Making visible the affective dimensions of scholarship in postgraduate writing development work

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Abstract

Many university writing and student academic development centres serve both under- and postgraduate student-writers. However, it is not always clear that the training and development of those who work with writers accounts fully for the affective dimensions of postgraduate writing, specifically. Especially at the doctoral level, where an original contribution to knowledge is required, writers need to take on a confident authorial voice in their work, both written and in conversation with others. Research, however, shows that many doctoral students struggle with this. This paper argues that, to be truly successful and fit for purpose, peer writing development work needs to understand the nature of postgraduate learning and writing from more than just the technical *perspective of writing a successful thesis. Writer-focused work at this level needs to account for the* affective *dimensions of writing and research as well, to engage students in more holistic, critical, and forward-looking conversations about their writing, and their own developing scholarly identity. The paper offers insights into the different affective dimensions of postgraduate writing, especially those under-considered in much practical work with postgraduate writers, and offers suggestions for a* whole-student *tutoring approach at this level.*

Keywords: academic writing development; emotional labour; writing blocks; doctoral writing; writing support

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Introduction

University and college writing centres around the world work, at the very least, with undergraduate students. But many also work with postgraduate students completing masters and doctoral degrees (for example, Stellenbosch University, the University of Cape Town, the University of Toronto, and many others). For the most part, they do this through one-on-one and small group consultations and workshops with students focused on writing tasks or projects that students need assistance with. For example, a student would approach a writing centre with a paper, research report,

or thesis chapter, and a writing tutor or consultant would spend about an hour per appointment looking at issues ranging from argumentation and structure, to voice, style, tone, and even citations and formatting, depending on the student's writing needs (see Gillam, Callaway, & Wikoff, 1994; Ryan & Zimmerelli, 2010).

These writing centres, in the main, tend to define themselves as working with both writers *and* pieces of writing. Their work seeks to enable students to find and express their voice (Archer & Richards, 2011); to challenge dominant and potentially exclusive forms of knowledge-making in the academy (Bailey Bridgewater, 2017; Nichols, 2017); and to enable access to understanding and creating writing that effectively communicates the writers' knowledge and meaning (Dison & Moore, 2019). Thus, writing centres, at least in theory, create tutoring spaces between students and writing tutors that are focused on writerly pursuits and development, which can take time to unpack and explore, especially with students who are traversing a larger articulation gap between their prior home and school and current university literacy practices (Dison & Moore, 2019). This work is not limited to writing centres, however, as it is also implicated in academic development work in faculty and departmental environments as well (Mitchell, 2010).

However, writing and academic development centres also work in the *real world* of university and college time and space, where what students write is always for assessment and evaluation, meaning it is usually *high stakes* and under some form of time pressure. Thus, there is often a gap between what we would like to work and focus on in tutorials—conversations focused on writers and their voices, ideas, and selves—and what we may end up focusing on in response to these pressures. We may, for example, focus on addressing concerns in single pieces of writing that students need to hand in for assessment, and in line with the standards set by their lecturers (Clarence, 2019a). This gap is not the focus of this paper, but it is part of the background to how writing centres may plan to, and then actually, construct and enact conversations about writing with student-writers. This in turn speaks to how approaches to tutoring are developed, and how peer writing tutors (also referred to as writing consultants) are encouraged and enabled to work with student-writers.

If we acknowledge that what we say and think we are and can do in a writing centre (or any writing development space), and what we actually do in practice, are not always the same thing, then we have the opening for a productive, albeit challenging, conversation about the role of writing support structures in shaping writer-development in higher education. This conversation can extend beyond just how writing centres work with students who seek out their help to how writing centres and writing development practitioners work with lecturers, disciplinary tutors, and research supervisors to 'demystify' academic writing as a knowledge-making practice at university (cf. Lillis, 2001; see also Archer & Richards, 2011; Dison & Clarence, 2017).

