Political Economy of Academic Writing Practices

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A few years ago, a colleague and I spotted an article posted in a departmental display case. My friend peered at it through the glass and said with a sneer: "Ha! It's just a think piece!" As an anthropologist and social foundations scholar, I have been much impressed by the intensity with which members of various academic tribes valorize particular kinds of scholarship while denigrating others. My colleague's training in educational psychology had taught her to value only data-based reports in national and international refereed journals and to view other writing projects with contempt. Such differences cause serious misunderstandings within Colleges of Education, limiting prospects for faculty collaboration across departments and program areas. They also foster a competitive milieu that may dissuade minority students and women from pursuing academic careers. Two major Carnegie Foundation reports have established the need and suggested strategies for changing how professors of education conceptualize and assess educational scholarship (Boyer, 1990; Glassick, Huber & Maeroff, 1997). Despite this, professors maintain rituals and reward structures that remain curiously conventional and resistant to change. This essay examines the political economy of academic writing practices and offers a rationale for more open-minded consideration of ways of "professing education" beyond the refereed journal article, the research report, and the tome.

Competent professors of education work across disciplinary and professional boundaries, keeping up with the literature of at least two fields, and often more than that. They read across disciplines, nations, genres and research methodologies, trying to stay abreast of the larger issues affecting educational research, theory, policy and practice.[1] In academe, career rewards accrue to specialists who focus on problems of interest to likeminded peers. But because solutions to significant educational problems demand collaboration within and beyond the academy, professors of education are expected to work with school, business and community leaders, teachers, parents, mental and healthcare professionals, the media, funding agencies and colleagues in the arts and sciences (Scheurich, 2005, pp. 275-276). Like all professors, educationists discover, synthesize, and disseminate knowledge in an increasingly complex, global context. They teach diverse, sometimes fragile, and often demanding audiences whose evaluations of them carry considerable weight. They must find time to learn how to use new technological tools for teaching and scholarship, while keeping up to date in their areas of specialization. The academic triumvirate of research, teaching, and service has been expanded to include revenue generation and public relations—as if the first three tasks, well done, were not enough. Indeed, professors of education serve many masters, some of them cruel, which can leave us frenzied, fragmented, and frustrated. Given all this, it may be time to take a fresh look at the political economy of academic writing practices in schools of education.

The term political economy is used in various ways within economics and anthropology. The study of the political economy involves analyzing how resources are created, distributed, and controlled within a group. The control of resources is a form of power. Therefore, political economies are often characterized by conflicts between self-interest and cultural ideals, and by inequitable distribution of opportunities. As a framework for this analysis, investigating the political economy of academic writing practices calls for professional self-examination and open-minded inquiry into the ways in which reward structures and traditions operate in academe. It means looking at consequences for individuals, organizations, and institutions (higher education as a whole).

Writing Small

I use the term *writing small* strategically to disrupt and interrogate a small herd of sacred cows. When authors choose to write essays, book reviews, commentaries, editorials, conference papers, web pages, blogs, and columns for professional and community newsletters they are "writing small."[2] Universities tend to undervalue such work, despite the fact that these kinds of writing projects have the potential to move ideas within specializations, across disciplinary boundaries and beyond the walls of academe. They also afford opportunities to demonstrate what Boyer termed the scholarship of "integration, application and teaching" (1990, p. 17-25). Writing projects of this kind are "scholarly" when they demonstrate that the author has skillfully deployed professional knowledge and judgment to address significant professional or public concerns. Scholarship means getting to the heart of a problem or issue, understanding it deeply and communicating one's best insights to others.[3]

Writing small also means writing well—writing clearly and authentically in the interest of being understood by our colleagues and students as well as more distant audiences. As the Navajo seeks to "walk in beauty," perhaps it is time for scholars to place more value on "writing in beauty." At 701 words, Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address was concise, but effective (Zinsser, 1990, p. 108). The text of the Declaration of Independence contains 1336 words. Powerful ideas have gift-like qualities—they move, they are shared and put to use. Thus, "good writing is good teaching" (Bem, 1995, p. 172). I do not propose that traditional, peer-reviewed writing efforts should be de-valued or supplanted in the tenure and promotion process. Rather, for reasons outlined below, I think universities should also recognize and reward the work of those who share their ideas within and beyond their disciplines by "writing small."

