarding peer review–very much depends on what type of journal they are. For instance, multiple editors in the focus groups noted that they work for journals that are imprints of larger academic publishing houses, such as the top five academic publishers by journal count: Springer (3692), Taylor and Francis (2909), Elsevier (2467), Wiley (1646), SAGE (1310), and De Gruyter (1100) (Academic publishers & scholarly journals, n.d.). Other editors in the focus groups are part of journals that are independently run and may have more freedom to implement

interventions, change the processes around peer review, etc. As Eyman and Ball (2022)

state, "Each publishing venue has its own requirements for content, rigor, style, usage,

and so on" (p. 213). Moreover, many journals in the field of writing studies are overseen

by organizations whose members often make decisions for the journal in tandem with the

editor. For instance, the journal *College English* is the official publication of the National

Council of Teachers of English (NCTE). Thus, to make changes to the journal, *College*

English's editor would likely need to consult with multiple stakeholders first: both the

press and the leaders of the national professional organization (i.e., NCTE). Independent

journals and journals overseen by larger publishing houses or larger organizations vary in

the way that their journals are run, and this context was particularly important to this

research.

Interventions

Editorial Feedback as Intervention

According to Spooner (2022), the job of an editor is to "make judgments," and such

judgments can "make or break a career" (p. vii). In other words, editors (and peer

reviewers as well) make judgments of manuscripts that have the potential to make a

career, with a successful publication, or break a career, with a rejection, as academia

continues to embrace a "publish or perish" mindset[5]. To that end, many editors in the

focus group sessions described ways in which they have taken into account the pressures

of publishing and worked to assist authors through additional editorial feedback. For

---

[5] One of the earliest iterations of the phrase "publish or perish" can be traced back to Logan Wilson (1942) who stated: "The prevailing pragmatism forced upon the academic group is that one must write something and get it into print. Situational imperatives dictate a 'publish or perish' credo within the ranks."

instance, Devin[6], an editor of a journal that is an imprint of a larger academic press, stated,

> I have implemented a process called Desk Review where… a manuscript that… looks like something we want to encourage but is not really ready for peer review, we'll send it back with some editorial feedback or have a meeting with the author or authors to talk about how to really optimize what they're giving [to] our readers and…to turn what's likely to be [a] reject into a revise.

Similarly, Ramsey, an editor at a journal that utilizes the open journal system[7] relayed "One of the kind of unwritten ideas behind [Journal Name] is that we do developmental editing, especially with new scholars. And so sometimes we do a little bit more work with some folks than with others." As described in the section "developmental editing" below, editors who engage in developmental editing tend to work with authors early on in the writing stage where they might restructure the writing, suggest in-depth changes, etc. (Ginna, 2017). As Ramsey describes, developmental editing requires a bit more work on the part of the editor, but may result in stronger manuscripts, particularly for early-career scholars. With developmental editing, editors in the field of writing studies are considering how they might intervene in the process (perhaps before peer review) in more structural ways as it relates to manuscript design. Many of these developmental possibilities can be touched on in reviewer feedback, but editors in the focus group sessions worked to intervene early on in the process to assist scholars, particularly early career scholars before sending the piece off to peer review.

Editing Feedback as Intervention

---

[6] All editor names are pseudonyms.
[7] According to the Open Journal System website "Open Journal Systems (OJS) is an open source solution to managing and publishing scholarly journals online. OJS is a highly flexible editor-operated journal management and publishing system that can be downloaded for free and installed on a local Web server."

The third question of each focus group session asked editors if they find themselves

editing reviewer feedback before sending comments to authors, an important intervention

supported by the ARRH (Theme a "Reviewers and editors frame reviewer comments to

support author revisions"). Many editors stated that they do edit reviews before sending

them to editors. For instance, Marianne was especially passionate about this topic, stating

"The answer is yes, and it's your ethical responsibility as editor to make sure people

aren't jerks. I feel really strongly about that." Marianne brings up an interesting point

about ethical responsibility, which is discussed in-depth later in this chapter and in

Chapter 5. Many of the focus group participants agreed with Marianne that editors should

be editing reviews, however, the extent of the editing of feedback varied from editor to

editor. For instance, one editor, Ramsey, edits reviews in a way that compiles all of the

information into one narrative to give reviewers the entire picture: "We try to give…as

complete as possible reviews…to the authors and then combine and then go into

conversation with the author about the two reviewers so that the two reviewers' messages

so that we emphasize particular areas." This framing of reviews relates directly to

guidelines under theme A of the ARRH. Additionally, Marianne and Devin both had

instances where they fully edited out the reviewer feedback as it related to asking the

author to cite specific work (including the reviewer's):

> *Marianne:* We just had a review come in where someone is saying that they need to cite the reviewer. I'm like, 'Nope, nope, nope, sorry.' You can say you need to expand your citational path. I'm cool with that, but dictating through my power of rejecting your article that you cite me is just not acceptable.

> *Devin:* And I think in one case I just deleted a recommendation that the author look at this person's work, that seems. I didn't care for that, but that others may disagree, but I didn't think that was appropriate.

Both Marianne and Devin are making moves consistent with ARRH Theme a, 1) Reviewers recommend pieces to cite; lack of certain 'canonical' citations is not automatically grounds for rejection and 2) Reviewers resist requiring the existing canon be cited and recognize that some canonical work may be purposefully uncited because of oppressive and harmful actions taken by those authors. Though these themes don't directly mention reviewer feedback that requests the author cite the reviewer, this move to delete such advice relates to a rejection of requiring the citation of the existing canon for various reasons. Additionally, the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) states that reviewers should '"refrain from suggesting that authors include citations to your (or an associate's) work merely to increase citation counts or to enhance the visibility of your or your associate's work; suggestions must be based on valid academic or technological reasons" (para. 3). The encouragement of self-citation or colleague citation continues to be an ethical consideration.

Furthermore, requesting self-citation can be seen as citation manipulation, which is characterized by "behaviours intended to inflate citation counts for personal gain, such as: excessive self-citation of an authors' own work, excessive citation to the journal publishing the citing article, and excessive citation between journals in a coordinated manner" (COPE, 2019). Though the reviewer might not be intending to increase their citation counts, the requesting of self-citation carries with it lots of ethical baggage and should be avoided in most instances. Though this particular move was not included directly in the survey, 28% (n = 10) of respondents marked that "The reviewer requested I cite an irrelevant author/publication" with one respondent noting in the write-in section that "The reviewer clearly only wants me to cite their work." The editing of this type of

review feedback might be in everyone's best interest. It is worth noting that reviewers with legitimate reasons for requesting the citing of their work might make that note in the feedback that goes directly to the editor rather than the feedback that goes to the author (Wiley, n.d.). Editors can then decide whether the reasoning feels appropriate or not based on their journal policies.

One interesting review edit came from Katy who noted that "Sometimes… reviewers… want to reveal their identity. That is something I usually do extract, however [collegially] that's intended. It really is not something that in terms of the peer review… that we're able to do." This editing intervention brings up the issue of power dynamics in the peer review process (discussed more in Chapter 5 as well). For instance, scholars who have more privilege or are in a more privileged positionality may be the ones who are signing their reviews because they may not fear retaliation or push-back from their reviewer feedback. Moreover, this particular edit brings up the question of what it means to be collegial as Katy mentioned. Collegiality remains one of those sticky issues within academia, but many have discussed the role of collegiality, particularly in tenure and promotion. For instance, Lo, Coleman, and Pankl (2022) discuss collegiality regarding librarian tenure processes and discuss the subjective nature of the idea, and relay that because of the lack of clarity on what it means to be collegial "When tenure committees discuss a candidate's collegiality, biases are likely to influence some of the committee members' willingness to describe behaviors as either collegial or not" (p. 85). These biases can have a particular impact on an early career/pre-tenured scholar's career (Lo et al., 2022).

However, the question still needs to be asked: Who is signing their reviews (in an anonymous review context) and why? It was difficult to find an exact answer as to who is commonly signing their reviews as, with most peer review conversations, it is inherently contextual and based on the field the reviewer is aligned with as well as the reviewer guidelines of the specific journal. However, research shows that there are many reasons why a reviewer might want to *not* sign their reviews. A recent study found that psychology faculty members stated fear of retaliation as a primary concern with signing reviews, with women reporting higher concerns than men (Lynam, Hyatt, Hopwood, Wright, & Miller, 2019). As Zhang, Smith, and Lobo (2020) further, "Fear of retaliation may be especially evident among junior faculty, who may worry that a signed negative review could have adverse implications for their future tenure letters, working relationships, and reviews of their own manuscripts" (p. 46). As relayed above, though signing a review may be viewed as collegial to some, to others, signing a review may open them up to career harm. Moreover, reviewers may be concerned that "the author may perceive even the best-intentioned, but critical, review as an act of incivility, which, in turn, could provoke a backlash from the authors and launch a spiral of incivility" (Zhang et al., 2020, p. 46). Much like Katy relayed, signing a review might be well-intentioned but can have unforeseen consequences, particularly for early-career scholars.

However, Lynam et al.'s study also found a few benefits to signing a peer review including less critical reviews and a contribution to overall civility (Lynam et al., 2019). Other sources agree with Lynam et al.'s benefits and argue that reviewer identification might be a move toward more inclusive, helpful review feedback. For instance, as PLOS states, "Even if you decide not to identify yourself in the review, you should write

comments that you would be comfortable signing your name to" (para. 11). This

comment suggests that the default, according to PLOS, is to consider signing your name

to a review, and if you choose not to, you should move forward with your review as if

you had. Regardless, the various positionalities that academics hold, including career

status, demographics, experience, etc. play a part in whether reviewers would want to

sign their reviewer feedback. Overall, I wish I had asked Katy to expand upon this point

during the focus group, but I hypothesize that Katy may be editing out names for many of

the reasons explicated above, particularly related to the potential for retaliation.

Conversation as Intervention

Many editors also mentioned intervention strategies related to conversations directly with

authors. For instance, Marianne mentioned an early intervention into the review process,

where the editors reach out to the author to mitigate any potential pushback from

reviewers:

> So we do what's called a desk revision in that we write to the authors and we have
> a Zoom meeting with them and talk about, 'we love this. So what you're doing
> here, we think it has a lot of potential.' Sometimes we'll do this in a letter as well,
> but 'here's some things that we know from our reviewers that we think they're
> going to get distracted by and we just think your peer review process will be a lot
> cleaner if you just [ad]dress these up front.'

This early intervention not only assists the author in addressing areas that may need more

work but also has the potential to prevent reviewer frustration or distraction as Marianne

noted. Moreover, Marianne's description here is similar to Devin's desk review process,

though Marianne's process is verbal rather than written like Devin's. Both processes

seem to have pros and cons, and I imagine both have specific exigence behind when an

editor might employ a verbal revision process or a written process, particularly according

to a submitting author. For instance, one survey respondent (Chapter 3) noted that an

editor provided feedback to an author before (or perhaps in place of) the anonymous

review process to which the author was particularly off-put:

> I submitted a piece to a journal and rather than sending it out for peer review or
> desk rejecting it, the EiC gave me copious feedback that essentially amounted to a
> revise-and-resubmit request, but without the anonymity or triangulation of peer
> review. It was so odd and offputting that I pulled the piece, published it
> elsewhere, and have never submitted there since. I think it might have happened
> in part because I heavily cited the EiC in question and they felt personally called
> to action by that somehow.

Though the editor may be providing what they view as a necessary step to the process,

the author may have benefitted more from verbal feedback rather than written or a

mixture of the two.

Moreover, another editor, Katy, described the conversations that often occur with

authors, particularly when reviewer feedback is complicated: "And in those

cases…where say, reviews are conflicting, I've met…with so many authors about…how

do you synthesize this or that and go forward, what should we do? The advice is so

conflicting." Conflicting reviewer feedback remains a consistent problem for authors and

can be one of the most difficult problems to mitigate. Some editors may send review

feedback (with advice on how to synthesize conflicting reviews) in writing, whereas Katy

(and presumably others) have these conversations in person. Much like Marianne and

Devin's processes above, Katy's meeting with authors represents another situation where

the same affordances of synchronous vs. asynchronous communication are salient.

However, Katy's description above led me to question whether many authors were

requesting these meetings and how Katy invited authors to have these conversations.

Typically, editors interpret reviewer feedback in writing proactively as a regular

editorial practice that is made evident by the ARRH theme a: Reviewers and editors

frame reviewer comments to support author revisions. However, in Katy's example, she notes that she meets with authors to have these framing conversations, which is extra labor for Katy, but could present an important mitigation strategy for many editors moving forward. But does Katy have these conversations with all authors? Or just authors who reach out for a one-on-one meeting? Moving forward, editors may wish to invite all authors to these conversations or heed some of my advice in Chapter 5 for how to further mitigate problematic reviewer feedback for authors.

One editor also noted that this conversation and dialogue can occur between editor and reviewers:

> We just did one last week where I sent it to [a reviewer]... and I basically asked the person, what do you think about this piece? Is it a good fit? How can we help this author if it's not, what could make it a good fit?

This dialogue between editor and reviewer worked as an intervention to help ensure that the editor (and more importantly, the author) received feedback that helped forward the manuscript in productive ways. Perhaps the finding to come from this theme is that editors having open discussions with multiple parties throughout the publishing process remains a key tactic for intervention.

Conflict Anticipation as Intervention

One interesting intervention an editor, Elias, described was working to anticipate conflict between an author and reviewer in response to an author's review response cover letter. As Elias stated

> In my reading of [the author's] letter, I've gone back to that author a couple times… saying, 'actually, because this letter is going to go to the reviewers, do you want to put this a different way? How can we find some other framing for how you're pushing back against this?' And that way at least I know of that kind of conflict, but that's the author-reviewer conflict that can kind of happen.

I theorized this interaction as an intervention between the author and the reviewer. The

editor, in this case, is trying to intervene to prevent potential pushback from the reviewer

in reading the cover letter as the author not taking the reviewer seriously, or whatever the

dynamic may be. Elias further noted that they were not disagreeing with what the author

had to say in the letter, but rather helping them to frame the review in a way that might

"[sound] like you're… still in good faith doing the things that you think are going to

make this [article] better without denying either party's sort of criticisms or response."

This particular intervention is interesting when considering author/reviewer dynamics

and the ways in which authors may not realize the impact of their response on reviewers.

I relate this interaction to my conclusion (Chapter 5) that authors need training on the

inner workings of the publishing process, particularly peer review. Moreover, this

discussion led me to conclude that many authors may not be trained in how to respond to

peer review feedback, or they may not realize that the editor is not the only person

reading the cover letter and that the reviewers read through the cover letter as well.

Moreover, there may be confusion around the ways to respond to reviewer feedback. For

instance, during one of the editor focus groups, the different ways of responding to

feedback was brought up:

> Elias: Tiny question. We encouraged the letters but not the revision tables and I
> was kind of unaware that when I collaborate with some folks they were like
> revision table first thing. I was like, really? But that can be a nice sort of, I don't
> know, does that sort of take the emotion or take a frustration from an author out of
> the context since it's in a table and it feels a little bit more plug and play in some
> ways?

> Marianne: I think that there's a real art to how people respond. At our revision
> tables, there's the part of chopping apart the letters of the reviewers, but then
> there's the part on the side where you say what you did, and I find working with
> really experienced people, they're really interesting in sometimes the way they

push back on stuff that in itself you could collect those examples would just be so rich.

There seems to be multiple ways to respond to reviewer feedback, a finding that I needed to educate myself on as well, as both the investigator into this topic and an early career scholar. The University of Calgary (2023), for instance, describes a revision table as, "a chart to respond to revisions" that includes a column for reviewer comments, changes made (with a yes or no answer), a brief description of changes, and notes or additional comments the author would like to make (para. 13). A revision table is not required, but can be helpful for authors, editors, and reviewers to keep track of reviewer feedback and how it has been addressed.