Working with research supervisors, who work primarily with postgraduate writers, is a relatively new area of concern for writing centres in particular, although

there is growing evidence of work with research supervisors through academic development that tackles writing the thesis (Kamler & Thomson, 2006; Guerin et al., 2017). Most writing centres work with students, and where they are able to, with lecturers and tutors in academic disciplines around particular writing projects, assignments, and so on, to create bridges between what lecturers want from students' writing, and what students do with the tasks before them (see, for examples, Archer, 2010; Clarence, Albertus, & Mwambene, 2014; Nichols, 2017). However, as postgraduate student numbers in universities around the world grow, especially in contexts where there is significant student diversity in nationality, home language, prior school and literacy development, and so on, focusing on postgraduate student writing development is becoming an increasing concern in research and practice (see Guerin et al., 2017; Badenhorst & Guerin, 2016; Aitchison & Lee, 2006). This raises important questions about what the focus of postgraduate writing support, with students and their supervisors, should be, and how this support should be structured.

The support universities and colleges offer to student-writers is not necessarily framed by the same discourses that the support staff themselves use to characterise and guide their ways of working. Writing centres were established in different contexts (e.g., the United States and South Africa) as part of open admissions, or wider access to higher education (see Archer & Richards, 2011; Boquet, 1999). Widening participation for previously excluded or marginalised students (i.e., working class students, black students) has been linked to democratising higher education, and also to diversifying both universities and workplaces (Hinton-Smith, 2012). But, the process of opening up access to students who attended less well-resourced schools, and come from working class homes; who speak and write English as an additional language; who have diverse learning needs and goals, has created tensions in higher education. The tension most relevant to this paper is that between seeing writing as a set of skills students should have before they come to university (Bock, 1988), and writing as a set of particularised practices that students need to be inducted into by disciplinary and academic peers and experts (Lillis, 2001; Mitchell, 2010). Writing centres have been called to provide *remedial* support for students who *lack* the required writing skills; yet many position themselves firmly in opposition to this discourse, especially because research shows quite persuasively that many students, regardless of background or ability, struggle to acquire academic literacies and discourses, and take on new scholarly identities (Lillis, 2001; Thesen & van Pletzen, 2006).

Writing centres and academic student support units that understand writing more as a process linked to knowledge, meaning making, and identity work (Thesen, 2013) tend to focus rather on helping students understand and create writing as part of becoming particular kinds of knowers and writers (i.e., adopting different ways of expressing critical thinking, creativity, analytical reasoning, and so on) in their disciplines. This is true for work with both under- and postgraduate students. At postgraduate level, increased demand from governments for highly skilled *knowledge workers*, along with increased student numbers, may reinforce

the discourse that sees writing as a set of skills students coming into a degree programme should have in place already. Students who struggle to write at the new level (masters or doctorate) may then be termed *problem* students who require skills training or skills support to close the gap between the writing they are doing and what their supervisors and the university expect of them (Wingate, 2006). What this discourse misses is the crucial realisation that literacy demands change with each level of study, and with changed expectations of the writing or other literacy practices. This is part of what makes postgraduate writing different from undergraduate writing, and why postgraduate writers should not be expected to come into a masters or doctoral programme already knowing how to write a dissertation or thesis at this level. Writing at this level is not just about knowledge or words on the page in the right tense, form, and style; critically, it is a resource for expressing a new identity as a *knower*, and for claiming a more authorial voice in one's field of research.

Postgraduate and undergraduate student-writers have much in common in terms of what they need to work on in their writing, and what they are required to create and achieve with their assignments and tasks. However, I am going to argue that there are crucial differences. These differences, and the focus of this paper, emanate from the affective dimensions of scholarly writing, and the concomitant expectations of postgraduate education and writing, particularly at the doctoral level. The notion of identity development and change, and the transformative nature of moving across different conceptual and research thresholds (Kiley, 2009; Kiley & Wisker, 2009), means that postgraduate doctoral writing is indeed different from prior writing students have done. Undergraduate students are not untransformed by their studies and their learning and certainly engage in identity work, which has affective demands. However, the use of writing and research as resources to evidence how one has become a different kind of scholar is most marked at doctoral level, where a student's title changes when they graduate. This identity work is also more overtly part of supervision than it is part of everyday undergraduate teaching and learning. Identity work involves emotional, affective work. Thus, writing centres, and those who work with student-writers at this level, including research supervisors, need to understand what constitutes this affective dimension. Further, we need to critically consider how we can incorporate the affective labour writers need to do into our conversations with masters and doctoral student-writers, and where possible, with research supervisors as well. This reflective, conceptual paper emanates from my own work as a relatively new research supervisor, and from my writing development work with postgraduate student researchers and writers.