Writing small means valuing the time, effort, and resources required by the publication process. It means writing only when one has something new, important, and interesting to say and contributing to the profession in other ways when one does not. It means moving beyond the dominance hierarchy that ensures continuing privilege and prestige for those who pound endlessly the same drum as though there were virtue inherent in redundancy. It means questioning the reward system in higher education that leads us to *count* our colleagues' publications rather than to try to understand and reflect upon their ideas (Boyer, 1990, pp. 29-32). It may even mean decoupling academic publication from the promotion and tenure process, as discussed below. Above all, it means taking a chance on colleagues who, for various reasons, dislike grandstanding, competition, and the three As of adversarialism, abstraction, and arrogance embodied in conventional displays of academic prowess (Tannen, 1996, pp. 40-46; Tannen, 1998, pp. 266-276). Writing small is thus a double metaphor referring not only to brevity, but also to a "mindfully conservative" (Bowers, 2003; Bowers, 2004, p.54) stance toward scholarship that questions and resists the academic status quo, challenging "what counts" in the political economy of academic writing practices (See, for example, Shatz, 2004, pp. 121-138). The case for valuing alternative writing practices can be made on economic, professional and moral grounds.

Economic Grounds: The Monetary Consequences of Academic Discourse

The academic journal is a unique medium. Faculty experts provide editorial and reviewing services without charge to the publisher. They also supply and "consume" journal content. Professors tend to focus on the higher purposes served by academic publishing, but it is a costly, time-intensive enterprise and the public foots the bill. Universities subsidize journals in two ways: by paying the salaries of faculty without whom journals could not operate and through library acquisitions (Weiner, 2001). The choices professors make as to where and what to publish have a significant economic impact on university and library budgets.

Professors of education generate very large numbers of manuscripts each year, sending them to an expanding array of print and electronic journals. Although estimates vary, in 2003 there were about 41,000 full-time and 39,000 part-time postsecondary teachers of education working in four-year colleges and universities in the United States (Forest Cataldi, Fahimi, & Bradburn, 2005, p. 38). In 2003, full-time professors of education reported publishing 3.2 articles and reviews and .6 monographs within the previous two years (ibid., p. 33). But whereas the number of articles published has increased over time, the number of articles academics read each year has remained steady (Weiner, 2001). There are more producers, but fewer consumers. Ironically, career rewards for academic publishing have increased as readership has declined and costs have risen.

Academic librarians have long grappled with financial challenges associated with budgets that cannot accommodate the rising cost of acquisitions (Cummings, Witte, Bowen, Lazarus, & Ekman, 1992). There are well over 1,000 education journal titles and 100 to 200 core education titles (O'Brien, 2001, p. 95; Web of Science/Social Science Citation Index, 2006). The average cost of subscriptions to education periodicals has increased 8.9% each year since 1996 and the average price of education journal subscriptions has increased 459.6% since 1984 (Dingley, 2006, p.11).[4] Periodical prices will almost certainly continue to climb in the future.

Emerging technologies have had a significant impact on the political economy of academic publishing. The number of periodicals has increased substantially over time, as digital technologies have reduced production and distribution costs. Increasing specialization and reduced production costs have supported the growth of an expanding array of "boutique" journals for small professional societies, institutions and special interest groups, with mixed economic results.

> As so much else in postfordist, info/semiotic economies, available text resources have gone from “narrowcast” to “broadcast”: from a few dominant high prestige journals (e.g., that still sit in the league tables of top 100 SSI impact and citation lists), to literally hundreds more refereed journals than existed twenty years ago. In fact, the editorial boards and publishers of many of these “high-stakes” journals have quickly moved into e-production and web portals to compete with online authors’ self-publication and to offer the rapid turnaround times characteristic of electronically edited and published journals. (Luke & Luke, 2005, pp. 279-280)

Small publishing companies and scholarly societies have not had the resources and expertise necessary to produce both print and online periodicals. Large publishing companies have made substantial investments in the technologies and brainpower required to develop online submission and publication systems, raising subscription prices beyond what many academic librarians and policy analysts consider reasonable (Bergstrom & McAfee, n.d.; Magner, 2000; Van Orsdel & Born, 2006; Pew Higher Education Roundtable, 1998).

Colleges and universities, faculty members and students, academic librarians, scholarly societies, and publishers all have a stake in the future of academic publishing. If efforts to maintain access to relevant research and scholarship are to succeed, faculty must be mindful of the broader context in which they carry out their work as scholars and researchers. Journals published by learned societies are typically less costly than those published by the 12 major corporations that dominate the publishing industry. E-journals and university-based institutional archives provide alternative, less costly venues for disseminating scholarly work within the “academic commons” (Association of Research Libraries, 2000; Bollier, 2002).[5]

One of the difficulties inherent in thinking differently about academic writing and publishing is that it is embedded in a political economy that is linked to professional practices, values and ideals. Although academic writing conventions do change, they change at a glacial pace. In the next section, I examine academic writing conventions as byproducts of the wider cultural, institutional and economic contexts in which professors carry out their work.

