Publishing in Peer-Reviewed Counseling Journals: Recommendations and Best Practices for Developing, Writing, and Submitting Publishable Manuscripts

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First...

- What are you hoping to learn by attending this session?
Agenda

- De-mystifying the peer review process
- How to develop a project for successful publication
- Best practices for writing and submitting the subsequent manuscript
- Tips for turning your dissertation into a publishable manuscript
How Does the Peer Review Process Work?

- Manuscript is submitted
- Initial submission is reviewed for submission requirements (APA, etc.) - This is typically done by an editorial assistant.
- Editorial assistant then assigns to two or three editorial board members for review (typically given one month)
- Editorial board members submit their reviews, the Executive Editor makes a decision based on reviews - revise and resubmit, accept, or reject
- E-mail is sent to author with disposition and reviewer feedback
How are Manuscripts Evaluated?

- Writing style
- Fit for Journal
- Adequacy of literature review and rationale for study
- Clarity of research questions
- Quality of research design and methodology
- Adequacy of data analysis
- Interpretation of results and conclusions
- Practical applications
Please rate manuscripts based on the following:

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<th>Poor</th>
<th>Marginal</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
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<td>The manuscript contains sufficient new and significant information to justify publication.</td>
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<td>The abstract clearly and accurately describes the content of the manuscript.</td>
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<td>The problem is significant and concisely stated.</td>
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<td>The experimental and/or theoretical methods are described comprehensively.</td>
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<td>The interpretations and conclusions are justified by, and supportive of, the results.</td>
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<td>Adequate reference is made to other work in the field.</td>
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<td>The organization and writing style are acceptable.</td>
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<td>Clear and practical implications are included.</td>
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Please rate the priority for publishing this article (1 is highest priority, 10 is lowest priority)

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<th>Recommendation</th>
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<td>Accept</td>
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<td>Major Revision</td>
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<td>Reject</td>
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Comments for the Editor:

Comments for the Author:
Rejection

- Rejection is common in academic publishing.
- Many academic journals have acceptance rates as low as 5%, with 37.7% being the average.
- Acceptance rate for JPC is about 10%
- Not all rejected manuscripts are poor quality, as other factors also may play role in rejection
Reasons for Rejection

- An analysis of editorial selection decisions for academic journals across multiple disciplines revealed that manuscripts were rejected for:
  - Unimportant or insignificant contributions (29%)
  - Methodological flaws or shortcomings (26%)
  - Inadequate theoretical foundation (21%)
  - Poor writing style or presentation (10%)
  - Not in line with mission of journal (10%)
Types of Manuscripts

- Research- quantitative, qualitative, action, case studies
- Conceptual
  - Articles that provide new theoretical perspectives or integrate existing views, address new or adapted procedures or techniques
- Practice
  - Provide concrete suggestions based on experiences in the field
  - Individual/group techniques and approaches, program applications, training and supervision, ethical issues (grounded in theory and empirical knowledge)
- Literature Review
  - Provides a thorough, integrated coverage of available information- includes critical analysis in presentation, all in one place.
Developing Your Idea/Research

- Ask yourself- Is it timely and relevant? Get feedback from colleagues and mentors.
- Is it scholarly? Is it creative?
  - Take old ideas and adapt them, or perhaps you have an idea that has not been researched.
- What questions are you trying to answer? What is it you want to know?
  - If a large scale study is not an option, consider Single Case Research Design (SCRD).
  - For research studies: think about who and what you will be studying.
- Consider collaborating with mentors, or colleagues who have experience with writing and publishing.
Do A Thorough Literature Review

- Search counseling related databases (Not just PsychInfo), as well as databases from other fields. Use professional references.
  - ProQuest
  - PubMed
  - Academic Search Complete
  - ERIC
  - JSTOR
  - ScienceDirect
  - Web of Science

- MLA International Bibliography
- CINAHL
- Business Source Complete
- Google Scholar
- Lexus/Nexus
- ABI/Inform
- Scopus
Writing Tips

- Use bibliography software (for example, Zotero)
- Make an outline, organize the clarity of your message
  - Annotated outlines can be helpful as they include descriptions and citations
- Watch bias in your writing (e.g. using the terms “unfortunately” or “inexcusable”). Discuss your ideas objectively, highlighting the strengths and the weaknesses. Providing different perspectives helps convey information without it seeming like it’s simply the author’s opinion.
Writing Tips (continued)

