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A Workshop for Graduate Students

**TRADE SECRETS AND EVERYDAY
KNOWLEDGE OF PUBLISHING**

When first considering this workshop on trade secrets of publishing, I approached the task with idea that my experiences were an ‘N’ of one. I wondered whether the experiences I had over the years were field, discipline, gender, and topic, and journal-specific. My assumption was, however, that I would benefit you more if I approached the task by thinking and acting like a qualitative researcher. I approached this endeavor with

my usual ‘nerd-like’ curiosity. So, with that in mind, I constructed an open-ended interview and proceeded to select journal editors (four in particular) from different types of journals whom might give different or specific insights that were tailored to their journal or field, disciplinary expertise, and audience range.

Like all (qualitative) researchers, I worked with time constraints that were passed on to those who responded. All four journal editors thankfully said “yes” to my time-consuming queries, presumably, a sign of their commitment to mentor graduate students and be thoughtful in their roles as journal editors. I am thus thankful for the respondents’ time, insights and good humor. I chose journals and editors I knew who worked on editing journals in education and/or adult education. Three were international journals with international audiences and contributors. One was an American journal which makes no claims be international but which certainly has an

international following. The journal genres and editors will be denoted by the following symbols:

- **Anon-A mainline international philosophy of education journal with a theoretical emphasis edited by someone wishes to remain anonymous.**
- ❖ **M.L. A mainline American journal, *The Review of Educational Research* published by AERA and edited by Margaret LeCompte, who was willing to be named here.**
- ▶ **T. S. An international adult education journal, *Journal for the Study of Adult Education* and *Adult Education Quarterly*, with Tom Sork having editorial experience and editing both at different times, also willing to be named here.**

- ✓ **L. R. Leslie Roman's sidebars and reflections as someone who guest edited in two different international and interdisciplinary journals in education and cultural studies (*The International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, Anglistica* in Italy, which is a cultural studies journal, as well as published in *Educational Theory, Discourse, etc.* and with large publishing houses such as Routledge, Taylor and Francis, Sage, and University presses, such as Univ. of Orientale, in Italy, etc.).**
- **Jim Scheurich, Prof. and Editor of *The International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, a tier one leading edge qualitative research journal.**

Following are the open-ended questions I asked each of the editors:

What are some tips you would give promising or emerging scholars in your field for honing a good original idea for publication in the following different venues:

A Theoretical or conceptual article?

Answered in specific theoretical terms suitable to the journal the editor edits in response to the query to do so---

- **Know the literature – don't just reinvent the wheel**
- **Set modest goals, especially as a younger scholar. Big Theory is hard**
- **Don't waste a lot of your time attacking others**
- ❖ **My comments pertain to ALL journals, regardless of their emphasis.**

- ❖ **Send the idea you have to the editor of the journal you are interested in and ask the editor if they'd be interested in an article on the topic.**
- ❖ **Make SURE that the article you are sending in is within the scope of what the journal publishes. Don't, for example, send an empirical study to the Review of Educational Research, which only publishes critical literature reviews!**
- ❖ **Make sure that you follow the style guide and page length dictates asked for by the journal. Don't send in an article in MLA style to a journal that wants APA style, or a 60 page manuscript to a journal whose page length is 30.**
- ❖ **Read some issues of the journals you think are appropriate to see what they**

look for and the kind of material they publish. Have some friends read the draft you produce and critique it.

- ❖ Give the revised draft to a professor you know in the particular field and ask them to critique it.**
- ❖ If you are brave, send it to a known expert in the field and ask them for advice in how to strengthen the paper.**
- ❖ Look at the programs for conferences in your area of interest for lists of papers that have been done on the topic previously. That will give you an idea of the range of treatments your bright idea already has had. Ask for the papers and read them. If yours is better, feel confident and send it in!!**
- ▶ General advice: My journal publishes all of the above genres**

- ▶ **Look at the guidelines published in the front of most journals**
- ▶ **Some professors take promising student papers and suggest how to revise for publication; seek out your professors to get such advice**
- ✓ **Take your professors' invitations to get feedback for publication seriously and follow up...Give them some time to give you thoughtful comments.**

A Theoretical or conceptual article?