Writing at postgraduate level

Before moving into the specific conceptual focus of the paper, I would like to first explore some of the essential meanings and practices that define or characterise postgraduate writing in particular. A key feature across levels of study in scholarly

writing in higher education is the presence of an argument and its development in a paper or thesis through the use of selected evidence and explication, drawn variously from published research, theory, and data generated by the writer-researcher. Behind all scholarly writing is the idea of the writer as researcher; whether they are responding to a question posed by a lecturer or creating their own research question, student-writers are required to do research to create a substantiated response to the task, often in the form of an argument, or a claim to knowledge. This is true of under- and postgraduate writing, because a primary logic underpinning higher education is knowledge creation, rather than knowledge 'consumption'; thus students become part of a broad community creating and extending knowledge in smaller and larger ways (Boughey, 2015).

I argue, though, that postgraduate writing is different from undergraduate writing in three key ways, and, further, that these are linked to an underlying axiology that marks postgraduate work as different from undergraduate work. These differences are, in brief, related to voice, confidence, and sophistication in the written text. The first key difference is that of *voice*. *Voice* is generally defined and understood in relation to argument or claims to knowledge, and can be described as the writer taking a position and expressing that position through choices around supporting evidence and explanation. The argument is a significant aspect of voice, because this is the tool the writer uses to contribute to knowledge in her field. Other crucial aspects of voice relate to understanding and having a sound grasp of the discourse conventions within the scholarly community a student-writer belongs to, and being able to choose and deploy these cleverly in their writing, to enhance, shape, and refine an authorial voice as a student becomes into a proficient writer (Hathaway, 2015). While it is not true to say that undergraduate students are not required to make arguments or have a voice in their writing, the strength of this requirement in terms of achieving ultimate success is not as marked as it is at doctoral level, where the absence of an *original* argument and commanding and confident voice (Trafford & Leshem, 2009) may result in a doctorate not being awarded.

A further important aspect of writing at postgraduate level, not often overtly spoken about and considered theoretically in writing instruction, is *confidence*, not only in one's writing, but also in the sense that one has something to say of value to the field. This is a second key way in which postgraduate writing differs from undergraduate writing. To claim and express a voice, of which an original argument is a significant part, postgraduate student-writers must have confidence in their claims to knowledge, and in the evidence and explanation they have selected and developed to sustain that argument. They need to believe they have something original and worthy to add to the conversations and debates that their discourse or disciplinary community is interested in. Several studies on doctoral writing or doctoral scholarship specifically mention confidence, or assertiveness, as key doctoral graduate attributes (Gurr, 2001; Stracke & Kumar, 2010; Wang & Li, 2011).

This sounds deceptively easy, but I contend, based on several years of work with postgraduate and early career researchers, that confidence is difficult to hold onto in the face of feedback and critique from peer reviewers, examiners, and supervisors that is not always formative and constructive in tone or intent. Several studies attest to students' emotional responses to, and subsequent blocks around, feedback from supervisors on their writing (Aitchison & Mowbray, 2013; Can & Walker, 2011; Stracke & Kumar, 2010). Postgraduate writing, in more immediate and visible ways than undergraduate writing, asks student-writers to really consider the scholarly community they are joining with their own research, and to think carefully about where and how their work is positioned within that community. Their work is going to be published in an online database upon graduation, and accessible to other researchers. This raises the stakes for supervisors and students, and can have implications for how confident students may feel, and how hard they have to work to hold this confidence in the face of tough feedback that reflects these stakes. Thus, this is an area of postgraduate writing development that needs conscious attention and focus in writing development work.

