# How to Publish in Scholarly Journals

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This article is based on an invited talk entitled "Getting Published While in Grad School," which was presented for the Graduate Student Council of the American Educational Research Association at the association's 2005 annual meeting. The authors discuss issues to consider when one is planning and writing a scholarly manuscript, and they offer several suggestions about substance, organization, and style. They also describe the journal submission and peer review process, including what to do if a journal editor's decision is "revise and resubmit," "accept pending revisions," or "reject."

This article is about writing an article for a scholarly journal. We begin at the planning stages and end by describing what can be done if a journal rejects your manuscript. We consider many issues along the way, from conception to finally seeing the work in print. This article is based on an invited talk entitled "Getting Published While in Grad School," which was presented for the AERA Graduate Student Council at the association's 2005 annual meeting. Thus we address young scholars directly, although we invite others to read on for a refresher or to consider using this as a mentoring tool. We ground our advice in our experiences as journal editors and authors. We each have experienced the joy of acceptance, the distress of rejection, and the uncertainty of "revise and resubmit."



## Planning Before Writing

Good writing begins with planning. Consider first your purposes for publishing and the audience for whom you are writing. A thorough deliberation on why you wish to publish should guide this process.

### *Consider Your Reasons for Publishing*

The main reason to publish is that you have something to say. Scholars contribute to their profession's dialogue by publishing. Contributions should be timely in relation to contemporary dialogues and should add new ideas. Although the very best writing revolutionizes a field, such groundbreaking work typically is beyond the reach of new scholars, whose colleagues instead expect that they will produce "good steady work" that advances the field incrementally. Publications are most widely admired when they are part of a coherent, sustained research program.

An even more practical reason to publish, however, is that many professional opportunities follow directly from publications. Academic job-seekers are at a competitive advantage when they can demonstrate a record of productivity with publications in an area of claimed expertise. The odds for tenure increase if you have published the number of articles considered adequate by your institution, if the publications reflect a clear programmatic focus, and if the articles appear in journals of the type and quality that your colleagues value.

### *Determine the Scope of Your Manuscript*

Once you have established a focus for your research and you are clear about your reasons for publishing, then you can address the scope of your manuscript. Some scholars are overly ambitious, trying to share too much in a single article. A manuscript should have a specific focus so that the author can write in depth about the target topic. Think carefully about what that focus should be, given your data.

When planning your manuscript, reflect about the content available to support your intended points. If your data cannot stand alone, do not try to publish them alone. If your theory and/or evidence only weakly support what you claim, do not overextend your findings; instead, dare to ask yourself critically if you can support your claim at all. If you cannot, do some additional work before proceeding, perhaps collecting additional data, because it is a waste of effort to try to write up an indefensible case. A common reason for rejection is that there is not enough support in the data for the claims made by an author. Write only after you have accumulated sufficient data (and/or developed a strong theoretical argument) to support your position. For example, a sound article on an empirical investigation is marked by a clearly articulated research question or questions derived from the review of the literature and theoretical framework, well-conceived design, a thorough explication of how you collected and analyzed your data, and well-drawn, sensible conclusions that do not overextend the design and outcomes obtained. After meeting these criteria, you are then well on your way to writing a solid article—but there are still other considerations, such as making sure your data and ideas are connected to the field.

### *Connect Your Research to the Field*

The introductory section of an article includes a review of related literature. In appreciation of publication as part of an ongoing professional dialogue, reviews of the literature should be thorough and up-to-date. A weak review may be interpreted as a signal that the author does not have sufficient command of the topic to make a significant contribution. If, while planning, you are not confident that you have a full grasp of the body of published work on your topic, stop and review the literature thoroughly before attempting to write. We are not suggesting that you should write your review of the literature before other sections of your manuscript (e.g., some writers like to start with the methods section). However, it is important to be familiar with the wider body of work in your area before proceeding with your research and writing so as not to duplicate unwittingly or make unwise or uninformed claims. (An important exception to this is if you are using grounded theory and purposely waiting to review the related literature in your area until after analyzing your data [Glaser & Strauss, 1967]). At one extreme, if you are claiming, "There are no prior publications on this topic," it is more likely that you have not found them yet and may need to broaden your search.