- **To me, this is probably the hardest to do well. I would suggest situating your original idea amidst the theoretical arena you are interested in. Let's say you want to do poststructuralist feminist theory. You better know well the theory of the poststructuralist feminist of wide**

note. You should know the discourses [of each tradition] well, their concepts, their way of writing, etc. You should also know the critique of these feminists.

- What I have mostly seen with those trying to do a theoretical piece is that the author does not know their theoretical area that well. These authors will often make a point that would not be sufficiently insightful to those already working in a particular theoretical area. You need to understand that is highly likely some of the major authors in a particular theoretical arena will be some of the reviewers of your manuscript.**
- For example, if I got a manuscript the focus of which was materialist feminism, and this ms. was trying to advance theory in that area, I would**

likely send it to Leslie Roman (among others), and she would have to be impressed to recommend we publish it. One way to see if you are doing good theory in an area is to find a reader in that area who could look it over before you send it in.

- **Also, check out a journal fairly thoroughly before you send it to that journal. Scholars constantly send us ms.'s that to me look like they did not check what we publish. In addition, if we have published ms.'s in your area, look those over for quality and presentation style.**

Empirical article? (qualitative or quantitative or a mix?)

- **Most empirical qualitative articles follow a fairly conventional or standard format: introduction, lit**

review, methodology, results, discussion, and implications. There is nothing wrong with this format. It is reasonably easy to follow. However, there are other ways to present, some more reflective, some more ethnographic, among others. It is easy to find examples of these in *QSE*.

- **The problems we generally see in this area are that the author does not do what they say they are going to do at the first. That is, the title, the intro, the lit review, the results, etc. should all follow closely and clearly a line of logic. You should set up a railroad track and then follow it. Many young or new authors lose focus or change focus as they go through the article, or they just don't do what they say they are going to do. The methodology should be clear, concise, and thorough; see examples of**

methodology and empirical articles in general in the journal you are interested in.

- **Another problem we see with new authors is that they drop the ball at the end. Often endings are meaningless or light weight. The ending is your last shot at your reader. Make that shot powerful, provocative, etc.**
- **Another issue is that your results should be the largest part of the article. Some new authors spend most of their space on other areas, whereas your results are the point of the piece.**

C). Critical review of literature or research?;

- **Don't do a critical review of lit or research unless you know the area**

well. Just because you read something you don't like is not a sufficient reason to do a critical review.

- I personally find most critical reviews boring. Just reviewing the literature is helpful, but given your review, what should we consider that we had not before? How can you use your review to think an area differently or provocatively?**

D). A mix of these genres?

- I think I will pass on this one.**

2. How do emerging scholars select the journal(s) to publish a specific work in your field?

- **Factors to consider, each equally important:**
 - **Status/prestige**
 - **Turn-around time**
 - **Acceptance rate**
 - **Reputation of editor**

- ✓ **Note the style and substance of your work and find a matching journal for submission. I recommend that you find a professor or mentor (don't be bashful) to recommend what revisions are necessary to shape the piece for publication, and further to help you find the journal or journals whose substance and style might match the piece on which you are working for submission.**

- **It seems like many emerging scholars pick a journal without really checking it out, based on the manuscripts we**

typically get at *QSE*. Therefore, thoroughly check out a journal's articles before you send to them. Make sure they publish the kind of work you are interested in or email the editors. The second thing an aspiring author should do is study the articles in a particular journal that are closest to what you are sending in. We get many ms.'s in which the author does not do a good methodology section though they could have found this out on their own by looking at example articles in the journal of choice.

3). Forgive the market metaphors here but how would you suggest an emerging scholar best research their 'knowledge niche' in order to determine ways of framing the issue or problem at stake that is well-matched to the journal or range of journals that may be interested in publishing her/his work?

