

#8 Co-writing Research

Practising ethics guides to built environment research

Alejandro Vallejo and Catalina Ortiz

When setting up

1. How will we address disciplinary definitions of authorship and writing conventions?
2. What kind of labour and contribution will count as “writing” or “authorship” and allow a researcher to be listed as “co-author”?
3. How will the power dynamics and hierarchies in our group be recognized, addressed, and represented in the author order we choose?
4. What kinds of referencing systems will we use?

When planning

5. What collaborative writing process will we use?
6. What kco-writing process will work best given our co-writers’ experiences of academic writing?
7. How can different forms of reasoning inform the approach to writing we take?

When writing

8. How will we support and care for other co-writers during the co-writing process, and how will they support us and each other?
9. Who will lead the process intellectually, and who will manage the project?
10. How will we deal with the time zones and technological issues that may arise?
11. How will we plan for and commit to the task of writing the research output in terms of timescales and deadlines?
12. What processes will we use for giving each other feedback?

Practising Ethics: Guides

These guides, curated by the [Bartlett's Ethics Commission](#) in collaboration with [KNOW \(Knowledge in Action for Urban Equality\)](#), and edited by Jane Rendell, (Director of the Bartlett Ethics Commission 2015-20), offer insights by experienced researchers into how to negotiate the ethical dilemmas that can arise during a research project. The aim is to help you practise built environment research ethically. David Roberts (Bartlett Ethics Fellow 2015-20) devised the format and structure of these guides to follow the ethical issues that arise during the development of a research process – from planning, to conducting, to communicating and producing outcomes – and Ariana Markowitz wrote some of the introductory text that runs across all guides. The guides focus on the different kinds of ethical issues you might encounter as a result of using specific processes or methods, and pay attention to the particular contexts and ways in which these methods are practised. Because when practising research, methods and context inform one another, we consider this series of guides as embedded in a mode of applied ethics called **situated** or **relational ethics**. Where you see words that are highlighted, they refer back to our definitions of key **ethical** principles and to terms contained in institutional protocols as found on [Practising Ethics](#).

1. *Making Images* (David Roberts)
2. *Asking Questions* (Yael Padan)
3. Co-producing Knowledge (Yael Padan)
4. *Staging Research* (David Roberts)
5. *Researching, Risk, and Wellbeing* (Ariana Markowitz)
6. *Researching Internationally* (Emmanuel Osuteye)
7. *Analysing Secondary Data* (Tania Guerrero Rios and Jens Kandt)
8. *Co-Writing Research* (Alejandro Vallejo and Catalina Ortiz)

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Guide #8 Co-writing research by Alejandro Vallejo and Catalina Ortiz

Writing is a creative act and as such can also be a joyful practice and craft. Writing is thinking with... weaving reflections – an interlocution.¹

About this guide: why and how built environment researchers co-write research

Built environment research is as much about people as it is about places: the people who use and inhabit the places you are researching, the people who engage with those places emotionally or spiritually even if they are not physically present, the people who build them, and the people who own or manage them. In addition, you the researcher are necessarily a key actor: you devise the research approach, become a participant in the place where you gather data, and you determine how to interpret that data and what to do with it. Because people are unpredictable, research can also be unpredictable, and you are likely to encounter unexpected **situations** that require you to think on your feet whilst navigating high expectations with limited time. Even the best-laid plans often go awry when they come into contact with reality and real people and you will need systems in place to support you throughout that process, minimising **harm** to those participating in your research as well as to yourself. **Ethics** concerns the kind of lives we lead, the qualities of character we seek to develop, and the **responsibilities** we have for each other and our social and ecological system. To conduct research **ethically**, it is important to consider the **benefits**, **risks**, and **harms** to all connected with and affected by it.

How to define co-writing research

For the purpose of this guide, co-writing research refers to writing processes that engage more than one researcher in the co-production of a written piece of research. We take the researcher “subject” of this guide to be a co-writer who writes as part of their research practice. In this way, we aim to acknowledge that subtle differences exist between, for example, a researcher who is a “writer” and who understands writing as their practice, and a researcher who, despite being the author of research papers, does not see themselves as a “writer,” but for whom writing is an important aspect of their identity as a subject, and who recognises that the ways in which they write are embedded in organisational layers of complexity that involve power dynamics. This guide neither explains “how to write a research paper” methodologically nor linguistically, but rather seeks to uncover and address the **ethical** imperatives involved in addressing *how* a researcher collaborates with other researchers throughout the writing process.