As previously discussed, editor and author perceptions of the same intervention strategy may directly conflict. Elias discussed coaching authors on how to frame a persuasive reviewer response. However, survey data (Chapter 3) suggests authors can experience this strategy differently. For instance, one survey respondent stated,

> I was told to write a response to the reviewer (two different journals and I assume 2 different reviewers) but not to offend them. I was also encouraged to largely ignore their mean spirited comments and only focus on the changes I could make to the piece. Given that one comment was that I simply was too young and not at the correct career stage, I wasn't entirely sure how to address that so I simply wrote nothing in my response about it. In many ways that only helped to perpetuate a feeling of imposter syndrome and make me question my own worth for several years after.

It's an important consideration not to offend the reviewer with responses to their review feedback, but it is also important, in considering the author's experience above, to be able to voice frustration or confusion with a reviewer's feedback. As with any editor intervention, it's important to balance the needs of the reviewer as well as the needs of the author. I think Elias was correct in asking the author to reframe. However, perhaps

author and reviewer perspectives can be brought into closer alignment with more

conversation. In the previous situation that Elias spoke about, perhaps a bit more

conversation between the editor and the author would have aligned their perspectives a

bit more. Or perhaps editors might discuss with reviewers the type of letters they prefer to

receive (particularly in considering narrative-based letters or feedback tables, as

discussed below). Either way, I believe training and communication (as discussed more

in Chapter 5) will align perspectives more, particularly in the situations described above.

Developmental Editing as Intervention

In both focus groups, this idea of developmental editing was brought up. For instance,

Elias noted that "one of the kind of unwritten ideas behind [Journal Name] is that we do

developmental editing, especially with new scholars. And so sometimes we do a little bit

more work with some folks than with others." Devin spoke of a similar idea:

> I had to go back to talk to some people who I felt had edited my stuff very well
> and very productively. And the only, I don't know if any of you've ever worked
> with [name], but who's a wonderful editor. And I was like, [name]? How'd you
> learn how to do this? He said, well, it's a philosophy called developmental
> editing.

This philosophy was one I was unfamiliar with at the time and worked to research the

inner workings of the idea of developmental editing. According to Norton (2023),

developmental editing "is inherently complex and unlike copyediting, cannot be

demonstrated with brief examples" (p. 5). However, Norton further defines

developmental editing as "significant structuring or restructuring of a manuscript's

discourse" (p. 6). Moreover, Ginna (2017) describes it as "a term often used for input a

step or two further along, usually when an author has a complete draft or most of one. At

this stage, an editor may reorder chapters or restructure within them, suggest different

writing approaches, or retool an introduction, for example" (p. 9). Norton (2017) furthers

that often those who provide developmental feedback "[use] a combination of two basic

approaches: coaching and modeling" (p. 88). Developmental editing can be distinguished

from copyediting by 1) the position in which the development occurs (often early in the

process), and 2) the focus on coaching and modeling as described by Norton.

Copyediting focuses on the clarity/readability/cohesion/etc. of a text and often includes

less coaching and assistance from the editor. At the copyediting stage, editors are

advocates for readers (Butcher, Drake, & Leach, 2006) whereas during developmental

editing, editors might be referred to as advocates for the author.

One editor, Elias, related developmental editing to the idea of mentorship with

graduate students stating,

> I think about the kinds of mentoring that we try to do for our grad students, and it feels very similar to a lot of the mentoring that you try to do for authors in the same sort of way, and it's a much more sort of short experience with every author…and that kind of developmental editing shift takes a lot from editors, but that's closer then to what you do with grad students.

However, developmental editing, much like mentorship, can take a lot of time and labor

from editors who may already be stretched too thin, particularly if they do not have

institutional, editorial, etc. support.

Care as Intervention

Finally, an important intervention mentioned by Marianne is the care with which an

editor approaches an author and their manuscript, particularly with a desk rejection[8]. As

---

[8] As desk rejection refers to a manuscript that has been rejected before it has gone out for peer review (Elsevier, n.d.). Manuscripts can be desk rejected for a variety of reasons including, the journal is not a good fit for the manuscript, the manuscript is not at a publishable stage (unfocused, too short, no methods, etc.), the manuscript does not follow the journal publishing guidelines, and/or the manuscript is unethical (duplicated submission, plagiarism, data falsification, etc.) (Author Services Taylor & Francis, n.d.).

Marianne stated, it's important to acknowledge and say "I'm sorry this didn't work out for you. Please, we would really be interested in hearing your work [in] the future. Again, just not this piece in this way at this time. So that's super important to do that." This intervention was mentioned in my survey data as well, with multiple respondents noting that they had frustrating experiences with editors' desk rejecting a piece that was done, perhaps, without much care. For instance, one respondent stated,

> Twice, I had an editor "desk reject" a manuscript after it passed peer review. In one case, the journal editor declared that the manuscript was not relevant to the journal, even though the manuscript had undergone two rounds of peer review there, been revised to the reviewers' satisfaction, and received the thumbs up from the journal's assistant editor, who told me proofs were on the way. I appealed the decision, but no one at the journal responded. The manuscript was published elsewhere. In the other case, the reviews came back very positive, with only a few things to revise. But in her letter to me, the journal editor stated that the reviews were not positive (she placed ~a lot~ of emphasis on minor questions that one of the reviewers had raised, even though those questions were easy to address), that she didn't really understand the manuscript anyway, and that I should submit it elsewhere. I wasn't sure how to appeal without coming across as rude.

Both comments lead me to conclude that an important intervention in the peer review/publishing process is the care with which an editor approaches a decision on a manuscript, particularly a decision to reject a manuscript. For instance, an editor sending a letter of rejection without care may simply reject the author's manuscript without much feedback, whereas an editor that rejects an author's manuscript with care might direct the author to another venue, offer to discuss the feedback, invite the author to submit other work to the journal, etc. Marianne paints a nice picture of what a reject with care scenario might look like:

> Somebody who's given us this interesting idea, but the execution behind it is problematic maybe in their sampling plan or something like that…we'll write a letter to them and say, not this article, so it's a desk rejection, but we would really like an article that pulls out this one kind of idea.

This finding is additionally supported by Ritter (2022) who describes their principles for editorial work including "Principal 1: Tell the Truth (And Protect Others From The Lie)" (p. 23). For instance, regarding a manuscript rejection, Ritter will tell the author the truth:

> I'm sorry, dear author, but I can't use this work and revising it won't help. I'll explain why, and I'll try not to hurt you in the process. But I also won't (usually) suggest you send it somewhere else…If your manuscript has been rejected, it's the case at least 9.8 times out of 10 that *something is wrong and you can make improvements*… If I don't tell you that, I'm pushing the Truth onto some other editor down the road. And that's unethical. (p. 23-24).

Ritter relays that this type of truth-telling represents care both toward the author, who will only benefit from careful and meaningful revision feedback, but also other editors who will be put in a similar position to have to be truthful with an author, and might not approach a reject with as much care as another editor might. To intervene with care is to tell the truth in a way that improves the manuscript because "no one benefits from poor scholarship… not the author, not the journal, not the field" (Ritter, 2022, p. 24). Overall, approaching publishing with care requires taking into account the various stakeholders who are involved in the process, and moving forward with empathy.

Mitigation Strategies

I found that many editors in the focus group discussed interventions (preventive strategies) rather than mitigations (reactive strategies). As one editor noted,

> I feel pretty fortunate in that the vast majority of [the] time I don't have to edit a review because of that unconstructive or un-collegial approach. It has happened. It is more rare. And when that has happened, I have tended to extract the most mean, if you will, to just be really blunt about it, the meanness of some of the language.

My hypothesis and my survey data support the theory that editors are strong agents of mitigation in the aftermath of a problematic peer review experience. However, many of the editors in my focus group sessions noted that harmful and problematic review experiences may be more rare, or they employ intervention techniques early on in the process to prevent negative review experiences from occurring in the first place (for the author). For instance, Devin reflected on a recent review that included feedback that was "not mean-spirited just useless, and it doesn't help the author. There's nothing of value to this." Here, Devin is carefully considering whether review feedback is helpful (which is the most common problem experienced by survey respondents) and intervening to ensure that what the author receives is helpful despite what the reviewer provided. Devin is describing a preventative measure to ensure that feedback is helpful, however, authors in my survey, who experienced problematic reviewer feedback, most commonly received unhelpful feedback. I theorize that one of two things could be occurring here. First, authors and reviewers could be experiencing different definitions of the peer review process. For instance, reviewers may consider themselves to be evaluators of manuscripts, and provide evaluative feedback rather than helpful, constructive feedback. And, without an editor like Devin, reviewer feedback that may be unhelpful made its way to authors. As Devin stated, "We're trying to weigh whether we want this manuscript to stay in the pipeline for another six weeks while we find someone who actually can review it." Rather than send the author the "useless" feedback, Devin intervened, which avoided the need to mitigate the negative review experience.

One interesting finding is that some editors seemed to have learned how to be a "good" editor, so to speak, by having negative experiences themselves, where an editor

had not intervened on their behalf and/or did little to mitigate the situation. For instance,

Ramsey noted:

> I think that we as the editors [and] co-editors need to make sure that the decision letter emphasizes the direction that we want the authors to take as they move forward in the process. I think that as an author, that was one of my biggest challenges when I had a complete hands-off editor at a journal and just said, 'here's the reviews.' Well one wanted a longer literature review and one wanted a shorter literature review with that. Well, I fixed it by not messing with the literature review at all, and it went back through very nicely, but I would've liked to have heard that from the editor.

Ramsey concluded from this experience that to be an effective editor, it's important to emphasize the direction authors take in the decision letter. Presumably, Ramsey now intervenes against split reviews, such as the example he shared, and explains to authors which direction they should go in.

Related to mitigation, a familiar conversation developed in the focus groups regarding labor and the labor involved in peer review and publishing at large. As Katy noted:

> Well, part of it is tied to the way in which that type of review is valued traditionally along that triangulation of teaching, research, and service. So for so many departments, including departments of English, it is considered a service. And I've always bristled at that because I think editing, peer reviewing all of that is an important, valuable form of scholarship. But you're creating, and some people would call it gatekeeping, but you're a steward of an intellectual space where these dialogues can take place and you're shaping the field as a result of it. And if that's not scholarship, I just don't know what is. And so reviewers need to be thanked for that, rewarded, and supported.

This valuing of labor is an important consideration particularly related to the ways reviewers (and perhaps editors) are able to perform this job. Aczel, Szaszi, and Holcombe (2021) averaged that reviewers complete "4.73 reviews a year" and yet, "according to Publons, certain reviewers complete over a thousand reviews a year" (p. 1-2). However, how long does a review, on average, take as far as time? Aczel et al., described a 2009

study that survey randomly selected reviewers which "indicated that the reported average time spent on the last review was 6 [hours]" (p. 3). This average describes a reviewer's singular read through of a manuscript, and some reviewers will be asked to review subsequent edits of the same manuscript. Although edited manuscripts should take less time, many reviewers may be asked to review multiple manuscripts each academic year, particularly in smaller fields, like writing studies. The more reviews a reviewer takes on, the less time they may be able to devote to the review, which may result in more curt or harsh and less helpful reviews.

Katy also mentioned that it's important to consider the ethics behind "paying" reviewers for their labor, and that reward and support can become an "issue…and then the ethics of…being paid for peer review, being paid for, say, a review of someone for tenure promotion, et cetera, et cetera. So very complicated issues for sure." As discussed in Chapter 5, paying reviewers continues to be a discussion that often involves this idea of ethos, as Katy mentions. For instance, some argue that paying reviewers would incentivize quick, non-detailed reviews (Matthew, 2016; Vines & Mudditt, 2021), which is what many are trying to avoid with overworked reviewers as well.

Regardless, Marianne noted that support is key to being able to intervene in positive ways, particularly as an editor,

> for editors to make positive interventions, they have to have the support behind them to do that, whether it be from your publishing house or your professional organization or even your institution. Just having that backing is just so important that you have somebody that you can turn to.

In a position that often provides little to no training (further discussed in Chapter 5), support is paramount to editors being able to lend their support to authors in the ways that

many want to. Overall, labor and support continue to be important considerations for peer

reviewers as well as editors.

Another interesting consideration brought up during the focus group was peer

review issues that occur during journal special issues where a guest editor is typically

brought in to perform many of the roles of the editor of the journal for a singular issue,

including soliciting peer reviewer feedback. Special issues seemed to be a contested idea,

and one where mitigation strategies proved particularly important.

However, as Katy noted, "I have become far better attuned over the years with the

relative strengths of guest editors because I've seen, if not the peer reviewers, it's the

guest editors who really go in a direction of synthesizing feedback that does become

harmful." For instance, one editor, Carlie, described a situation where an author of a

special issue received a particularly harmful review. In response, the journal implemented

extensive training for special issue editors and additional oversight:

> any guest editor who wants to propose a special issue has to go through the peer
> review heuristic training, the guidelines… And then we've been working with
> them to create inclusivity training for the peer reviewers, and then the editors have
> to go through all of the peer review letters and review them and then also pass
> them through us so that we can review them before they get sent out.

Through this conversation, editors in the focus group seemed to come to the

consensus that guest editing adds a whole other layer of editorial oversight which Katy

furthered:

> Sometimes what happens, and it's tied to the issue of the scholarly community, if
> you will. So with a lot of guest edited issues for [Journal Name], people know
> each other. It's a small field. It's not, they know who the contributors are. Maybe
> they don't know who, maybe the peer reviewers don't know, but obviously, the
> editors know. And so they might, based on those interpersonal relationships that
> have nothing to do with the editorial mentoring relationship, say and do things
> that are out of bounds. And you don't always know what those relationships are.

> And I would say it's not our job to necessarily keep track of them, but as you start
> to see that things are going south, to intervene quickly and to step back.

I discuss further in Chapter 5 that there are certain complexities of the peer review

process that are more difficult to provide solutions to. I find this relational dilemma here

to be one. On one hand, it can be helpful for guest editors to know the authors they are

working with (particularly for first time editors). However, as Katy noted, these

relationships can cause issues if an editor relies too much on an author's relationship with

them. For instance, perhaps a guest editor might misstep when it came to reviewer

feedback because they assumed their colleague would be fine receiving a more critical

review. Guest editing, and editing in general, can be made more difficult when collegial

relationships are involved.

As far as interventions related to the potentially problematic peer review

processes of guest-edited journal issues, one editor noted that they have devised an

entirely new process that guest editors must now go through.

> Our intervention now is that, that we've just started within the last, I think two
> years, and we've only had one new special issue proposal come through since
> then is that any peer reviewer or any guest editor who wants to propose a special
> issue, has to go through the peer review heuristic training, the guidelines, which
> [journal name] subscribes to anyways. And then we've been working with them
> to create inclusivity training for the peer reviewers, and then the editors have to
> go through all of the peer review letters and review them and then also pass them
> through us so that we can review them before they get sent out.

One specific intervention could be training related to the peer review process.

Moreover, a similar intervention could be implemented to the regular peer review

process. In Chapter 5, I argue that training is particularly important for all people

involved in the publishing process and outline a specific training idea.

Overall, negative experiences seem like unique moments that can motivate scholars and academics to change academic culture rather than continue to replicate harm over and over. For instance, with my negative experience (described in Chapters 1 and 5), I learned an important mitigation strategy, which was discussing feedback with my mentor. In many experiences, it can take an outside perspective to reframe feedback, particularly to work that might be important to an author (such as work related to personal experience; Discussed more in Chapter 5). And my experience prompted me to explore other mitigation strategies that could be embedded into policy in order to decrease the harm caused to authors by negative review experiences. I discuss these strategies and actionable recommendations for the academic community in Chapter 5.

Conclusions

In this chapter, I described the two editor focus groups where I spoke with editors in the field about their specific peer review processes and their overall experience intervening on behalf of authors. Many editors describe interventions including editing reviewer feedback, training for guest editors, reframing author review response letters, and mentorship with authors as they edit their manuscripts.

Related to training, one specific conversation emerged about who is particularly well-positioned to be not only a journal editor but a *successful* journal editor. As one editor, Carlie, aptly suggested: "Good scholars do not make good editors necessarily." This led me to the conclusion that many editors in the field agree that editor training should also be a future field priority.