- **Know the journals – read them. The #1 reason for being rejected is “inappropriate”**
- **Ask experienced scholars**
- **Relate what you are doing to existing literature**
- ▶ **Again, READ THE JOURNALS. Talk to the editors of the journals and ask them what they think would be a good tack to take.**
- ▶ **Look for the range of issues or disciplinary issues represented in the paper and find the journal or journals that publish this kind of work;**
- ▶ **Work needs to link to other scholarship in the field. Nothing is free-standing or done in a vacuum;**

- ▶ **Link your work to research (whether empirical or theoretical) done in the field (if adult education, then link to adult education, etc.).**
- ▶ **Make sure your work fits the broader trends in the field or responds to them, and that it translates to the identifiable work the specific journal publishes that is your target for publication;**
- ▶ **Don't stop at the first rejection;**
- ▶ **Seek the most prestigious journal first.**
- ✓ **Women, don't internalize criticism. Men are sometimes more likely to externalize criticism...Of course, there are gendered exceptions to this small observation. Simply learn and grow from feedback and critique; don't make the mistake I did when asked once to revise and resubmit from *Signs***

an undergraduate poli. Sci. paper, I took the excellent feedback I got as a sign to give up the ghost. Looking back, I should have revised and resubmitted. I might have that publication today, had I not been so hard on myself!

4) When honing a dissertation chapter for publication in a refereed journal what tips would give the scholar to make take the thesis chapter out of ‘thesis’-sounding mode? Please be specific.

- **Be careful to edit out language like “this chapter...”**
- **You need less lit review in an article than in a dissertation**
- **A dissertation is an evaluation device, and you do certain things in it for the sake of evaluation. A scholarly article**

is about creating new knowledge, not proving your acumen

- ▶ **The most important thing would be to cut the material down to article size. Brevity and succinctness count. Most dissertations are very wordy. They also have too much text addressing methods. While these are vital to a dissertation, they should be abbreviated for an article. They also have too much high-falutin' theory talk and not enough data, analysis, argument, interpretation. Empirical works should focus on results and interpretation. Most students will be doing empirical dissertations, anyway.**
- ▶ **Depends on what the chapter ([or article] Addition mine) means to accomplish**

- ▶ **Author's voice shifts when the audience does; students often forget that writing for edited collections or refereed journals is NOT the same as writing for your doctoral committee or an institution**

- ▶ **Remove the vestiges of your student voice addressing your committee or the particular quirky dynamics of your university or committee politics**

5). What special problems or issues may an interdisciplinary (eg. cultural studies, feminist studies, etc.) scholar face when receiving reviews from journals?).

- **Different reviewers will tend to review the work from the standpoint of their own disciplinary orientation – interdisciplinary work may fall between two stools.**

- **You may get very eclectic and conflicting input from the reviewers**
- **Some interdisciplinary work tries to do too much, and hence fails at its goals.**
- ❖ **Editors and reviewers won't know what pigeon-hole to place the work in. The article should, therefore, frame the place where it belongs early on in the paper. Authors could suggest specific reviewers (though I tend to ignore them as I believe they often are FOAs (friends of the author)); an alternative would be to suggest reviewers from specific fields. This is helpful to editors, who sometimes have to guess where to best send an article for review. If an author gets back a review that clearly indicates that the reviewer didn't understand the perspective of the article, or was looking for a disciplinary perspective**

the author didn't intend to take, the author should contact the editor and very politely suggest that another reviewer be selected, because the current one misunderstood the work.

- ▶ **Make sure you are grounded in the literature of the interdisciplinary area of your paper's topic.**
- ▶ **Show depth of knowledge. Depth is better than wide scope that is superficial.**
- ✓ **Avoid jargon but defend useful theoretical language with examples to illustrate your points (e.g. White is a Color does that and so does my 'Slam Dance' chapter).**
- **I don't think I have anything to say here, but I can talk about dealing with reviews.**

- **Reviews other than those in which you are told that everything is perfect (a rare occurrence; I have had it only once), you will probably be irritated with the critique, even if it is minor. Don't they know that all of my words are perfect? I generally read my own reviews once and then put them away for a few days while I get over my irritation. After I get over my irritation, I go back and read them to see what they want me to do.**
- **If they want me to do something that I think is wrong, I try to figure out a way to finesse it. By finesse, I mean give them a little of what they want with the hope that they will take that as all they want. Another finesse is to reframe it for them so they will think I am addressing their critique. A third way is just to present a rationale for why I disagree. However, if you disagree with too much, they will**

probably drop you. Pick your battles within the review. Give them as much as you can.