The ethics of co-writing research

As it is grounded in interpersonal relations co-writing research embodies a myriad array of ethical considerations. Establishing an **ethical** collaborative writing process involves not only making a commitment to all the writers involved in their own capacities as writing subjects, but also securing conditions of parity to avoid discriminating with respect to the identities, geographical locations and power positions of the writers. The writing of research outputs together requires diverse kinds of contributions and does not only refer to the final words on the page, but this process also raises issues of authorship and author order, **recognition**, and **respect**. Acknowledging the often-invisible labour involved in making an output become a reality in written form is key; for example, **care** about and for team members, and the brokering of access with informants and archival work can **benefit** good practice. These can be crucial elements for enacting a research **ethics** of **care** through your co-writing process that you certainly also wish to critically reflect upon throughout the process.

How to use this guide

These guides to *Practising Ethics* define appropriate ways to engage **ethically** in research. *Co-Writing Research* aims to assist you in recognising the **ethical** dilemmas which arise from co-writing and to address and reflect on these with confidence. It is designed to be a point of reference at any stage of your research – from planning your project, to conducting activities in the field, to communicating what you have learned through the production of particular research outputs.

Co-Writing Research contains *principles*, *questions*, *guidelines* and *resources*. The *principles* in the next section inform best practice. These are not just regulatory hurdles for you to jump through at the beginning stages of your research but concepts that ground **ethical** inquiry throughout. They help you develop and refine an approach that it is **sensitive** to the physical and emotional challenges that may arise in the research process, enabling you to be a more effective researcher. The series of guiding *questions* act as prompts for you to **reflect** on the potential **ethical** considerations which emerge throughout a project, before, during, and after you conduct your research. The *guidelines* expand on the questions, illuminate the different **ethical** concerns they raise, and recommend actions which embody these principles. The *resources* section provides additional information.

These guides are not exhaustive and cannot address all the possible **situations** you will face, particularly for research on sensitive topics or in places experiencing violence or instability. But learning from the experiences of others, will help you gain the ability to reflect on what you encounter, and to make informed judgements about the best way to practise your research **ethically**. Insightful and imaginative research encompasses a range of sites, cultural contexts, and people and there will always be a need for flexibility and **care**.

Principles

The people, places, and research methods you use and the contexts in which they are practised will each raise their own **ethical** considerations related to a common set of principles that encourage **ethical** conduct and promote interaction based on good faith and mutual **respect**.

Benefit not harm: Your research should have a **benefit** to society and any **risks** that participants could face must be minimised, balanced against the potential **benefit** to the overall community, and clearly explained to participants before they give their **consent**.

Informed consent: You need to inform your participants about the study and what is being asked of them, including any potential **risks** or **benefits**, in order for them to make an informed and voluntary decision about whether or not to participate in the research.

Confidentiality: You need to inform participants of the extent to which **confidentiality** can be assured and **respect** their right to remain **anonymous** in dissemination and display.

Additionally **Co-Writing Research** highlights the following principles:

Transparency: You need to **transparently** inform your co-writers and researchers of the nature and amount you can contribute and the level of commitment you can make to the co-writing process in order to be fairly credited for the work done.

Accountability: You should be **accountable** and **responsible** for the research you have conducted and for the co-written piece of research in which you have participated.

Consensus (or Collegiality): You and your co-writers and researchers should have “[t]he right to be heard through a democratic process and a right to influence said process for the common good” in order to foster a “mutual recognition of perspectives and practices.”²

Questions

When setting up: *Recognising disciplinary and unravelling power dynamics*

1. How will we address disciplinary definitions of authorship and writing conventions, and which will we use?
2. What kind of labour and contribution will count as “writing” or “authorship” and allow a researcher to be listed as “co-author”? Is writing the only kind of research labour that will count towards being considered an author?
3. How will the power dynamics and hierarchies in our group be recognized, addressed, and represented in the author order we choose?
4. What kinds of referencing systems will we choose to use and how will these different kinds of citational practice recognise other authors and other kinds of contribution?

When planning: *Transforming co-writing research epistemologically and axiologically*

5. What kind of collaborative writing process will we use, and what references and contexts will we consult to in order to make this decision?
6. What kind of co-writing process will work best given our co-writers’ different experiences of academic writing and their preferences for writing styles?
7. How can different forms of reasoning inform the approach to writing we take, including the choice of writerly “voice,” and so enrich the research outputs we aim to produce while also preserving the coherence and consistency of the overall piece?