Thus far, I have argued that postgraduate writers need to claim a clear and critical voice in their writing, and that confidence is necessary to both claim and express this voice in scholarly environments, in written and verbal forms. The third key feature that sets postgraduate writing apart from undergraduate writing is the *sophistication* expected by readers in how the writer's voice is expressed and how the argument is constructed to make an original contribution to knowledge (see Trafford & Leshem, 2009). Short, simplistic sentences, basic word choices, terminology not explained or used to make meaning—these are all issues that may be focused on in undergraduate writing development, especially closer to capstone level, but there is significantly more pressure on postgraduate writers to write and think in increasingly sophisticated ways. It may also be the case that many supervisors expect their students to be capable of this without extended or overt feedback or development to this effect, given that they have been accepted into a postgraduate degree programme, and have prior degrees (Hill, 2007). To be clear, while erudite use of language is certainly part of this, this is not what I mean by sophistication. By this term I mean, rather, the writer's ability to demonstrate in-depth knowledge of the space they are occupying in their field, relative to other writers' and researchers' claims and positions, and their ability to express this knowledge clearly and effectively using disciplinary discourse and language. This is an issue of a writer's ability to read and think in joined-up, complex, layered ways, and implicates epistemology, axiology, and ontology. In other words, success at this level is not just about being a proficient writer in the medium of instruction; it is also about belief in oneself, understanding of the underlying values inherent in postgraduate writing and research, and the ability to manage difficult emotions around writing, feedback, supervision, and knowledge-making at this level.

To connect this all to the focus of this paper, I will move now to look particularly at axiology as an underpinning influence shaping postgraduate writing and education. The focus of the paper is the need for writing support and

development work to be able to account for the affective dimensions of postgraduate writing in work with postgraduate writers especially. This implicates axiology, which creates very different ultimate goals and expectations for writers and researchers working at this level, particularly doctoral students. Axiology can be defined as values and ethics that shape disciplinary research projects, questions, and concerns (Frick, 2011). Linked to ontology (becoming a particular kind of scholar), epistemology (choosing what counts as valid knowledge in relation to the scholarship one is engaged in), and methodology (the means with which that knowledge is obtained), axiology is a crucial part of postgraduate identity formation (Frick, 2011). At the doctoral level, students take on a new scholarly, and also professional, identity: their title actually changes in recognition of the fact that the holder is a different kind of scholar than they were prior. The title assumes a researcher and writer who is confident, a sophisticated thinker, and able to express a range of claims to knowledge with an authentic and disciplinary voice (Stracke & Kumar, 2010; Trafford & Leshem, 2009). This is, I would argue, part of the broader axiological underpinning of postgraduate education: that it enables the development of a scholar that values integrity in research, authenticity, and ethics, and that expresses these values through confident and sophisticated academic discourse.

Axiology is fundamentally affective in nature. It is, of course, connected to epistemology, or knowledge of the world. But one cannot claim a doctoral identity with knowledge alone. Trafford and Leshem (2009) have written about *doctorateness* that doctoral students must have and display to be awarded their degree. This, for these authors, goes beyond knowledge of the field, a competently written thesis, and a basically sound argument: doctorateness is the ability to show evidence, through the thesis, of claiming a doctoral identity and voice such that the student shows they are able to be an independent researcher and a new colleague and peer. I would argue that a doctoral student cannot or will not show evidence of doctorateness in their writing without the three aspects of postgraduate writing this section of the paper has discussed. In particular, students need confidence, which weaves through all aspects of scholarship at postgraduate and further levels. Thus, what I am arguing is that writing development work with postgraduate writers in higher education—implicating writing support work and research supervision—needs to reckon overtly and visibly with these pertinent affective dimensions of becoming a scholar at postgraduate level.

Reckoning with the affective in writing development work

If we accept the premise that all successful writing—regardless of level—has, as a critical part of its endeavours, an engagement with ourselves, and our feelings, beliefs, values, and work ethic, then we have to be serious, and creative, in creating holistic writing support. When we write, whether in the social or natural sciences, we construct the world around us and we make it knowable to ourselves and others. We do this in different ways, and with different forms of scholarly *voice* (e.g.,

writing in the first person, or the third person). Nevertheless, as Frick (2011) argues, when we write a thesis, we not only construct a complex, sophisticated scholarly text, we also construct ourselves as legitimate knowers of knowledge and discourse in our discipline, and we communicate a significant part of our scholarly selves to readers. Thus, scholarly writing is fundamentally about engaging the heart—the core of the self—alongside engaging the head and the hand (our knowledge of the field, and linguistic and literacy skill and practices) (see Soëtard, 1994).