Professional Grounds: Publishing, Perishing and Peer Review

Journals do more than promote the exchange of knowledge and ideas. They create and sustain communities of practice by providing opportunities for conversations among members of particular discourse communities. But within the hierarchical, bureaucratic world of the university, educational researchers who participate in the kinds of conversations associated with revenue generation are prized. As a consequence, NIRDBAs—"national and international refereed data-based articles"—count more than synthetic reviews of the literature (Apple, 1999, p. 344; Henson, 1999, p. 780-782; Klingner, Scanlon & Pressley 2005, p. 15), and quantity tends to trump quality. New research findings are more likely to lead to grant funding than efforts to develop theories, synthesize knowledge, or critique the status quo. NIRDBAs provide a means whereby funding agencies identify worthy recipients. Visibility in prestigious journals and citation indices increases the likelihood that an author will be rewarded with external support for research and scholarship. And in a society whose economic engine is fueled by capitalistic values and assumptions, institutions are driven by professional practices and reward structures that support the accumulation of cultural and economic capital. In such institutions, revenue generation is always a good thing.

Pressure on faculty to produce NIRDBAs is highest in research universities, which are increasingly dependent upon external funding for status enhancement, power and continued institutional growth. This mentality has consequences for professors of education who often wear multiple hats inside and outside academe. Although this is clearly a very complicated topic, I will focus on two sets of issues that bear upon the argument that professors of education need to become more self-critical about their writing and publishing practices. First, there are negative consequences linked to the "publish or perish" system, which seems to have intensified in recent years. Second, there are flaws in the process whereby articles are selected, and academic rewards distributed: masked peer review.

Overproduction and Trivialization of Scholarship

For most professors of education, professional advancement rests heavily on scholarly productivity, which administrators and faculty committee members believe to be demonstrated by publishing in refereed journals and by writing books. The problems ensue when tenure and promotion panels and funding agency reviewers tally up an author's peer-reviewed articles (and monographs) and rely upon citation counts as primary indicators of professional talent, skill and promise. Faculty reward systems and institutional ambition have fostered the overproduction of trivial scholarship and faculty trained to disseminate their work by means of the "least publishable unit" (dividing work into multiple small publications when one longer work would suffice). Increases in faculty publication rates have supported the creation of new periodicals. This, in turn, has contributed to the academic library crisis (Association of Research Libraries, 2000; Mooney, 1991; Magner, 2000; Pew Higher Education Roundtable, 1998). Pressure to publish may also encourage individuals to cheat and to disseminate inferior work. "While a fundamental factor contributing to the rapid increase in the volume of published research is the rapid expansion of knowledge, the academic credentialing system encourages faculty to publish some work that may add little to the body of knowledge" (Association of Research Libraries, 2000). In the rush to publish, publication becomes an end in itself. Integrity and honesty take second place to the generation of NIRDBA's and the rewards associated with productivity/visibility in the field come to define and delimit professors' professional activities. This, in turn, may undermine universities' capacities to meet other important obligations to the students and communities they serve (e.g., Seifer, 2008).

Human and Environmental Consequences

Overproduction of trivial scholarship is wasteful. It wastes natural resources. It wastes the time of reviewers, editors, funding agencies, and readers. The time taken reading bloated documents would be better spent on other important tasks: research, teaching, supervision, community service, professional development, mentoring and collaborating with new scholars. The authors of the Pew Higher Education Roundtable Report (1998) conclude:

> The commingling of publication with peer review for purposes of promotion and tenure produces information at a rate that far exceeds the capacity for consumption within the enterprise. In a world ruled by "publish or perish," what perishes first, it turns out, are trees and library budgets. Breaking this logjam requires disentangling—or what the AAU task force has termed "decoupling"—the processes of faculty evaluation and print publication. (p. 10)

The widely publicized Association of Research Libraries (2000) "Principles for Emerging Systems of Scholarly Publishing" also recommended that promotion and tenure decisions be decoupled from quantitative measures of productivity:

> In the spirit of creating an environment that reduces emphasis on quantity across the system and frees faculty time for more valuable endeavors, faculty in research institutions should base their evaluation of colleagues on the quality of and contribution made by a small, fixed number of published works, allowing the review to emphasize quality. This de-emphasis on quantitative measures could moderate the rate of increase in new titles and numbers of articles published.