- **Of course, most critiques are useful so use them to improve your piece. The most common results of a submission, besides rejection, is a revise and resubmit. Don't be freaked out by a revise and resubmit. Don't run to a new journal if they are encouraging revisions.**

6). How may conferences become a source of publishing connections to emerging scholars? How do you yourself approach the work of scholarship and publishing at conferences?

- **Conferences are primarily for presenting and getting feedback on work being prepared independently for publication**

- **The “talk” version of a project is not just reading the text**
- ✓ **Clear disagreement comes next:**
- ❖ **Conferences are vital for making contact with book publishers and editors, as well as people who are putting together theme issues of journals. They are good places for young scholars to meet a group of like-minded folk with whom they might work to produce a book or a theme issue. A group of conference papers is a nucleus for a book or theme issue. Peddling ideas to publishers and editors is better done face-to-face, anyway. You can also peddle them to senior colleagues and get feedback instantly. It’s less time-consuming than reading a paper, and you get to meet someone important. Make appointments to have these**

conversations if you can. You can also attend publishing workshops—most conferences arrange them—as well as sessions where you can “meet the editors.” Most conferences have these as well. In addition, hanging out at the book display is a good place to meet people, see what’s being published and what isn’t, and by whom. You don’t have to buy the books to peruse them.

- ▶ **I have two different but related responses: First, journal editors often encourage students to take their work and submit it to the journal for publication; Second, write an attractive summary of your conference paper and approach a journal editor with the summary to see whether the paper will attract interest for possible submission; follow-up, if you get a positive response from the editor with specific queries about how to re-work**

your conference paper for publication.

- **First, I typically present a piece I am working on at one or two conferences to help me work out the bugs and get some response and review and critique.**
- **Second, conferences are great places to develop networks that can yield publications.**

7). Conference papers are frequently reshaped or revised to become journal publications or part of conference proceedings. What advice can you give emerging scholars in the effort to reshape their conference papers for publication? Would your advice vary depending on whether the paper is: a) theoretical/conceptual; b) empirical; c) critical or scholarly review of

research/literature, or a d) mix of these genres? If so, how so?

- **Keep the talk version/published versions distinct. What works in one venue doesn't work in the other**
- **My advice wouldn't vary in accordance with the type of paper. Follow all the suggestions that the critics give, send your paper to people who ask for it (if you trust them not to steal your ideas), and follow their suggestions as well. Make sure that you keep track of the changes you've made in your paper yourself in the process of giving it.**
- ❖ **I would not give fundamentally different advice for different journals.**
- ❖ **Go back to the guidelines for the journal. Otherwise, you may be sorry**

and out of step with the journal's guidelines;

- Respecting the guidelines of the journal is a trade secret and successful way of attracting positive attention from editors and reviewers.**
- See above.**

8). As a longstanding journal editor and author who has worked with both academic and trade publishing houses, what advice would you give to the recent dissertator when considering whether to publish her/his dissertation with an academic press or a large trade publishing house?

- An academic press is generally seen as higher prestige; a commercial publisher may do more to promote and “sell” the project.**

- ❖ **Will they market it well? Or will the editor just sign you up and move on to the next conquest and forget you?**
- ❖ **How long do editors hang around a company? Is the editor who signs you up likely to still be there to work with you in 6 months?**
- ❖ **Will the book stay in print, and for how long?**
- ❖ **How many copies will they produce for the first printing??**
- ❖ **What does the publishing house usually publish? If they are accustomed to publishing the kind of work you are doing, that's better.**
- ❖ **University presses tend to produce very expensive books and not to print very many of them, but they don't go**

out of print. They also don't have too much money to market their books. There are exceptions, but...a word to the wise is sufficient. Commercial presses tend to want to sign up a lot of books, but give little attention to authors once that's done. They market better, if the editor hangs around, but things are getting bad in the publishing business and they don't tend to.