At another extreme, writing a complete literature review can be difficult with a well-trod topic. Do not cite it all; instead, cite what is most relevant. If that still leaves too much to include, be sure to reference influential sources (particularly fairly recent ones and key historical pieces), as well as high-quality work that clearly connects to the points you make. Avoid citing as evidence of a claim an article that only weakly supports it or, even worse, that offers only speculation about it, which you proceed to claim as fact. To avoid misrepresenting other researchers' work, read the sources you cite. A misleading or erroneous literature review can create the impression that you are not qualified to write on the topic or that you are careless, thus dooming your article. An even worse situation is to get away with faulty citations, making a "contribution" to the professional literature that readers might believe. This disservice is similar to reporting fabricated research findings.

The closing discussion section of an article should also connect the manuscript to the larger field. A common error is to write a very brief discussion that inadequately ties the reported work to the larger professional dialogue(s), thereby not allowing the article to contribute everything it could. In the discussion, you should come full circle, connecting your research findings to the body of work that you described in your review of the literature.

### *Decide Early on the Target Journal*

Some publications count much more than other publications. Peer-reviewed journals are the most prestigious for some disciplines, while books are valued more in other disciplines. Regardless of which discipline you are in, some book publishers and peer-reviewed journals are viewed more favorably than others. Many scholars think of journals and publishers as belonging to tiers, with first-tier journals and publishers having the highest status (though not everyone agrees on where particular ones fit in the hierarchy). As for journals, a number of factors serve to indicate that a journal is well regarded:

- Wide circulation, which means that more people read it.
- A low acceptance rate, which indicates that the journal receives numerous submissions and can select only the best articles to publish.
- Well-known editor(s) and editorial board members.
- A long citation half-life (i.e., the journal is cited often, over time, according to, e.g., the *Thomson Social Sciences Citation Index,* 2004).
- A high journal impact factor (i.e., the "average article" in the journal is cited frequently in a given period; see Thomson Institute for Scientific Information, 2004).
- High visibility (i.e., the journal is indexed in multiple computerized databases, which allows articles in the journal to turn up on searches).

That said, a journal need not have all of these factors; for instance, there are niche journals with relatively low circulations that have prestige within their fields (e.g., *Mind, Culture, and Activity*). In contrast, publish-for-pay journals are often held in disrepute with respect to tenure review and professional decision making. Organization newsletters and special reports are more difficult to judge. Although they never have the same prestige as refereed publications, some may be respected for their exposure to members of the profession. The same applies to book chapters, which generally lack the prestige of journal publications but often expose the author to audiences who do not read the original research in journals. Asking the opinion of trusted colleagues can be invaluable in deciphering tier rankings and determining the status of an outlet.

You want your work to appear in the best outlet that will accept it. Rewards of all sorts follow from publication in frequently cited, visible journals. These range from more positive personnel reviews to more favorable grant reviews, to invitations to publish more. However, before considering the relative prestige of potential outlets for your work, you should determine which journals would be a good fit for your research and writing. Look for journals that publish similar types of work targeted for the same audiences that you want to reach. Go to the library and skim the last 5 years of a journal to see what it has published. By doing that kind of analysis, you can learn what interests the editors.

One common error is neglecting to research the appropriateness of a journal before submitting a manuscript. For example, the *Review of Educational Research (RER)* accepts only comprehensive, critical reviews and never publishes single studies. Yet the journal frequently receives single-study submissions. Likewise, *Educational Researcher* does not publish single studies but often receives single-study manuscript submissions, which it rejects without sending out for external review because such manuscripts do not fit the scope of the journal. To avoid making this mistake and annoying editors and reviewers, be sure that you have actually read articles in the journal to which you are submitting and have determined that your manuscript is a good fit for that journal. In addition to reading articles, look at the list of editorial board members. If the journal is appropriate, you should know at least some of the editorial board members by reputation and be at least somewhat familiar with their work. Editors regularly must reject excellent manuscripts that are outside their scope. Avoid that fate by selecting a suitable target for your work.