At postgraduate level, and then postdoctoral level, the affective dimensions of writing surface more powerfully than in previous degree levels, and can be a significant and often tacit stumbling block in getting writing done successfully. This dimension is often tacit because the focus of a great deal of writing development work at this level, including workshops for supervisors, focuses on getting the thesis done: the research process, writing the different sections, working with theory, conducting fieldwork, managing data analysis, and so on. The focus, in other words, is on the *product*, and the parts of the process that lead to the creation or output of the product. What is often missing from visible and overt consideration is the *person* doing all the reading, writing, thinking, and knowing.

At this point, one may want to counter-argue that in working mainly through one-on-one or small group consultations with writers writing centre or writing development work is all about the person, and *is* concerned with the affective. Here, I want to come back to the idea I introduced earlier about the gap between who and what we say we are and do, and what we are actually able to do in practical situations where we are pushed out of our theoretical or ideological framings into a real world of student (and university) anxieties, writing concerns, and deadlines (see Carter, 2009; Clarence, 2019a). There is certainly a significant focus on the person in writing centre work, particularly, and this is reflected in a great deal of writing centre scholarship, from the United States (Nancy Grimm's and Mary Ryan's work, for example), to the United Kingdom (Lisa Ganobscik-Williams' and Kathy Harrington's work, for example), to South Africa (Pamela Nichols', Arlene Archer's and Laura Dison's work, for example). However, while the focus of conversations in writing centres or writing development work is ostensibly on the student-writer, we need to consider: what is the underlying *basis* for the conversation that shapes its ultimate goal or outcome? Is it primarily the deeper, long-term development of a more confident, sophisticated writer and thinker, or is it primarily the creation and publication of a solidly written thesis? This is an important question because it shapes the orientation of our practice with these students.

If we are focused more obviously on the production of a well-written, technically sound thesis produced in the 'correct' language and form, we may neglect or rush past aspects of writing development practice that could focus on affective issues, such as voice, confidence, fear, and anxiety. We may push the person in front of us into the background, and foreground their writing; writing they may be stuck on because of the issues we have glossed over or cannot focus on because our principal concern is the writing itself. I do not want to argue that we

should not do this, or that this is an either/or choice: writing centres are there to help writers create writing that conforms to, and perhaps sometimes challenges, the standards set within their disciplines. Writing development practice would be remiss in not talking about how to write set texts, like a thesis, in acceptable, examinable, and successful forms. But I do want to suggest that if we keep pushing the *whole* person into the background to focus more narrowly on the writer who has to produce a set format thesis within a set amount of time, we will be limiting writing centres' socio-cultural role as emancipatory, or empowering, spaces for writers. I believe part of the power of the writing centre, harking back to its activist academic development roots (Nichols, 1998, 2017), is its ability to pause the relentless hamster-wheel of academic knowledge production that students and lecturers are all engaged in, and bring the focus to the person in front of us. This means not just or only talking about the writing and its deadline and specific needs, but how the writer feels about writing, what else they are working on, how they are coping. We have a unique and powerful space in which to enact a more humanising, inclusive pedagogy around writing that openly acknowledges the affective and its crucial role in providing access to or enabling deeper engagement with the epistemological and ontological aspects of knowing knowledge and making knowledge in higher education.

Some thoughts on how we acknowledge the affective in our practice

Readers may now be thinking: this is all well and good but what do I *do* differently in my writing development work or in my supervision practice? This section outlines my initial thoughts in response, based on my experiences and lessons learned in working with both postgraduate and postdoctoral writers across several different university contexts in South Africa.

The first sounds overly simple, and perhaps quite obvious, but it can be profound in its impact: acknowledge that writing is hard work, and that not everyone enjoys it all the time. Part of this hard work is the actual writing itself - finding the *right* words and ideas, and expressing them effectively; part of this work is the work of taking on and being comfortable with a new scholarly identity. Many students looking at their supervisors see successful, productive, published researchers, and may feel inadequate and stupid when they think about their own writing as being tough, stilted, and not enjoyable. Many student-writers feel alone in their struggles, and are ashamed of admitting them because they chose to do this degree; they feel they should be able to just get on, and have all the requisite literacies and knowledge in place (see Aitchison & Mowbray, 2013; Hill, 2007). Hearing from a more experienced researcher that writing is often very hard work, and that even the most productive writers struggle, get stuck, and hate their writing can be enormously encouraging for novice researchers. It also helps students to realise that if they do not already have doctoral (or masters) level literacies in place at the start (cf. Bock, 1988), there is nothing *wrong* with them and they are not