This finding is supported by many of the authors in *Behind the Curtain of Scholarly Publishing Editors in Writing Studies,* the only published book on publishing

and editorial work, in the field of writing studies (Schoen & Giberson, 2022, p. 5). As Schoen describes, "What this [editorial] opportunity meant for us was that we had to learn how to become editors" (p. 4). Moreover, Giberson relays that upon reflecting on his first editorial role, "one of the things we were really lacking… was an understanding of what it means to work as editors. We had to figure it out on our own, step by step" (p. 5). Overall, one firm conclusion I made is that peer review, the processes, intricacies, etc., need to be much more transparent and communicated, and there should be some sort of education early on in a scholar's career related to not only peer review but publishing and editorial work at large. As Ramsey noted, "I think that a lot of this conversation is really… the professionalization of academics and where they receive that training." How are we professionalizing academics concerning scholarly publishing, which is so integral to a successful academic career?

In Chapter 5, I address this conclusion and others in-depth and offer specific, actionable, recommendations based on the conclusions I've made in this study.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

Introduction

> *In many ways that [review comment] only helped to perpetuate a feeling of imposter syndrome and make me question my own worth for several years after.*
>
> -Study 2 Survey Respondent

When faced with what I viewed as a particularly negative peer review experience, I didn't know how to proceed. I considered scrapping the article entirely, removing the positionality statement entirely, and completely rewriting that section of the piece. I also thought it would be inappropriate to reach out to the editors for something like reviewer feedback. I had never consulted with an editor and truly did not think this was an option! Ultimately, I consulted with my mentor, and, with their help, I revised the positionality statement. Post-publication, I know that the article benefited greatly from the reviewer's feedback. However, if I had not sought the advice of my mentor, and had she not intervened, I would not have published that article. I most likely would have withdrawn the manuscript, perhaps tabling it permanently.

What I've learned throughout this research is that my experience (with helpful mentorships and mitigation) may be considered rare, as many scholars in my survey (Chapter 3) have had many different experiences. For instance, in response to the survey question, "After the receipt of the problematic review(s), what did you do with the manuscript(s)?" one respondent stated that they "thought about leaving the field all together." Though not every academic may think of leaving the field after a review experience, problematic, unhelpful, unprofessional, or otherwise harmful peer review

experiences have material implications, particularly on the career advancement of scholars.

I began this investigation to better understand how authors mitigate receiving unhelpful, unprofessional, or otherwise harmful peer reviews. Additionally, I wanted to understand how editors intervene when there has been a negative peer review experience. I asked the following research question:

> Within the context of writing studies (e.g., rhetoric and composition, technical and professional communication, writing program administration), what can turn a "negative" review experience into an overall positive publishing experience?

Many authors and editors offered mitigation and intervention techniques against unhelpful, unprofessional, or otherwise harmful peer review experiences, and many of these techniques have been reported throughout this dissertation. Throughout this research, I learned about the overall complexity of publishing, and future research on this topic will work to untangle some of the complexity and address the future research directions noted below.

Chapter 2 provided a comprehensive literature review on the history of peer review, with a focus on peer review in the humanities. In Chapter 3, I describe the results of two closely related studies:

1. A textual analysis of the review procedures, guidelines, and policies of six journals in writing studies
2. A survey (IRB # 13738) that focused on the specific experiences of participants related to negative publishing experiences.

The results of both studies led me to suggest that though many journals in the field of writing studies are embracing and committing to inclusive guidelines, unhelpful, problematic, and otherwise harmful peer review experiences still occur for many authors. In Chapter 4, I describe the results from two editor focus groups where I sought to

discuss interventions and mitigation strategies with editors. I concluded that many editors in the field agree that editor training should be a future field priority.

The Complexity of the Process: A Conclusion

Throughout this research, one thing remained clear to me: publishing and the peer review process, in particular, is highly contextual and surprisingly complex. And I began this research project hoping to be able to address at least some of the problems with peer review. However, what I found is that the process itself is a complex web that will take much more than a dissertation to untangle. For instance, it is easy to see why many academics–especially for those new to the role–entangle and entwine our scholarly identities with our writing. This is even more true after the social justice turn in TPC, which encourages intersubjectivity, including lived experience as researcher/research/data/evidence. With a focus on identity and personal experience comes the potential for hurt feelings and feelings of harm when our work is critiqued. Yes, tone can be changed, and many editors are already doing the important work of intervening and mitigating peer review feedback. However, my survey results suggest that harm still occurs for many authors in our field. This made me pause to ask why?

It wasn't that the results surprised me. I have come to understand that authors, reviewers, and editors can all hold roles and responsibilities in common and still view feedback in very different ways. Perhaps it's because we each filter those similar experiences through our various positionalities. Simply put, the same negative, unprofessional, or otherwise harmful peer review experience will not affect a white, cis-gender, heteronormative, tenured scholar the way it will affect a queer, Black, emerging scholar. To make it clear, I did not hear survey respondents, editors, etc. claiming it

would, but it's important to understand that we filter peer review feedback through our various positionalities. I'll give an example. As described above and in Chapter 1 with my own experience, I viewed the feedback negatively, and my mentor did not disagree with me. However, she was able to frame the feedback from an editor's perspective and pull out the important critique from the tone that I read as harsh. My position as an author at that moment affected the way I approached the reviewer's feedback.

For the most vulnerable in the field, that is those who need the acceptance of a publication, care may be the most important move an editor and reviewer can make. In Chapter 1, I discussed whether or not a reviewer is capable of providing care in the review process through Tronto's four elements of an ethic of care. Overall, I argued that yes, it's possible to care in this relationship. However, it's important to reiterate that what I am arguing for here is not a changing of the *person*. I am arguing more so for a reframing of the peer review *process*. It is not just one bad reviewer here and there, but more so a process that is not taking into account attentiveness, responsibility, responsiveness and competence, and overall, what it means to be ethical and what it means to care.

I argue that everything between a desk reject and an accept should be approached with care, and intent to help, or at least an intent to do less harm than the decision has already caused. Below, I forward actionable recommendations for the academic community that came from the results of this research. However, I urge the current and future editors, current and future reviewers, and everyone in the field to consider the following as we continue to discuss peer review, the complexities, and the ways that we can continue to be more inclusive:

- What do our most vulnerable authors need to be able to publish in our journal?
- What do peer reviewers need to be able to write helpful, caring reviews?
- What do editors need to be able to intervene and mitigate between these parties?

Actionable Recommendations

Below, I describe actionable recommendations for the academic community, particularly

the field of writing studies, that I've drawn from this research study, based on four

conclusions,

  a. The importance of communication throughout the publishing process,
  b. The necessity of stakeholder training (particularly editors and early career scholars),
  c. The mentorship potential for authors by reviewers and editors, and
  d. Peer review remains a process with unique ethical considerations that policies (journal guidelines, stylesheets, best practices of peer review, etc.) may not be able to take into account.

I conclude with further implications from this study that I argue are rich sites for future

research.

Conclusion a: The Importance of Communication

Noddings (2013) describes the importance of communication in caring, and states, "The

attempt to maintain a caring relation is an attempt to keep the doors of communication

open" (p. xii). Moreover, when problems arise solutions "require appropriate thought,

sensitivity, and open communication" (Noddings, 2013, p. 182). Moreover,

communication relates to this ethical element of attentiveness. In order to care, we have

to be attentive to the needs of others, which so often requires communication.

Communication, perhaps above all else, assists in our ability to care for someone, and by

prioritizing open communication we may find ways to "ameliorate the hate, distrust, or

rage we've detected and, thus, be in a better position to protect others in the web of care"

(p. 193). Based on my findings, it remained clear to me that in a process filled with uncertainty, anger, and hurt, open communication needs to remain the most important move toward improvement.

Many respondents to the survey (chapter 3) noted that communication was integral to the mitigation of problematic review experiences. For instance, one respondent stated, "Talk to your editors, they can be massive advocates for authors in the peer review process/experience." Over half of respondents to the survey noted that, when faced with a problematic review, they "Discussed the problematic feedback with colleagues, which assisted in how [they] moved forward with the publication." Communication remains a key mitigation tactic for many scholars, be it with various stakeholders in the peer review and publishing process.

Furthermore, care ethics theorists recognize that harmful mistakes can be made if communication with those in need is not initiated; when we are not attentive. As Noddings (2015) describes in a discussion of human needs,

> It is still possible, however, to make mistakes even with these needs when we fail to communicate with those thought to be in need. Organizations have been known to flood survivors of natural disasters with clothing when they really need food or with food when they need building materials. (p. 74).

In a publishing context, many different stakeholders may be at need at various times. Authors, for instance, are in need of advice regarding how to respond to reviewer feedback, of interventions on their behalf to remove inappropriate conditions for acceptance, etc. Similarly, editors may be in need of training, support to allow them to intervene, etc. Reviewers may also be in need of clear criteria for effective reviewing, deadline extensions, mentoring, etc. What we may be doing is offering stakeholders things that they may not need. For instance, academia seems to be pushing for ways to

increase the speed of reviewer feedback (which may be helpful for authors), as many

complain that the process is much too slow (Allen, Reardon, Crawford, & Walsh, 2022;

Flaherty, 2022), when what reviewers need is perhaps more time to offer framed,

constructive feedback to authors, which seems to be what authors also need more of.

Moreover, Noddings (2015) theorizes needs as being either 'assumed' or

'expressed,' and the difference is the source of the communicated need. Expressed needs

require a development of "relations of care and trust" (p. 74), which is where dialogue

around needs becomes meaningful, and the need comes directly from the person, or

group. For instance, in publishing, an example of an expressed need would be when

authors contact editors and ask for help understanding review feedback or figuring out

how to revise when review feedback conflicts.

Assumed needs, on the other hand, are less communication based. As Noddings

(2015) describes, "Some human needs can obviously be assumed; we all need food,

shelter, and clothing" (p. 74). In a publishing context, the assumed need could be the

need for publication. We know, from prior experience, that scholars need publications in

order to get tenure. However, assumed needs, even the most good faith assumptions, can

go very wrong. As Noddings (2015) states,

> If we suppose that those about whom we are concerned want (or need) exactly
> what we would want in their situation, or that we can assume knowledge of their
> situation from a few salient facts, we are likely to make serious mistakes and
> evoke distrust and resentment rather than gratitude. (p. 75)

For instance, the assumption is that all scholars need publications in order to get tenure.

However, are we assuming the speed at which scholars need these publications? And is

this assumption negatively affecting the process? Unhelpful, problematic, and otherwise

harmful peer review experiences still occur for many authors. Is this because of assumed

needs and a lack of communication during the process?

The anonymous peer review process might mean, for instance, that reviewers

have to assume the needs of authors regarding what type of review they might require.

Could this process be improved with a bit more expressed need and what could this

process look like?

As Noddings (2015) argues it is necessary to "establish regular communication

between those discussing care at the policy (or caring-about) level and those working

directly with the recipients of care" (p. 80). Thus, those at the level of policy

development in publishing (editors, publishing companies, etc.) must continuously

communicate with stakeholders to be attuned to the expressed needs beyond the assumed

needs.

I call on editors and journals in the field of writing studies to continue this

important work and open up a dialogue with authors as well as peer reviewers and

editorial board members to invite them to express their needs and allow editors to express

their needs to stakeholders as well. Below, I forward specific, actionable

recommendations based on this study and based on the expressed needs of multiple

stakeholders to the peer review process. It is important to note that not every

recommendation will work for everyone, and I recognize the limitations of each

recommendation. As such, the sections below describe the specific recommendation, how

it relates to findings from my research, and its limitations.

Recommendation 1: Drop-in Hours for Editors (conclusion a)

Similar to office hours for faculty and instructors, I recommend that editors in the field of writing studies implement drop-in hours (via Zoom or another video conferencing platform to increase access) for authors, peer reviewers, etc. to be able to meet and discuss their experiences or any issues they may be facing. This recommendation addresses conclusion a: communication.

One important consideration with this recommendation is communicating the drop-in hours and making it clear what authors, reviewers, etc. might utilize the time for, particularly for graduate students and early career scholars who may not understand what the drop-in hours are for. For instance, Smith et al.'s (2017) study regarding faculty office hours found that students were

> most likely to perceive office hours as the last resort they can turn to when an academic crisis (e.g., an anticipated failing score) is on the horizon, rather than as an institutional resource that may be regularly used for a broader set of fruitful interactions with faculty members. (p. 15)

Similarly, drop-in hours can work as an important intervention in times of crisis, but can also work as an important resource that authors, reviewers, etc. can regularly utilize, potentially beyond times of crisis. In policy documents, editors might state their availability for drop-in hours, how to find the video conferencing invite/link/etc., and the type of conversation editors are open to. In addition, editors might state in their feedback letters/emails to authors that they are open to meet with authors about reviewer feedback and include information about drop-in hours. This recommendation can also be communicated to peer reviewers and editorial board members so they may utilize the drop-in hours as well.

As far as limitations, I recognize that editors are particularly busy people who often have additional responsibilities on top of their editor position. In addition, some

editors may not have the institutional or organizational support that others do. As one editor in the editor focus group (Chapter 4) aptly stated, "for editors to make positive interventions, they have to have the support behind them to do that, whether it be from your publishing house or your professional organization or even your institution." It's important for editors to consider the time they are able to offer to the academic community and perhaps offer a once a month drop-in time. Editors might also offer the drop-in time on a trial basis so they can further gauge whether this recommendation is effective and further consider the time they feel they are able to give.

Recommendation 2: Invited Talks on Peer Review Processes (Conclusion a, b, d)

I also recommend that editors take some time to speak to graduate courses in their own programs (if they are not already) to describe their position, speak about the journal processes, and leave time for students to ask questions. This recommendation addresses conclusion a: communication, conclusion b: training, and conclusion d: ethics. Editors might also work with their university library or related institutional career center and set up a talk about the publishing process, particularly peer review. For instance, Dr. Rebecca Walton at Utah State University (USU) delivers a talk on peer review that typically takes place during the university wide peer review week. Peer review week is

> a community-led yearly global virtual event celebrating the essential role that peer review plays in maintaining research quality. The event brings together individuals, institutions, and organizations committed to sharing the central message that quality peer review in whatever shape or form it may take is critical to scholarly communication. (USU Libraries, n.d.).

Both recommendations represent important service to the academic and individual university communities.

However, I recognize the potential limitations of this recommendation, particularly related to the various positionalities editors may hold. For instance, editors may not be connected to specific universities and thus may be less able to speak in the ways described above. I recommend editors, if interested in this recommendation, find universities that may not have academic journals in the field of writing studies connected to them and inquire about presentation options such as Zoom presentations.

Conclusion b: The Importance of Training

Related to communication, and communicating needs, another key finding from this research is the necessity of training for multiple stakeholders. Editors during my focus group sessions communicated the *need* for training, as many editors entered, and continue to enter, the editor position with little to no prior knowledge or training. As one editor, Carlie, relayed,

> So that's the thing is none of us are trained to do this work. Technically, [those] of us here have been doing this for so long that we've figured it out. On the job training essentially. But otherwise, editors have to rely on their own…moral compass. And that's not always the best.

Training is important when we consider morality, ethics, and the concept of responsibility. What is the responsibility of a reviewer? Or an author? Or an editor? Training helps to frame responsibility in the peer review process so all actors can understand their responsibility to others.

Below, I expand upon research-based ways to further train/educate those who are key players in the publishing process and describe a 15-week-long graduate course in academic publishing, created with consideration of the findings of this research.

Recommendation 3: Graduate Course on Academic Publishing (Conclusion a, b, c, d)

Many of the editors in my focus group noted that they approached the position with little to no prior training as it related to the specifics of the editing job. Moreover, many scholars, particularly early career scholars, may be less knowledgeable about the inner workings of the publishing process, including peer review, and are required to learn as they go. Furthermore, as O'Hara, Hope, and Mulvihill (2019) describe, many professors perform the important work of mentoring graduate students through the process of publishing, which, as the authors describe, brings to light two interrelated issues:

1. a pedagogical problem within graduate education (e.g., what are the best ways to teach graduate students how to navigate the publishing process?).
2. a persistent problem of increasing demands on faculty time and complex workload expectations related to research, teaching, and service, including mentoring numerous graduate students.