- ❖ You should ask if you can have the book back if the company decides not to publish it after all. Sometimes, the company owns the manuscript, and the author is just out of luck if they decide not to put it out.**
- I have had limited experience with trade publishing. Only one student of mine published with a trade publisher. Much of the work of copy editing and**

marketing is in the trade publisher's domain.

9). Please describe in your experience the advantages of working with a university press?

- **I haven't (yet) but I am just starting up a book series with one**
- ▶ **I haven't worked with a university press**
- ✓ **Prestige, depending on the Univ. and no claim to be "a well of Volvo left academic" from the royalties.**

10). Please describe the disadvantages of working with a university press?

- **They may rely more on "traditional" reviewers, and hence be less hospitable**

to fringe or ‘cutting edge’ ideas and projects

- ❖ **I haven’t worked with a university press**
- ▶ **No experience, except what I hear from others who have...**
- ✓ **University presses are short-staffed and often meticulous. They also are labor intensive for authors! Publish for smaller markets but seen to be more ‘academic’ by some, though, the advantages and distinctions are often blurred between types of publishing houses.**
- ✓ **Univ. Presses are fussier about editing.**
- **University presses are short-staffed and often meticulous. They also are labor intensive for authors! Publish for**

smaller markets but seen to be more ‘academic’ by some, though, the advantages and distinctions are often blurred between types of publishing houses.

- *Univ. Presses are fussier about editing.*
- *Slower, publicize less.*
- **Already answered**

11). Please describe the advantages of working with a trade or large commercial press (e.g. Taylor & Francis; Sage, etc.)?

- ❖ **Better promotion and advertising (sometimes); faster turnaround time for projects; will often do more speculative work in process, than competed texts**
- ❖ **Already answered, see above.**

- ▶ **I have worked with Jossey Bass and Krieger in the U.S. Bass is a publishing machine. The disadvantage is their market. It's a professional market. They use such a market to discourage theoretical work and limit graphics work. Sometimes, you must test their limits or boundaries for what they will accept. Again, know your publishing market. Copy editors working for such machines will not necessarily respect your views or innovations of terminology that may challenge the current frames of reference. Be prepared to defend your edits of the copy editor.**

12). Please describe the disadvantages of working with a large trade or commercial press?

- ❖ **They often put books “out of print” sooner**

- ❖ **Ditto**
 - ▶ **Their primary audience is professional, so they know how to work with and for that audience. Josey Bass will often have an excellent contract editor but that contract editor will free to change your innovations of terms, for example, someone discovered his phrase, ‘power and interest’ was seen to be lack of good English grammar when in fact it was an invention or coining of a new term! You can run into barriers from this business or professional orientation to the field.**

- **My experience is that trade houses work harder to get your work out for people to see; at least, that is my**

experience, and, again, in my experience, the trade houses are just as willing to publish radical work as are the academic presses.

- **None. Making money for capitalists.**

13.) What must emerging scholars know about editorial boards and review processes to understand and best select the journal suitable to their work?

- **The stature of the reviewers gives the journal credibility, but can also make it tougher to get things accepted**
- **Review process: turnaround time, acceptance rate**
- ❖ **How long and what is the review process? Is it blind review? Peer reviewed? Reviewed by the editorial board only? How well trained are the**

reviewers and what kinds of criteria are they supplied by the editors?

