WITHOUT A NET: PURSUING TENURE IN THE OPEN

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I am an uninvited visitor on Tk'emlups te Secwepemc territory within the unceded traditional lands of Secwepemcúl'ecw (Secwepemc Nation), where learning has taken place since time immemorial.

TERMS OF ENGAGEMENT

- This presentation is interested in tenure as it is practiced in the post-secondary education systems in North America, where tenure is seen as the institutional reward for a body of work – scholarship, teaching, and service, in different measures depending on the institution – guaranteeing job security and socioeconomic stability for the remaining years of one's career.

A FRACTURED WRITING PROCESS

The Ideal

The Real, in this Case

Proposal → Presentation → Article

Proposal → Article (abandoned) → Presentation
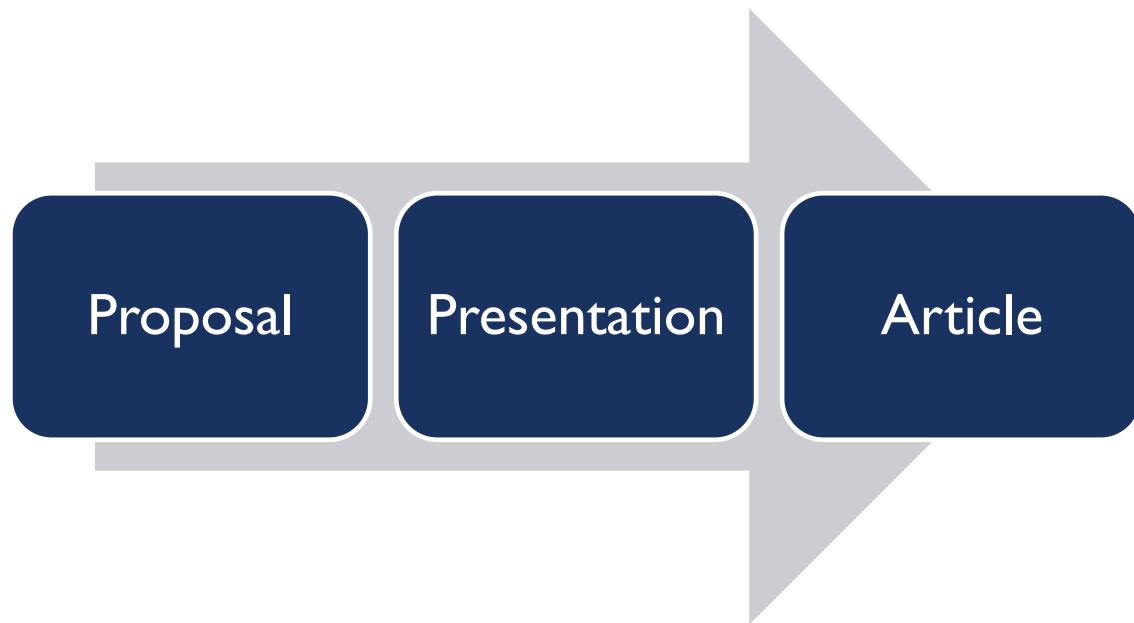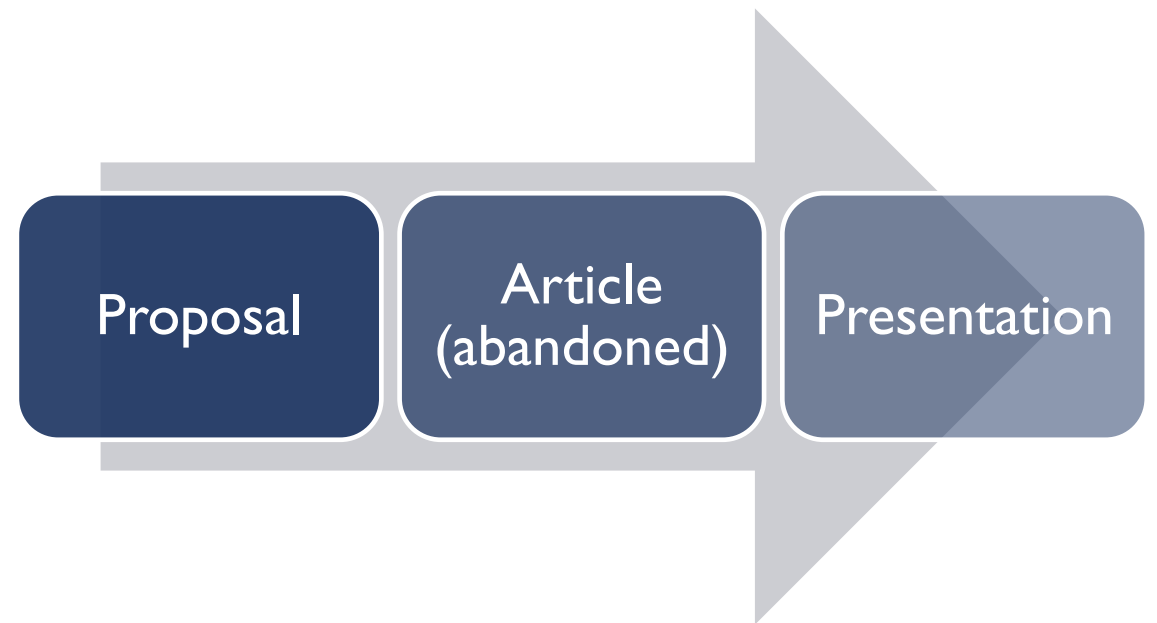
WHAT PROBLEM AM I TRYING TO SOLVE?

