Expanding Academic Writing: A Multilayered Exploration of What It Means To Belong

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Abstract

In this article, we explore the impact of rigid boundaries of what counts as academic writing and what is means to belong through the construction of a multilayered text that draws on the work of Patti Lather. Our layered writing engages with and documents the complexity of the writing *process and the struggle of putting chaos* into a static format that cohesively considers the multiplicity of knowing. This alternative format productively disrupts the status quo and honors an engagement with writing we would like to see embraced in the academy.

Keywords: academic writing, narrative inquiry, multilayered text, belonging

Texts that do justice to the complexity of what we know and understand include the tales not told, the words not written or transcribed, the words thought but not uttered, the unconscious: all that gets lost in the telling and the representing.
—Patti Lather (2007, p. 13)

Introduction

In Hall's (2015) children's picture book *Red: A Crayon's Story*, the protagonist struggles to meet the expectations of others. The illustrations depict a waxy, blue stick labeled with a red wrapper. He attempts to draw strawberries, fire engines, and ants while other crayons comment: "Sometimes I wonder if he's really

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red at all," "Give him time. He'll get it," and "Well, I think he's lazy" (np). The crayon struggles to express himself fully within the literal and conceptual restrictions in which he has been required to work by his peers and mentors. And then, another crayon asks him to draw water. "I can't. I'm red." Ignoring the expectations of what was possible, the crayon then encourages Red, "Will you try?" (np). And he does.

In this article, we explore the impact of rigid boundaries of what counts as academic writing through the construction of a multilayered text. Such a writing practice intentionally expands the process of composition to welcome the unknown, while also inviting readers to actively engage meaning making. It also disrupts presentational modes that position arguments as finished and monologic. It makes explicit the dialogic nature of language, not only in a Bakhtianian sense that looks outward, teeming with the socio-historical remnants of past uses and anticipating a future response from an audience real or imagined, but in a Vygotskian sense that looks inward, internalizing information and incorporating it into identities. "Language thus takes on an intrapersonal function in addition to its interpersonal use. When children develop a method of behavior for guiding themselves...they succeed in applying a social attitude to themselves" (1978, p. 27, emphasis in the original).

This alternative format disrupts a status quo within academic writing as a means to acknowledge the multiplicities of how knowledge is constituted. It is our assertion that this writing form—which includes an explicit invitation for collaboration between authors and readers—creates a third space in which writing engages with both the unknown and embodied ways of knowing. By complicating the readers' interaction with the text, we invite the reader to engage with and through the layers of understanding while navigating decision-making, intertextuality, and an individual's affective connections to the reading process.

We draw on the work of Patti Lather, who uses assemblage-style writing—with split-pages, endnotes, and endnotes used as narrative and analytical devices—to push the boundaries of knowledge construction that are difficult to capture in a standard formatting. Lather's writing as productive disruption is most salient in the multilayered prose crafted for *Troubling the Angels: Women Living with HIV/AIDS* (Lather & Smithies, 1997). "The textual and interpretive practices [of creating multilayered texts] work toward a multiplicity and complexity of layers that unfold an event which exceeds our frames of reference, evolving insight into what not knowing means" (Lather, 1997, p. 254). The writing of a multilayered text is iterative—analysis, insights, and a possibility for praxis emerges as the text is constructed across layers. Writing as a form of praxis (Lather, 2007) pushes the writer to reflect on the possibilities for and constraints within language to engage with different ways of knowing. Multilayered writing offers an opportunity to change the filter through which perspectives are represented and to craft a dialogic, poly-vocal text by inviting writers and readers to move between different

spaces on the page. In the in-between spaces, the spaces that exceed our frames of reference, writers—and readers—enter a space inaccessible by single layers of direct quotes, delineated findings, and monologic rhetoric.

As writers, the use of multilayered text allows us to recognize multiple knowledges within our experiences and map those in separate and interconnected locations on the physical page. This form of scholarly writing provides a vehicle for the messy and varied ways of engaging with text which invite questions, contradictions, and multiple constructions of knowledge. So too does this ask readers to become aware of their own embodied knowledge and social interactions that inform *what* they bring to the reading of a text and *how* they read that text. Because "individuals (or subjects to use the post structural term) have been constructed through social and linguistic codes and practices that shape their relationships to texts and how such texts might be defined" (Lewis, Enciso, & Moje, 2007, p. 5), authors and readers are never outside of sociocultural forces that inform relationships with text and knowledge.