One way to assist graduate students in navigating the publishing process is to teach a stand-alone course devoted to the intricacies of academic publishing (to be discussed in-depth below). As Chtena (2015) states, "Coursework is an essential part of any doctoral program, and it sets the stage for the dissertation phase." As previously discussed, publishing, particularly during a scholar's doctoral degree, is integral to securing a job post-graduation. Moreover doctoral students, in particular, are the future of academic publishing and will be the scholars in future editorial roles in the field.

Thus, I have developed a graduate-level course dedicated to academic publishing and describe this important recommendation below (Refer to Appendix C for example class syllabus). This recommendation addresses conclusion a: communication, conclusion b: training, conclusion c: mentorship, and conclusion d: ethics.

EXAMPLE ASSIGNMENTS

Instructors may choose to develop any assignments that they see fit, but one assignment

that should remain integral to the course is an assignment with hands-on, practical

objectives. In other words, students should engage in the publishing process and be

encouraged to submit a publication to a journal in the field of writing studies. However, I

do envision this assignment being particularly dependent on the context in which the

instructor is teaching.

For instance, if the course was marketed towards master's students, a book review

would prove helpful, and many journals send out calls for book reviews on a rolling

basis. This option would also be helpful for early doctoral students who may only have a

project in the beginning stages of writing. Additionally, the course could be framed

around a particular special issue in the field, or the assignment could ask students to work

on smaller projects to be submitted to journals that accept shorter pieces, such as

Programmatic Perspectives:

> FOCUS articles are short, timely pieces that spotlight current or emerging issues
> related to technical and scientific communication that readers would find useful in
> their administrative roles. These topics can include, but are not limited to,
> pedagogical approaches, industry trends, administrative resources, funding
> strategies, policy discussions, and such other issues.

> All articles will be double-blind reviewed.

> Length: 2,500 words, including abstract, main text, and references

The options listed above allow students to explore the publishing process in

various ways. For instance, if students are rejected from a journal or special issue, the

course represents a unique place where students can discuss with the professor various

moves forward. It's important to note that review timelines may not allow for this type of

discussion. However, having developed a submission during the course, and having

continued conversations about the publishing process, would allow students to be

equipped to express their needs if they receive a rejection– Whether expressing their

needs to the editor and/or to the instructor of the course. Rejection, in particular, can be

difficult for early-career scholars, and having a place to explore the process can be

especially meaningful. Moreover, related to recommendation 3 above, a graduate course

on academic publishing is the ideal location for invited talks from editors in the field, and

instructors might choose to attach an assignment or activity to this talk (if applicable) for

students to simulate discussing publishing issues with editors. For instance, ethical case

study examples that students could discuss with an editor in the field. Other sample

assignments are described briefly below:

> **Reflective Journal on Publishing Journey:** Throughout the course, students will maintain a reflective journal documenting their personal journey in academic publishing. This journal is primarily for each student, and the instructor will only briefly check, while grading, to make sure entries have been made. Students may choose to keep this journal in whatever form makes the most sense to them.

> **Journal Analysis and Critique:** Students will explore a journal in the field's scope, target audience, editorial policies, and impact factor and write a brief analysis of the journal.

> **Ethical Dilemma Case Study Analysis:** Students will analyze an ethical dilemma, identify ethical principles at play, and propose solutions or actions based on ethical considerations.

> **Collaborative Writing Project:** Student will collaborate on a written project with an emphasis on effective communication strategies, coordination (project management), and the development of a cohesive manuscript.

> **Peer Review Panel:** Students will review and assess each other's work, with emphasis on specific, knowledgeable, and kind feedback.

> **Individual Writing Project:** Students may choose to write a manuscript, book review, etc. to be submitted to a journal in the field of writing studies. This assignment should be started at the beginning of the semester (as much as is possible), so that students may work through the publishing process (if applicable) throughout the semester. This project will be graded based on completion.

Overall, the assignments in this course should allow students to gain insight into the publishing process in a way that increases their learning but also provides them with the security of a classroom environment where they can ask questions, make mistakes, and engage with publishing experts.

Conclusion c: Reviewers and Editors as Mentors

Conclusion c is that many editors in the field view their editorial work as relating to mentorship. For instance, Elias relayed during the editor focus group, "I think about the kinds of mentoring that we try to do for our grad students, and [editorial work] feels very similar to a lot of the mentoring that you try to do." I argue that reviewers should view their position in the publishing process similarly. For instance, Amand L. Hardiman on X (formerly Twitter) compared peer review to coaching (refer to Figure 2) stating "My job is to help the author(s) who put hard work into their project in a position that elevates them (regardless of my decision)" (Hardiman, 2024). Moreover, the Specific, Knowledgeable, and Kind Heuristic (Alexander et al., 2019) recommends that reviewers "advocate for the author. Approach reviewing as you would mentoring. Review others the way you'd want your manuscript to be reviewed" (n.p.).

Figure 2: Amand L. Hardiman's post on X on January 8th, 2024
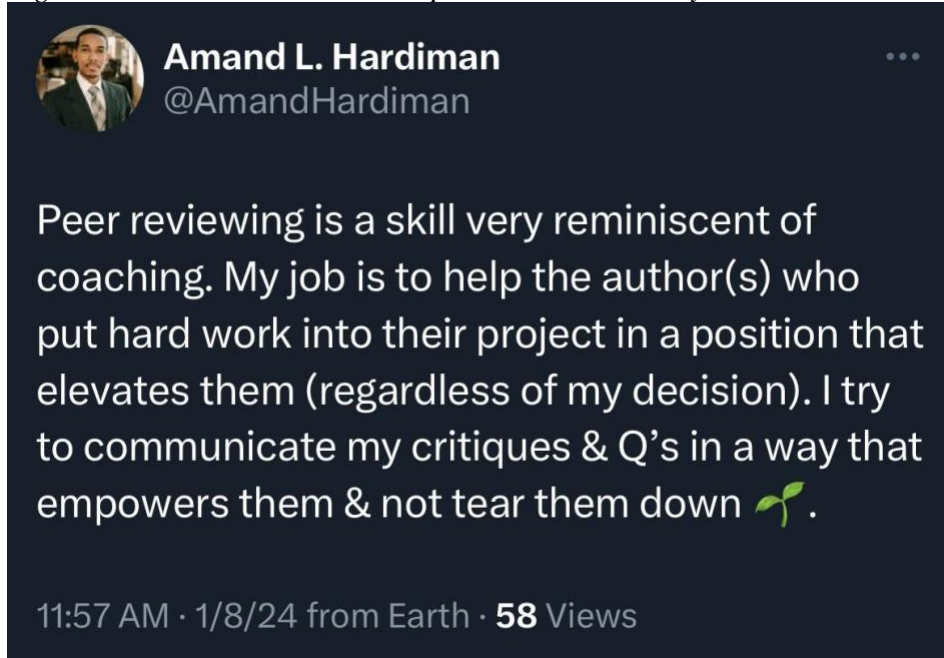
However, as Clarke and Halpern (2023) argue, it is also important to remember that the person whose manuscript you are reviewing is "a colleague and not a student" (para. 6). It's important to keep in mind that though you, as a reviewer, should have a mentorship and supportive mindset while reviewing a manuscript, it is also important to remember that during a review, the author of the manuscript under review is your colleague and "can teach [*you*] something, rather than the other way around" (para. 7).

Regarding ethics, mentoring relationships may reframe the process toward the ethical phases of responsiveness. In other words, we may consider the act of writing a manuscript, submitting it to a journal, and receiving feedback to be a self-supporting process, in that as academics, we should be able to successfully publish a text on our own. However, as Tronto (1993) states, "Caring is by its very nature a challenge to the notion that individuals are entirely autonomous and self-supporting" (p. 134).

Responsiveness requires us to remain attuned to abuses that can arise with those who are considered more vulnerable. Thus, mentorship relationships allow us to be more attuned to the needs of those we mentor. To that end, I recommend the following.

Recommendation 4: Assistant Editors/Editorial Board members as Mentors (Conclusion a, c)

The second recommendation related to communication is the hiring of assistant editors who specifically work as mentors for editors and reviewers. This recommendation addresses finding a: communication. As described above, editors are particularly busy people who may not have the time or support to be able to offer extensive mentorship beyond what they may already be doing. Thus, I recommend editors consider hiring an assistant editor or multiple assistant editors whose job is to communicate directly with authors and reviewers to assist in various ways.

Additionally, editors might reach out to editorial board members and inquire about mentorship roles that editorial board members might play. Perhaps policy can be written into the process that editorial board members also take on a mentorship role for an author throughout the journal of their manuscript through the publication process. I imagine editorial board members may have the bandwidth to be able to mentor one or two authors a year to keep in "good standing" with the journal.

I recognize that this recommendation has limitations related to funding and support for editors. Some editors do not have funding to be able to hire assistant editors as recommended. However, many editors have associate editors or managing editors working with them as well. I envision associate or managing editors perhaps being able to take on a mentorship role if their position allows. Additionally, it is also important to recognize that many editorial board members have multiple positions in academia and

asking them to put in more labor could be divisive. Editors should carefully weigh the labor of their editorial board members and their ability to position associate/assistant editors as mentors before moving forward with this recommendation.

Conclusion d: Unique Ethical Considerations of Peer Review

Peer review remains a process that has its own unique ethical considerations, many of which are particularly difficult to document in policy and procedure. However, as Bryson and Clem (2022) state, "The powerful potential of dialogue between editors and authors could… be leveraged to encourage more ethical, inclusive peer review" (p. 94). Regarding competence, continuing to have frank, transparent, conversations about ethical concerns with peer review becomes a priority, as academic considers what it means to be a competent reviewer, author, editors, etc. As Tronto (1993) describes,

> Intending to provide care, even accepting responsibility for it, but then failing to provide good care, means that in the end the need for care is not met. Sometimes care will be inadequate because the resources available to provide care are inadequate. But short of such resource problems, how could it not be necessary that the caring work be competently performed in order to demonstrate that one cares?. (p. 132).

Beyond resources, how can caring work between reviewers, authors, editors, etc. be competently performed? Academia has to continue to have these conversations about ethics and what it means to be ethical in complex processes such as peer review.

Recommendation 5: Continued Conversations of Ethics (Conclusion d)

Just because policy may not be able to attend to every ethical consideration does not mean we should stop discussing ethical considerations and dilemmas of authors, editors, peer reviews, etc. For instance, during weeks 5 and 6 of my proposed graduate course, I encourage the discussion of the ethical implications of publishing. Within these two

weeks, instructors should plan to bring in specific ethical case studies as part of the discussion.

The ARRH provides seven scenarios/stories that describe relevant situations for authors, editors, and reviewers that can be utilized in a graduate course and discussed. Additionally, instructors might consider utilizing the case studies included on the COPE website. These case studies are submitted by COPE members to the forum for community discussion and advice and are rich places for discussion in a graduate course on publishing.

Additionally, in considering recommendation 2: Invited talks on peer review, editors might continue these conversations of ethics and encourage discussion. I envision editors bringing in case studies like the ones mentioned above to the talk, or situations of their own that can encourage students, faculty, etc., to engage in these ethical dilemmas.

Editors might also interrogate their editorial practices against an ethical framework, and encourage reviewers, editorial board members, and authors at their journal to do the same. For instance, with a care ethics framework, editors might ask themselves:

- How inclusive and diverse is our editorial board, and how does this diversity contribute to the care and consideration of a wide range of perspectives?
- Do the reviewers provide feedback that fosters growth and improvement rather than critiquing and pointing out flaws? Do I provide such feedback? Do I frame reviewer feedback as such?
- How transparent are my communication practices with authors regarding the status of their submission and the reasons for a decision?
- Am I recognizing and valuing the emotional labor involved in academic writing and publishing?

Reviewers might be encouraged to consider:

- Do I approach the review process with empathy, considering the time and effort the authors have already invested in their work and are likely to invest further?

- Is my feedback constructive, aimed at helping authors improve their work, rather than solely pointing out deficiencies?
- Do I consider the potential impact of my comments on the well-being of the authors?

Authors might be encouraged to consider:

- How have I acknowledged the contributions of others, including collaborators, reviewers, mentors, and participants in my research, particularly in write-ups of my research?
- How do I approach and respond to feedback from peer reviewers constructively and respectfully?
- How do I approach and seek understanding if I have concerns or questions about editorial decisions?

Answers to these questions might help the academic community better align themselves with a care ethics, or other ethical, framework.

Implications for Future Research

Accessibility/Disability and Peer Review

A peer review scenario that was perhaps under-thought-out in my survey was ableism in the process. In Question 4b: Discriminatory, respondents were invited to check the scenario "The reviewer assumed the gender, nationality, ability, etc. of the author, and it seemed as if that assumption influenced the review comments," which briefly touches on the idea of assumption of ability. However, one respondent utilized the open response section to note that "I have dyslexia and a learning disability. I am appalled by the comments about errors I cannot control." This comment may relate to unprofessional and unhelpful peer review as well, as reviewers are unnecessarily commenting on aspects of the manuscript that will perhaps be edited out in the published piece. However, presumably, the respondent did not categorize it as such and utilized the open section to expand on this situation.

This comment has many implications for future research. Despite this current conversation about inclusion in publishing, disability is often overlooked. As Ryan (2020) states, "Disabled people are the biggest minority in the world…but the publishing industry is still disappointingly unrepresentative of us" (para. 2). According to Leary, "92% of the publishing industry identifies as nondisabled" (para. 20). However, physical representation is not the only issue affecting academic publishing. Baker, Nightingale, and Bills (2021) describe some of the challenges blind or visually impaired people face as it relates to extra labor and "invisible work," which includes learning additional tools to complete tasks. Additionally, Gies et al. (2016) relay that though academic publishing is pushing for more inclusive and accessible efforts, gaps and areas remain unaddressed, such as inaccessible documentation, inability to access track changes, and confusing publishing platforms.

Multiple factors might play a part in ableist peer review comments, and the ones mentioned above are just a few. I hope to continue discussing this topic in future research on disability, publishing, and the peer review process.

Consent and Peer Review

One area I would like to continue researching is the idea of consent in peer review and the rights of reviewers, particularly regarding the editing of a review. For instance, in January of 2024, on the Association of Teachers of Technical Writing (ATTW) listserv, Dr. Michael Duncan posed an ethical question. As Duncan described, he recently completed a peer review for a journal in writing studies where he "requested that my name be included in the review. I have done this for every peer review I've written since

2015." The issue, as Duncan relays, is in the actions of the editor of the journal post review:

> I received a copy of the peer reviews after the publication decision, plus an email asking me not to sign reviews. My response to the editor was to note my name was removed without consent, that I would decline to review further for the journal, and if I had been asked to remove my name prior to it being sent out, I would have withdrawn the entire review.

Duncan goes on to describe the ethical dilemma faced in wanting to publish a "key phrase" included in each of his reviews to balance the power dynamics: "I can be held accountable for any incompetence, the editor's misstep is answered in kind, and perhaps the author could confirm, at least, that their peer reviews was not written by an enterprising chatbot." Duncan then closes the email considering the choices he has and whether they relate to "Personal ethics vs. professional ethics? Virtue vs. duty?" The final words of the email are particularly interesting considering the ethical framework utilized throughout this dissertation.

A colleague, Dr. Joanna Wolfe, responded to Duncan's initial email, with her "$.02." Wolfe, who noted that she is very open to reconsidering peer review processes, and welcomed a debate on the issue, takes the stance that it would be "wrong to subvert the editor's policies," and decisions to subvert policies should be made in conjunction with the editorial board, not individual reviewers. Wolfe also relayed that recently she was given a signed review (as a submitting author) and when the review took longer than expected (on a revise-and-resubmit) she had the urge to reach out to the reviewer. As she stated, "I found myself wishing I did not know the person's identity so I would not be tempted to reach out." Wolfe's example is just one in support of why editors might remove a reviewer's name.