Get *current* information about the journal you are targeting for your manuscript. Information about the rejection rate, more than any other number (e.g., number of issues published per year, number of articles published per year), can help you estimate your chances of acceptance. These chances may be as little as 1 in 20 for a highly selective, well-regarded outlet; however, the odds are more often closer to 1 in 5. Less prestigious journals generally offer a better rate of acceptance; some accept most of the articles submitted to them. If after reviewing rejection rates and citation rates you remain unsure about the status of a journal, ask more experienced colleagues for their opinions. The relative stature of journals in one's field is common knowledge among scholars who have been working for more than a few years. This is particularly important for scholars working in controversial fields or fields involving underrepresented groups.

If you are considering targeting a journal with a very high rejection rate, you should read a few articles in the journal with an eye to answering the question, "Is my article as well-reasoned and does it make as great a contribution as the articles this journal publishes?" With respect to a very selective outlet, it also makes sense to ask a senior colleague to read your work and evaluate whether it has a chance of being accepted. If you are at an institution without such a colleague, dare to reach out to other senior professionals in the field whose work you admire. Many scholars consider it a professional responsibility to mentor the next generation of scholars. If you come to believe that your manuscript might make it in a first-tier journal, give it a try. If you think it will not, look for another outlet serving the same audience that is not as selective. Again, your senior colleagues might have some insights about where to send it. In short, top-ranked journals are high risk, but they are also high gain when you succeed. Even if your manuscript is not accepted, one reason to favor the best journals is that they tend to provide feedback of the highest quality, which can be quite helpful to you as you work to improve your manuscript.

You should also seek information, perhaps by e-mailing the editor, about how long it takes the journal to review an article, how many rounds of review the journal typically requires before it accepts an article, and the publication lag from the point of acceptance. This information can be helpful in deciding whether publication in the outlet is timely enough, given your needs. For example, if you are looking for a job for the next academic year, and it is now August, you need a journal that reviews in a timely fashion and makes decisions in at most two rounds of review. If the journal takes about 10 weeks per review round and if you are very efficient in your revisions, then your manuscript could be "in press" in such an outlet by late winter—in time for job hunting. Later in your career, reviewing and publication lags may not be as critical.

### *Consider Whether to Co-Author Your Manuscript*

Co-authoring is the natural result of collaborating with others on research or related projects. Yet professions differ in how they value co-authored publications. In the medical sciences, for example, authorships of six, eight, or more are common. In education, co-authorship groups rarely exceed four. In the social sciences, authorship lists tend to be shorter. A rule of thumb is that by the time you apply for tenure, you should have some sole-authored publications and some first-authored publications in the mix, with it clear from your overall record that you have made important contributions to most of the publications on your vita since achieving the doctoral degree. An important contribution means that the author was substantially involved in the design, analysis, and write-up of the article in question and that the other authors on the piece are willing to acknowledge such if asked. Personnel review committees (e.g., those involved with hiring and tenure decisions) may inquire about the degree and quality of your contributions to co-authored publications. For example, it can raise eyebrows if at tenure time a high majority of your publications are co-authored with a graduate school mentor. It is worth the effort to talk with colleagues about your work during all phases of the research and writing process so that they are aware of the depth of your involvement.

## Writing the Manuscript

All writers have their own style and approach to the task of writing. Even so, there are conventions that must be observed if you are going to publish. Some of these conventions pertain to substance, others to the organization of the manuscript, and others to basic style rules.

### *Tell Them What You Set Out to Do*

Early in the manuscript you should establish its intended contribution to the professional literature: Clearly state the topic of the manuscript, as well as the particular problem or questions you will address and why the problem or questions are important. The introduction to your manuscript does not need to be limited to the professional literature. Links to larger social and political phenomena, such as legislation and societal trends, can be appropriate.

Perhaps most important, good work makes a contribution to theory. Atheoretical manuscripts rarely get published in the social sciences. Social science articles either test theories, which means the tested theories need to be identified for the reader early in the manuscript, or they develop theories, which means a new theory must be presented before the manuscript concludes.