Placing more emphasis on quality is a step in the right direction, but this raises the important question of how review panels are to ascertain the quality of academic work. At the center of the NIRDBA fetish is a process intended to ascertain the quality of scholarly and scientific work: masked peer review.

Problems with Peer Review

Peer-reviewed publications in prestigious journals are considered significant markers of success in academe because they have been selected and endorsed by competent experts in the field. Most academic journal publications are "peer reviewed"—reviewed by other academics working in the same field. The editors of refereed journals send manuscripts to experts who recommend whether the article should be accepted for publication. Refereed journals employ "masked review," in which the reviewer does not know the identity of the author. Many journals employ a "double blind" process in which neither the author nor the reviewer knows the other's identity. The term "peer reviewed" is sometimes incorrectly used synonymously with "refereed." Most academic publications, including books, have been subjected to peer review. One or more experts in the field have decided the work is worthy of publication. Editors who oversee the creation of edited books play this role. They ensure that the work of contributors is reviewed and critiqued by peers. Not all such publications are subjected to masked review (e.g., refereed). The masked review process is intended to eliminate "bias" by ensuring that reviewers do not know the identity of the author. Thus, good work is evaluated and disseminated by virtue of its merits, not the author's reputation, professional connections or personal qualities. Those who argue against the valorization of publishing in prestigious, refereed journals encounter stiff opposition on the grounds that peer review is essential to maintaining high standards and rigorous accountability in the professions (Eisenhart, 2002, p. 241-3; Freidson, 2001; Mohammadreza et al., 2003, p. 76). Presumably, we live in a meritocratic professional universe in which faculty sufficiently talented and persistent have an equal chance to win the race. Unfortunately, there is little evidence to support this claim.

On the other hand, there is substantial evidence that the journal article peer review process is neither bias-free nor fair and equitable. This is a complex topic about which a great deal has been written (e.g., Eisenhart, 2002; Kumashiro et al., 2005; Mohammadreza et al., 2003; Shatz, 2004; Turner, 2003). Key issues include the following:

1. Reviewers are not always "blind." Masked (anonymous) reviews do not always prevent reviewers from identifying the authors of papers.

> 2. Reviewers are not always or ever unbiased (Mohammadreza et al., 2003, pp.78-84).
>
> 3. Reviewers are not always "experts." They may not possess the kind of expertise required to evaluate submissions (Eisenhart, 2002, pp. 244-5).
>
> 4. Review panels are not always diverse or gender balanced. Lack of diversity may suppress new ideas and proposals (Kumashiro et al., 2005).
>
> 5. Given that editorial board members and reviewers are often well established in the field, they may have a vested interest in maintaining the status quo. The peer review process may privilege the familiar over the new and work to limit innovation rather than support it (Eisenhart, 2002, pp. 248-251; Shatz, 2004, pp. 89-93).
>
> 6. Peer review of publications does not always catch fraudulent and erroneous research reports. This is supported by perennial concerns about the adequacy of editorial gatekeeping in medicine and science (Altman, 2006).
>
> 7. Reviewer anonymity may permit and might actually promote careless, abusive and insensitive feedback to authors. (Kumashiro et al., 2005; see also Eisenhart, 2002, 243; Mohammadreza et al., 2003, pp. 86-87).

Thus, a good deal of evidence supports the claim that the peer review process does not guarantee that articles selected for publication will be of uniformly high quality. But the problem runs deeper than this. Because reviewers are often members of relatively closed networks of White, middle class individuals, critics have questioned the openness and legitimacy of the whole academic publishing enterprise (Kumashiro et al., 2005; Mohammadreza et al., 2003). Indeed, the peer review process is less problematic than the professional discourse and worldviews that valorize it (to the exclusion of other scholarly writing and publishing practices). I suspect that the celebration of competition, selectivity, meritocracy, and prestige that characterizes much of the discourse on publishing in academic journals may work to exclude faculty and students of color, gays and lesbians, and women from full membership, participation, and advancement in the education professoriate, as they may have little interest in such "tournaments" and know very well the system is not fair. Devon Mihesuah's (2004) comments provide a glimpse into this matter.

