Doing scientific work and being a scientist is a social activity involving many people in many different ways. Scientific publishing, too, takes place in a social context filled with people—from graduate students learning to become scientists, to emeritus professors who edit international scholars’ papers for publication as a service to the field. Thus, understanding the social roles of people in networks that promote scientific writing competence or that create barriers for participation can be vitally important.

Part III examines the research about people and the roles they play in relation to scientific writing and publishing. The research comes from fields such as sociology, education, applied linguistics, and others. Much of this research is centered on the idea of participating in a “community of practice”; this is a term used in applied linguistics. A community of practice describes a group of people who come together to perform mutually important and understood activities. It captures the idea that people participate in a given community, and it indicates an approach in which people “learn” to become something (a butcher, a particle physicist, a gang member, and so on) by learning from others in the “community” who “practice” this same kind of identity.

In this part, we will explore the different roles that people have within the science community and discuss how participation in these networks can promote successful experiences in writing for scientific publication.