- ❖ **What kinds of people review for the journal?**
 - ▶ **Google (yes, this term is being used as a verb here!) the Editorial Board and list of Reviewers to check out who they are and what they have published. This may give you insight into the major axes of research respected by the journal;**
 - ▶ **Editors often call upon members of the Editorial Board when there are conflicting reviews to resolve the conflict or give the paper another or different look or reading;**
 - ▶ **Don't lose sleep over trying to psych-out an editorial board. Don't second guess the process too much.**

- ✓ **Ask others to read your drafts and be conscious of being fair to those you critique...Critique as you would wish to be critiqued.**
- ✓ **Avoid the offence of neglecting to cite the major figures in a debate who are also major figures in the editorial board; on the other hand, don't cite gratuitously simply for the sake of citing and currying favor.**

14.) As a long-term journal editor, what are some sage pieces of advice of you would give to scholars who receive mixed or opposing reviews from reviewers when they get “revise and resubmit” status on their manuscript? How must they communicate with the editor and/or reviewers (and in the manuscript) in the next round?

- **You can't satisfy everyone**
- **Accept criticism graciously**
- **Listen to the Editor: he/she will sometimes tell you which side of conflicting advice is more valuable**
- **Prioritize the changes you can and are able to make: which ones are essential, which more discretionary, even cosmetic?**
- **Don't quibble.**
- ❖ **Write a careful letter to the editor indicating what you can and can't do to revise and resubmit. Be fair; if the reviewer didn't understand the work, it probably isn't very clear!! Write this letter before you do the revision. If you don't understand what the reviewer said, contact the editor for help in decoding the communication.**

Please always communicate with editors politely and succinctly. We are crabby and overworked. A short email, full of misspellings, lacking punctuation or capitalization and headed as follows: “Margaret! Fred here and I wanted to tell you y our reviewer is incompetent....etc” is not going to be well-received. Neither is a letter that tells me just how wonderful the work is, how important it is, and how the reviewers should have realized this from the get go. Believe me, I’ve gotten all sorts just like this. E-mail is fine and fast, but it’s still a formal communication and should be written as such.

- ▶ I think it is crucial that authors be attentive to all the main points the reviewers have identified in the manuscript which are problematic**

- ▶ **In the letter of re-submittal, show how you have addressed their points or choices. And, if you can't accept their criticisms or revisions, explain **NON-DEFENSIVELY** your position. Challenge the editor and the reviewers to live up to your rationale for latitude. Use humor and humility to communicate. Both go a long way.**
- ✓ **Stay above the fray and take the tone of position of a 'curious' receiver of feedback that does not fit the gist of your thesis or logic of your methods or evidence, etc.**
- ✓ **Treat the editor with respect, even if it means walking around the block a few times before you draft that letter of re-submittal.**
- ✓ **Keep track of ALL your correspondence with the editor and**

note all time-frames and chronology of your communications, if need be. Guilt (reminders of the chronology and written agreements to publish, etc.) can work wonders when a journal has taken too long to get timely results back to you or has changed courses in their responses to you.

15.) Are there any areas of trade secrets or everyday knowledge you would like to add to our conversation for the benefit of future emerging scholars that have not been covered here?

- This is a good start**
- ❖ I like the title of your workshop**
- ❖ Gack!!! No!!!! Too Many Questions!!**
- ❖ I'd only say that the best manuscript is the sent-in manuscript. It isn't going to**

get published if it's never sent to an editor!!! And it doesn't have to be perfect...it WILL have to be revised, 99 times out of 100. You can integrate new ideas and suggestions into the revision. What DOES have to be perfect is the grammar, spelling, style, format, headings and such. Neatness does count. We have sent manuscripts back to the authors that are so badly written that we'd insult reviewers if we sent them out.

- ▶ **Many ground-breaking works began as student papers that go on to launch careers; given that, make sure your papers have some 'grounds or legs on which to stand';**
- ▶ **Make your innovative contributions early and build on them.**

- ▶ **Carve out your niche as a researcher through becoming focused**
- ✓ **The publishing world is a small one than you think. Be conscious of the “golden rule” when speaking about others publicly. Or, you may find that the editor you called an “unreasonable jerk” is the one anonymously reviewing your next project.**

Please note: the four editors I interviewed did not answer every single question.

In conclusion, doubtless, there are many other questions and approaches to be taken, given the array of journals, editors and preferences in the scholarly world. These tips will go some distance though to unraveling some of the trade secrets and everyday knowledge of the publishing world in refereed journals in education.