Power, as we conceptualize it here, is the constitutive force of sociocultural norms that define what has value, and what does not. That which is valued functions as capital, positioning particular language and forms of writing as superior. Power not only acts on writers but through them as they determine what counts as relevant and shape it in ways that suit their onto/epistemological commitments. Multilayered writing invites a more transparent interaction with power and the sociocultural forces that shape expectations around text and how knowledge is constructed through it. These considerations suggest that neither the text nor its reading are neutral but are imbued with "ready-made formulations of social meaning and relations of power" (Enciso, in Lewis et al., 2007, p. 52). Bakhtin's ventriloquism (as cited in Morris, 1994) underscores that text construction and how it is interpreted is indeed not neutral but is done strategically as if it were a conceptual bricolage (Rolling, 2013), noting the effectiveness of past utterances and the improvisation of joining those utterances with others to make a new and unique statement.[1] This bricolage-like text is not a unitary thing. It is made up of a curated language shaped through, with, and by hegemonic forces. The language equally constitutes the individual as the individual constitutes meaning in the language and, ultimately in the entire text. And yet, for all its possibility, the limitations of available language restricts texts (Enciso in Lewis et al., 2007, p. 53). In order to fully consider power within multilayered texts, it is integral to acknowledge the ways in which language and reading operates to situate writers and their audience in particular ways.

In this article, we take up a form of multilayered writing (Sterner, 2019), inspired by and expanded from the writing of Patti Lather (1997, 2007) and her work with Chris Smithies (1997). In their original book, *Troubling Angels*, Lather and Smithies (1997) use multilayered writing to explore the connections between bodies, text, and social life. Lather's (1997) discussion of the creation of that

form articulates the experiential possibilities for both writers and readers when engaging in multilayered writing. We draw on Lather's (1997, 2007) analysis of her work with Smithies as foundational to our own exploration of multilayered writing. Here, we take up multilayered writing to explore the politics of writing within the academy. This consideration includes a recognition of how writing and reading work as embodied practices and not the discussion of bodies, text, and social life that is integral to the work of Lather and Smithies with women living with HIV/AIDS. As such, we build on Lather's discussions of multilayered writing and not of the analysis that came out of the intertextual representation that is specific to women living with HIV/AIDS in *Troubling Angels*.

Here the multilayered text exists in three separate but interconnected sections: the central main text, sidebar, and endnotes. Each section has a specific purpose and serves to illuminate the complex and messy realities of the writing process and the generative entanglements that emerge. Readers bring their own knowledges, experiences, and embodied ways of being to their engagement with the layered writing and map an individualized reading path that flows from their chosen interaction with the text. Our writing purposely creates interstitial boundaries in the text that force readers to balance/juggle/shift between each different layer, as the automaticity of the reading transaction takes on a new shape.

To guide readers, we include this textual roadmap, which doesn't delineate a single reading path, but provides information to craft each reading experience. In the main section of the text we employ traditional academic writing to theorize language and writing in a community of practice. We use the sidebar section as a generative space to theorize, enhance, complicate, and question our thinking as we navigate the claims we make. Finally, the endnotes serve as a place for personal observations, connections, and narratives to further complicate and agitate the academic sensibilities of the main text and demonstrate the messiness of the writing process.[2] Through these multiple layers, we highlight the process and struggle of our attempt to capture complexity in one larger, multi-voiced text.

Publisher's Note: Due to printing limitations the footnotes written in the original multilayered text section of this article had to be converted to endnotes. This changes the multilayered approach of the authors' piece, but does not change the focus of their argument. Please see Figure 1 on the next page to view the original layout of their multilayered format.

Figure 1
Sample of Original Formatting of Multilayered Text

Diving In to the Tangle:
A Multilayered Consideration of Academic Writing

In this community:
      I write: I am a writer/member.
      I write: I am not a writer/member[3].