Another respondent to the listserv, Dr. Cana Uluak Itchuaqiyaq, brought in another layer to the conversation: the idea of accountability. Itchuaqiyaq relayed that though signing a review might add a layer of accountability, "there already is some accountability built in on the journal's side. For example, the EIC, the assistant editor assigned to a manuscript, and often the managing editor see the full contents of one's review with name attached." Thus, a review is never entirely anonymous, and those who have been tasked with a certain level of accountability, have the ability to keep *others* accountable. This idea of accountability relates to what Dr. George Hayhoe relayed in the listserv conversation as well. Hayhoe reminded listserv readers that anonymous peer review has historically protected "those who are building professional reputations from the bias of the 'old guard'... In other words, it allows all researchers to start [on] an equal footing, whether they are full professors or graduate students." There is, as Itchuaqiyaq stated, accountability built into the process, and as Dr. Joseph Robertshaw aptly stated in the exchange, "It hardly seems like a time that we should work to weaken any academic structure in any way. Unless we have a better way already prepared to take over when the old system." However, are reviewers adding their names to reviews a practice that is weakening the anonymous system?

The anonymous peer review system is one that seems to be questioned by a lot of academia, however, the humanities are a bit slower to accept de-anonymized review. In a 2019 study of open peer review, researchers found that "174 journals were using open peer review, but only one (1%) of those were from the humanities" (Karhulahti & Backe,

2021). Of the 43 active journals listed on the University of Pennsylvania Library Guide

"Writing Studies Journals," only one utilizes open peer review[9].

 This email exchange led me to consider the rights of the reviewer in the process

as it relates to what is being done with their review and whether the reviewer should be

consulted during this process. During the editor focus groups (Chapter 4), I posed the

question to the editors of whether they let reviewers know that they are editing their

reviews, with the consensus being that many editors do not let the reviewer know that

their review has been edited. As Devin described what is typically removed from reviews

is "probably just somebody is irritable or trying to meet the deadline or it's before the

third cup of coffee or whatever. Presumably, I would hope that an editor would take that

stuff out of my reviews." Reviewers may not be consulted for small word changes here

and there. But should they be for larger moves such as the removal of a reviewer name? I

think, overall, communication (Conclusion a) would help in this situation, either from the

editor to reviewer, or from journal policy to the reviewer (if it is the journal's policy to

remain entirely anonymous). Either way, I think reviewers should have some sort of

communication related to changes such as the removal of a name, even if it is simply a

reminder of the journal policy.

 Another editor brought up the interesting point that they "took stuff out because if

it's unhelpful, it doesn't need to go on [to the author] and… I don't guarantee reviewers

that all their comments helpful and unhelpful are going to make it to the author." This

comment brings up the question of what reviewers may expect to happen to their review.

---

[9] It is also worth noting that it was quite difficult to find explicitly described peer review information from many of the journals listed by the University of Pennsylvania, which leads me to believe that because anonymous or "blind" peer review remains the default, many journals do not explicitly mention or describe their processes, particularly anonymous processes.

And is there any guarantee that a reviewer's comments will move on unedited to an author?

Future research might consider the perspectives of peer reviewers concerning their expectations for their reviewer feedback and the ways in which these expectations influence the writing of said review.

AI and Peer Review

Artificial Intelligence (AI) was brought up as one interesting consideration I had not previously considered, and one that carries with it its own ethical considerations. In one focus group session, Ramsey made the important distinction that in their journal policies they "have a statement about using AI to review and that we don't allow AI, you can't upload any manuscript to AI to assist with your review." Additionally, Katy noted:

> One thing I'd encourage you to think about is the role of AI in peer review and the ethics of that. I don't believe I've had to deal with an AI peer review ChatGBT peer review…It has I think, many positive benefits for writing studies if used ethically and transparently. But I think that's part of the process, the ethics and the transparency of that and the role of an authentic reader of a manuscript, however much of a construction, a postmodern construction that might be. But I think that's worth considering as you look for those questions that take you in new directions after you've completed your project.

Research on ChatGPT and other generative AI in peer review has mostly been done in the sciences, and the consensus, among science scholars and journal editors, is that AI is a positive as the increasing submission rate to academic journals poses a significant challenge for traditional peer-review processes (Biswas, Dobaria, & Cohen, 2023). For instance, Srivastava (2023), a data and applied Scientist at Microsoft (Indeed, n.d.) introduced a study that investigated the potential of AI and other large language models for scientific peer review. As Srivastava notes

> Our analysis shows that there is promise in using AI techniques to augment the traditional peer-review process…our experiments with ChatGPT have demonstrated that it is possible to use large language models to assess the sentiment of research papers and provide insights into their potential for acceptance or rejection. (p. 10)

One consideration here is the potential conflict of interest related to a company, whose business interests lie in AI, conducting a study on the benefits of AI, and finding that it has promise as an assessment tool.

Regardless, humanities peer review can look very different from science or STEM-based fields' peer review processes. For instance, Muddit and Wulf (2016) interviewed Mary Francis, an editorial director at the University Press of Michigan who noted a few key differences such as "[Humanities and Social Sciences (HSS)] articles tend to be longer, and HSS journals tend to publish a small percentage of submissions. Peer reviewers for HSS journals are thus doing pretty extensive work on lengthy submissions" (para. 3). In other words, longer manuscripts and lower acceptance rates equals more labor for peer reviewers, who review long pieces, and authors who revise the pieces, and the manuscript may never actually be published. Though AI may lessen the time for reviewers (and authors who may wait for reviews from overworked reviewers), AI, at the current moment, is unable to perform first-hand research, and thus cannot accurately assess a manuscript. As Sage (2024) relays in their AI policy, AI may be able to create a summary, it is unable "to capture the reviewer's experience as a researcher in the field, any local or contextual nuances of the study or indeed what impact the study may have on various populations" (n.p.).

Moreover, it's important for editors and reviewers to consider what is information AI tools hold on to:

> As the [AI] tool or model will learn from what it receives over time and may use it to provide outputs to others, we ask Editors not to use these tools to triage manuscripts or create summaries. You should also not use these tools to summarize reviews and write decision letters due to concerns around confidentiality and copyright. (Sage, 2024, n.p.)

Reviewers inputting an author's manuscript into an AI tool results in copyright and confidentiality issues, and overall, it seems as if editors and reviewers should resist the urge to utilize AI in peer review feedback. Though peer review is valued in many different fields, the process can vary from field to field, and the feasibility of utilizing ChatGPT and other generative AI can vary as well. More research is needed to better understand how generative AI affects or can affect the humanities and social sciences peer review process.

Valuing the Labor of Peer Reviewers

In publishing, the question of how we value the labor of peer reviewers in ethical ways remains consistent. Many argue against paying reviewers for a multitude of reasons including the potential rise in the cost of journal subscriptions to offset reviewer payments (Moustafa, 2022; Vines & Mudditt, 2021), conflicts of interest (Vines & Mudditt, 2021), and the potential for incentivizing quick, non-detailed reviews (Matthew, 2016; Vines & Mudditt, 2021). Regardless, with the constant struggle to find reviewers and continued questions about the ethics of a primarily voluntary system, some journals think it is time that the labor of peer review comes with some sort of paycheck (Matthews, 2016).

I've considered multiple ideas related to the valuing of peer review labor including:

- Letters from editors for reviewer Tenure and Promotion files
- Arguments for peer reviewing as 'service' in tenure and promotion

- Discounted or free subscriptions to journals (particularly for industry reviewers who may not have access to a journal through an institution).

In future research I would like to explore all of the above, particularly taking into account the expressed needs of peer reviewers in the field of writing studies to be able to address the labor issues pervading the process.

Conclusion

Though, in some ways, I may have more questions than answers from this research, I am sure of a few things. First, it is clear that one of the best mitigation strategies/interventions is communication. Discussing with the stakeholders involved in the process seems like a prime place for editors, in particular, to intervene against negative peer review experiences. Next, all members of the scholarly community need to be better trained in the multiple roles they may hold if we hope to cultivate more positive publishing experiences. Lastly, peer review remains a process that carries with it unique ethical considerations that may not always be addressed by policy. I'm not sure policy can make someone care about another person when they review a manuscript, synthesize feedback, respond to feedback, etc. However, continuing to discuss the nuances of the process, the ethical considerations, and the care we could continue to emphasize, seems like important moves in the right direction.

Above, I described four recommendations aligned with three different conclusions drawn from the research study (refer to Table 14). The four conclusions are,

a) The importance of communication throughout the publishing process,

b) The necessity of stakeholder training (particularly editors and early career scholars),

c) The mentorship potential for authors by reviewers and editors, and

d) Peer review remains a process with unique ethical considerations that policies
(journal guidelines, stylesheets, best practices of peer review, etc.) may not be
able to take into account.

Table 14: Recommendations and the Overlaps with Research Conclusions

Study-Based Recommendations	Conclusions Addressed (a, b, c, d)			
Recommendation 1: Drop-in Hours for Editors	a			
Recommendation 2: Invited talks on peer review processes	a	b		d
Recommendation 3: Graduate Course on Academic Publishing	a	b	c	d
Recommendation 4: Assistant Editors who work as mentors	a		c	
Recommendation 5: Continued Conversations on Ethics				d

Academic publishing remains an integral and high-stakes process because

publishing influences a scholar's ability to build a reputation in the field, which dictates a

scholar's ability to both get a tenure track job and get tenure. A process that is so integral

to the success of academics, but equally difficult, ambiguous, and oppressive becomes a

process that needs to be recognized, revealed, rejected, and replaced (Walton et al.,

2019). This research began this necessary work.

REFERENCES

About Open Journal Systems. (n.d.). https://openjournalsystems.com/ojs-3-user

guide/overview/

Academic publishers & scholarly journals. (n.d.). https://ooir.org/journals/

Agboka, G. Y. (2013a). Participatory localization: A social justice approach to navigating

unenfranchised/disenfranchised cultural sites. *Technical Communication*

Quarterly, 22(1), 28–49.

Alexander, J., Cheek, R., Itchuaqiyaq, C. U., Shirley, B., & Walton, R. (2019, March 13).

Specific, knowledgeable, and kind: A heuristic for the journal publication process.

Workshop presented at the 22nd annual Association of Teachers of Technical

Writing conference, Pittsburgh, PA.

Alexander, J-J., & Walton, R. (2022). Relational recruiting: Using Black feminist theory

to inform graduate recruiting strategies. IEEE Transactions on Professional

Communication, 65(1), 164-178.

Allen, K-A., Reardon, J., Crawford, J., & Walsh, L. (2022). The peer review system is

broken. We asked academics how to fix it. https://theconversation.com/the-peer-

review-system-is-broken-we-asked-academics-how-to-fix-it-187034

Allen, K-A., Reardon, J., Lu, Y., Smith, D. V., Rainsford, E., & Walsh, L. (2022).

Towards improving peer review: Crowd-sourced insights from Twitter. *Journal of*

University Teaching & Learning Practice, 19(3), 1-14.

Anti-racist scholarly reviewing practices: A heuristic for editors, reviewers, and authors.

(2021).

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1lZmZqeNNnYfYgmTKSbL2ijYbR4OMov
v6A-bDwJRnwx8/edit

Author Services Taylor & Francis. (n.d.). *5 top reasons for desk rejection – and how to avoid them.* https://authorservices.taylorandfrancis.com/blog/get-published/5-reasons-for-desk-rejection-and-how-to-avoid-them/

Baker, M.J., Nightingale, E.M., & Bills, S. (2021). An editing process for blind or visually impaired editors. *IEEE Transactions on Professional Communication, 64*(3), 275-287.

Baker-Bell, A. (2020). We been knowin: Toward an antiracist language & literacy education. *Journal of Language and Literacy Education, 16*(1), 1-12.

Beem, C. (2022). *Why virtue signaling isn't the same as virtue – it actually furthers the partisan divide.* https://theconversation.com/why-virtue-signaling-isnt-the-same-as-virtue-it-actually-furthers-the-partisan-divide-189195#:~:text=Thus%2C%20while%20the%20term%20virtue%20signaling%20may%20be,matched%20with%20actions%20%E2%80%93%20mere%20signaling%20is%20insufficient.

Biswas, S., Dobaria, D., & Cohen, H. L. (2023). ChatGPT and the future of journal reviews: A feasibility study. *Yale Journal of Biology and Medicine, 96*(3). 415–420.

Branham, C., & Vie, S. (2018). Women veterans' advocacy use of social networking curating and responding to trolling. *Connexions*, 1-50.

Braybrooke, D. (1987). *Meeting needs.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Bryson, R. W., & Clem, S. (2022). Cultivating ethics in the peer review process. In Proceedings of the SIGDOC '22: The 40th ACM International Conference on Design of Communication, Boston, USA, October 2022.

Buchanan, N. T. (2019). Researching while Black (and female). *Women & Therapy, 43*(1-2), 91- 111. https://doi.org/10.1080/02703149.2019.1684681

Buggs, S. G., Sims, J. P., & Kramer, R. (2020) Rejecting white distraction: A critique of the white logic and white methods in academic publishing. *Ethnic and Racial Studies, 43*(8), 1384-1392.

Butcher, J., Drake, C., & Leach, M. (2006). *Butcher's Copyediting.* Cambridge University Press.

Buyserie, B., Bryson, R. W., & Quistberg, R. (2021). Productive disruptions: Resilient pedagogies that advocate for equity. In T. Thurston, K. Lundstrom, & C. González (Eds) *Resilient pedagogies: practice teaching strategies to overcome distance, disruption, and distraction* (pp. 37-53).

Cargile-Cook, K. (2002). Layered literacies: A theoretical frame for technical communication pedagogy. *Technical Communication Quarterly, 11*(1), 5-29.

Carnes, M., Fine, E., & Sheridan, J. (2019). Promises and pitfalls of diversity statements: Proceed with caution. *Academic medicine: journal of the Association of American Medical Colleges, 94*(1), 20.

Center for First-Generation Student Success. (2020). Are you a first-generation student? Retrieved from https://firstgen.naspa.org/why-first-gen/students/are-you-a-first-generation-student

Chen, Y., & Carliner, S. (2019). Who technical communicators are: A summary of

    demographics, backgrounds, and employment. *Intercom.*

    https://www.stc.org/intercom/2019/01/who-technical-communicators-are-a-

    summary-of-demographics-backgrounds-and-employment/

Chicago Beyond. (2019). Why am I always being researched?

    https://chicagobeyond.org/researchequity/

Clark, D. (2004). Is professional writing relevant? A model for action research. *Technical*

    Communication Quarterly, 13(3), 307-323, DOI: 10.1207/s15427625tcq1303_5

Clarke, M. T., & Halpern, F. (2023). *How to review an academic journal article.* Inside

    Higher Ed. https://www.insidehighered.com/opinion/career-

    advice/2023/09/05/journal-reviewers-should-act-more-mentors-gatekeepers-

    opinion

Cohen, P. (Aug. 23, 2010). Scholars test web alternative to peer review Retrieved from

    http://www.culik.com/1190fall2012/Paper_1_files/peerreviewcohen.pdf

Collins, P. H. (1989). The social construction of Black Feminist Thought. Common

    grounds and crossroads: Race, ethnicity, and class in women's lives. *Journal of*

    Women in Culture and Society, 14(4). 745-773.

Collins, P. H. (2000). *Black Feminist Thought.* New York: Routledge.

Colton, J. S., Holmes, S., & Walwema, J. (2017). From noobguides to #OPKKK: Ethics

    of Anonymous' tactical technical communication. *Technical Communication*

    Quarterly, 26(1), 59-75.

Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE). (2021). Systematic manipulation of the

    publication process. Retrieved from https://publicationethics.org/node/39471.

COPE. (2018). *Editor and reviewers requiring authors to cite their own work.*

> https://publicationethics.org/case/editor-and-reviewers-requiring-authors-cite-

> their-own-

> work#:~:text=According%20to%20COPE%E2%80%99s%20ethics%20guideline

> s%20for%20peer%20reviewers%2C,be%20based%20on%20valid%20academic

> %20or%20technological%20reasons.%E2%80%9D

COPE. (2019). *Citation manipulation*. https://publicationethics.org/citation-manipulation-

> discussion-document

Core Practices. (n.d.). COPE. https://publicationethics.org/core-practices

Costanza-Chock, S. (2020). *Design Justice: Community-Led Practices to Build the*

> *Worlds we Need.* MIT Press.