- Consider including a case study in your conceptual/practice manuscripts, to illustrate how to apply your ideas.
- Include a purpose statement and research questions or hypotheses.
  - Practice manuscripts should include discussion of the change strategy, rationale and prediction of expected outcomes, as well as relevance for intended population.
Use APA 6th Edition Style

- No, really.
- Pay attention to detail. Manuscripts submitted that are not in the correct format give a bad first impression to reviewers. If they are missing key components (for example, data analysis section or abstract) a manuscript may be automatically rejected.
- Have someone else review your manuscript before submitting
Select Your Journal

- Be intentional about this choice - who is the audience, and why will they care about your manuscript?
- Read the Journal author guidelines.
  - Limits regarding page number, word count in abstract, keywords, tables, figures
- Review other studies published in the journal.
What errors do you see in this manuscript that need to be fixed before submission?
Tips for Qualitative Manuscripts

- Briefly explain why qualitative research is the best fit to answer your research question, and why that qualitative approach specifically.

- Include a clear and comprehensive overview of how they study was conducted. This should include:
  - Design
  - Data analysis (theory, coding)
  - Trustworthiness
  - Role of the Researcher
  - Interview Questions
  - Participants
Tips for Quantitative Manuscripts

- Clearly delineate your research problem and questions.
- Clearly define and operationalize your variables (and justify this).
- Provide detailed description of your methods, including recruitment of participants.
- Discuss any underlying theory behind your research design.
- If possible, conduct a pilot study, which will help you refine protocol, instructions, and practices.
- Typically, the simplest method of data analysis is the best.
- Conduct statistical power analysis BEFORE your conduct your study (G*Power).
- Don’t collapse interval/ratio variables into ordinal categories.
- Provide Cronbach’s Alpha (measure of internal consistency) for continuous variables.
Discussion/Implications

- **Breadth and Depth** - critique, evaluate, and apply results or ideas as opposed to just describing them

- For research manuscripts, start with a sentence or two giving a summary of the study and the most important findings
  - Should include the “why” of what you found.

- So What? Sell why this matters, and why readers should care.
Limitations

- For qualitative studies, remember that being non-generalizable is NOT a limitation - don’t compare it to quantitative research
- Consider internal and external validity
- Be critical, but not too critical
- Also include suggestions for future research
Conclusions

- Brief summary of the study (or idea), results, discussion and implications
- Don’t be too far reaching with your conclusions
Submitting Your Manuscript

- Write a cover letter
- Be sure your manuscript is blinded as described in submission requirements
- Then, wait.
Sample Cover Letter

Dear Dr. ________,

Please find enclosed the manuscript, “______” for your consideration. I verify that the enclosed manuscript:

1. Was written in compliance with all applicable research, authorship, and publication provisions of the ACA Code of Ethics;
2. Describes an original quantitative research study
3. Is not under consideration by any other publication.

I am excited about the possibility to publish with The Journal of __________. If you have any questions regarding this communication, please do not hesitate to contact me immediately at [phone number] or e-mail me at [e-mail address].

Cordially,
How to Turn Your Dissertation into a Publishable Manuscript

- Tailor to the journal/audience you select. Dissertations often present broad justifications & implications (i.e., practice, training, policy, etc.) Only include those relatable to journal readers.

- Contemporary: Dissertation lit reviews are comprehensive- articles should position study in current knowledge bane (most recent five years).

- Some dissertation elements not needed in article:
  - Put research questions, not hypotheses
  - No definition of terms
  - Visual aids- in articles 1 table, figure, graph= 1 page regardless of size. Limit to three

- More focus on implications and less on methodology. Explain method and analysis, don’t get into decision/rationale
Discuss with your neighbor:

- What projects are you currently working on for publication?
- What are your biggest concerns, or barriers to publishing this manuscript?
- How are you going to overcome those barriers?
Final Tips for Success

○ Review past issues of the journal you’re submitting too
  ○ Look for trends in topics published
  ○ Get ideas on format and structure
○ Contact the editor to discuss your idea
○ Review the roster of current editorial board members included in each issue
○ Be responsive to reviewer feedback
  ○ Not everything has to be incorporated in revision
What other questions do you have?
Conclusions

- Thank you!
- Michelle.Hollenbaugh@tamucc.edu
References