### *Tell Them What You Did*

Whether you conducted a research study (which may have used quantitative, qualitative, or multiple methods), prepared a comprehensive review of the literature, or developed a theoretical piece, you must report the methods you used. Your research methods should be aligned with your theoretical framework, purpose statement, and research questions. In the case of quantitative research, the standard has long been to report methods with enough detail that a reader could replicate the study. The same standard is the ideal for reporting the methods used in any research study or other scholarly work, such as a literature review, policy statement, or theory construction. In qualitative research, a detailed description of your methodology helps to establish the trustworthiness of your work. A common error, one that some editors consider fatal, is to write a vague and too-brief methods section. Methods can never be as specified as a cookbook recipe, but the reader should be well informed about your process of inquiry. Without sufficient detail, the reader cannot judge your findings and discussion and has no reasonable basis for trusting you.

### *Tell Them What You Found*

Any dataset, no matter what the design or methods, can be portrayed in numerous ways. Describe your results as succinctly as possible, providing analyses that support the conclusions you wish to draw. You do not need to report every analysis you carried out! Hard thinking is required to develop a results section that flows logically and is written so that the most important results are memorable. If the result is a new theory (e.g., a grounded theory; Glaser &

Strauss, 1967), the most logical possible version of the theory should be presented, one that provides enough detail to be clear but not so much as to bore readers or render the article much longer than is justified for the problem studied. In other words, be parsimonious.

### *Discuss What You Found*

Once you have fully reported your findings, discuss the importance of what you have done and relate your new findings to broader issues. The caution in "going broad," however, is to avoid going too far, drawing implications from findings not sufficiently supported by data or claiming that the findings are relevant to issues beyond those that the study was designed to inform. Avoid undue speculation and keep the discussion consistent with both the purpose of the manuscript and what you reported in each prior section. Do not report new data in the discussion.

### *Don't Forget About Style*

There are a number of basic style rules that should be followed. The targeted journal's information for contributors will likely name several that are specific to that journal (e.g., word count). It will also name a stylebook to follow; most commonly in education this will be the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (APA, 2001), currently in its fifth edition. Make certain that you adhere to these guidelines. Stylebooks contain many helpful writing hints; time spent with them can be time well spent. What we emphasize here, however, is that even during the early stages of writing a manuscript, you should be aware of the style requirements of your target journal; if you are not, you will have to revise the manuscript in advance of submission to make it conform to stylistic requirements.

There are a few stylistic devices that we, as editors, wish authors would use more often:

- Make sure transitions are succinct, with one section naturally flowing into another. A weak form of transition is to flag what is going to be said in the next subsection or section. Although advance organizers can be helpful, unneeded repetition should be avoided.
- When in doubt, spell it out. Acronyms should be used sparingly and should be defined at first use unless they are ubiquitous (e.g., TV, U.S.). Remember that not all readers will be as familiar with your area as you are. For instance, someone who studies the effects of DAT may know what an IEP is but is less likely to be familiar with SCDEs, even though she or he may work in an IHE.
- Avoid the passive voice. Write, for example, "The teachers told us . . ." instead of, "We were told by the teachers that. . . ." The active voice focuses the reader more on the participants and/or the action.
- Do not anthropomorphize (i.e., give human-like characteristics to a nonhuman form). Your study did not conclude anything—you did. The following section does not present anything; you the writer are doing the presenting.
- Stay away from wordiness and jargon. Awkward sentences only distract the reader from your message. Let your content dazzle your readers, not your convoluted syntax or use of terms that are unfamiliar to readers because they are vague. Define terminology that is specific to a field.
- Avoid using "this" as a stand-alone pronoun; rather, use it to modify a noun. Too often, the antecedent for "this" is not clear.

### *Get Help*

Editors and reviewers notice flaws. Therefore, ask colleagues to review your writing before you submit it. Their helpful comments can point out imperfections to correct before your manuscript ever gets into the hands of an editor who must judge whether your work is ready to go out for review. If writing is really difficult for you, more assistance might be required. For example, a writing group can provide critical feedback and also moral support and encouragement. In addition, when you help others by reacting to their work in such a group, you will learn more about the craft of writing. You might also consider hiring a writing coach or copy editor. The better the manuscript you initially submit, the better your odds for success in the review process; therefore, you should be willing to expend whatever effort is necessary to submit a well-crafted article. Writing is challenging work!

