Starting to Publish Academic Research as a Doctoral Student

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Abstract

This article presents some opinions, views and advice that graduate students might consider in order to assess and improve their success as new scholars. Contrary to the famous motto “publish or perish”, we argue that publishing academic research should be headed by intrinsic motivation for becoming a scholar and not by external pressures of social or professional requirements to produce scholarly work. This paper gives practical advice about building and sustaining the initial momentum in publishing. We discuss the importance of practicing academic writing as a way to improve scholarship. Some important social aspects and policies that should be considered in the process of publication are also presented.

Key Words: Doctoral studies, Academic writing mentoring, Publishing in journals, Submissions policies.

Introduction

Few students, even those registered in doctoral programs, engage in formal academic writing at a level sufficient enough to get accepted in peer-reviewed journals (Gray & Drew, 2008). Having grasped the proper construction of a literature review, theoretical framework, methodology, collection of data, data analysis, findings, and discussions, some inspired academics might finish an article in a few days. However, for graduate students, who are finding themselves at the starting point of their academic career, it takes weeks if not months.

It is not easy to adjust one’s life to academic writing. Doctoral students have not had much experience in this area. Some feel that focusing on writing, other than the dissertation, occurs when one has landed a post-doctoral or professorship position. However, we argue that one should not wait to secure any of these positions in order to attempt to publish academic research. It can be frustrating and an unpleasant experience if one needs to write under the pressure of finding a job or gaining tenure. These might be good reasons to write for those who thrive being under stress, but there are better reasons. Graduate students should write for refereed journals, in order to see if they enjoy publishing and if academia is a suitable lifestyle for them. Maybe doctoral students should write just because of who they are and not because of external, social, or professional pressures.

The intent of this article is to offer advice about academic publishing for graduate students and include practical strategies about the process of ‘breaking the ice’ in publishing that seems to surround graduate students. We describe considerations, paths, and reasons that graduate students might consider in order to improve their pursuits of publishing academic papers.
Writing in a journal as a graduate student is a major component of their apprenticeship. This paper is written by two authors who hold different perspectives (one is a graduate student and the other is a graduate faculty member) and explores different paths and choices of getting published. The first section gives an overview of writing articles as a graduate student. In the next section, the process of establishing scholarly awareness in academic publishing is presented. Some practical opportunities that graduate students should seek out are presented in the third section. In the fourth section, some social considerations to social networking are discussed. In the fifth section, we review some policies and ethical issues that should be considered in the act of writing and, in the next section, we discuss article submission and getting published. In the final section, some conclusions about the writing process as a graduate student are presented.

The Initial Start: Building the Momentum

There are some commonsensical reasons for doctoral students that make them delay the process of writing. The most common ones are graduate coursework, comprehensive exams, conducting research, teaching courses, and designing and writing of the doctoral thesis. These requirements are stringent enough on their own to keep someone busy for their entire doctoral program. However, publishing academic work will make a difference when applying for an academic job in a research-oriented position. Nonetheless, a great number of teaching-oriented universities are requiring publications for their scholars in order to give them tenures. Publishing, especially in peer-reviewed journals, is an excellent indicator of one’s ability to prove that his or her work is well-regarded by a disciplinary community. Likewise, Gray and Drew (2008) argue that graduate students who publish during their studies have more chances to publish after they graduate.

Other than the barriers posed by the commitments of a doctoral program, there are other reasons that explain why many graduate students have difficulty producing written work. Some of these are the vicissitudes of graduate life, social obligations, or just the need to have downtime from regular academic work. Hence, during the doctoral program, it is important to recognize how life and writing needs should be well-planned (Ali & Kohun, 2007; Bolker, 1998; Grover, 2007).

Writing is considered by some academics a hard work (Boice, 1990, Silvia, 2007) and requires adequate preparation. Sometimes students expect that inspiration will just appear and make their writing magical. We argue that this is a very positive attitude toward writing although some additional plans and steps should be taken in order to keep being creative. Some students believe that they will be able to produce groundbreaking research in their fields. Some students are even willing to spend more years in graduate school in order to accomplish more research and publish significant papers.