Council Members. (2023, August 24). COPE. https://publicationethics.org/about/council

Davenport, S., & Leitch, S. (2005). Circuits of power in practice: Strategic ambiguity as

> delegation of authority. *Organization Studies, 26*(11), 1603-1623.

Davidson, R. M. (2020). Peer review: Academia's most important but least understood

> task. *Electronic Journal of Information Systems, 86.*

De Hertogh, L. B. (2018). Feminist digital research methodology for rhetoricians of

> health and medicine. *Journal of Business and Technical Communication,* 1-24.

Delgado, R. (1984). The imperial scholar: Reflections on a review of civil rights

> literature. *University of Pennsylvania Law Review, 132*(3), 561-578.

> > https://doi.org/10.2307/3311882

Dietrich, S., & Hernandez, E. (2019). Language use in the United States: 2019. Retrieved

> from

https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2022/acs/acs-
50.pdf

Dietrich, S., & Hernandez, E. (2022). What languages do we speak in the United States?
Retrieved from https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2022/12/languages-we-
speak-in-united-states.html

Durack, K. T. (1997). Gender, technology, and the history of technical communication.
Technical Communication Quarterly, 6(3), 249–260.

Edenfield, A. C. (2018). The burden of ambiguity: Writing at a cooperative. *Technical
Communication, 65*(1), 31-45.

Edenfield, A. C., Holmes, S., & Colton, J. S. (2019). Queering tactical technical
communication: DIY HRT. *Technical Communication Quarterly, 28*(3), 177-191.

Elsevier. (n.d.). *Paper rejection: Common reasons*. https://scientific-
publishing.webshop.elsevier.com/publication-process/paper-rejection-common-
reasons/

Engster, D. (2019). Care ethics, dependency, and vulnerability. *Ethics and Social
Welfare, 13*(2), 100-114. https://doi.org/10.1080/17496535.2018.1533029

Eisenberg, E. M. (1984). Ambiguity as strategy in organizational communication.
Communication Monographs, 51, 227-242.

Fernandez, T., Godwin, A., Doyle, J., Verdin, D., & Boone, H. (2016). More
comprehensive and inclusive approaches to demographic data collection.
Retrieved from
https://docs.lib.purdue.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1059&context=enegs

Fichten, C. S. Ferraro, V. Asuncion, J. V. Chwojka, C. Barile, M. Nguyen, M. N. Klomp, R. & Wolforth, J. (2009). Disabilities and e-Learning Problems and Solutions: An Exploratory Study. *Educational Technology & Society, 12*(4), 241-256. http://www.adaptech.org/cfichten/abDisabilitiesAndE-LearningProblems.pdf

Fisher, S. (2023). Great survey questions: How to write them and avoid common mistakes. Retrieved from https://www.qualtrics.com/blog/writing-survey-questions/

Fitzpatrick, K. (2011). *Planned obsolescence: Publishing, technology, and the future of the academy.* New York, NY: New York University Press.

Flaherty, C. (2022). The peer-review crisis. https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2022/06/13/peer-review-crisis-creates-problems-journals-and-scholars

Forsberg, E., Geschwind, L., Levander, S., & Wermke, W. (2022). Peer review in academia. In E. Forsberg, L. Geschwind, S. Levander, & W. Wermke (Eds.) *Peer review in an era of evaluation.* Palgrave Macmillan.

Frederick, J. K. (2020). Four strategies for crafting inclusive and effective demographic questions. Retrieved from https://sr.ithaka.org/blog/four-strategies-for-crafting-inclusive-and-effective-demographic-questions/

Frost, E. A. (2016). Apparent feminism as a methodology for technical communication and rhetoric. *Journal of Business and Technical Communication, 30*(1), 3-28.

Fyfe, A. (2015). Peer review: Not as old as you might think. Retrieved from https://www.timeshighereducation.com/features/peer-review-not-old-you-might-think

Gies, T., Boucherie, S., Narup, T., Wise, A., & Guidice, N. A. (2016). What goes unseen in accessible publishing: Good practice and remaining gaps. *European Science Editing, 42*(3), 66-69. doi: 10.20316/ESE.2016.42.015

Gilligan, C. (2003). *In a different voice: Psychological theory and women's development.* Harvard University Press.

Ginna, P. (2017). Introduction: The three phases of editing. In P. Ginna *What editors do: The art, craft and business of book editing* (pp. 1-13). Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Gonzalez, P., Wilson, G. S., & Purvis, A. J. (2022). Peer review in academic publishing: Challenges in achieving the gold standard. *Journal of University Teaching & Learning Practice, 19*(5). https://ro.uow.edu.au/jutlp/vol19/iss5/01

Google Survey Help. (2023). Things to keep in mind when creating surveys. Retrieved from

https://support.google.com/surveys/answer/7380083?hl=en#sendemo&zippy=%2 Cin-this-article

Graham, M. (2007). The ethics of care, Black women and the social professions: Implications of a new analysis. *Ethics and Social Welfare, 1*(2). 194-206.

Haas, A. M. (2012). Race, rhetoric, and technology: A case study of decolonial technical communication theory, methodology, and pedagogy. *Journal of Business and Technical Communication, 26*(3), 277–310.

Hallberg, L.R. -M. (2006). The "core category" of grounded theory: Making constant comparisons. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies on Health and Well-*

Being, 1(3), 141–148. https://doi-

org.dist.lib.usu.edu/10.1080/17482620600858399

Hansen, D. T., & Quek, Y. (2023). The call to teach and the ethics of care: A dynamic

educational crossroads. *Journal of Curriculum Studies, 55*(1), 8-20.

https://doi.org/10.1080/00220272.2022.2143243

Harnad, S. (2000). The Invisible Hand of Peer Review. *Exploit Interactive, 5*.

Hart, H., & Conklin, J. (2011). Toward a meaningful model of technical communication.

In J. Conklin & G. Hayhoe (Eds.) *Qualitative research in technical*

communication (pp. 112-144). New York: Routledge.

Held, V. (2006). Feminist moral inquiry and the feminist future. In V. Held (Ed.) *Justice*

and Care (pp. 153-176). Boulder, Co: Westview Press.

History and context of the COPE guidelines. (n.d.). COPE.

https://publicationethics.org/about/history/guidelines

Holladay, D. (2017). Classified conversations: Psychiatry and tactical technical

communication in online spaces. *Technical Communication Quarterly, 26*(1), 8-

24.

Holst, F., Eggleton, K., & Harris, S. (2022). Transparency versus anonymized: Which is

better to eliminate bias in peer review? *Insights, 35*.

Howard, J. (2010). Leading humanities journal debuts 'open' peer review, and likes it.

Retrieved from https://www.chronicle.com/article/leading-humanities-journal-

debuts-open-peer-review-and-likes-it/

How to Write a Peer Review. PLOS. https://plos.org/resource/how-to-write-a-peer-review/#:~:text=Even%20if%20you%20decide%20not%20to%20identify%20yourself,focus%20on%20the%20manuscript%20instead%20of%20the%20authors.

Hughes, J. L., Camden, A. A., Yangchen, T., Smith, G. P. A., Domenech Rodriguez, M. M., Rouse, S. V., McDonald, C. P., & Lopez, S. (2022). Guidance for researchers when using inclusive demographic questions for surveys: Improved and updated questions. *Journal of Psychological Research, 27*(4).

Indeed. (n.d.). *Mashrin Srivastava*. https://www.linkedin.com/in/mashrin/

Itchuaqiyaq, C.U., (15 March, 2022). MMU scholar list. https://www.itchuaqiyaq.com/mmu-scholar-list

Itchuaqiyaq, C. U., Edenfield, A. C., & Grant-Davie, K. (2022). Sex work and professional risk communication: Keeping safe on the streets. *Journal of Business and Technical Communication, 36*(1), 1-37.

Itchuaqiyaq, C. U., & Walton, R. (2021). Reviewer as activist: Understanding academic review through Conocimiento. *Rhetoric Review, 40*(4), 378-394

Jammaers, E. (2023). Theorizing discursive resistance to organizational ethics of care through a multi-stakeholder perspective on disability inclusion practices. *Journal of Business Ethics, 183*, 333-345.

Jones, N. N. (2016a). Found things: Genre, narrative, and identification in a networked activist organization. *Technical Communication Quarterly, 25*(4), 298-318.

Jones, N. N. (2016b). The technical communicator as advocate: integrating a social justice approach in technical communication. *Journal of Technical Writing and Communication, 46*(3), 342-361.

Jones, N. N., Moore, K. R., & Walton, R. (2016). Disrupting the past to disrupt the future: An antenarrative of technical communication. *Technical Communication Quarterly, 25*(4), 211-229.

Journal of Business and Technical Communication. (n.d.a). Editorial board. https://journals.sagepub.com/editorial-board/JBT

Journal of Business and Technical Communication. (n.d.b). Review Criteria for Article-Length Studies (Research Articles). https://journals.sagepub.com/pb-assets/cmscontent/JBT/JBTCReviewCriteria-ResearchArticles.pdf

Karhulahti, V-M., & Backe, H-J. (2021). Transparency of peer review: a semi-structured interview study with chief editors from social sciences and humanities. *Research Integrity and Peer Review, 6*(13).

Kimball, M. A. (2006). Cars, culture, and tactical technical communication. *Technical Communication Quarterly, 15*(1), 67-86, DOI: 10.1207/s15427625tcq1501_6

Knievel, M. S. (2008). Rupturing context, resituating genre: A study of Use-of-Force policy in the wake of a controversial shooting. *Journal of Business and Technical Communication, 22*(3), 330-363.

Kronick, D. A. (2004). *'Devant le deluge' and other essays on early modern scientific communication*. Lantham, MD: Scarecrow.

Kugler, L. (2022). Technology's impact on morality. *Communications of the ACM, 65*(4), 15-16.

Larivière, V., Haustein, S., & Mongeon, P. (2015). The oligopoly of academic publishers in the digital era. *PLoS ONE, 10*(6). doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0127502

Leary, A. (2016) Why the publishing industry can't get disability right. Retrieved from

    https://medium.com/the-establishment/why-the-publishing-industry-cant-get-

    disability-right-938de48adac3

Leavy, P. (2017). Research design: Quantitative, qualitative, mixed methods, arts-based,

    and community-based participatory research approaches. New York, NY: The

    Guilford Press.

Ledbetter, L. (2018). The rhetorical work of YouTube's beauty community:

    Relationship-and identity-building in user-created procedural discourse. *Technical*

    Communication Quarterly, 27(4), 287-299.

Leydens, J. A., Moskal, B. M., & Pavelich, M. J. (2004). Qualitative methods used in the

    assessment of engineering education. *Journal of Engineering Education, 93*(1),

    65–72. https://doi.org/10.1002/j.2168-9830.2004.tb00789.x

Longo, B. (1998). An approach for applying cultural study theory to technical writing

    research. *Technical Communication Quarterly, 7*(1), 53-73, DOI:

    10.1080/10572259809364617

Luetger, C. (2014). Where does peer review fit in a digital age? Retrieved from

    https://www.historians.org/research-and-publications/perspectives-on-

    history/may-2014/letter-to-the-editor-where-does-peer-review-fit-in-a-digital-age

Markkula Center for Applied Ethics. (2022). Technology and engineering practice:

    Ethical lenses to look through. https://www.scu.edu/media/ethics-

    center/technology-ethics/Tech_and_Engineering_Practice-Ethical_Lenses-

    2022.pdf

Matthews, D. (16 March, 2016). *Should academics be paid for peer review?*. Times Higher Education. https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/should-academics-be-paid-for-peer-review

Matsumoto, A. (n.d.). How to create more inclusive surveys. Retrieved from https://www.surveymonkey.com/curiosity/how-to-create-more-inclusive-surveys/

Mavrogenis, A. F., Quaile, A., & Scarlat, M. M. (2020). The good, the bad, and the rude peer-review. *International Orthopaedics, 44,* 413-415.

McCaughey, J. (2020). The rhetoric of online exclusive pumping communities: Tactical technical communication as eschewing judgment. *Technical Communication Quarterly, 30*(1), 1-14.

McManus, D., Dryer, R., & Henning, M. (2017) Barriers to learning online experienced by students with a mental health disability. *Distance Education, 38*(3), 336-352, DOI: 10.1080/01587919.2017.1369348

Miller, C. R. (1979). A humanistic rationale for technical writing. *College English, 40*(6), 610-617.

Miller, C. R. (1989). What's practical about technical writing. In B. E. Fearing & W. K. Sparrow (Eds) *Technical writing: Theory and practice* (pp. 14-24). MLA.

Miller, J. C., & Harris, C. T. (2009). Conflicting agendas for scholars, publishers, and institutions. In. A. N. Greco (Ed.) *The State of Scholarly Publishing* (pp. 9-26).

Moore, K. (2013). Exposing hidden relations: Storytelling, pedagogy, and the study of politics. *Journal of Technical Writing and Communication, 43*(1), 63-78.

Moore, K. R., Cundiff, B. S., N. Jones, N., & Heilig, L. (2017). Contested sites of health risks: Using wearable technologies to intervene in racial oppression.

Communication Design Quarterly, 5(4), 52-60.

https://doi.org/10.1145/3188387.3188392

Moore, K. R., Cagle, L. E., & Lowman, N. (2023). Afterword: Diversity, equity, and

inclusion through citational practices. In H. Yu & J. Buehl Keywords in technical

and professional communication. WAC Clearinghouse.

Morse, J. M., & Niehaus, L. (2009). *Mixed method design: Principles and procedures.*

Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press.

Mott, C., & Cockayne, D. (2017). Citation matters: Mobilizing the politics of citation

toward a practice of 'conscientious engagement.' *Gender, Place & Culture, 24*(7).

954-973.

Moustafa, K. (2022). *No to paid peer review.* The Lancet.

https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(22)01057-

1/fulltext

Muddit, A., & Wulf, K. (2016). *Peer review in the humanities and social sciences: If it

ain't broke, don't fix it?* The Scholarly Kitchen.

https://scholarlykitchen.sspnet.org/2016/09/21/peer-review-in-the-humanities-

and-social-sciences-if-it-aint-broke-dont-fix-it/

Mulligan, A., Hall, L., & Raphael, E. (2013). Peer review in a changing world: An

international study measuring the attitudes of researchers. *Journal of the

American Society for Information Science and Technology, 64*(1), 132–161.

https://doi.org/10.1002/asi.22798

National Center for Women & Information Technology (NCWIT). (n.d.). Guide to

demographic survey questions. Retrieved from https://wpassets.ncwit.org/wp-

content/uploads/2021/10/29170259/Surveys_DemographicsGuide_10292021.pdf

Noddings, N. (2015). Care ethics and 'caring' organizations. In D. Engster & M.

Hamington (Eds.) *Care Ethics and Political Theory* (pp. 72-84). Oxford, UK:

Oxford University Press.

Norton, S. (2017). Open-heart surgery, or just a nip and tuck? Development editing. In P.

Ginna *What editors do: The art, craft, and business of book editing* (pp. 85-95).

Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Norton, S. (2023). *Developmental editing: A handbook for freelancers, authors, and

publishers.* Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Nozick, R. (1993). *The Nature of Rationality.* Princeton University Press.

Oransky, I, & Marcus, A. (2010). Why write a blog about retractions? Retrieved from

https://retractionwatch.com/2010/08/03/why-write-a-blog-about-retractions/.

Ornatowski, C. M. (1992). Between efficiency and politics rhetoric and ethics in

technical writing. *Technical Communication Quarterly, 1*(1), 91-103.

Oxford English Dictionary. n.d. peer review, n., sense 2.b. July 2023.

https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/1169878592

Penn Library Guides. (2023). Writing studies.

https://guides.library.upenn.edu/WritingStudies/journals

Petersen, E., & Moeller, R. M. (2016). Using antenarrative to uncover systems of power

in mid-20th century policies on marriage and maternity at IBM. *Journal of*

Technical Writing and Communication, 46(3), 362-386.

https://doi.org/10.1177/0047281616639473

Present Tense: A Journal of Rhetoric in Society. (n.d.a). About.

http://www.presenttensejournal.org/about/

Present Tense: A Journal of Rhetoric in Society. (n.d.b). Sample submission topics.

http://www.presenttensejournal.org/submissions/#guidelines

Ranney, F. J. (2000). Beyond Foucault: Toward a user-centered approach to sexual

harassment policy. *Technical Communication Quarterly, 9*(1), 9-28.