stupid or unfit to complete their studies. It is more likely that the process of acquiring and mastering these masters or doctoral literacy practices has not been made effectively overt, accessible, and learnable, whether through supervision or other forms of writing and research development and support (cf. Thesen & van Pletzen, 2006). Making these literacies, and the work around writing at these levels, open for discussion and critique is an important part of the work students do at this level to take on a new or next-level scholarly identity.

Identity formation at postgraduate level, perhaps especially in doctoral studies, is a struggle. This struggle is marked by (often intersecting) issues of gender, for example, balancing study, work, and home for women students (Aitchison & Mowbray, 2013; Carter, Blumenstein, & Cook, 2013); nationality and language (Manathunga, 2007, 2019); and socio-economic status and *race* (Manathunga, 2007, 2019). The struggles are not the same for every student, and it is important in conversations with writers—and with supervisors as part of their own development —not to reify some kind of homogenous idea of what a doctorate is or should be. Manathunga (2019, p. 1) terms this 'assimilationist pedagogy'. There are different kinds of doctoral dissertations and arguments created within different disciplinary traditions and ways of working, and part of developing sophistication and confidence is learning to talk about, explain, and relate to these in one's own work. Thus, talking about the struggles of claiming and evidencing a scholarly identity through writing should be a visible part of writing development work that we make time for, because it is a crucial part of the whole learning process.

The second practice we can engage in with writers is to talk to them about the actual practice of writing. Where and when do they write? How often and for how long? What are some of their most common stumbling blocks that constrain their progress or knock their confidence? Many supervisors and writing development practitioners are likely relatively confident talking about the text itself and what needs to be done to the draft to get it from where it is currently to the next step; we may well be less confident about talking to writers about their writing behaviours, habits, and struggles. It may not even occur to us to have that conversation; this was a learning moment for me in my first supervision experience. But, experienced supervisors have argued that this is crucial to whole-candidate development (Kamler & Thomson, 2006), especially when you consider that the current doctoral student you are working with may be someone's supervisor in a few years' time. What can current students learn about writing that will benefit their own future students, and their own ongoing self-directed learning and writing?

This is a point to consider carefully, in both supervision and broader writing development practice: that we are not just trying to help a student complete a thesis. We are also trying to help a postgraduate student find and develop a new scholarly voice, express it more ably and confidently, and make a sophisticated argument that contributes valuable knowledge to their field of study. To enable this to happen successfully, we need to help students reflect on their own development as writers and thinkers: they need to think about their own writing process, and what shapes

it for better and worse. This may involve, for students, supervisors, and writing development practitioners, sitting with some discomfort as certain academic or scholarly practices may invoke difficult emotions around how a scholarly voice is expressed, how language is made appropriate and inappropriate in certain contexts, and how some academic writing practices work to silence parts of a student's sense of self (Thesen, 2013). Ideally, this kind of meta-awareness will enable postgraduate student-writers to work on maximising the practices that work, and trying to minimising those that are less helpful (Clarence, 2019b). This meta-awareness may also help students and supervisors to more openly talk about the risks involved in some aspects of postgraduate writing, and the emotional labour involved in managing and mitigating these risks (see Thesen & Cooper, 2014). This will be constant work, as it is for all writers (Sword, 2017), but the work may only begin in earnest when this meta-level is made visible and open to analysis and change.

A third practice, focused more on those who work with writers, such as writing consultants, supervisors, and critical readers/friends, is to have frank conversations about their own affective experiences as scholars who are also researchers and writers. If you are reading this from the perspective of a supervisor, or writing tutor, consultant or advisor, consider some of the issues you have with voice, confidence, and creating more sophisticated, layered arguments in your own writing, and what helps you to move forward productively. Create an open-ended list you can keep collectively adding to that offers you ways into similar conversations with students, and also possible advice, tools, and practices they can try to get their own writing moving again. These can be adapted for masters and honours students as needed, given that the requirements around sophistication and originality in the thesis are less demanding at these levels. They can even be adapted for undergraduate students, especially those working on mini research projects (often at capstone level), and can deepen a university writing centre or student support unit's repertoire of student-centred developmental 'tools'.