- Graduate students and early-career academics frequently report feeling bewildered by the process and unable to clearly ascertain expectations (Ponjuan et al, 2011; Lawrence et al, 2014).

- Faculty do not have a great deal of trust in the tenure process, including perceptions that tenure dossiers are not prepared accurately or adjudicated fairly (Wells et al, 2019).

- Members of marginalized communities within the academy, scholars researching topics that could embarrass their institutions, folks on the cutting-edge of cultural production: they all might quite rightly wonder if their work can be assessed by the people in the position of doing the assessing.

Tenure is supposed to make space for more radical thinking, but we don't have a lot of evidence to support this theory.

Given that the process itself makes so little room for difference, and that it is a process of entrenchment in a series of systems, we might just as likely theorize the opposite.

WHY OPEN TENURE AS <u>A</u> SOLUTION?

- To what extent is *confidentiality*, as we understand it, critical to *fairness*? In other words, who is protected by the requirements of confidentiality: the candidate or the institution?

- Can we reimagine confidentiality and consent as choices made by an empowered candidate?

- "Confidentiality protects secrecy" (Baez, 2002).

"MILITANT FAILURE": THE ACADEMY'S INABILITY TO RECKON WITH FAILURE

In "Can the Failure Speak: Militant Failure in the Academy" (2019), Nick Clare argues that stories of failure *could* demystify and clarify processes in academia, but tend not to because we only discuss failure in terms of "fetishizing" those who "fail up."

Failure is not, then, about learning or change, but about resilience narratives.

We present ourselves as finished products.

LOOK TO THE EMERGENCE OF OPEN PEER REVIEW

Goals: render transparent opaque processes; end the reinscribing of biases; raise accountability on reviewers (Ford, 2013; Ross-Hellauer, 2017).

Findings from early reviews of open peer review processes show generally widespread trust in and acceptance of moves to greater openness in peer review, with discomfort primarily surrounding the concept of open identity (Ross-Hellauer, Deppe, & Schmidt, 2017).

- Applying for tenure is scary; failure sucks.

- High stress, but not evenly distributed. Female and non-binary faculty feel a greater stress burden even as they move through the ranks of tenure than men (Tunguz, 2014), and racialized faculty experience this even moreso (Jones, Taylor & Coward, 2013).

- Who *can* open out this process, and who *would want to*.

AFFECT:
OF TENURE,
OF FAILURE

WHAT DON'T I KNOW?

Part of why I wanted to talk about this with folks at OTESSA is that I don't know what history I'm missing.

The literature review is sparse, and I suspect much of the early work imagining open tenure took ephemeral forms (abandoned websites, for example).

Iterative examples I have tracked to date fall into two categories: blogging the process (at any scale) or posting portfolios online after the decision is rendered.

BUT WAIT, THERE'S MORE!

+ tracking entrees of openness into tenure processes (eg. affordance > preference > requirement for OA research, practices, developing OER, etc.)

+ capturing movements towards openness in other previously confidential spaces, eg. scholarly peer review

DEFINING AN OPEN TENURE PROCESS

For the purposes of this project, I define open pursuit of tenure as opening up all aspects of the process <u>over which the candidate has control</u>.

Sharing documentation (performance reviews, activity reports), blogging or otherwise recording the process, sharing the tenure portfolio as a work-in-progress.	Production of an openly-available WP template for this purpose.	Invites buy-in from evaluators and colleagues.

Differs from extant examples: not pseudonymous, and live.

- I offer myself as the subject of my own investigation: "indulgent."

- Where autoethnography is anti-canonical and used to "make characteristics of a culture familiar for insiders and outsiders," it indeed is the appropriate methodology for a critical inquiry of the process of tenure (Ellis, Adams & Bochner, 2011).

- Diverging from autoethnography due to lack of retrospective analysis.

- What else to do than present my own experience, informed by both the literature and the specificities of my situation, as a site for study?

AUTOETHNOGRAPHY AS METHODOLOGY

POSITIONALITY

01
Tenure-track faculty support is weird, and its weirdness affords some freedoms.

02
I don't teach students, so one often closed process – the student evaluation, closed to protect from harm – is not a piece of my TT puzzle.

03
TRU is an open-access university with an open mandate, and I work in Open Learning supporting open tools and leading efforts to expand open pedagogy: if anywhere, here.

04
I am insulated by whiteness and abledness; I embody many privileges that enable smoother movement through these spaces. I may be uncomfortable; I will not be unsafe.

QUESTIONS? FEEDBACK? STORIES?

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