When writing: *Learning by doing responsible and accountable research*

8. How will we support and care for other co-writers during the co-writing process, and how will they support us and each other? And how will we address the institutional context of the neoliberal university and its potential to undermine caring work within the writing process?
9. Who will lead the process intellectually, and who will manage the project? Will these roles be played by the same or different writers? How to decide?
10. If the co-writers are in different geographical locations, how will we deal with the time zones and technological issues that may arise?
11. How will we plan for and commit to the task of writing the research output in terms of timescales and deadlines?
12. What processes will we use for giving each other feedback, for addressing in a constructive and timely manner comments and suggestions made by all co-writers, and for negotiating the completion of unfulfilled tasks and deadlines?

Guideline 1 When setting up: *Recognising disciplinarity and unravelling power dynamics*

1. *How will we address disciplinary definitions of authorship and writing conventions, and which will we use?*

Negotiating differences and unevenness in the co-writing process is paramount. The built environment is claimed and contested, designed and produced, researched and written by and across the whole range of disciplines – the sciences, social sciences, and humanities. We propose that disciplinarity is pivotal for **situating** the writing process, for understanding who is conducting the research, which paradigm is used, and which roles are being performed. The Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE),³ refers to the fact that while researchers may be aware of the differing conventions and traditions in their disciplines around **recognising** authorship, workload, assigning roles, and ordering co-authors;⁴ these processes continue to be the source of incommensurable disagreements which at their core concern **ethical** issues.⁵ Co-writing research requires the framing of an ethics of engagement. As one author of this guide, architect and urbanist Catalina Ortiz, explains “the ethics of engagement is not only a fixed moral code of conduct but rather it is: a) a reflexive practice of one’s responsibility for others; b) a constant inter-subjective negotiation on how to guide collective action; and c) a systematic way of framing issues, respecting cultural sensitivities.”⁶

Enacting disciplinarity is one way of claiming the **recognition** of architectural research’s methods and outputs. Referring to the Research Assessment Exercise of 2008, architectural designer and historian Jane Rendell, and editor of these guides, contends that the current system of definition of output and assessment criteria differs across built environment disciplines, while the funding allocation to produce those kinds of output and the outputs itself varies “from books to buildings.”⁷ Rendell explains that the ways in which research outputs are produced and authored across disciplines is not the same. For example, she notes how science-based research teams focus on producing articles for high-ranking journals, with research fellows and assistants (and/or PhD students) often carrying out the “actual” research, and more senior academics expected to provide intellectual leadership. She contrasts this to the

arts and humanities, where researchers tend to focus on the production of “solo authored books” or monographs based on research conducted by independent individuals, with PhD students also tending to publish their work as sole authors – traditionally, supervisors are not included as co-authors, but their research is often cited in references and their support mentioned in the acknowledgements.⁸

In the sciences, the Contributor Role Taxonomy (CRediT) model has been used since 2014 in over 120 journals in an attempt to shift from “authorship” to “contributorship” in order to produce a greater **transparency** and **recognition**. This CRediT model acknowledges that contributions to research range across a whole series of activities, from conceptualization, investigation, methodology, data curation, formal analysis, visualization, to writing an original draft, reviewing and editing work, and beyond.⁹ The division of research labour varies enormously across disciplines, as well as inside them.

2. *What kind of labour and contribution will we count as “writing” or “authorship” and allow a researcher to be listed as “co-author”? Is writing the only kind of research labour that will count towards being considered an author?*

COPE notes that to be considered a “co-author” or to claim authorship for the writing of a research output, an author must have made a “substantial contribution” to the conception, design or writing of the research output, and be **accountable** for that work and its disclosure as a publication. For example, in the same vein, researchers Sylvie Noël and Jean-Marc Robert point to a range of roles associated with writing, so as well as being a writer, also being a consultant, an editor, a reviewer, a leader-facilitator or/and a copy editor-typographer – as well as the possibility for multi-tasking several roles at once.¹⁰ But are there other kinds of labour, besides those listed by COPE and CRediT, that you and your co-writers should consider counting towards “co-authorship”?