Educators Turned Scholars

    As K-12 educators, we taught and generated writing in many forms. As we transitioned from the K-12 classroom to graduate school, we entered a new professional community which included different norms, something we experienced in publications, coursework, and under the umbrella term of *academic writing*. Implicit norms were explicitly codified in manuscript guidelines, style guides, peer feedback, and program expectations. At times these writerly norms and the tone they engendered felt limiting to our thought processes, and often at odds with the deeply contextual and messy way we believed knowledge to exist. While we recognize the need to engage in the traditional scholarly writing as part of our training to be academics, there were times we noted an ontological tension. This emerged most for us when we were required to demonstrate knowledge in academic spaces where rigid norms limited the format of our writing and thus the knowledge[4] that could be shared.

    We wish to point to an important distinction in the ways in which the practice of writing works to draw boundaries of membership and resonates with power. The ways we taught and generated writing as K–12 educators positioned us as members of that community both practically and ontologically. Administrative writing such as emails or lesson plans, and writing instruction in genres such as narrative or expository were tools we successfully used to articulate our knowledge based on experience. And experience was often the basis of knowledge production in these forms of writing. These texts were narrative and evolving as readers or listeners added their own ideas, responding and complicating the text. The general culture of our K–12 educational spaces recognized these authorial practices as

Systems of Constraint:
Beyond Expectations

    It is also important for us to name the systematic realities of our lived experiences as white heterosexual cisgender scholars. As we write through our experiences of belonging and not belonging, of stretching the bounds of academic writing, of finding paths in and through this work, we acknowledge that we benefit from the privilege that is held in our embodied identities. Similarly we recognize that academic writing, research, and scholarship is deeply steeped in, influenced by and influencing systems of power: white supremacy, patriarchy, and hegemonic discourses that marginalize knowledges and ways of being outside of traditional western educational institutions.

What Knowledges Are
Valued in Academic
Spaces?

    As we started to explore our thoughts in footnote 4, we realized that there seemed to be a theory/philosophy vs.

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[3] In our writing partnership, we have often pondered what it means to identify as a writer. We both write but we have very different ways of identifying that action. What does it mean to self-identify as a writer? Does that make you a member of a community? Or just a person who writes things and is outside of the community? We make no claims in this piece, either way, but recognize that claiming 'writerness' has a different meaning, impact, and emotional weight for each one of us as we write our way into and through the academy.

[4] We found that the teacher knowledges that had served us as K–12 teachers were no longer valued as intellectual contributions beyond the pragmatic, nor did they feel honored or respected by our new community of practice, especially by some of our doctoral student peers. This was rather surprising to us as our doctoral programs were housed in a college of education. There were certainly exceptions to this, but they were exceptions that underscored the broader expectations of what we came to understand as traditional academic writing.

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or expository were tools we successfully used to articulate our knowledge based on experience. And experience was often the basis of knowledge production in these forms of writing. These texts were narrative and evolving as readers or listeners added their own ideas, responding and complicating the text. The general culture of our K–12 educational spaces recognized these authorial practices as valuable,[5] and we found them as useful guideposts to understand our experiences and share that insight with others.[6] As K–12 educators, our writing practices affirmed our identities as writers and members within the profession.

Writing within the academy requires something else. Instead of finding strength in multiple forms of writing, ideas are often only validated once refracted through a prism of allowable forms.[7] Sent through this prism, traditional academic writing colors ideas in ways that change them or makes them altogether unrecognizable—a form utilized to signal membership or *belonging* to the physical space and the culture within it. The forms within the genre of academic writing are accessible but often feel limiting. In the search for genres that did fit during graduate school, instructors often found well-meaning ways to redirect us towards traditional academic writing.[8] Even in moments when alternative genres and formats were encouraged, the exception further underlined the message that these forms of writing were outside the boundaries. It was in this cultural environment that writing, even successful writing, at times left us feeling as if we were not a writer or member.

As recent graduates in transition from our doctoral studies to our professional scholarly lives as teacher educators, at both the preservice and inservice levels, we continue to navigate the dialogue between writing and membership. Our identification as teacher educators, an often generic term for the work of preparing teachers, is very important to how we see ourselves as academic writers. As Davey notes, "there *are* specific skills and knowledge and abilities involved in being a teacher educator, and to

divide that shaped many of our interactions with peers during class discussions and as we engaged with the course materials. The practical knowledges we brought from our classrooms were not seen as the traditional intellectual fodder of the academy and did not merit the same weight with our peers as the theoretical and philosophical. We recognize this to be our lived experience of the informal spaces of the academy, yet they shaped both how we saw ourselves in our first academic experiences and how we were seen by others. The not-enoughness that we felt in these moments positioned us as outsiders and further perpetuated the knotted tensions of our new identities as doctoral students and emerging scholars. There were times where our formal writing was also positioned as not "good enough" for the academy, not "academic enough" for publication, thus rendering our writing, and us by connection, incapable of passing through this gate into the academy. In an attempt to position new academics to meet the standards of publishing and peer critique and