> As an editor who sends out numerous essays to even more reviewers each year…and as a fairly prolific writer myself, I can speak to the reality that many reviews are not done in good spirit. Some negative reviews are written to keep the status quo alive, and some are obviously written in retaliation for perceived past wrongs perpetuated by

> the writer against the reviewer, such as writing a bad book review, or as I found out, not accepting a lunch invitation and rejecting essays for American Indian Quarterly. As an editor, it is my responsibility to sort out retaliatory comments. As a writer, it is my job to try to educate my publishers as to the politics behind nonsensical comments. (p. 39)

Although faculty and administrators tend to consider peer review as an inherently good and necessary aspect of professional life, it is not a guarantee of quality, and to the degree it fosters conformity to traditional scholarly ways of thinking and writing, it may reduce creativity and innovation (Shatz, 2004, p. 83-85; 89-93).

With Patti Lather (1996), I seek to unsettle conventional notions of prestige and value, with an eye toward broadening our vision of what constitutes "good work."[6] Educational scholarship serves many purposes and, over time, the way we value such work can, and should change. Therefore, faculty reward structures and the practices that maintain them require periodic, thoughtful reconsideration. In order to change practices that are deeply embedded in academic culture, professors of education must become more self-critically aware of the taken-for-granted systems that determine how career rewards are allocated and success defined.

Moral Grounds: Toward Inclusive Academic Writing Practices

Despite concerted efforts to diversify college of education faculties in North America, most professors of education are White, as are a majority of public school teachers and education majors. Universities have created support structures to help culturally and linguistically diverse students adapt to and succeed in the academy, including innovative courses on academic writing aimed at helping graduate students develop their writing skills and acquire a deep understanding of and comfort with the enterprise as a whole (e.g., Noll & Fox, 2003; Rose & McClafferty, 2001). If professors of education are to make good on their commitments to increasing diversity and inclusiveness, we will need to do more than help "new hands" acquire skills needed for adaptation to existing academic cultures. We need to change the deep structure of university life. Broadening and deepening conceptions of scholarship demands cultural reciprocity—the capacity for professional self-critique combined with openness to other worldviews. Although professors of education generate a good deal of well-intentioned discourse about fostering diversity, they maintain individualistic, hierarchical, competitive, careerist professional values and practices to which others are expected to adapt.

The world of academic publishing and academic success portrayed above implies an ordered social universe in which the wise author makes carefully calculated decisions aimed at maximizing career success and influence in the field. It portrays a world of anonymous, powerful experts distributed by talent and cleverness in a hierarchy of technical experts who judge others' work stripped of personal context. It is *just possible* that indigenous people (for example) do not find this image of academic life particularly inviting (Cajete, 1994, pp. 208-227; Cajete, 1999, pp. 13-20; Grande, 2004, pp. 148-151). Writing, reading and pondering are lonely pursuits. It is not surprising that individuals who value social connections, whether by virtue of gender, class or ethnic group membership, resist or reject conventional forms of academic writing (Miller,1986; Smith, 2005, pp. 144-5 and pp. 148-151). *We write to belong*, to make the world a healthier place, to change schools and society for the better, to trouble mistaken assumptions. We write, and resist writing in contexts that make it more or less possible, and more or less appealing, to feel connected to particular discourse communities.

Considering the virtues of alternative writing projects (writing small) entails broadening our notions of the kinds of writing efforts that "count" in education to include the work of those of us who write for *audiences about whom we care and to which we want to feel connected*. It means acknowledging that scholarship aimed at community service, advocacy, curriculum development, teaching, language preservation, and creative expression through non-NIRDBA modalities has value. It invites exploration of new images of professional competence—for example, the notion that brevity and selectivity might be professional virtues to be cultivated and more widely appreciated as a reflection of judgment, principled resource consumption and skill.[7]

As noted above, I do not mean to suggest that brief writing projects should supplant lengthier projects, or substitute for complex arguments aimed at academic peers. The latter demand elaboration and careful documentation of evidence and the logic behind one's arguments. The point is simply that scholarship requires and can be demonstrated through many different kinds of writing practices. Those who have written both data-based articles and "think pieces" know there are challenges associated with both genres. Reflecting on the relevance of Laura Nader's work for anthropologists of education, Edmund Hamann (2003) noted

> First, we need to get off our campuses and engage with multiple education stakeholder publics. In engaging with them, we need to learn their discourses. …Second, to free up the time to respond to this first lesson, we need to resist the restrictive publish-or-perish parameters in which we work. The point is not to stop publishing, nor to stop engaging in careful, rigorous research. To the contrary, both of these efforts