Other graduate students complete only the requirements specified in their graduate programs and look for opportunities to write after their program is finished. The major challenge in this case is that they might not even know if academic writing is right for them although they might get an academic job. If they wait until they have finished the dissertation, they will have missed some opportunities to disseminate their early findings and experiences. Another issue for them is that they might put their tenure at risk later or exclude themselves from getting accepted into research-oriented universities.
Publishing articles in refereed journals are mandatory only in few European and North American universities. In fact, the purpose of our contemporary doctorate programs is not to make students write articles. Graduate students are only supposed to show competence in performing research and completing a doctoral thesis. However, publishing is strongly recommended and students feel the pressure to get published from the first day of the graduate program.

Each article requires time, quality of reasoning, expertise, and energy. Chances to publish sometimes come in too many ways, sometimes they are too rare. If, during the graduate program, a chance is given to a student to get published, they should be adequately prepared to evaluate and take that opportunity. Does it provide you with a venue to inform others about your work? Does it focus your attention on your research or just take you away from your dissertation? Therefore, it is important to accurately evaluate your chances of success and to make adequate decisions. Publishing is an opportunity that you should get prepared for. By the time you finish graduate school, you should have become familiar with academic publishing practices and journals in your area of expertise.

You might be the worst possible editor for yourself, as you might have difficulties separating what is in your mind from what you just wrote. In fact, you might doubt your own work and whether it makes a contribution. You may not be sure what topic is suitable for you. As a novice researcher, there are serious challenges in designing research and reporting it adequately. Although students lack the experience in reporting research and are not being trained in academic writing, there are ways to be successful.

As Boice (1990), Johnson and Mullen (2007), and some other authors acknowledge, the training for scholarly writing is not linear. Academic, familial, social, personal, and financial aspects mingle daily and are difficult to separate when the need to write appears. Hence, the power of cultivating and keeping a schedule to create and maintain a focus on your scholarly writing remains essential.

The Awakening Act and the Warming up Process

While a mature scholar is more aware of difficulties in the academic writing process and can write fast, the doctoral student has a different trajectory. In fact, the awakening in academic writing is an event that does not occur quickly. Sometimes doctoral students reproduce previous literature reviews or fail to report new knowledge. A successful article must contribute to the research community in some way and so the article has to have a flow that outlines what the student learned before and what is new.

The ideal topic to write about is one in which you have experience. Two important points to consider are originality and the depth of involvement. With respect to originality, very few students are able to be the first contributor to a topic, so they should take the opportunity to write in order to build their expertise. With respect to the second aspect, the depth of involvement, each scholar is asked to select a topic that deeply expresses his or her personality. As Muow (2006) puts it “Don’t write an article because you have to; any journal editor will immediately know your heart isn’t in it. The article that clearly and coherently expresses the passion of the author will be the one that succeeds” (p. 2). If the originality of an article is highly desirable, the depth of involvement remains essential.
The article must have some theme or story. While the author will only write one part of the article at a time, it must be clearly connected. As Elbow (1998) mentions about the holistic aspect of writing “All parts of a piece of writing are interdependent. No part is done till all parts are done” (p. 75).

**Selecting an Adequate Journal**

It takes time to learn and produce successful writing in academic journals. Therefore, you should locate adequate journals that are interested in accepting the themes and methods of your research (Knight & Steinbach, 2008). An author should first learn about the detailed aspects of a specific journal that could be the target for his or her article. You should read first articles in the previous issues in order to understand which research topics and paradigms are encouraged and which are not. In addition, you should read about the editor and the core editorial board in order to see what they recently published and what they might view suitable for publishing. In order to write in a specific area, we recommend participating in social activities like congresses or conferences linked with that specific topic. You should participate in professional activities that offer opportunities to meet with authors having similar research topics as you.