acknowledge that these attributes are not commensurate with simply being a good schoolteacher *or* with being a competent educational researcher but rather are broader than and includes both" (2013, p.174, emphasis original). In this scholarly community of practice we want to embrace and value both aspects of this complex identity and find pathways for it to live out in our writing and in the writing of the academy.

Writing and Identity

Writing and identity are deeply entwined.[9] This is particularly true when communities use writing as a key practice that signifies part of an individual's identity within the broader culture.[10] As identities are authored, the metaphor of voice and its physical connotations (e.g., Anzaldúa, 1987, pp. 53–54) evokes questions about the impact of one's writing on their construction of self. Thus writing becomes an important consideration when exploring the identity politics of joining and becoming a part of a community.

Lensmire (2000) suggests an individual's voice as a project in which individuals appropriate language that has been used by others, infused with their values and ideologies. Possible audiences and their desires and opinions are also considered. As Giroux (1988) writes,

> ...language is intimately related to the dynamics of authorship and voice. It is within and through language that individuals in particular historical contexts shape values into particular forms and practices. (p. 59)

In other words, language—and, for our purposes, the way writing shapes it—signifies particular values. These values by extension participate in the construction of a writerly, and scholarly, identity.

Kamler (2001) posits there is more distance between writing and identity by suggesting, "a closer attention to what is written (rather than she who has written)—to the actual text—and contexts

support their scholarly development, unintentional harm[18] can be inflicted by those in the academy wanting to help support newcomers gain this essential access.

Constructions of Identity: Framing Our Thinking in Theory

A post-structural and sociocultural construction of the self foreground our argument that writing and identity are connected. Butler (1990) contends that identity does not exist before its expression: "... identity is performatively constituted by the very 'expressions' that are said to be its results" (p. 33). As an utterance, that performance utilizes past uses of the same signifying vocabulary, the ideologies carried by them, and the possible interpretations by an audience (Bakhtin as cited by Morris, 1994) to construct a possible identity for the self. That performance is then interpreted by a community located in a particular socio-historically situated time and place and given cultural meaning. In turn, an individual internalizes that meaning in the pr**o-**

in which it is produced" (p. 45). Snaza and Lensmire (2006) describe this articulation as attending to representation (the text represents a thing but is not the thing itself), labor (the text is constricted by expectations of production), and analysis (the text requires a critical reading of language use). In this way, Kamler distances the individual from their writing as its own entity apart from the writer.

Writing, and by extension language, have strong metaphorical ties to the body and the conception of self. This self is both an ongoing project and, through writing, captured in a particular moment of expression and analysis. The written artifact constructs a past to which an identity references and builds from. And it is the writing process that helps to construct understandings of the world. It is the practice by which we come to understand ourselves.

Community of Practice

To understand our place in the landscape of academia, we find it valuable to consider how writing for the academy fits into the larger scholarly community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Taking up sociocultural understandings of induction practices in a community provides a vocabulary—however incomplete—with which we can navigate the complex ontologies and epistemologies of academic writing practices. There are clear delineations in this community of practice of the cultural practices, discourses, narratives, and ideologies that "count" as good writing. These delineations mark cultural community practices that work toward access and belonging through what may be qualified as acceptable scholarly writing.

A community of practice centers itself around shared goals and resources to accomplish those goals. Learning occurs within a particular social space and time and is connected tangentially to other social spheres. As newcomers make sense of practices, they engage in legitimate peripheral

cess of mastering the self (Vygotsky, 1991). Thus the sociohistorical echoes of meaning become a conduit through which power acts on individuals by means of the available discourses, the way those discourses are valued, and the intrapersonal impact those social relations have as an individual comes to understand themselves in a community.

Limitations and Opportunities: Finding our Writerly Selves in the Academy

We have felt constrained by the limitations of this writing community. But like Red, the crayon, we have found ways to express ourselves by both writing inside the lines19 and also finding spaces to belong by writing outside of the lines.