## **Submitting the Manuscript**

Once you complete a manuscript, you may have misgivings about whether it makes sense to submit it to the journal that you originally targeted. This is an opportune moment to tap the most distinguished person in your field who is willing to appraise your manuscript and ask for a read and a recommendation about whether the journal you have in mind makes sense for your manuscript. Ask for suggestions for other journals if the targeted journal does not seem quite appropriate. You can also ask the journal editor if you are unsure about the appropriateness of your manuscript for that journal. Virtually all journal editors will look at the abstract to make an initial judgment about the fit and scope of the manuscript for their journal. Some may be willing to skim or even read a manuscript prior to submission based on an e-mail request to do so.

When you have made your decision, you must send out your manuscript to only one journal at a time. It is a serious ethical violation to submit simultaneously to more than one journal. If an author is caught doing this, all of the receiving journals may summarily reject the manuscript. We have seen it happen!

### *Create a Good First Impression*

Make certain that your manuscript has been scrupulously written in the style required by the journal to which you are submitting. Double-check and triple-check that your manuscript is as error-free as possible. Again, we have been surprised by the many stylistic errors that we find in the submissions we receive. In some cases, we return the manuscript to the author, specifying that style must be corrected before the manuscript can be reviewed. There are a few style violations that particularly annoy reviewers, and, thus, authors are well-advised to make certain they do not offend with respect to these points:

- Do not use condensed character spacing or a font smaller than 12-point to make it appear that your manuscript is shorter than it is.
- Similarly, be sure to double-space throughout (including in the reference

list, indented quotations, and tables). Tighter spacing is harder to read.

- Use flush-left alignment for the body of the text rather than both right and left justification.
- Number pages and use specified margins (usually 1 inch, though sometimes wider).
- Make sure that your citations and reference list match. Double-check that your references and bibliographic style are correct and complete.
- Be fastidious in correcting typographical and grammatical errors before submitting, for they really irritate some readers. As you make such corrections, use your software's spelling check and grammar check, but keep in mind that by themselves these are insufficient for proofreading purposes: Some errors are real words that are not caught.

### *Send in Your Manuscript*

When you submit your manuscript, carefully follow submission guidelines. Generally, these guidelines are available both in the journal and on the journal's website. When viewing a copy of the journal, be sure to use the most recent issue. Past editors continue to receive submissions for years after completing their terms, and your submission may or may not be sent on to the current editor. Not long ago, journals required three to five hard copies of a submission, perhaps along with a disk copy. Now, more and more journals are accepting submissions on-line rather than through the mail. Follow the on-line directions for posting your manuscript. If you are not sure what the journal requires, contact the editors and ask them.

If the journal calls for masking the submission, carefully do so (i.e., remove all references to your name and other information that would reveal your identity), following, for example, the guidelines in the APA manual (APA, 2001). Insufficient masking can also be a point of irritation for editors, some of whom will refuse to send the manuscript out for review and return it to the author for proper masking.

## The Review Process

The review process varies somewhat depending on the journal and on whether the submission and review process is handled manually or on-line. Generally, however, the steps are the same. First, an editorial assistant acknowledges receipt of the manuscript, assigns it a number, and assigns it to one of the editors (or the editorial team decides who will handle which manuscripts). Once the manuscript is in the editor's hands, she or he conducts a preliminary editorial review and decides whether the manuscript is appropriate to send out for review. Some manuscripts are rejected at this early stage in the process because they fall outside the purview of the journal or they are not considered to be of sufficient quality to send out for review. When the editor determines that the manuscript is appropriate to send forward, he or she generates a list of possible reviewers with expertise relevant to the focus of the manuscript. These reviewers may or may not be on the editorial board. Editors generally try to come up with at least six to eight names initially, hoping that three to five colleagues will accept an invitation to conduct a review. For some journals, the minimum number of external reviewers is two. AERA requires its journals to use a minimum of three. Sometimes there are more (e.g., the Research News and Comment section of *Educational Researcher* uses four or five reviewers per manuscript). Editors may try to include junior as well as senior scholars and, when possible, a graduate student as an extra reviewer. Many editors aim for diversity in critical and theoretical perspectives, gender, nationality, ethnicity, methods, and methodology. When uncertain about any aspect of the process up to this point, the editor consults with others on the editorial team or the editorial board.