Another important aspect to consider is who you want your readers to be and the degree of specialization. For instance, there are journals with articles focused on a reduced number of specialists and there are journals targeting a large number of participants having different skills in a specific discipline. There are journals that publish in highly narrowed themes, there are journals publishing only broad themes for a discipline, and there are also journals that are publishing in interdisciplinary areas. In addition, there are journals that have a great number of readers, while other journals have a reduced number.

The actual submission to the journal does not give you much credit on your academic record. Therefore, we strongly advise you to cautiously evaluate your chances of publishing in each journal. We have seen doctoral students contemplating publishing in top journals and unfortunately spending their time without any academic success. While the highly ranked journals are always preferred, you should pay attention to find what the realistic chances of getting accepted are, and what amount of time is required to apply and pass each submission’s stage in order to finally get accepted in these top journals. These journals usually deal with a high rate of rejection (usually 90–95 percent), and your lack of experience might put you in this category.

If you do not have a very important topic, we recommend applying in the middle level journals. There is a high probability that, regardless of journal, the number of revisions might be extensive for your lack of experience, so that the time of completion will be greater than expected. On the other hand, there are quality journals that publish more than 50% of the submissions. They might accept articles that are not well constructed but have great ideas. Their editors take more time to edit your work and the reviewers give you valuable feedback. Johnson and Mullen (2007) suggest also targeting middle level journals. These journals deal with a lower rejection rate, somewhere between 25-75 percent. They are willing to publish any suitable professionally written piece of work or any reasonable academic contribution, and give you a fair credit. In
addition, some of these journals might have a faster review process so that you might get accepted for publication in less than six months.

There are start-up or little known journals. These journals accept everything sent to them and publish without alterations. They are almost never quoted and, as a result, you will not get much merit in getting accepted in these journals. Publishing a few times in these journals might be acceptable, but we recommend not spending much effort on these.

**Writing to Publish Academic Research**

We believe that writing is a social practice. Although graduate students may spend time writing alone, writing is not a solitary activity. Through academic writing, they connect to the research community. Here we present several opportunities and forms of academic writing that a graduate student might target.

**Being a Reviewer**

Being a reviewer gives graduate students opportunities to learn current trends in their topics of interest. More exactly, reviewing for conferences or journals provides them consistent and practical ways to disseminate and learn fresh academic attempts in their field. In this way they might evaluate topics and approaches that were widely accepted and build on them. Although being a reviewer is not considered a great accomplishment, graduate students and new scholars might find help to judge valuable skills and use them proficiently. We advise graduate students to avoid volunteering in journals unrelated with their present academic interest.

**Writing a Book Review**

Although a book review might appear in a peer-reviewed journal, a book review is, in most cases, a non-peer reviewed paper. The book review is usually between 1,000 to 2,000 words. The authorship of a book review varies. We have seen book reviews signed by famous professors and by graduate students. Some people might treat this genre as minor. We disagree; insights of the review are important and not the genre of the paper. As advice to follow in writing a book review, you might check the following:

- Write about books that are within your expertise. It is good to find what other researchers recently did and systematically disseminate their contributions in the field. By presenting their contributions, a book review will show your expertise.
- Try to write book reviews about books that got published less than two years ago. For books older than two years, write about them only if they are seminal in their area.
- Avoid books that are different from your expertise. These do not bring you any benefit and might spoil your reputation. Over the years, when people evaluate your academic expertise, finding reviews in which you do not have any expertise might make you seem unprofessional.
- Refuse writing reviews that only attack the book or describe its authors in negative ways. In addition, we recommend avoiding writing about books or authors that you do not sincerely appreciate.
- Be cautious in writing about books about authors that you personally know. In this case, your appreciative phrases should be moderated. Moreover, you should acknowledge that you personally know the authors.

**Publishing from Your Coursework**

Publishing papers based on coursework offers a clear topic from the start. Several students and professors have mentioned to us that they succeeded in publishing their coursework. You have the advantage of completing an extensive literature in that topic and you have started your reflections or a small project in this area.