Other experiences of writing as part of a collaborative team include a myriad array of “soft” **care** work, for example, training and learning, which we suggest that you take into consideration due to the educational and personal **benefits** for all members of your team – including staff and students, early and established career researchers alike.¹¹ Some more radical teams may also wish to include as co-authors those in their teams who have undertaken activities other than writing as part of

their processes of co-writing. Max Liboiron and her co-researchers include “training new members on protocols; maintaining equipment; cleaning up; contributing to logistical tasks including note taking, scheduling, sending email reminders and booking rooms; caring for members’ physical and mental health by listening, sending sick people home, providing ‘time outs,’ and telling jokes; and thanking each other” as other activities that grant authorship and determine author order.¹²

3. *How will the power dynamics and hierarchies in our group be recognized, addressed, and represented in the author order we choose?*

It is important to disentangle the power dynamics and hierarchies within your team in order to **recognise**, address, and represent these as core **ethical** issues informing co-writing processes and co-authorship sequences. If the impacts of the institutional power structures of the academy upon the roles and positions of those involved in the writing process – from identities, geographical locations, and power positions, to career experiences and expectations – are not taken into account in the co-writing process and addressed by the full team, then this can lead to one writer – intentionally or even unintentionally – exerting discriminatory, exploitative, and patronising practices over another.¹³ As Susan J. Cheng et al argue, both authorship and author order run the risk of perpetuating practices embodied in ‘racism, misogyny, ableism, colonialism and other harmful systems of domination.’¹⁴ Health **ethicists** Daniela Cutas and David Shaw emphasise the unevenness and pitfalls of current practices of co-authorship and publishing, especially for early career researchers.¹⁵ As a feminist science-based laboratory team stresses, women and early career researchers “consistently receive less credit for equal work.”¹⁶

You and your co-writers will need to set up a process agreeing the terms of your writing partnership for jointly and **transparently** deciding on issues of authorship and author order as part of the setting up or designing of the research project and the establishment of a broader set of agreements between researchers. Doing so at an early stage, by clearly agreeing and declaring a set of shared principles or protocols that express and define the ethos of your team, will help avoid future misunderstandings and unpleasant **situations** that could lead to the end of the partnership. The dimensions foregrounding the declaration of principles could include: **equity** (disputed with **equality**), **transparency**, **accountability**, consensus (collegiality), shared commitment (shared vision), an

ethics of care, and the **reciprocal recognition** of identity groups within the team.¹⁷

If we take these factors into account, it is clear that author order is not necessarily decided according to hierarchical positions in the academy or notions of a “politically correct” order, but instead can be chosen together according to the different kinds of contributions authors have made to the co-writing process, including even the more long-term ones involved in research, for example, those that might have propelled this specific research project and/or output at an earlier stage.¹⁸ Author order is relational, contextual, and temporal; and so the decisions taken around who is to be named as an author and how these names will be sequenced should be made in a case-by-case manner.

4. *What kinds of referencing systems will we choose to use and how will these different kinds of citational practice recognise other authors and other kinds of contribution?*

Such concerns with acknowledging the differing contribution to co-writing processes authors make can extend to processes of referencing and citation. Rendell has described “referencing as an **ethical** act, and citation as an academic correspondent to that act,” one which **recognises** the earlier contributions to the field made by others and which **situates** one’s own writing in relation to those contributions.¹⁹ Drawing on decolonial and feminist theory – specifically in art and architecture, Rendell critically **reflects** on the ways in which a critique of citational practice can raise **ethical** questions around visibility and invisibility, **consent** and autonomy, and the difficulties of citation in artistic and architectural practice-led research – in other words, how is it possible to cite the contribution of another researcher in a research “outcome” whose form does not allow conventional referencing, such as an artefact, building or event.

Citation is never neutral. It is, as feminist theorist Sara Ahmed affirms, “a rather successful reproductive technology, a way of reproducing the word around certain bodies.”²⁰ For geographers Carrie Mott and Daniel Cockayne, citation itself can work “as [a] performative technology of power.”²¹ The politics of citation “can be a tool for either the reification of, or resistance to, **unethical** hierarchies of knowledge production.”²²

In order to engage with an understanding of citation as a contested practice, we recommend authors and writers critically **reflect** at the outset of a project on the ways in which co-writers will engage with, select, or possibly even invent, referencing and other citational practices appropriate to both their project and the place in which they choose to publish. The ethics and politics of citation might require you then to decide on which authors, writers, and works you will include.

Guideline 2 When planning: *Transforming co-writing re- search epistemologically and axiologically*

5. *What kind of collaborative writing process will we use, and what references and contexts will we consult to in order to make this decision?*

The different types of co-writing practice are so varied and extensive as to be almost uncountable; any attempt to map and categorise them thoroughly depends on a range of factors. Although there are several taxonomies – mostly made by researchers in the sciences²³ – no single one includes every type.