Once reviewers have been identified, the editorial assistant sends the manuscript to the reviewers and notifies you that the submission is "in review." Many journals use a "double-masked" review process; that is, the reviewers do not know the identity of the author of a manuscript and the author does not know the identity of the reviewers. Virtually all journals keep the identities of reviewers unknown to authors, although individual reviewers sometimes sign their reviews with the intent of identifying themselves to the authors and many editors pass on those identities.

Ideally, the journal editor will get back with you in 10 weeks with a decision, although it can take longer. The length of time for the review process varies, depending on whether the journal uses an on-line submission system, how quickly the editorial team can find reviewers, and, more than anything, how promptly the reviewers send their reviews back. Typically, editors ask reviewers to complete their review in about 4 weeks. However, reviewers often take longer. The editorial assistant reminds delinquent reviewers to get their reviews in, but sometimes reminders are not sufficient and it is necessary to find a new reviewer. Eventually, the editor decides that there are enough reviews on hand to make a decision, sometimes coming to this decision with fewer reviews than desired because just too much time has passed since the review process began.

If you have not heard back from the journal after 4 months, that can be a sign that something is awry at the journal. (If you did your homework on the journal, you might have found out about such delays in reviewing, which might have shaped your decision about whether to submit to that outlet.) After about 4 months, it is appropriate to e-mail the editor and ask when feedback can be expected. If there is no reply, or the reply is that feedback may be months away, it might make sense at that point to consider submitting the manuscript elsewhere, at the same time withdrawing it from the first outlet. If you do withdraw a manuscript because feedback was not timely, you should make that clear to the editor at the time of withdrawal.

### *The Editor's Decision*

The editor carefully reads all reviewers' comments and (re)reads the manuscript before making a decision and might also confer with others on the editorial team. Consulting is particularly important if the reviewers' comments are ambiguous or their suggestions appear contradictory. After reaching a decision, the editor writes a letter to the author that includes the decision, a summary of the reviewers' comments, and any further suggestions. The editor's decision may include one of the following: (a) Accept the manuscript as is; (b) accept it pending the completion of specific revisions; (c) invite a revision and resubmission; or (d) reject. These first-round decisions are not equally probable. Immediate acceptance is extremely rare. The most common decisions are "revise and resubmit" and "reject." If your manuscript is not rejected, the most likely sequence of events is that you will first be asked to revise and resubmit and then may receive an acceptance pending minor revisions. For a revise and resubmit decision to become an acceptance, the revisions must respond constructively to the reviewers' concerns. Because of the frequency of the revise and resubmit category, we discuss it next.

### *"Revise and Resubmit"*

If the editor's decision is that you should revise and resubmit your manuscript, pay careful attention to the editor's letter and the reviewers' comments when revising your manuscript. Accompany your resubmission with a letter in which you describe in detail the changes you made in the manuscript and how you addressed the editor's and reviewers' concerns. You do not necessarily have to make every change suggested, *but if you choose not to, you should explain why in your letter to the editor.* If you are not sure whether the editor is resolute about a particular recommendation, contact the editor and ask. When you resubmit your manuscript, the editor will often send it back to the same reviewers, though sometimes the journal has a policy of involving new reviewers and sometimes the old reviewers simply are no longer available to do a re-review.

### *"Accept Pending Revisions"*

If the editor's decision is "accept pending revisions," you will again have changes to make in the manuscript, as detailed in the editor's letter to you. However, these are generally fewer in number and not as substantial as when the editor's decision was "revise and resubmit." Once you have made these changes and returned your revised manuscript, usually only the editor will read it to determine if you have adequately addressed all suggestions. At this point, you might be able to consider the manuscript "in press," but do not assume this is the case—check with the editor to make sure. The most certain way to move from the "accept with revision" category to "accept" is to make each and every revision requested and then detail how you addressed those revisions in a cover letter that accompanies the resubmission.