We note that the overwhelming majority of course papers will never become journal articles. This is because these papers probably contain themes and sections requested for a specific course outline, or previous threads of discussions with professors and colleagues. The writing style and expectations presented in a course paper are usually much lower than that of an academic article. Therefore, a great amount of effort is required to refine the clarity and quality of the course paper. A great researcher in social science, such as Becker (2007), mentions that he is still attempting to finish a course paper after dozens of years. Overall these are good points to start with, but, as mentioned already, these should be further extended with adequate expertise and effort.

**Publishing an Article Based on a Conference Paper**

Writing an article from a paper presented in conference is a promising path. You already have a topic and the expertise required to present your work in front of other scholars. If it is a conference with proceedings, you already have completed writing a substantial part of the article. During the presentation, you might receive feedback from other people or, at least, you can feel what is clear and what needs clarification. You might socialize by approaching people with similar interests. You will have time to think about the topic, to clarify some of your idea, to think more clearly about a possible article, and to receive new input.

You should take this opportunity to write the article. After the conference passes, you should accelerate the process of finishing writing of the article. You should use this time to finish the paper as the feedback and the new perspectives gained from the conference will highly increase your chance of improving the article. We noticed that many papers remain only presented for conferences, without being further published in journals. This is because the text of a conference has less quality than an article from refereed journals. Therefore, you have to improve the quality of the conference paper in order to become a good candidate for refereed journals.

**Writing as a Research Assistant or Graduate Assistant**

Being a graduate or a research assistant might provide some opportunities to publish. You might find a team where research is the main focus. This is not enough to get your name in print. In fact, most of graduates finish their research tasks by collecting data and do not have any opportunity to do some data analysis and write the findings and the final conclusions. If you look for an opportunity to publish as a research assistant or as a graduate assistant, make sure first to carefully choose the team willing to accept you in the writing team. Second, mention in advance
that you want the opportunity to publish as one of the outcomes of your participation in the research project as these jobs usually require collecting or analysing the data.

**Writing from Doctoral Dissertation**

You should view your dissertation as a great opportunity to write articles. You are already an expert in this area. You worked for years reading articles and performed original research in this topic. Despite these advantages, in fact there is not a great percentage of doctoral students publishing from their dissertation (Dunleavy, 2003; Francis & Mills, 2009; Goldsmith, Komlos, & Schine Gold, 2001). Why is this? As mentioned by some authors, a doctoral dissertation is quite different from an article (Kamler, 2008; Luey, 2005; Bolker, 1998). The doctoral thesis design and completion is a journey. You have discussed and presented your research with your committee. You will have given them the required details while explaining the arguments you make in your thesis.

Reshaping the text for a larger audience may require much additional work (Francis & Mills, 2009). The size of an article is less than the size of a doctoral thesis. You have to seriously think about what to remove. You will have to answer some key questions: What literature should be kept and what literature should be removed? Should the theoretical framework be mentioned, should it be omitted, or should it be changed? What research questions, findings, and explanations should be maintained for the article, and which should be removed? These issues are not perfunctory tasks that get done easily but, rather, require a lot of effort, additional time, creativity, and dedication. As Schniederjans (2007) mentioned, it is very important that the doctoral students work with their supervisor and before and after the dissertation is accomplished in order to learn ethical and methodological responsibilities.

**Writing Articles Based on Literature Review or Theoretical Aspects**

Some journals do not appreciate an article based on theoretical concepts or review of the literature and automatically label this genre as unoriginal or minor. As other authors (Levy & Ellis, 2006) already pointed out, we totally disagree with that; it is, in fact, the quality of the review that matters. The difference is whether the review offers a systematic approach and a consistent perspective of a specific topic. Instead of poorly designed or reported ‘original’ research, disseminating previous research and predicting tendencies based on previous contributions makes your contribution sound. It is essential to go beyond simply mentioning studies and theories. What are the main ideas? Can you see some general trends? Who are the main contributors and why? How are these similar and what differences do they take in their approaches? Are you able to make consistent evaluations, recommendations, or predictions for the further research in this area?