You and your co-writers may choose or adapt or develop your own strategy primarily based on your own and your co-writers' abilities, skills, and needs. It is also possible to consider synchronous writing, especially given the current technical possibilities offered by a range of digital platforms, where a number of co-writers can all write at the same time;²⁴ you may also want to think of your contributions in terms of “voices” – yours and others;²⁵ and economically, you may wish to foster co-writing as an enhanced form of research productivity.²⁶

6. *What kind of co-writing process will work best given our co-writers different experiences of academic writing and their preferences for writing styles?*

From our research into the field of co-writing research here are four types of co-writing to consider:

The first type involves just one researcher from your team writing the first draft of the output. Although this is the least variable of the types, there are a couple of variations, for example, whether to include any group deliberations prior to the writing of the first draft and/or whether the lead writer is also the lead-facilitator. This type of co-writing is often called “single-author writing,” “collegial writing,” “lead-writing,” “first-draft writing,” “first cut,” “layering,” “scribe writing” and “principal writer.”²⁷

The second type is the most commonly used as well as the one with most variations. It encompasses each co-writer writing a part of the output – mostly by dividing the output into sections – with one co-writer stitching together all the parts. Be aware here of the variations, these include whether your team decide to jointly outline

the output and its structure and negotiate together the decisions concerning who will write each section based on their abilities, skills, and needs; whether the writer putting the draft together is to act as curator, editor and writer; whether this writer is also the lead-facilitator; and whether the “voices” of each of those writing are identified by author name or merged under one list of authors assigned to the whole output. These are decisions you and your co-writers should ideally determine together. This type of co-writing is described as “horizontal division or parallel writing,” “turn-writing,” “write-in-section,” “cut it up and put it back together,” “bricolage” and “lego.”²⁸ The pandemic has brought limitations to the possibility for bodily proximity when writing together but there are still ways – some synchronous and others asynchronous – of keeping the flow of collective writing going.

The third type, and the least used, comprises each co-researcher in the team writing on every section of the output, adjusting, and commenting on each other’s work. Although others have described this approach as “inefficient,”²⁹ we find it a thought-provoking approach, that can work well in small teams or for those who value **reflective** practice. As adult educators Dorothy Lander and Leona English demonstrate, dialogical inquiry, for example, might allow you to critically **reflect** on the ways you can read and re-join your co-writers’ works through critical action research. Adopting a literary style, Lander and English state that “this approach of **relational** knowing contextualizes transformative action research and authorship at the intersection of ‘I’ and ‘you’, self and other, theory and practice, public and private, reader and writer and text.”³⁰

The fourth type, the last one for now, and from our research, the most challenging and least reported upon, consists of writing side-by-side, metaphorically called “writing as a piano duet.”³¹ Here bodily presence is necessary as you and your co-writers and researchers will be talking and writing the research output as the same time. “The talking spills onto the page with the co-writers taking turns to do the actual keyboard work,” as educators Pat Thomson and Barbara Kramler note in their discussion of the way in which they have written many of their works through, what they call, “type-talk,” that is writing side-by-side.³² But for this kind of co-writing you should be aware of the need to schedule extra time to meet personally – this could include travelling – and that the necessity for bodily presence could also discourage some people. Previous collaborations among your co-writers and researchers might improve the likelihood of this practice being effective as well as making the requirement for openness and **trust** easier to achieve.³³

7. *How can different forms of reasoning inform the approach to writing we take, including the choice of writerly “voice,” and so enrich the research outputs we aim to produce while also preserving the coherence and consistency of the overall piece?*

The notion of a writerly “voice” summons up both epistemological and **ethical** connotations. Recognising the writers have different “voices” both from other writers but also in their own writing, that relate to shifting subject positions both inside and outside the written text, allows us to consider co-writing in terms of the inclusion of narratives of the self and the others. Co-writing in different voices certainly includes taking into account the **reflexivities** and **positionalities** of your own writing self and the writing selves of the other co-writers, as well as other researchers involved in the project, including those who have contributed to the research but who are not involved in the writing. Yael Padan, Vanesa Castán Broto, Rendell, and David Roberts **reflect** on the **situatedness** of co-writing outputs in “A ‘Minifesta’ as the Promise of Collective Voice:”

*Achieving a collective voice is a utopian idea. Voices, individual and collective, are not waiting there to be collected into a monolithic narrative of what is to be done. Voices are shaped by the history of the people and communities they live with and by the events and situations in which their voices are expressed. In contrast, the manifesto belongs to the event in which it is produced. It can only be understood with the cacophony of voices that created this moment of agreement that we call a minifesta.*³⁴