### *Overcoming Rejection*

What if your manuscript is rejected? First, you should recognize that many eventually published pieces were rejected somewhere before they found a publication home. Second, know that there are responses to the rejection that can go far in assuring a more favorable outcome in the future (see Pressley, in press).

Carefully read all the paperwork that you received from the rejecting journal, including the letter from the editor and the reviews, noting and reflecting seriously on any revision suggestions in their comments. Keep reading and processing these remarks until you are certain that you understand them. Often, a rejection letter and accompanying reviews will seem overwhelming at first, but, on further reflection, the points become clearer and seem more manageable. By the end, you may be able to organize the remarks into related themes, which can make rewriting much easier to accomplish. Once you understand the reviewers' remarks, revise the manuscript on the basis of their suggestions. If quite a bit of work is in order, such as collecting more data or doing extensive re-analysis, plan your time and resources to accomplish the tasks sufficiently. You may need to do substantially more work before submitting the manuscript elsewhere.

One common reason for rejection is that the manuscript represents an insufficient advance in knowledge. If you receive that feedback, you should be doing what you can to make the importance of your contribution to the literature more obvious, perhaps in the discussion section. If there are concerns about the writing (e.g., too long, not enough detail), deal with them. Since months have passed since you last worked on the manuscript, revision possibilities not obvious during initial drafting may be more obvious now, especially given the feedback from the journal. Similarly, reviewers recommending rejection often have concerns about analysis procedures. If reviewers recommended alternatives, inform yourself as much as possible about those options and consider whether they are more sensible and can be carried out with available resources. If the reviewers spotted what they considered to be unjustifiable conclusions, look hard at those conclusions until you are clear about the reviewers' concerns and adjust accordingly.

By the end of this process, you will understand your manuscript better, and it then makes sense to think about where you might send it next. Is there a thematically better-matched journal? Should you target a less selective outlet? The answer to these questions can be determined only by realistic thinking about your manuscript in light of all the feedback you have received and your responses to that feedback. A substantially reworked manuscript could now benefit from pre-review by a respected senior colleague.

Finally, sometimes a rejection decision and the associated reviews compel the conclusion that additional effort on the manuscript would be a waste of time. If that is the implication, take the possibility seriously and reflect carefully on whether that may be the case. If it is, move on. Focus in directions more likely to pay off rather than in ones with little likelihood of success.

Our journals are the major forums for communication in our profession. Their quality and integrity must be maintained. With some effort on your part, you can reap the professional rewards that come with making valuable contributions to professional dialogues by publishing.

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## President-Elect Baker Invites Nominations for Committees

Each year, the AERA president appoints a number of members to committees that are important to the Association. The committees include Publications, Professional Development and Training, Government Relations, Scholars and Advocates for Gender Equity in Education, Scholars of Color in Education, Nominations, Communications and Outreach, Social Justice Action, International Relations, *JEBS* Management, Annual Meeting Policies and Procedures, Technology, Minority Fellowship Selection, and Research Advisory. In addition, appointments will be made to the following awards committees: Distinguished Contribution to Education, Early Career, E. F. Lindquist, Outstanding Book, Palmer O. Johnson, Relating Research to Practice, and Review of Research.

This year, President-Elect Eva L. Baker will make appointments to many of these committees during the fall. She urges members to supply names, including their own, if they are interested in serving on a committee. Please send a resume, if volunteering, or a statement about qualifications, if nominating someone else, and state which committees are of interest.

President-Elect Baker also welcomes suggestions about strengthening the quality of the organization and possible new initiatives to raise the quality of research and offer support to members.

Please write to her at:

**University of California, Los Angeles**
**Graduate School of Education**
**and Information Studies**
**CRESST 301**
**Charles Young Drive**
**Los Angeles, CA 90095**

Or send her an e-mail message at:

**eva@ucla.edu**
(preferably without extensive attachments)