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Addressing the ‘Hidden Curriculum’ in Political Science Publishing

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Demystifying Publishing: A Short Guide for Early Career Researchers

Critical Perspectives Introduction

Addressing the 'Hidden Curriculum' in Political Science Publishing

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Across the academy, there is growing concern over diversity within academic institutions. According to recent research across three top political science journals, members of historically marginalized groups remain underrepresented and marginalized in submissions, publications, and even reviewer pools (Ayoub 2022; Bell et al. 2020; Reinhardt et al. 2022). Expectations that scholars, especially Early Career Researchers (ECRs) "publish or perish" thus exacerbate intersectional inequalities within the discipline (McKenzie 2017; Steinþórsdóttir et al 2018; Briscoe-Palmer and Mattocks 2021). Overwhelming pressure to publish at all costs, further, can commodify knowledge production and foster a toxic, competitive environment based on peer-rivalry rather than on collaboration for the sake of advancing knowledge (Horta and Li 2022, 9-10, 13-14).

To encourage submissions to *Politics & Gender*, as well as promote access for diverse authors to publish in the discipline more broadly, the journal hosted a virtual event for ECRs in October 2022 to demystify the publishing and reviewing process. The impetus for the event came from our attendance at the 2022 European Conference on*Politics & Gender*, and Hannah organized the virtual roundtable, recruiting past and current editors and editorial board members to provide their insights and advice. The event was ultimately attended by more than 100 scholars from around the world.

This Critical Perspectives brings together the contributions from this event, offering a comprehensive overview of the publishing process, covering types of publications, editors' perspectives, the review process from the perspectives of responding and writing reviews, and advice for publishing while doing a Ph.D. Building on their webinar presentations, the authors provide practical and accessible information for early career researchers on the current norms and processes of publishing, with the aim of making visible the "hidden curriculum" that may otherwise create inequalities in publishing and reviewing opportunities, especially for junior scholars.

The Contributions

The section begins with Jamil Scott's instructive overview of different types of publications, from research articles to book reviews, as well as strategies to approach these distinct article formats. On journal selection, she advises scholars to choose publications that align with their research focus. She emphasizes the importance of writing clear abstracts which include motivation, relation to the literature, research puzzle, results, and wider implications. One of her tips was to use others' work as examples for how to frame and organize your manuscript, but always to remember that these publications have been through multiple revisions and reviews before getting to the final product. Crucially, and perhaps radically, she urges researchers to practice self-care in what can be a grueling process.

Current *Politics & Gender* Editor Mona Lena Krook joins prior editors Christina Wolbrecht and Susan Franceschet to discuss what editors are looking for in this journal and beyond. Drawing on their years of experience of writing, reviewing, and editing, they emphasize the importance of a clear abstract that expresses and makes clear the research's wider theoretical contributions. In an important insight, they make clear that editors tend to select reviewers from

the article's reference list, and often purposely ensure a diversity in terms of methodological and topical expertise, which means it is important for researchers to speak to a broad audience in their writing.

Celeste Montoya goes into more detail into what reviewers are looking for and, importantly, what makes a good reviewer. She emphasizes the importance of thinking like a reviewer when developing a journal article, in terms of making clear the research's unique contribution, ensuring rigor and accuracy, and formulating clear style and structure. Further, she reveals the benefits of reviewing including the opportunity to shape the academic field and developing skills on providing feedback, which is another "hidden," or not explicitly taught, skillset on many doctoral programs.

Aksel Sundström continues the focus on the review process, sharing advice about how to respond to reviews. He urges the importance of developing an open mindset when going through comments from reviewers. While it can be challenging to read criticism, it is important to be open to improvement for academic exchange. When it comes to writing a response, it is important to be clear, detailed, and constructive. He offers a helpful reminder that the review process can be as time consuming as the initial writing process, and takes dedicated time and effort.

Finally, Daniel Höhmann shares advice on how to publish during the Ph.D., a perennial question for many doctoral students. He offers practical tips including co-authoring a first paper with a more senior scholar who can support early career researchers with their experience of publication and considering writing an article-based rather than monograph thesis if allowed by the doctoral program. Importantly, he emphasizes the importance of normalizing rejection and, like the other contributors, self-compassion in an intimidating process.

Our Key Takeaways

As ECRs ourselves, we see three resounding reflections across these essays. First, when it comes to approaching publishing, we ECRs should, quite simply, approach publishing. Second, we should approach the process with a mantra of "no fear." Finally, we should maintain self-compassion and the understanding that rejection is expected and frequent – in other words, the norm (Weeks 2006; Esarey 2017; Rider 2021).

Organizing this event and reading more about the topic, we also believe there are important takeaways for academic institutions and the academy more broadly on improving access to publication. Rather than assuming ECRs will figure out the publication process through informal networks, the academy should formally invest in such knowledge sharing. Others (e.g., Lee and Kamer 2008; Aitchison et al. 2010; Aitchison and Guerin 2014) recommend academic writing and publishing be part of doctoral pedagogy. For example, doctoral programs could make the hidden curriculum visible by making the publication process part of the curriculum.

We offer five ways that departments could integrate publishing into their curriculum:

1. Design a semester-long publishing class around Wendy Belcher's (2021) guide, *Writing Your Journal Article in 12 Weeks*. Dr. Cynthia Daniels of Rutgers University offered this course and students participated both in updating and submitting their manuscript to a journal. They also learned about the process of publishing including meeting with and learning from journal editors.
2. Libraries are a great resource for graduate students, especially when it comes to publishing; however, these resources are often underutilized. As such, departments could work with their libraries to offer resources about the publication process, courses on using reference management systems and programs like LaTeX, R, python, and others that are fundamental

to academic research and publishing today (Grote et al 2022). One specific model is the University of Colorado's "Publish Not Perish" information literacy tutorial for faculty and graduate students (Knievel 2008) which consists of five modules from an overview of publishing to building a customized publishing plan.

3. Most universities have a writing program aimed at facilitating and supporting student writing. While these programs often seem to be aimed at undergraduate students, some universities have instilled graduate writing development into their aims and goals. As such, where these institutions are lacking, departments could seek opportunities to create graduate student writing courses.
4. Departments could design a professionalization seminar where graduate students are introduced to not only planning for the Ph.D., but also peer-editing, reviewing, and examining opportunities for publication. Part of this seminar could be aimed at student/faculty collaboration and mentorship.
5. Senior academics can and should refer graduate students for opportunities for peer review as well as book reviews. One caveat is that the senior academics can and should then also provide students with quick training on peer reviewing practices as well as offer to read through rough drafts of book reviews.

This list is not exhaustive; however, we hope that it encourages more established academics and programs to take seriously the integration of publishing (in all its dimensions) into pedagogy. While we seek to empower ECRs to put themselves out there, we want to highlight that it is incumbent on the academy to transform its structures to an environment that is not intimidating

and mysterious, but inclusive and welcoming. We believe that a more supportive and open environment would ultimately improve the quality of publishing and academic knowledge.

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