As Rendell notes elsewhere,³⁵ by italicizing, bracketing, marking quotations, bolding or changing the typography of a text, you can acknowledge and enact different voices in a written text. The use of these textual signs occurs in the ‘Minifesta’ of Padan, Broto, Rendell and Roberts, which includes their voices but also many others from their research group. Using a sort of “bricolage,” they enunciate changes in voice and declare shifts in sections, corresponding to each other by using such signs. Another piece by Rendell, this time where she contributes a text of her own alongside those of other feminist architects – perhaps this could be classified as a “write-in-section” piece – showing how separately, name-attached sections can work, and can work well.³⁶

And from an epistemological perspective you may find the work of educators Rachel Handforth and Carol Taylor helpful here, in proposing “bricolage as an experimental feminist praxis of doing collaborative writing differently” by undoing “normalised practices of academic writing”

and “becoming-feminist” through research narratives.³⁷ Whilst researchers Melissa Burchard, Amy Lanou, Leah Mathews, Karin Peterson, and Alice Weldon – a feminist interdisciplinary writing team – suggest that developing skills in critical self-**reflection** through storytelling can help to enact transformative capacities of “knowledge-making” in co-writing teams, allowing responses to negative institutional environments to surface, and for these to be worked through, so transforming relations between “knowing, working and living.”³⁸

Co-writing a research output that considers writing in terms of voice will not only entail **recognising** the different styles of other co-writers and researchers’ voices but can also mean acting to ensure that the voices of others get heard – the oppressed, the marginalised, the underrepresented – those that often suffer from epistemic **injustices**. Alejandra Boni and Diana Velasco refer to a specific form of epistemic **injustice** present in written outputs, that they call “hermeneutical **injustice**.”³⁹

From an ethical perspective, it is also important then that you consider carefully whether you have a **moral responsibility** to, for or with the subject(s) of your research. We recommend taking a principled approach in which you decide not to reproduce stereotypes that marginalise others, especially those who are already marginalised. As Stephanie Butcher states, “Ask yourself: are you writing in solidarity with the **vulnerable** communities you are working with? If it is not in solidarity, you should not write” at all.⁴⁰ Butcher later **reflects** on how the **situational** contexts that arise allow writers and researchers to understand from which perspective they might narrate the story. When taking into consideration how each community is a complex scenario, researchers may first wish to disentangle the everyday power dynamics of those living there, in order to find and choose those who to partner with, and how to incorporate their voices.

Guideline 3 When writing: *Learning by doing responsible and accountable research*

Although organisational and procedural processes are important to take into account, first while setting up a research project, and then while planning to write, when you do start to write, with all that this entails, aiming for a comfortable interaction between members of the co-writing team can be a good way of trying to avoid the emergence of highly **unethical** transgressions. But as Ariana Markowitz discusses in *Practising Ethics Guides to Built Environment Research: # 5 Researching, Risk, and Wellbeing*,⁴¹ you and/or your co-writers may also be conducting research with high levels of risk, that can impact on your wellbeing, and produce, for example, feelings of **anxiety**, anger, discomfort, or frustration. At the same time, the pressure of deadlines, as well as intersubjective **relations** and contextual **situations**, can require, as James D. Todd describes, time to reflect.⁴² It is important to recognize the impact of external **situations** and group dynamics on your ability to write.

8. *How will we support and care for other co-writers during the co-writing process, and how will they support us and each other? And how will we address the institutional context of the neoliberal university and its potential to undermine caring work within the writing process?*

Barbara Groot and her co-writers remind us of how embedding an **ethics of care** as a research ethos for your project can be a meaningful way of sharing **responsibility** for an **ethical** practice, especially highlighting “the importance of self-**care** and existential safety” – in particular, when we are working in participatory paradigms. An **ethics of care**, Barbara Groot and her co-writers affirm, “can help to sensitise researchers for the complex **moral responsibilities** of their work in a highly hierarchic context, and strengthen their **reflexivity**” as well as the **situational**, **relational**, and emotional character of such praxis.⁴³ They provide a useful set of questions that you can use to stimulate **reflexivity** in your co-writing and/or research team.⁴⁴

Researchers Karen Collet, Carolien van den Berg, and Belinda Verster, inform us of the **benefits** of adopting an **ethics of care** in co-writing outputs, noting that this is not only a way of building sustained partnerships of **care**

and enhancing creative meaning-making,⁴⁵ but also of finding joy and pleasure while co-writing alongside your co-researchers. They also find factors that thwart their partnership of **care**. Collet, van den Berg, and Verster regret how, “we lost the connection and caring because we started to be driven by the output and not the process.” The process – writing, the pressure of writing, and writing as a “creative act” – or as Collet and her co-researchers put it “the complexity of the fluid emergent multidimensional process of meaning-making through multi-modalities and spaces” may be constantly threatened. This kind of disarticulation is something you may encounter in your transit through the academy. It can afflict you, and others’, **caring** work. The embracing of neoliberal practice in universities that exacerbates productivity and pushes for mass publication – according to research assessment criteria – can annihilate **caring** practices such as those recommended by Collet and colleagues.⁴⁶ As such, it is really worth focusing on how to nurture an **ethics of care** during the co-writing of your output, how to **care** about and for, give care, and receive each other’s care.