Together we have engaged with narrative inquiry, the use of stories and storied writing, collective memory work (Haug, 1999), and verse/poetic constructions (Kumashiro, 2002) as a means to write slightly outside of the lines in ways that are accepted in some corners of academic writing. Often these opportunities have come in the form of spe-

participation in which learning is the result of participation in a community.[11] Thus communities of practice assume an individual's engagement within a community as they come to understand the cultural practices that define it from other communities.

Tustig (2005) and Barton and Hamilton (2005) build on initial theorizations of communities of practice to acknowledge the role of language and power as a constitutive force. Language, Tustig writes, is key in the negotiation of meaning within communities of practice. Language can signify power outside of the initial old-timer/newcomer relationship. While community experts may utilize power, it is language through which power flows more than the relationship of old-timer and newcomer.

Communities of practice also exist not on their own but in relation to others (Barton & Hamilton, 2005, p.12). This is the case when someone moves to a different city, an individual transitions back and forth from work and home, or a K–12 teacher shifts into graduate school in which communities share different goals and interests. Understanding an individual community becomes murky and challenging as people move from one to another. Negotiation of "objects that congeal this experience into 'thingness'" (Wenger, as cited by Barton & Hamilton, 2005, p. 26), or the reification of who a community is and what they do, more directly acknowledges the role of power and language.[12]

We must wrestle with the implications of language and power within communities of practice. Language bears the weight of what Bakhtin describes as heteroglossia (as cited in Morris, 1994). "Each word tastes of the context and contexts in which it has lived its socially charged life" (p. 293). Thus macro aspects of social structures play out in language, identity, agency, and power—key considerations when reckoning with the construction of an identity, however fluid, as one moves between various communities of practice. As Lave and Wenger (1991) write, "we place...more emphasis on connecting issues of sociocultural transfor-

cial issues that are open to creative academic writing or when professors have encouraged something else (out of the norm) for final papers and projects.

For both of us different writing styles began to resonate and emerge from our experiences as we engaged with the coursework and writing projects for two doctoral research courses we took together: Narrative Inquiry and an Arts-Based Research in Education. Through this coursework and the exposure to academic writing that skirted the edges of what some would consider acceptable, we each discovered a path where we felt our writing could both sing and reflect the commitments we make as scholars, teachers, and teacher educators.

Those pathways led us to crafting multilayered texts and ethnodrama, which became core components of our respective dissertation research. As noted, Sterner has been playing with multilayered texts and expanding on Lather's (1997) form to build her own layering process. It has become a powerful way, as we hope to have demonstrated in

mation with the changing relations between newcomers and old-timers in the context of a changing shared practice" (p. 49). Communities of practice are steeped in systems of power.[13] Those systems become the foundation of the available identities within a community whether intentional or not. Writing, as a practice through which new scholars learn what it means to be a scholar, becomes a reification process in which dominant social structures get acted out and acted on by available identities. As such, we must ask what are the ways traditional academic writing (along with less-traditional forms of writing) reify the very dominant structures we wish to interrogate and how can that process be disrupted.

Constraints of Writing Expectations

Writing in the academy, with its explicit and implicit expectations, contains both the path of access and the barriers of constraint.[14] In many cases, expectations of how one should write define a narrow gap of what is acceptable in the academy. Writing that falls outside of that boundary is marginalized and minimized. Because structure influences the epistemological boundaries, possibilities for understanding and the complexities they bring to bodies of knowledge also get marginalized, minimized, or altogether left out.

In academia, as in K–12 education, writing must follow the norms of a specific field and/or writing genre. These norms are shaped by the chosen style guide of the field. Each style guide holds the discourses, ideologies, and commitments of its origins, whether they are explicitly clear or not. The American Psychological Association (APA), the style guide of our field, came about at the same time as behaviorism and supports many of its values, namely the value of the experiment over the experience of the researcher, writer, and reader[15] (Mueller, 2005). Academic writers must also follow the writing guidelines of their selected research methodologies. While qualitative research offers a variety of

this piece, to acknowledge the complex and entangled multiplicities of understanding. Fisher, whose background includes over a decade of participating in and teaching theater, found ethnodrama (Saldaña, 2005; Smith, 1993) as a writing style that most closely attuned to his epistemological orientations. Ethnodrama attends to the aesthetics of texts and the generation of understandings by considering bodies, space, rhythm, pacing, and silence among the many other available theatrical tools.