Regehr, G., & Bordage, G. (2006). To blind or not to blind? What authors and reviewers

prefer. *Medical Education, 40*(9), 832– 839. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-

2929.2006.02539.x

Retraction Watch. (2023). Retrieved from https://retractionwatch.com/.

Ritter, K. (2022). The journal you have. In G. Giberson, M. Schoen, & C. Weisser (Eds.)

Behind the curtain of scholarly publishing: Editors in writing studies (pp. 15-28).

Logan, UT: Utah State University Press.

Roberts, T. J., & Shambrook, J. (2012). Academic excellence: A commentary and

reflections on the inherent value of peer review. *Journal of Research

Administration, 43(*1).

Ross-Hellauer, T. (2017). What is open peer review? A systematic review.

F1000Research, 6(588).

Rowley, J., & Sbaffi, L. (2018). Academics' attitudes towards peer review in scholarly

journals and the effect of role and discipline. *Journal of Information Science,

44*(5), 644–657

Ryan, F. (2020). Publishing must make room for disabled authors – for its own good. Retrieved from https://www.theguardian.com/books/2020/sep/04/publishing-must-make-room-for-disabled-authors-for-its-own-good

Sackey, D. J. (2020). One-size-fits-none: A heuristic for proactive value sensitive environmental design. *Technical Communication Quarterly, 29*(1), 33–48.

Sage. (2024). *Using AI in peer review and publishing.* https://us.sagepub.com/en-us/nam/using-ai-in-peer-review-and-publishing#pt3

Sarat-St. Peter, H. A. (2017). 'Make a bomb in the kitchen of your mom': Jihadist tactical technical communication and the everyday practice of cooking. *Technical Communication Quarterly, 26*(1), 76-91.

Schoen, M., & Giberson, G. (2022). Introduction: Why consider the role of editor? In G. Giberson, M. Schoen, & C. Weisser (Eds.) *Behind the curtain of scholarly publishing: Editors in writing studies* (pp. 3-11). Logan, UT: Utah State University Press.

Schusterman Family Philanthropies. (2020, August). More than numbers: A guide toward diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in data collection. Retrieved from https://schusterman.widen.net/s/rrcfkzdxtn/deidatacollectionguide

Sciullo, N. J., & Duncan, M. (2019). Professionalizing peer review: Suggestions for a more ethical and pedagogical review process. *Journal of Scholarly Publishing, 50*(4), 248-264.

Selfe, C. L., & Hawisher, G. E. (2012). Methodologies of peer and editorial review: Changing practices. *College Composition and Communication, 63*(4), 672-698.

Shatz, D. (2004). *Peer review: A critical inquiry.* Rowan and Littlefied Publishers Inc.

Shelton, C. (2020). Shifting out of neutral: Centering difference, bias, and social justice in a business writing course. *Technical Communication Quarterly, 29*(1), 18-32, DOI: 10.1080/10572252.2019.1640287

Smith, C. F. (2000). Writing public policy: A practicum. *Technical Communication Quarterly, 9*(1), 77-92.

Smith, M., Chen, Y., Berndtson, R., Burson, K. M., & Griffin, W. (2017). "Office hours are kind of weird": Reclaiming a resource to foster student faculty interaction. *InSight: A Journal of Scholarly Teaching, 12*. 14-29.

Spooner, M. (2022). Forward: The shape of editorial work. In G. Giberson, M. Schoen, & C. Weisser (Eds.) *Behind the curtain of scholarly publishing: Editors in writing studies* (pp. vii-xiii). Logan, UT: Utah State University Press.

Stanton, D. C., Bérubé, M., Cassuto, L., Eaves, M., Guillory, J., Hall, D. E., & Latham, S. (2007). *Report of the MLA Task Force on Evaluating Scholarship for Tenure and Promotion.* MLA. https://www.mla.org/content/download/3362/file/taskforcereport0608.pdf

Stevens, H. L. (2022). "I don't have a gun stop shooting": Rhetorical analysis of law enforcement use of force policy documents. *IEEE Transactions on Professional Communication, 65*(1), 104- 117. https://doi.org/10.1109/TPC.2022.3144824

Stevens, H., & Walton, R. (2022). Selecting Editorial Board Members for Technical Communication Quarterly. ATTW Blog. https://attw.org/blog/selecting-editorial-board-members-for-technical-communication-quarterly/

Strauss A. L., & Corbin J. (1990). *Basics of qualitative research: grounded theory procedures and techniques*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Taylor & Francis. (2015). Peer review in 2015: A global view. Taylor & Francis Group. Retrieved from https://authorservices.taylorandfrancis.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/White-paper-Peer-Review.pdf

Tennant, J. P., & Ross-Hellauer, T. (2020). The limitations to our understanding of peer review. *Research Integrity and Peer Review, 5*(6). https://doi.org/10.1186/s41073-020-00092-1

Tham, J. C. K. (2021). *Design Thinking in Technical Communication: Solving Problems through Making and Collaboration*. Routledge.

Tronto, J. (1993). *Moral boundaries: A political argument for an ethic of care.* New York: Routledge.

University of Arizona. (n.d.). Inclusive and functional demographic questions. Retrieved from https://assessmentresearch.arizona.edu/sites/default/files/2021-10/Inclusive%20and%20Functional%20Demographic%20Questions%20Revision%202021.pdf

University of Calgary. (15 Dec., 2023). *Academic publishing demystified*. https://libguides.ucalgary.ca/publishing/peer_review

University of Pennsylvania. (7 July, 2023). *Writing Studies.* https://guides.library.upenn.edu/WritingStudies/journals

University Press of Colorado. (10 June, 2022). Our publication processes and timelines. https://upcolorado.com/publish-with-us/our-publication-process

USU Libraries. (23 Aug., 2022). Peer review week. https://library.usu.edu/news/2022/peer-review

Velasquez, M., Andre, C., Shanks, T. S. J., & Meyer, M. J. (2014). *Justice and fairness.* https://www.scu.edu/ethics/ethics-resources/ethical-decision-making/justice-and-fairness/

Vines, T., & Mudditt, A. (16 June, 2021). *What's wrong with paying for peer review?* The Scholarly Kitchen. https://scholarlykitchen.sspnet.org/2021/06/16/whats-wrong-with-paying-for-peer-review/

Vosman, F., Baart, A., & Hoffman, J. (Eds). 2020. *The ethics of care: The state of the art.* Peeters.

WAC Clearinghouse. (n.d.). *Scholarly journals.* https://wac.colostate.edu/repository/resources/professional/journals/

Walton, R., Moore, K. R., & Jones, N. N. (2019). Technical communication after the social justice turn: Building coalitions for action. Routledge.

Walwema, J., Colton, J. S., & Holmes, S. (2022). Introduction to the special issue on 21st-century ethics in technical communication: Ethics and the social justice movement in technical and professional communication. *Journal of Business and Technical Communication, 36*(3), 257-269.

Wandler, J. B., & Imbriale, W. J. (2017). Promoting undergraduate student self-regulation in online learning environments. *Online Learning Journal, 21*(2).

Ware, M. (2008). Peer review in scholarly journals: Perspective of the scholarly community - an international study [report]. Retrieved from https://content.iospress.com/articles/information-services-and-use/isu568

Wickman, C. (2014). Wicked problems in technical communication. *Journal of Technical Writing and Communication, 44*(1), 23-42.

Wiley. (n.d.). *Reviewer Guidelines.*

> https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/page/journal/10991476/homepage/reviewers

Williams, M. F. (2009). Understanding public policy development as a technological

> process. *Journal of Business and Technical Communication, 23*(4), 448-462.

Wilson, L. (1942). *The Academic Man: A Study in the Sociology of a Profession.* Oxford,

> England: Oxford University Press

WPA: Writing Program Administration. (n.d.a). Reviewer guidelines.

> https://docs.google.com/document/d/1ML4kKx1YeEBJfsQt4QkS2ZTPgzdxsx-
>
> Oqv-9homYoaU/edit

WPA: Writing Program Administration. (n.d.b). WPA Journal Editorial Board.

> https://wpacouncil.org/aws/CWPA/pt/sp/journal-board

Yoon, C., Sturm, S., Mullen, M., Lythberg, B., Longley, A., & Harré, N. (2021). Editorial

> conclusion. Kindness in the review process. *Knowledge Cultures, 9*(3), 206-219.

Yusuf, M., & Namboodri Schioppa, V. (2022). A technical hair piece: Metis, social

> justice, and technical communication in Black hair care on YouTube. *Technical*
>
> *Communication Quarterly, 31*(3), 263-282.

Zdenek, S. (2015). *Reading sounds: Closed-captioned media and popular culture.*

> Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Zhang, D. C., Smith, R. W., & Lobo, S. (2020). Should you sign your reviews? Open

> peer review and review quality. *Industrial and Organizational Psychology, 13*,
>
> 45-47.

APPENDIX

Appendix A:

[Letter of Information]

Negative Peer Review Experience(s)

Q1: As an author pursuing academic publication (e.g., journal, conference proceeding, book proposal, etc.), have you ever had a peer-review experience that you considered problematic?
- Yes
- No
- Maybe/Unsure

Q2: At which point(s) in your career have you had problematic peer-review experience(s)? (Please select all that apply).

- Assistant Professor
- Associate Professor
- Full Professor
- Graduate student working toward Master's degree
- Graduate student working toward Ph.D. or another doctoral degree
- Industry practitioner
- Non-tenure track full-time instructor
- Non-tenure track part-time instructor or Adjunct
- Post-doctoral researcher
- Other:
- Prefer not to say

Q3: Approximately how many times would you estimate you've had a problematic peer-review experience when submitting academic work for publication?
- 1 or 2 times
- 3 or 4 times
- 5 to 9 times
- 10 or more times

Types of Problematic Peer Review

For questions 4 and 5 please think of problematic peer review experience(s) you've had in the past 10 years:

Q4: What made these peer review experiences particularly problematic? (Please select all that apply):

Q4a: Unprofessional:
- The review comments were unclear and/or confusing.
- The review comments were exceedingly short.
- The review comments lacked thoughtful and/or helpful feedback.
- The reviewer focused exclusively on the weaknesses of the piece and did not identify strengths.
- The review comments included unprofessional language.
- Review comments made it seem that the reviewer did not fully/carefully read the piece.
- The review comments were exceedingly overdue by journal timelines.
- The reviewer requested I cite an irrelevant author/publication.

Q4b: Discriminatory:
- The review included discriminatory and/or oppressive language such as racist or sexist language.
- The reviewer requested that the work be reframed through dominant forms of expertise.
- The reviewer did not respect lived experience as a source of expertise.
- The reviewer assumed the gender, nationality, ability, etc. of the author, and it seemed as if that assumption influenced the review comments.
- The reviewer's comments focused exclusively on the writing ability, language proficiency, etc. of the author.
- The reviewer commented on unrelated qualities of the manuscript such as the nationality, gender, language, career level, etc., of the author.

Q4c: Unhelpful/unproductive:
- The reviewer unnecessarily compared the piece to another publication.
- The reviewer stated that the text was not relevant to the field (and did not offer revisionary feedback or explanation).
- The reviewer criticized the citing of texts such as social media posts, blogs, opinion pieces, etc.
- The review comments were mean-spirited or cruel.

Q5: Have you experienced reviews that were problematic in other ways not listed? If yes, please explain.
- Yes, please explain:
- No
- Prefer not to answer

After Receiving Problematic Reviews:

Q6: What strategies have you used to mitigate problematic review experiences? (Please select all that apply.)
- Approached a mentor to ask for advice about problematic review(s).
- Contacted the journal editor/special issue editor/book editor/etc., to ask for advice about problematic review(s).
- Removed the article/proceeding/book/etc. from consideration after the problematic review.
- Discussed the problematic feedback with colleagues, which assisted in how you moved forward with the publication.
- Discussed the problematic feedback with friends, family members, etc., which assisted in how you moved forward with the publication.
- Other:
- Prefer not to answer.

Q7: Following the receipt of the problematic review(s), what did you do with the manuscript(s)? (Please select all that apply):
- Revised and resubmitted to the same venue
- Submitted the piece to a different venue
- Did not revise and resubmit and did not send the piece elsewhere
- Other:
- Do not recall
- Prefer not to say

Q8: If you would like, please share the story of a strategy that you feel worked well for helping to mitigate a problematic peer review experience:
[Short answer]

Demographic Information:

Introduction: The following questions are for research purposes only and will allow us to compare anonymous responses for potential relationships, if any, among the amount/type of problematic review experiences and intersections/types of identities. We understand that because of the size of the field, responding to these demographic questions could, by their nature, identify individuals. Only the research team will have access to the survey data, and data will be aggregated and presented so that no individual will be identifiable from the results.

Q9: Please indicate your current career role:
- Assistant Professor
- Associate Professor
- Full Professor
- University administrator (e.g., associate dean, center director, department head)

- Graduate student working toward Master's degree
- Graduate student working toward Ph.D. or another doctoral degree
- Non-tenure track full-time instructor
- Non-tenure track part-time instructor or Adjunct
- Post-doctoral researcher
- Alternative academic (alt-ac) career (Working in academia in a role other than a teaching or research faculty position, often a full-time staff position)
- Non-academic career (Working outside of academia, for example in a company or nonprofit organization)
- Other:
- Prefer not to answer

Q10: In the context of academic publishing, have you served as any of the following? (Please select all that apply):
- Anonymous peer reviewer
- Named peer reviewer
- Journal editor
- Journal managing editor
- Guest editor (journal)
- (Co)-editor of an edited collection (book)
- Book series editor
- Book review editor
- Editorial board member
- Other:
- None of these
- Prefer not to answer

Q11: Which field(s) are associated with the academic venues in which you publish work? (Please select all that apply):
- Composition
- Professional writing
- Rhetoric
- Technical communication
- User experience
- Writing program administration
- Other:
- Prefer not to answer

Q12: Do you identify as a first-generation college student (the first person in your immediate family to earn a Bachelor's degree)?
- Yes
- No

- Unsure
- Prefer not to answer

Q13: Which of the following best describes you? (Listed in alphabetical order; Please select all that apply):
- Agender
- Gender fluid
- Gender queer
- Man
- Non-binary
- Woman
- Prefer to self-describe:
- Prefer not to answer

Q14: Do you identify as transgender?
- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to answer

Q15: How would you describe your sexual identity? (Listed in alphabetical order; Select all that apply):
- Asexual
- Bisexual
- Demisexual
- Fluid
- Gay
- Heterosexual or straight
- Lesbian
- Pansexual
- Queer
- Questioning
- Prefer to self-describe:
- Prefer not to answer

Q16: Which of the following best describes your race or ethnicity? (Listed in alphabetical order; Please select all that apply):
- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Asian or Asian American
- Black or African American
- Hispanic, Latino, Latina, or Latinx
- Middle Eastern or North African
- Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander

- White
- Prefer to self-describe:
- Prefer not to answer

Q17: What language(s) do you use at home? (Listed in alphabetical order; Please select all that apply):
- Arabic
- Chinese
- English
- French
- German
- Hindi
- Portuguese
- Spanish
- Tagalog
- Vietnamese
- Prefer to self-describe:
- Prefer not to answer

We thank you for your time spent taking this survey.
Your response has been recorded.

Appendix B:

Focus Group Prompts:

Opening:
- What does the peer review process look like at the journal that you are part of?

Focus Group Questions:
- What do your specific peer review guidelines look like?
    - What's included? What isn't?
    - What do you most hope reviewers will focus on? Why?
- Do you find yourself editing peer reviews before sending them to authors?
    - Which ones?
    - What would you edit? What would you not edit?
    - What does that look like?
- Have you experienced authors asking you to intervene against a negative peer review?
    - What did that look like?
    - How did the experience get resolved?