9. *Who will lead the process intellectually, and who will manage the project? Will these roles be played by the same or different writers? How to decide?*

Leadership is crucial in research and when it comes to the writing of a research output as it may require specific kinds of skills in organisation as well as involve cognitive and creative ability, and expertise. The team of Collet, van den Berg, and Verster decided to use a rotational process of leadership – as they put it metaphorically– “like birds flying in formation,” working “together to take the lead ..Working in this collaborative way and sharing leadership built our confidence and cohesion as a group.” They continue, this time, citing Black et al., “this way ‘allows room for other and otherness. Flying in this kind of formation is an **ethical** choice. It isn’t a common choice.” Later, reflecting on power dynamics they vividly affirm:

Power is a maker or a breaker in a collaborative group. It may be different in different stages but it is always there. Rotating the lead, for example, helps to break the power dynamics. The trust shifts at different times, but being in and working with an EoC [Ethics of Care] framework helps to make you mindful when you are not paying attention.⁴⁷

We consider Collet, van den Berg, and Verster’s style as a form of best practice, a kind of utopian leadership, a destination where co-writing teams may aim to end up.

Whether the leadership is rotational or not, the lead author should be deeply engaged in the co-writing process, along with the other co-writers, and could be a source of inspiration to the other co-writers, especially if the lead author is an early career researcher and other early career researcher are also involved as co-writers. As educators Elizabeth Marquis, Katarina Mårtensson, and Mick Healey state, strengthening the claims of Collet et al for team cohesion, the right kind of leadership can “foster community and encourage members to take **responsibility** for tasks” in collaborative writing groups.⁴⁸ Lead authors may be exemplary, working side by side with their co-writers rather than managing a team from a hierarchical position. This kind of behaviour – the managing of a team from a hierarchical position – can actually discourage partners and be a rather unhealthy way of working for the whole writing team.

An apprenticeship – to learn by doing – can offer a great opportunity for co-writing. As researchers Charlotte Wegener and Lene Tanggaard enthusiastically affirm, “apprenticeship as a pedagogical methodology as well as a theoretical framework makes co-writing more than an output-driven technique for increasing productivity.”⁴⁹ Throughout a ten-month email exchange, Wegener and Tanggaard’s dialogue explains how their comments, suggestions, and responses advanced. Since power dynamics are not exempt here either, it is important to consider how this supervisor invites “the student explicitly to revise the supervisor’s writing” – as an act of **trust** and confidence. Navigating this apprenticeship involves the student in the whole process – from outlining the paper to assessing the reviewers’ comments – and the supervisor invites the student for quick exchanges, redirecting and/or advising when it is necessary to maintain the pace of the work.

The **benefits** of this learning process include the student getting acquainted with academia’s technicalities by working with the supervisor and so avoiding the student experiencing performance **anxiety**. As both writers have a mutual interest in getting published, this can lead to mutual **benefits**, important for both building and maintaining their track records. Doing so in a process-driven manner – co-writing as an apprenticeship – rather than via an output-driven technique or hierarchical process is what makes this interaction flourish.

10. *If the co-writers are in different geographical locations, how will we deal with the time zones and technological issues that may arise?*

So when you are embedded in the writing process, do be aware of co-writers' conditions and contexts, consider where your co-writers are writing from. This may strengthen ties with your co-writers and help you build lasting **relationships** – that may endure for a lifetime. You and/or any co-writers you are working with may be located in insecure and unstable contexts or in negative institutional environments and so any support co-writers can provide can be an encouraging factor both in and beyond the co-writing process. This **caring** about co-writers' **wellbeing** is something to take into account and not to take for granted – if you intend to nurture an **ethics of care** in your team this may be only the first step.