While each of these forms of academic writing have found outlets in publications and are accepted as qualitative research, they still exist outside of the mainstream. Each of these writing modes is considered an alternative that is still marginalized or only reserved for recognized scholars, suggesting that some forms are more valuable, or at least more foundational, to others. This leads us to ask why? Who benefits from this? And whose voices are left out?

methodological options (Denzin & Lincoln, 2017; Patton, 2015), writers using these methodologies must still attend to the conventions and norms of the method, options available in a field's publications, and the epistemologies lived out in publishers' requirements for authors.

In our own experiences, we have found that what counts as academic writing is also bounded by the writing that is supported or encouraged by the institutional practices that circulate through a department and college. This is acted out through advice from advisors, the forms of writing allowed and expected by professors, and the suggestions and feedback given by professional mentors.[16] Writing is also taken up, positioned, and considered by fellow graduate students in ways that demonstrate belonging, judgement, writerlyness, and or transgression.

A primary constraining factor, it seems, is the publishing process. Journal publications[17] are lived out performances of being a full member of the academic writing community. They are cultural capital recognized in employment and funding applications. They are the benchmark and bar where style guide, field, and membership expectations merge together as the final gate of inclusion.

At times we can see through the expectations and begin to recognize that academic writing serves as performativity towards belonging. While recognizing the importance of each of these informal and formal regulatory processes, we also must acknowledge that they also work as barriers and gatekeepers to full acceptance in the academic writing community.

Acknowledgement of Expanded Notions of Writing

The writing we are arguing for does exist. In addition to multilayered writing and ethnodrama, other forms are taken up by academic writers.

The work of Clandinin and Connelly (1995; 2000) and other narrative researchers (e.g. Barone, 2001; Casey, 2013) offer narrative as a method and a theory through which to understand the world. Further, the engagement with narrative underscores how "[w]e have helped make the world in which we find ourselves….[W]e are complicit in the world we study" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 61).

Poetic constructions also offer reflexive practices to address the presence of authorial voice in block quotes more generally positioned as unfiltered access to participant Truths (Kumashiro, 2002) and open up additional processes for analysis (Gee, 2008).

This is by no means an exhaustive list but a brief reference to how some scholars have explored the impact of writing forms on their ideas.

Conclusion

We purposefully move away from the multilayered text back into a more traditionally formatted conclusion to explicitly articulate the questions and concerns that this work offers. Learning the common writing practices of the academy provides access to a cultural form of communication we wish to engage in. It is when conceptions of *common* or *traditional* become synonymous with *natural* or *foundational* that we can lose sight of our own agency as members of a community to define not only what does count, but also what could count. Writing in multiple forms invites us as stakeholders in the academy to consider the politics and possibilities of our writing. What are the affordances of particular guidelines and what might be gained by stretching those bounds? And how might we engage in the purposeful employment of both? Reflecting on forms that stretch the bounds, specifically ethnodrama, Saldaña (2003) writes that it is not a genre to use without reason. A researcher must carefully consider their research questions, the empirical materials, and what the researcher wishes to say about those materials before asking if ethnodrama best matches the goals and requirements for the project under study. We extend that recommendation beyond ethnodrama. Just as we would ask what research methodologies best fit a set of research questions, so too should we ask what forms best support the goals for our writing.

Notes

[1] We recognize that this new statement is still steeped in systems of power and can serve to either reify or disrupt dominant discourses. Multilayered texts are not inherently disruptive or critical. We argue that they simply create opportunities to recognize the sociocultural forces that inform knowledge and knowledge construction, thus allowing for the emergence of the unknown (Lather, 1997) and an engagement beyond traditional academic reading and writing practices.

[2] Please note that we use endnotes in the main text and in the sidebar. The sidebar endnotes will be delineated in two ways: the number will be out of order from the other endnotes and it will be written in Arial font to visually distinguish it from the other endnotes.

[3] In our writing partnership, we have often pondered what it means to identify as a writer. We both write but we have very different ways of identifying that action. What does it mean to self-identify as a writer? Does that make you a member of a community? Or just a person who writes things and is outside of the community? We make no claims in this piece, either way, but recognize that claiming 'writerness' has a different meaning, impact, and emotional weight for each one of us as we write our way into and through the academy.