> ground what we do. But to the extent we publish for publishing's sake, for job security, we perpetuate in small but real ways the press on our time that keeps us from learning how to engage our most important publics, and this keeps us from being of much real use to them. We allow ourselves to talk to each other in diminished spaces, in cramped quarters. Nader beseeches us to do work that matters. We do, and it can and should engage others as well as ourselves. (p. 444)

Thus, professors need to acknowledge and affirm the diversity inherent within our professional communities of academic practice. Not all scholars of education and educational researchers consider writing for status enhancement and prestige within a hierarchical universe of unbiased (disinterested) experts a worthy goal. For some of us, writing to be understood by, or to help improve the lives of those about whom we care may be of more compelling interest. Changing the political economy of academic writing practices will require a willingness to learn from others and to take a hard look at our own narrow minded, and potentially exclusionary and elitist professional practices. By adopting a more critical stance toward our assumptions about the nature of academic productivity, professors of education might find themselves better able to appreciate and reward the contributions of those who have chosen not to play the game, or to play it another way.

Notes

[1] This is how one librarian described educationists' information needs: "Education leaders, practitioners, and students have a voracious need for reference information. Many reference needs in education center on direct support for classroom teachers and the growing complexity of laws, curriculum mandates, testing, and the inclusion of special need students into the traditional classroom. At any given time, there is a need for instant access to resources that address policies, grants, technology integration, student evaluation, school finance, professional development, fundraising, counseling, community relations, crisis handling, disaster intervention, and classroom management" (Golian-Liu, 2005, pp. 195-6).

[2] There are many illustrations of brief scholarly writing projects that have significant impact. Some of my favorites are Eugene Provenzo's "TIME EXPOSURE" essays in *Educational Studies*; the brief (250-500 word) "Quick Fix" teaching tip essays in *College Teaching*; and the succinct book reviews published in *Choice: Current Reviews for Academic Libraries*, a publication of the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL). Professional society newsletters (e.g., *AESA News and Comment*; *Anthropology News*; The John Dewey Society's *Insights*; the AERA Division I newsletter, *Professions Education Research Quarterly*; the AERA Division J newsletter, *The Pen* (Post-secondary Education Network); the AERA *Division C News*, and the newsletter of the AERA Teaching Educational Psychology special interest group, *TEP News*) serve many

purposes, one of which is to provide an archival record of the activities and concerns of members. Another is to disseminate information about scholarly work in progress to an informed and potentially helpful audience. Such newsletters are often widely distributed and read with interest. (See also note 5, below.)

[3] The idea that scholars investigate problems and communicate ideas is a modernist notion. The broad definition I have proposed is intended to be inclusive rather than exclusive. It is compatible with a range of images of professional roles and goals (e.g., professing as leading to dialog, transformation, liberation, mediation, and/or conservation).

[4] The average cost of the 221 education periodicals indexed in Academic Search Premier rose from $236 in 2002 to $360 (52.5%) in 2006 (Van Orsdel & Born, 2006).

[5] Innovative new online journals often seek brief submissions (e.g., *Teaching Educational Psychology*; *Professing Education*) and sometimes move from non-refereed to refereed status over time (e.g., the *Electronic Magazine of Multicultural Education*—EMME). Once established, well-designed online journals conserve both material resources and time (Van Orsdel & Born, 2006). Open access, online journals also support the academic freedom of editors, as well as authors (Willinsky, Murray, Kendall, & Palepu (2007). Authors of university-hosted web sites and web pages require few resources other than time. Their open-access documents disseminate information and ideas to a global audience (e.g., Bergstrom & McAffey, n.d.). See also, Apt (2001, pp. 27-8), and Shatz (2004, pp. 139-161). In so doing, they may influence public perceptions of universities and university life.

[6] Lather (1996) and I are both grappling with the problem of how academic practices produce social hierarchies that have adverse, unintended, unrecognized consequences. She would no doubt take issue with my call for clarity (the hallmark of modernist authors), emphasizing the need for postmodern experimentation—as she puts it, "troubling clarity." Postmodernist writing practices challenge convention and "trouble clarity" through complex, multi-layered, multi-voiced weaving together of fragments into (what modernist readers might perceive to be) inchoate narratives. Lather's remarkably creative work as a postmodern, feminist social scientist shows that non-academic audiences are more sophisticated and intellectually competent than experts tend to assume.

[7] An anonymous reviewer of this article noted that it is unlikely that the production of more, brief writing projects would reduce "the Niagara of text that is pushed at all of us daily on our computers and in our mailboxes." I concede the point. My main argument is that scholars should become more mindful of the resource consumption/waste issue and its association with the political economy of academic writing.

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