In addition to those broader contexts are the various **situations** within them. Your co-writer may be located in a low or middle-income country where unstable conditions can impact on whether your co-writers have the technological means to engage in co-writing an output, whether they can access the internet reliably and at affordable prices, and indeed whether an on-line meeting tool is even accessible in their countries. Emotional, material, or other kinds of support and care that you can provide could be of enormous help to your co-writers. As such, before engaging in co-writing an output, it is best to find out whether any of your co-writers are involved in contexts and situations that pose challenges to writing together, and to be mindful of these when deciding on co-writing processes and protocols.

11. *How will we plan for and commit to the task of writing the research output in terms of timescales and deadlines?*

Deadlines, as noted above, can be a major source of anxiety for writers and more broadly entail **ethical** considerations that you may wish to consider when setting out. Equally important, are the timescales of each co-writer's specific tasks and related deadlines – you may decide to set these out early, realistically and effectively to facilitate “on-schedule paper completion.”⁵⁰ But timescales depend on the type of co-writing you and your writers choose – sequential or write-in-section approaches can be deeply affected by delays. In order to take into consideration each co-writer's skills, experience and knowledge, it is also preferable for co-writers to volunteer for tasks rather than to be assigned them.

Ideally, from the outset, all those involved in co-writing need to be **transparent** concerning their levels of commitment to the co-writing process and to be involved in setting deadlines together. Scientists Kendra Cheruvelil and her co-writers refer to this as “researchers who are committed to a common purpose.”⁵¹ Acknowledging levels of commitment can also help co-writers bear both **responsibility** and credit for the work done. The level of commitment each team member can offer needs to be **respected**, and it is important for all writers to **respect** each other's time and other life commitments.⁵²

Importantly, if any adjustment to task allocation or deadline is considered necessary during the writing process, then a response to this needs to be decided by all co-writers together rather than imposed by any one of them. When co-writers are not able to fulfil their tasks or meet deadlines agreed, they should promptly inform the co-writer leading the team and the other co-writers in order to redistribute tasks so as to not jeopardise the work of the whole team. Providing this kind of information **transparently** and as soon as possible is vital in avoiding causing discomfort to other co-writers. The redistribution of tasks could become a burden for other co-writers and so should not be decided without their **consent**.

12. *What processes will we use for giving each other feedback, for addressing in a constructive and timely manner comments and suggestions made by all co-writers, and for negotiating the completion of unfulfilled tasks and deadlines?*

Feedback, comments and suggestions usually focus on the publication process itself, i.e. when peer-reviewers and editors assess the quality of your work for publication.⁵³ However, peer-reviewers and editors are not the only ones who can offer comments and suggestions; you and your co-writers can also do so too. Due to their critical nature, comments and suggestions need to be considered from an **ethical** perspective, that takes into account the power dynamics within the writing team, and the relative positions of early and established career researcher relationships, or supervisor and student relationships.

Ideally, all co-writers should treat each other as equals, and as such, when making comments and suggestions in response to another person's writing you should always be polite and **respectful**. When you suggest, accept or decline changes it is important to try to clearly explain your perspective and point of view. When reviewing and/or editing another person's work, your comments

need to be specific and preferably contain a proposal for an alternative rather than simply a deletion or noting that something “needs review.” In some disciplines, comments and suggestions should be based on evidence, while aspects of interpretation and clarity of argument can be important in other disciplines.

* * *

We’d like to end this guide by proposing some questions for you to critically **reflect** on before, during or after consulting some of the resources listed below, especially Wendy Laura Belcher’s book *Writing Your Journal Article in Twelve Weeks*.⁵⁴

What kind of journal article do you want to write and why?

How will you agree upon the argument and structure of the text?

What is the best place to publish the type of research you are conducting?

Who will carry out the administration for submitting the paper, compiling the abstract, the authors’ biographies, and authors’ agreement forms?

Who is responsible for deciding on images and captions, and for providing this information?

Who will fund any costs of reproduction and permissions?

Who should address comments and suggestions made by anonymous reviewers?

How will these comments and suggestions be addressed?

How will the final edits be made?

How will you decide on a contingency plan if our research output is rejected?

If conditions or interests in the project change or unworkable intellectual clashes occur, how will you ensure to factor in a friendly withdrawal mechanism?

Resources

As you may note, the works cited in our guide engage with the ongoing debates concerning interpersonal, intersubjective, and **reflective** practices occurring inside writing teams. As such, they are mainly drawn from alternative – or radical – publications, as well as established journals, such as *Gender, Place & Culture*, which has been particularly engaged in the co-writing debate. Traditional or high-ranking publications – Web of Science endorsed journals and the like – are less involved in this debate, and the articles on writing there tend to focus on issues pertaining to plagiarism or perhaps authorship. We wish to draw your attention to this specific selection:

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