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[5] K–12 education culture is not free from its own exclusionary practices (Fisher, 2019; Ngo, 2010; Pollock, 2004; Valenzuela, 1999). Just because we benefited from and felt at home in K–12 epistemologies does not free that exact culture from the problem of ontological

especially those that are not white.

⁶ Here, like Haug (1999) we value experience as theory. "It is not only experience, but work with the experience, which is useful as a research method" (Haug, 1999, p. 2). And since experience is constructed through a kaleidoscope of interpretations, we wonder how can published writing act as witness to polyphonic (Bakhtin as cited in Morris, 1994) accounts that construct it?

⁷ In the context of this academic writing, we feel compelled to note that K–12 teachers along with many others are successful writers within the academy. This is not an argument in order to broaden what counts as good writing because of individuals who might struggle to write in formal academic ways but because of the ways formal academic writing might struggle to open up all the possibilities for knowing, understanding, and communicating we wish to explore.

⁸ Within this community of practice of doctoral studies, we recognize the possibility of this move as supportive instruction in which to ensure our success in the academy. Yet when it is used after we were invited to write in different ways, it functioned as a corrective that reified the boundaries of what counts and is valued as academic writing.

¹⁸ Experiences like this during the first years of our PhD studies were particularly difficult for us to overcome.

⁹ As a writing consultant at a university writing center, Fisher (2019) regularly heard undergraduate and graduate student writers share how someone responded to their writing and the ways it made them feel about themselves. This was most often a negative experience both affectively and academically. Fisher (2019) found one of the most successful ways of beginning to address these experiences was not to disqualify the writer's connection between the quality of their writing and how they saw themselves but to qualify the disturbing response as a singular interpretation and not the final definition of the value of their writing or themselves as writers.

¹⁰ Though this too can be complicated as evidenced by a fellow graduate student in our doctoral classes. They would often speak in ways that impressed and intimidated fellow classmates, creating both a so-called ideal to which many aspired and bristled. This use of language was also tied to the fellow doctoral student's own insecurities around membership in an education program though they had not taught in a K–12 context.

¹⁸ By employing multiple layers of this text, intermingling the more traditional main body of this text with the additional layers of thinking, we bring an interplay of format/genre/epistemology that engages in a yes, and approach to academic writing. We appreciate the affordances of more traditional academic writing while utilizing and expanding the possibilities of other formats and genres. We do not wish to engage in an argument of irony, excoriating the exclusiveness of one form of writing by replacing it with another line in the sand of valuation. Instead, we wish to open up a conversation between genres and formats in order to more fully explore the various fields of research.

¹¹ Knowing that communities of practice conceptualize community membership specifically around a labor of production leaves us pondering: If we don't write, are we academics?

¹² The example of formal academic writing provides an apt example, particularly for graduate students going through the process of induction into the community of the academy. The writing of papers in traditional academic writing several times for each class across several classes each semester effectively constructs a sense of who academics are and what they do in relation to their writing. In other words, it is the writing of academic papers, often positioned as potential spaces for future publications, that "congeal into 'thingness'" what an academic is, whether or not that actually reflects the lived identities of who an academic wishes to be or how they see themselves.

¹³ Discussed in more depth in the first section of the sidebar.

¹⁴ We have paid particular attention throughout this piece in order to name these

constraints as a means to have critical dialogue of academic writing while still recognizing the importance of standards and common cultural practices of writing that allow for the successful and meaningful communication of ideas. We wish to honor this reality while lovingly engaging in a critique in order to continue to explore multiple ways of knowing and expand the boundaries of what it means to write in the academy.

[15] An official constraint on this writing, and the multilayered writing that Sterner (2019) developed, is that APA expressly forbids the use of footnotes for citations, though allows minimal use for additional content. "APA does not recommend the use of footnotes and endnotes because they are often expensive for publishers to reproduce. However, if explanatory notes still prove necessary to your document, APA details the use of two types of footnotes: content and copyright." (Purdue Online Writing Lab, 2019, para. 1). Yet, this writing style has become a powerful way to engage with the complexities of the phenomenon that Sterner (2019) studies while also reflecting the onto-epistemological commitments that she makes as a qualitative researcher.

[16] See endnote 8.

[17] Sometimes this is further constrained, depending on the promotion and tenure standards of an institution or department, by which pieces make it into the "right" journals or books with the "right" amount of impact.

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