It is important to keep these conversations open, and to focus on critical engagement and reflection. There are few *right* answers when it comes to how to write successfully; for example, Boice (1985) argued that you have to write habitually, daily, to be productive, whereas Sword (2017) argues that a good time for writing and reading is a time that works for you, and that writing every day is not a requirement for success in academic scholarship. What we are looking for here is not positivist notions of *best practice* that can be measured as more or less successful than others. Writing—especially doctoral writing—is a highly personal as well as scholarly endeavour. Given that the Master's or doctoral thesis will be published, and for many students (although this differs by national or regional context) lays the foundation for an academic career, the thesis may represent a scholar's beliefs and to an extent their passions, reflected in what they have chosen to research and write about, and how they have done this. That is personal, and so is the process of creating it, especially when you consider that many students are what I have termed 'part-time students with full-time lives' (Clarence, 2014, para.

2) and that many women, students of colour, working class students, international, or immigrant students have varied experiences of postgraduate studies, as noted earlier in the paper. Drawing on these students' experiences and feedback about how they navigate writing at postgraduate level in ongoing work with student-writers, lecturers and supervisors can connect the scholarly, academic and the affective, personal dimensions of writing work in powerful, and necessary, ways.

A final thought is that writing centres or writing development units could create an alternative series of workshops, lunch-time sessions, and writing circles and invite postgraduate students to sessions ranging from facilitated inputs on different aspects of writing—both more technical and epistemic as well as more affective—to writing circles where writers can share and talk about their draft texts (Aitchison & Guerin, 2014; Wilmot & McKenna, 2018), as well as issues related to the processes and practices of writing, reading, and getting feedback. Making the invisible, behind-closed-doors practices and processes that go into creating a large, significant text such as a thesis more visible and open for debate and discussion can go a long way towards raising the profile of academic writing not as a set of skills *good* students should have, but as comprising different sets of socio-cultural, value-laden, disciplinary practices, and ongoing work (Kamler & Thomson, 2006). This may be able to powerfully counter notions that students are somehow at a deficit if they cannot already read, write, and think at postgraduate level without help or guidance, as students themselves will be able to challenge this through their own changed experiences of writing.

Conclusion

The argument I have made in this paper is that writing development work, whether through a writing centre, a student-facing support structure, or within a supervision setting, needs to pay closer, more overt attention to the affective dimensions of writing at postgraduate level. This claim, and my suggestions for shifting or augmenting current writing development practices with postgraduate students, is in no way meant to suggest that there is little or no acknowledgement already of the affective dimensions of scholarly writing. But, it has been my experience, working with many different postgraduate and postdoctoral writers and supervisors across several different South African universities, that the affective dimensions of writing are under-theorised and under-considered in a great deal of writing development and supervision work. The powerful emotional labouring writers have to do to access and make the most of their practical writing time and practice needs to be more openly thought about, theorised, and incorporated into writing development work with students, and with supervisors.

This relative silence, or occlusion, around emotional or affective labour has significant implications for the holism of writing development and supervision work. In bringing this aspect of scholarship more to the fore, students, supervisors and those who support them can push back against current higher education

discourses that reduce whole people to metrics, such as how much grant money they can win, how many papers they can publish, and how many students they can help or graduate (preferably with excellent marks, so throughput rates grow). Ultimately, I want to suggest that visibly bringing the affective, human, messy emotional labour behind the texts writers create into the open, showing student-writers that all writers struggle and need help, but that writing can be pleasurable and productive, is important work within current outcomes-driven university environments. When writers encounter and take on emotional stumbling blocks they can often find creative ways back into their writing, and move forward. They can learn not only about what successful writing looks and sounds like, but also what a successful writer feels and thinks and does to remain successful, and happier in their *writerly skin* (see Sword, 2017). What counts as success, too, can be understood in more holistic and balanced ways that take both experienced and novice scholars beyond citation and publication metrics and narrow productivity measures. Writing development practitioners and research supervisors can lead the way here, and change the ways in which we talk about and do academic writing work in higher education for the better.

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