



CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES ARTICLE

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 published in 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, Windsor, and King 2022). Expectations that scholars, especially early career researchers (ECRs), “publish or perish” thus exacerbate intersectional inequalities within the discipline (Briscoe-Palmer and Mattocks 2021; McKenzie 2017; Steinþórsdóttir et al. 2018). Further, the overwhelming pressure to publish at all costs can commodify knowledge production and foster a toxic, competitive environment based on peer rivalry rather than collaboration for the sake of advancing knowledge (Horta and Li 2023, 269–70, 271–72).

To encourage submissions to *Politics & Gender*, as well as to 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 and Gender. Following our conversations with other ECRs at the conference, we organized the virtual roundtable, recruiting past and current editors and editorial board members to provide their insights and advice. The event was attended by more than 100 scholars from around the world.

This Critical Perspectives section 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 to and writing reviews, and advice for publishing while doing a PhD. Building on their webinar presentations, in these essays, the authors provide practical and accessible information for ECRs 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 the 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 that include the researcher’s motivation, relation to the literature, research puzzle, results, and wider implications. One of her tips is to use others’ work as examples for framing and organizing 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 past editors Susan Franceschet and Christina Wolbrecht to discuss what editors are looking for in this journal and others. Drawing on their years of experience of writing, reviewing, and editing, they emphasize the importance of writing a clear abstract that expresses the research’s wider theoretical contributions. In an important insight, they underscore that editors tend to select reviewers from the article’s reference list, and they often purposely ensure diversity in terms of methodological and topical expertise, which means that it is important for researchers to speak to a broad audience in their writing.

Celeste Montoya goes into more detail about what reviewers are looking for and, importantly, what makes a good reviewer. She emphasizes the necessity of thinking like a reviewer when developing a journal article, in terms of advancing the research’s unique contribution, ensuring rigor and accuracy, and writing with clear style and structure. Further, she reveals the benefits of reviewing, including the opportunity to shape the academic field and develop skills on providing feedback, which is another “hidden,” or not explicitly taught, skill set in many doctoral programs.

Aksel Sundström continues the focus on the review process, sharing advice about how to respond to reviews. He emphasizes 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 it takes dedicated time and effort.

Finally, Daniel Höhmann shares advice on how to publish during the PhD, a perennial question for many doctoral students. He offers practical tips, such as coauthoring a first paper with a more senior scholar who can support the ECR with their experience of publication and writing an article-based rather than a

monograph thesis, if that is allowed by the doctoral program. Importantly, he stresses 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 messages across these essays. First, when it comes to approaching publishing, ECRs should, quite simply, approach publishing. Second, we should begin the process with a mantra of “no fear.” Finally, we should maintain self-compassion and understand that rejection is expected and frequent—in other words, the norm (Esarey 2017; Rider 2021; Weeks 2006).

In organizing this event and reading more about the topic, we identified some important takeaways for academic institutions and the academy more broadly to improve access to publication. Rather than assuming that ECRs will figure out the publication process through informal networks, the academy should formally invest in such knowledge sharing. Other scholars (e.g., Aitchison and Guerin 2014; Aitchison, Kamler, and Lee 2010; Lee and Kamler 2008) recommend that academic writing and publishing be part of doctoral pedagogy.

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

1. Design a semester-long publishing class around Wendy Belcher’s (2021) guide, *Writing Your Journal Article in 12 Weeks*. Cynthia Daniels of Rutgers University offered this course, and students participated in both 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. Therefore, departments could work with their libraries to offer resources on 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, Reynolds, and Howard 2022). One 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. Where these institutions are lacking, departments could seek opportunities to create graduate student writing courses.
4. Departments could design a professionalization seminar in which graduate students are introduced not only to planning for the PhD, 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 senior academics can and should also provide students with quick training on peer-reviewing practices and offer to read through rough drafts of book reviews.

This list is not exhaustive; however, we hope that it will encourage 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 create an environment that is not intimidating and mysterious, but inclusive and welcoming. We believe that a more supportive and open environment would improve the quality of publishing and academic knowledge.

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