In all, writing an article based on review of the literature might offer another possibility to get a doctoral student published in peer-reviewed journals. The advantage is that you are not required to design and report your own experiment. Another advantage is that, after completing this work, one will learn the state-of-the-art research in this specific area. We recommend writing articles on topics that match your original research and help building your expertise.
Social Aspects to Consider When Writing

Although intellectual and academic abilities are very important, we argue that these are not always enough to sustain writing. Scholar writing is about publishing in different conference proceedings, journals, or books, which inevitably requires a complex socio-academic environment. Thus, it is vital to have social skills and know how to extend your professional contacts in the academic community. Social skills are not only an ability to conduct ice-breaking activities but also to find people committed to join a team, build trust, and dedicate their greatest intellectual efforts to scholarship. We often meet students who get stuck completing a publishable version of a paper. Even though the content was clear in their mind, sometimes it is not easy to be able to produce a scholarly outcome.

Authors do not start writing academic articles from nothing. Things like previous expertise, ideas, questions, paragraphs or big pictures about what the article would be are always present (Belcher 2009; Boice, 1990). There are dissertations, coursework, and conference presentations that might give good start for graduate students. Social skills are essential to develop a nurturing environment that will sustain scholarship. You might need these skills to find the right coauthors and negotiate the topics and participants for your research. You need these to discuss the rewriting of articles with other authors, journal editors and reviewers in order to establish a publishing portfolio. At a minimum, you need some people willing to review what you wrote and to give you feedback. In order to have a long time relationship with academics who are able to be reviewers, you should reciprocate these commitments for them.

Finding Social Opportunities to Improve Writing Skills during the Graduate Program

There are several ways to improve your writing skills that will be examined systematically in this section.

Writing Alone

Writing alone is a major path to build your academic personality. It is how both students and senior academics practice their writing skills and make progress. Writing alone is a positive aspect as long as you are being able to be clear about your thoughts and remain productive (Johnson & Mullen, 2007). However, you should consider stopping writing alone when you have spent long periods of unproductive effort and you still remain stuck with the same troublesome problems. When your article has flaws that can be mended by collaborating with other scholars, it is definitely the moment to stop writing alone. We have seen many papers left on the shelf for years since the student did not find the right people for assistance at the appropriate time.

Learning from Books and Special Courses Designed for Writing

There are good books and articles about academic writing and learning how to write. Some of them are masterpieces. For scholarly writing there are different categories of books that might be helpful: dictionaries, grammar books, books about academic writing (Strunk & White, 2000; Williams, 2000; Zinsser, 2001), books that discuss the motivations for the passion of writing (Boice, 1990; Elbow, 1998; Johnson & Mullen, 2007; Silvia, 2007), books about reporting research (Booth, Colomb & Williams, 2003; Day, 1996), or specialized books about writing articles (Belcher, 2009; Murray, 2009). Most research-oriented universities allocate an important
number of resources for courses, workshops, and one-to-one counselling meetings in academic writing. The biggest inconvenience is that no book, course, or counsellor will be enough to guarantee your success in writing. However, used properly, these resources might be very helpful to you.

Collaborating with Writing Experts

It is always good to have someone else adequately criticizing your writing, and giving you positive encouragement. Adequate critiques might give you a lot of feedback and new ideas to improve your work. This is especially challenging, when English is not the maternal language for the doctoral students (Carter, 2009). However, experts in writing are not able to save your articles based on poor research ideas; they are not able to clarify your research ideas but only your writing. Elbow (1998) portraits such a writing expert by mentioning that “he isn’t really listening to you. He usually isn’t in a position where he can be genuinely affected by your words... He has to read them as an exercise” (p. 127).

But practicing writing techniques will not solve the problem of writing. As Strunk and White (2000) mentioned, writing is an act of believe and not a technique: “Style takes its final shape more from attitudes of mind than from principles of composition, for, as an elderly practitioner once remarked, ‘Writing is an act of faith, not a trick of grammar’”… If you write, you must believe in the truth and worth of the scrawl”(p. 84).