Appendix C:

ENGL 7480: Academic Publishing
Synchronous Online | Section 001

"I have come to believe over and over again that what is most important to me must be spoken, made verbal and shared, even at the risk of having it bruised or misunderstood."-Audre Lorde

___

Instructor Contact Information

Name: Dr. Hannah Stevens (she/her)
Email: [email removed]

Course Description and Objectives

___

Academic publishing remains an integral and high-stakes process because publishing dictates a scholar's ability to build a reputation in the field, which dictates a scholar's ability to both get a tenure track job and get tenure. However, academic publishing tends to not prioritize transparency in its policies and processes, which can leave early-career scholars at a particular disadvantage.

This course will prepare you to write for academic publication, including a range of journals relevant to English studies (for example, literary journals, research journals, and trade publications like *Technical Communication* or *Intercom*). We will discuss several key moments in the publication process, including preparing a manuscript, navigating the peer review process (with a sense of self intact!), and working with a team (editors, reviewers, copyeditors, proofreaders) after your manuscript has been accepted. You will gain valuable experiences in each of these processes, experiences based on current research and best practices.

This 15-week graduate course on academic publishing is designed to provide students with a comprehensive understanding of the complex and dynamic landscape of scholarly communication. By the end of the semester, you will meet the following objectives:
1. Developing specific skills, competencies, and points of view needed by professionals in the field most closely related to this course.
2. Gaining a broader understanding and appreciation of intellectual/cultural activity.
3. Developing ethical reasoning and/or ethical decision making.

Additionally, by the end of the semester, you should be able to:

- Understand the peer review process, including the roles of authors, reviewers, and editors.
- Demonstrate practical skills in manuscript preparation, including effective writing, formatting, and organization of scholarly articles.
- Adhere to specific journal guidelines and standards, ensuring manuscripts meet the expectations of publishers and peer reviewers.
- Select appropriate publication outlets based on research objectives, target audience, and academic career goals.

Course Materials

Required Texts:

Behind the Curtain of Scholarly Publishing Editors in Writing Studies Edited by Greg Giberson, Megan Schoen & Christian Weisser

All other texts and materials for this course are open educational resources (OER), meaning that they are available for free either through the Canvas course or through the USU library's e-library.

Accessibility Statement

In my experience as an instructor, most students will, at some point, encounter situations and conditions that impact their ability to complete coursework. Some of these situations and conditions may come from identified disabilities that may be an ongoing part of a student's experience, including physical, mental, neurological, and emotional disabilities. Sometimes disabling situations and conditions arise unexpectedly in the course of the semester. If you experience a circumstance, situation, or condition that you feel is impairing your abilities to succeed in this class, please communicate with me. Communication and flexibility are paramount to my teaching practice. We can work together to identify personal, classroom-based, university, and community resources and solutions to help you have the best opportunity to succeed.

In addition to this statement, please read through the university policy on disability that appears in the policy section of this syllabus below.

Assessments

Your final grade is based on the following assessments; assessments are explained in more detail on Canvas:

Unit 1: Introduction to Academic Publishing	10%
Unit 2: Ethical Considerations in Academic Publishing	25%
Unit 3: Peer Review Process	30%
Unit 4: Journal Selection and Submission Strategies	35%

Assignments

Reflective Journal on Publishing Journey: *Throughout the course, students maintain a reflective journal documenting their personal journey in academic publishing (Unit 1-4).*

Journal Analysis and Critique: *Explore a journal in the field's scope, target audience, editorial policies, and impact factor (Unit 1).*

Ethical Dilemma Case Study Analysis: *analyze an ethical dilemma, identify ethical principles at play, and propose solutions or actions based on ethical considerations (Unit 2).*

Collaborative Writing Project: *Collaborate on a written project with an emphasis on effective communication strategies, coordination, and the development of a cohesive manuscript (Unit 3).*

Peer Review Panel: *Review and assessment of each other's work, with emphasis on specific, knowledgeable, and kind feedback (Unit 3).*

Individual Writing Project: *Writing of a manuscript, book review, etc. to be submitted to a journal in the field of writing studies (Unit 4).*

Select Department and University Policies

Removed.

15 Week Breakdown

Weeks 1-2: Introduction to Academic Publishing
- Overview of academic publishing landscape

- Historical evolution and current trends
- Roles of authors, editors, reviewers, and publishers

Weeks 3-4: Manuscript Preparation and Submission
- Effective writing strategies for scholarly articles
- Structure and organization of a research paper
- How to submit (journals, books, special issues, book reviews, etc.)

Weeks 5-6: Ethical Considerations in Academic Publishing
- Plagiarism, authorship, and conflicts of interest
- Ethical guidelines and best practices
    - Anti-Racist Reviewing Heuristic
- Responsible conduct in research publishing

Week 7: Manuscript Decisions
- Desk Reject
- Revise and Resubmit
- Rejection

Weeks 8-10: Peer Review Process
- Understanding the peer review system
- Roles and responsibilities of reviewers
- Constructive feedback and the revision process
    - SKK Heuristic
- Responding to review feedback

Week 12: Open Access and Open Science
- Principles of open access publishing
- Benefits and challenges of open research
- Open access repositories and platforms

Weeks 12-13: Journal Selection and Submission Strategies
- Choosing the right journal for your research
- Preparing and submitting a manuscript
- Navigating the peer review process at specific journals

Weeks 14: Digital Tools for Academic Publishing
- Using reference management software
- Online collaboration tools for co-authorship
- Social media and academic visibility

Week 15: Future Trends in Academic Publishing
- Emerging technologies in scholarly communication
- Alternative metrics and measuring research impact
- Predictions and challenges for the future of academic publishing

CURRICULUM VITAE

Hannah L. Stevens

Hannah L. Stevens (PhD, Utah State University) is a copywriter at Blackstone Products and instructor at Utah State University. As far as research interests, she brings to her work a background in feminist analysis that is layered onto her work with public policy along with considerations of race, class, disability, and other factors. Her most recent research focuses on academic publishing, particularly the peer review process, investigating the potential for supplementation of policy documents to cultivate positive publishing experiences.

Education

PhD in Technical Communication and Rhetoric, Utah State University, Expected May, 2024
> *Dissertation Title:* "Dismantling Barriers to Publishing: Identifying Types of Negative Review Experiences and Strategies for Mitigating Them"
> *Major Professor:* Rebecca Walton
> *Committee Members:* ryan moeller, Jared Colton, Beth Buyserie, Tammy Proctor

M.A. in English, North Dakota State University, 2019

B.S. in English, North Dakota State University, 2016
> *Minor:* Women and Gender Studies

Awards, Fellowships, & Funded Research/Projects

Grants
- Special Interest Group for the Design of Communication (SIGDOC) Career Advancement Research Grant | 2023-24

Fellowships
- Center for Intersectional Gender Studies & Research (CIGSR) Graduate Fellowship | 2021-22
- The Lynn Langer Meeks Fellowship | 2021 & 2022 & 2023

Scholarships
- T.Y. & Nan C. Booth Scholarship | USU | 2023
- Madeline S. Gittings Scholarship | NDSU | 2017
- Rooney Scholarship | NDSU | 2017

Awards
- College of Humanities and Social Sciences (CHaSS) Doctoral Student Researcher of the Year | 2023-24

- Association of Teachers of Technical Communication (ATTW) Graduate Research Award | 2023
- Arts Humanities and Social Sciences' Outstanding Graduate Teaching Award | NDSU | 2019
- English Department Outstanding Graduate Teaching Award | NDSU | 2019
- English Department Outstanding Graduate Teaching Award | NDSU | 2017

Funded Research
- Empowering Teaching Excellence (ETE) Scholar | 2023-24
- Graduate Student/Faculty Summer Grant (CHaSS) | 2023
- Technical Editing for Social Justice Open Educational Resources (OER) Create Grant | 2022
- Technical Editing for Social Justice Summer Mentoring Grant (CHaSS) | 2022
- Anti-racism in Publishing Summer Mentoring Grant (CHaSS) | 2022

Funded Projects
- Dr. Mehdi Heravi Book Project | USU CHaSS | 2023

Journal Publications (*anonymously refereed*)

Stevens, H. L. (in press). Publicly available, transparent, and explicit: An analysis of academic publishing policy and procedure documents. *Communication Design Quarterly.*

Stevens, H. **L.** (2022). 'I don't have a gun stop shooting': Rhetorical analysis of law enforcement Use of Force policy documents. *IEEE Transactions on Professional Communication, 65*(1), 104-117.

Stevens, H. L. (2022). Numbers in the life of a graduate student thought about on a random Wednesday. *The Journal of Multimodal Rhetorics, 7*(1).

Sassi, K., & **Stevens, H.** (2019). Preparing students to participate in the pop-up parlor. *The Language Arts Journal of Michigan, 34*(2).

Conference Proceedings (*anonymously refereed*)

Stevens, H. L. (2023). Identifying Overlaps Between Guidelines of Inclusive Publishing Processes and Journal Policies. Proceedings of the 2023 SIGDOC, October 26–28, 2023, Orlando, FL.

Alexander, J-J., **Stevens, H. L**., & Walton, R. (2022). Diversifying knowledge: Graduate application process. SIGDOC '22: Proceedings of the 40th ACM International Conference on Design of Communication October 2022, 3–8. https://doi.org/10.1145/3513130.3558971

Stevens, H. L., Collins, K., Hsiao, M., & Mathis, W. (2022). Constructing the online classroom amid a pandemic: Advocating for students through user-centered design. SIGDOC '22: Proceedings of the 40th ACM International Conference on Design of Communication, October 2022, 69–77. https://doi.org/10.1145/3513130.3558980

Moeggenberg, Z. C., **Stevens, H. L.,** Alexander, J-J., & Walton, R. (2022). Inclusive editing: Actionable recommendations for editors and instructors. Proceedings of the 2022 IEEE International Professional Communication Conference (ProComm), July 2022, 267- 276. DOI: 10.1109/ProComm53155.2022.00055

Book Chapters (*refereed*)

Stevens, H. & McCall, M. (in review). Students as designers, not consumers: Framing accessible, participatory learning as a social justice approach to online course design. *Troubles Online*.

Book Reviews

Stevens, H. L. (2020). Building access: Universal design and the politics of disability. *Technical Communication Quarterly, 29*(1). 99-102. https://doi.org/10.1080/10572252.2019.1613337

Academic Positions and Teaching

Utah State University (USU)
- *Instructor* (2020–present)
    - Instructor of record. Responsible for all course planning, course materials, grading/assessment, and student communications.
- *Communications Coordinator* (2023-present)
    - Coordinator of Center communications for the Center for Intersectional Gender Studies and Research (CIGSR).
- *Graduate Research Assistant* (2022–2023)
    - Research assistant to Drs. Rebecca Walton, Natasha N. Jones, and Kristen R. Moore on a coding research project.
    - Research assistant to Dr. Rebecca Walton on a graduate recruitment project.
    - Research assistant to Drs. Rebecca Walton and Jared Colton on a National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) grant.
- *Graduate Website Manager* (2022–2023)
    - Manages, edits, and updates English department university website focusing on accessibility and inclusivity.
- *Managing Editor Technical Communication Quarterly* (2021–2023)
    - Managing editor in charge of production-related tasks such as review, copyediting, queries, as well as assigning peer-reviewers to manuscripts and making initial recommendations to Editor in Chief regarding publication.
- *Writing Center Tutor,* (2020–2022)
    - Tutor for USU's writing center; responsible for upholding tutoring session with students and providing written feedback.

North Dakota State University (NDSU)

- *Part-Time Lecturer,* (2019)
    - Instructor of record. Responsible for all course planning, course materials, grading/assessment, and student communications.
- *Graduate Instructor*, (2016–2019)
    - Instructor of record. Responsible for all course planning, course materials, grading/assessment, and student communications.
- *Graduate Assistant to Dr. Mary McCall and Dr. Kelly Sassi*, (2018–2019)
    - Assisted with the publishing of the Red River Writing Project's *Best Student Writing.* Worked as a research assistant for a full publication and two separate proposals. Worked on the marketing and promotional materials for the NDSU Usability and User-Experience Lab.
- *Assistant Director of First Year Writing,* (2017–2019)
    - Observed and evaluated first-year graduate instructors' teaching, supervised their progress, and helped them respond to emerging classroom needs. Met monthly with Director of First-Year Writing and other Assistant Directors to discuss programmatic concerns, important readings, and other relevant work.

Courses Taught
- Technical Editing (undergraduate)
- Writing in the Workplace (undergraduate)
- Academic Prose (undergraduate)
- Intermediate Writing (undergraduate)
- College Composition I (undergraduate)
- Fantasy and Science Fiction Literature (undergraduate)

Selected Conference Presentations

Stevens, H. (2023, October). Identifying Overlaps Between Guidelines of Inclusive Publishing Processes and Journal Policies. The ACM Special Interest Group on Design of Communication (SIGDOC), October 26–28, 2023, Orlando, FL. ***Student Research Competition poster presentation first place; Oral presentation semi-finalist.***

Bryson, R., Colton, J. S., Smith, E., & **Stevens, H.** (2023, June). Panel presentation: Insight and Accessibility: Lessons for TPC Policy and Practice in Higher Education. The Association of Teachers of Technical Writing (ATTW) Virtual Conference, Online.

Alexander, J-J., **Stevens, H.,** & Walton, R. (2022, October). Diversifying Knowledge: Presenting and Applying a Framework for Inclusive Graduate Program Websites. The ACM Special Interest Group on Design of Communication (SIGDOC), Boston, MA.

Collins, K., Hsiao, M., Mathis, W., & **Stevens, H.** (2022, October). Constructing the Online Classroom Amid a   Pandemic: Advocating for Students Through User-Centered Design. The ACM Special Interest Group on Design of Communication (SIGDOC), Boston, MA.

Mathis, W., Moeller, R., & **Stevens, H. L.** (2022, June). Enacting Social Justice in Technical Editing, Pt. 1 & Pt. 2. The Association of Teachers of Technical Writing (ATTW) Virtual Conference, Online.

Stevens, H. (2022, March). Articulating the rhetorical situation of positionality statements: A move toward more critically reflective research methods. The Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCCs), Online.

Stevens, H. (2021, August). Intentionally quieting your internal voice: Teaching and learning with radical listening and mindfulness. ETE's Empower Teaching Conference, Utah State University.

Stevens, H. (2020). 'When you're expected to disclose ALL disabilities to every1…': Exploring Internet activism in the composition classroom through the #AbledsAreWeird campaign. The Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCCs). (Conference presentation accepted; Conference cancelled for COVID-19).

Stevens, H. (2019, March). **'**I couldn't upload, so I am attaching my paper to this email': Usability in the first-year writing classroom. The Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCCs), Pittsburgh, PA.

Invited Lectures & Workshops

- Graduate Recruitment Event, USU English Department | Spring 2023
- English Department Professional Development, USU English Department | Spring 2021
- Online writing instruction summer workshop, NDSU English Department | Summer 2020
- Online writing instruction summer workshop, NDSU English Department | Summer 2019
- Roundtable: Grading Contracts**,** Red River Graduate Student Conference, NDSU | 2018

Committees

North Dakota State University
- FYW Committee (2017-2019)
- Graduate Committee (2017-2018)
- Red River Graduate Student Conference Co-Chair (2016-2017)
- Social Media and Events Co-Chair (2016-2017)

Professional Service

National
- Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) proposal reviewer (2023)
- ACM Special Interest Group on Design of Communication (SIGDOC) proposal reviewer (2023)

- Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) Documentarian (2020)
- Writing Program Administration Graduate Organization (WPA-GO) Social Media Committee (2018)

Departmental
- NDSU *Pen and Pixels* department newsletter editor (2018-2020)
- NDSU First-Year Writing Committee (2017-2019)
- NDSU Graduate Committee (2017-2018)
- Red River Graduate Student Conference Co-Chair (2016-2017)
- Social Media and Events Co-Chair (2016-2017)

Professional Memberships

- The Association of Teachers of Technical Writing (ATTW)
- National Council Teachers of English (NCTE)
- National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)
- Society for Technical Communication (STC)
- ACM Special Interest Group on Design of Communication (SIGDOC)