Writing with Well Established Scholars

Writing with scholars who are well established experts might be advantageous and the first choice could be your advisor or a member from your thesis committee. A scholar who has similar expertise and you have already described your intentions with them. In fact, maybe they already gave you some ideas for the doctoral thesis and coursework. In addition, they are already aware of your expertise, potential, and research focus. They might be one of those people able to finish in one day the paper that kept you struggling for months.

However, some serious thoughts should be considered about how you negotiate the power, time, and expertise with them. First, they are usually mature researchers and writers, so due to hectic schedules, professors might not be able to have enough time to spend with you. For them, writing with a professional is faster and smoother while writing with you requires additional time for training and mentoring. Even writing the article together with senior academics, you might not be able to understand their approaches or you might be displeased by the small amount of time they spent actually writing the article. After publishing you might feel frustrated because you felt that most of the paper was your work and your ideas yet two or more names have been attached as co-authors. You should try to understand what the expert did in the article and, if you can, write on your own the next time.

Writing in a peer-to-peer group

Building a peer-to-peer support group is very useful. There are support groups where people share their dissertation journey (Bolker, 1998). Some of these groups may support peers in their efforts to succeed in publishing. These groups might be valuable in the sense that participants are sharing similar interests and the different levels of expertise might be attractive (Becker, 2007). Unfortunately, fewer groups are effective in building adequate networking in order to support graduate students in their efforts on writing articles (Bolker, 1998).
Policies and Ethical Issues in Academic Publishing

There are multiple issues expressed by authors and editors (Brice & Bligh, 2004; Denholm, 2006; Serebnick & Harter, 1990; Tandon, Mahajan, Sharma & Gupta, 2006). Here we will discuss the following: 1) fake data and tendentious interpretations, 2) plagiarism, 3) unclear authorship, and 4) unacceptable submissions.

Fake Data and Tendentious Interpretations

Journals and editors have been reporting cases where the data for research was forged (Kaufman & Sugarman, 2001). It happens usually when researchers do not have enough data, they have inaccurate information, they don’t have enough time, or they don’t have enough evidence for their study. Another dishonest practice takes place when researchers willingly misrepresent their findings. This means avoiding some inferences and fabricating or exaggerating others. To avoid inaccurate or fake results, some journals from medicine and scientific fields often request the data and files containing the analysis, in order to verify if the research design, collection of data, and data analysis were properly performed.

Plagiarism and Self-Plagiarism

Plagiarism, defined as using someone’s text or ideas without acknowledging it, is a serious breach of copyright agreements and has major consequences for those who trespass the rules of scholarship and honesty. There are different degrees of plagiarism, from copying paragraphs and sections, to copying ideas. They might have different causes, from sloppy documenting techniques and negligence to knowingly committing of fraud and misdemeanour.

One of the particular cases is self-plagiarism, which is reported when the authors attempt to republish the same article or parts from an article already accepted by another journal. Being under the pressure to publish, some authors attempt to recycle articles published previously. Therefore, it is required to train graduate students properly to avoid these traps. As Bouville (2008) recommends, these cases of plagiarism should be learned by graduate students not as ways of avoiding severe punishments, but as ways to reveal paths to adequate scholarship.

Gift, Pressured and Ghost Authorship

Unfortunately, many articles containing multiple authors, do not report accurately the “true” authors. These facts have been mentioned repeatedly by editors (Alexander, 1953; Slone, 1996). Alexander (1953) signalled the occurrence of suspected undeserved authorship, which means people who do not participate in the process of writing the article or their contribution is not substantial enough to be mentioned as coauthors. Unfortunately, these cases are not treated as seriously as plagiarism, although they have the same consequences: undeserved authorship.

The reverse phenomenon was also noticed, ghost authorship, where people participating in the writing of a paper and having a decisive contribution were not noticed as final authors. This article does not discuss extensively who should be the coauthor or should be only mentioned in acknowledgement. In order to avoid these cases of fraudulent authorship, we suggest that along
with other suggestions (Bags, 2008; Slone, 1996) participating in the publishing process should be responsibly considered.

**Unacceptable Submissions**

Unacceptable submissions are when you submit without any acknowledgment the same article or large parts of it at two different journals. All peer-reviewed journals require that the articles submitted are not under review for other journals. The most obvious reason for this is because of reviewers that voluntarily work in order to provide feedback. Being so many academic journals, it is easy to figure out how the amount of work changes and what would happen if each potential article goes in all possible journals.

There are other important issues that doctoral students might consider about submissions. First, as an important rule in place for all peer-reviewed journals, never submit the same article to two different journals at the same time. Second, if you used some of its content in other conference proceedings or article, you should discuss it with the editor or mention it in the acknowledgment section.

**Submitting and Getting Published**

Although your manuscript may have good ideas, is clear of typos, and employs the use of good grammar, first submissions are not the final stage. You should be always prepared to work with the reviewers to make the required corrections. There are often important issues to negotiate with the editors and reviewers. Delays often occur and you should be prepared to wait. You need to be patient and wait for their feedback. Most of the journal reviewers are scholars working as volunteers. This does not mean that the journal can keep your article for years without reviewing your manuscript. Therefore, it is wise to negotiate with them a deadline when it is possible to have feedback about the article.

Assuming that all stages of preparing for writing, choosing the right team, and following the policies and ethical guidelines for submissions were properly accomplished, it remains the final stage of submitting, dealing with editors and reviewers, and, in the final, getting your name published. It is where your persistence pays off and you start your life as a scholar. This is an opportunity to learn to be a scholar. Some journals and associations mentor authors and reviewers in order to improve their quality as ISI (Information Science Institute) or AERA (American Educational Research Association) do.

This process of peer-review is not always smooth. As several editors mentioned, in the process of evaluation there are cases when the reviewers or the editors are not able to draw a competent evaluation (Benos et al. 2006; Roth, 2006). In addition, there are cases where peer-review might have conflict of interests with the publication (Bosetti & Toscano, 2008; Ancker & Flanagan, 2007; Langfeldt, 2006).

In all, although the peer-review system has flaws, it remains the only way to accept and validate you as scholar. This is the stage when your persistence and scholarship are highly required to make the difference. Taking the risks and finding your voice are both indispensable to get
through (Drake & Jones, 1997). Therefore you need to learn from rejections as well as from acceptances (Foster, 2006). The first version of submission almost never gets accepted as it is (Mouw, 2006). When it is a positive outcome you are requested to provide corrections and improved versions in a specific time limit.

The success of publishing makes normal the process of becoming an independent scholar. Often, publishing has a domino effect: the more you publish, the easier to get published again. As author, you should acknowledge those persons who gave you helpful feedback. It is important to celebrate successes and be aware of events and persons that have supported your writing. Step by step, academic writing will become a long term perspective and strategy. Therefore, it is important to balance your academic achievement with adequate social and family interactions, adequate nutrition, and personal health concerns. A life strategy will be required for success in academia.

**Final Comments**

Publishing academic research is not a one time shot. Publishing is neither a random act, nor a linear process. Inspiration and hard work should prepare each other so that the academic writing work gets accomplished. Willing to contribute to the academic community should be seriously planned in order to find adequate paths of success in academic research. As Cameron (1998) puts it, “all of them did it by making time to write rather than waiting to ‘find’ time” (p. 14).

Designing adequate academic projects, being aware of policies and rules in place, socializing and finding the right collaborators are essential aspects for doctoral students’ in their attempts to start their academic life. There is not only one right answer or right choice for make their plans succeed. Each case remains unique and should be considered in its particular context. By adopting a lifestyle suitable with their scholar life, doctoral students are deemed to find ways of sustaining their academic writing. Therefore, it is important to make realistic schedules and stick with them (Boice, 1990, 2000; Johnson & Mullen, 2007). Writing for a referred journal is not a luxury; it is the core of academic life.

**References**


