

# **Publishing in Graduate School: A Narrative of the Process**

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*Publishing during graduate school has become essential since potential employers in academia consider publications in the determination for employment. This article describes the experience of two graduate students who were successful in converting a class assignment into a publication. Their experiences with peer collaboration, communication, and juggling multiple priorities are described. General lessons learned encourage graduate students to pursue collaborative writing for publication. Additionally, implications address the need for college professors to mentor future scholars and to incorporate the essential elements of developing scholarly publishable papers in the coursework as well as encouraging those students who produce worthy papers to pursue publication.*

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## Publishing in Graduate School: A Narrative of the Process

### Introduction

Doctoral students spend hours reading critically, analyzing methodology, discussing various viewpoints, making presentations, and learning how to write scholarly papers – all necessary skills needed to be successful in higher education. Twombly (2005) explained that “universities seek to obtain or maintain prestige through hiring individuals with degrees from prestigious graduate departments, who in turn contribute to institutional prestige by conducting and publishing cutting-edge research” (p. 425). Pasco (2009) suggested that graduate students who want to be competitive in the job market need to have at least one publication. Carpenter (2008) posited that “counting the number of research publications is one of the most unbiased approaches to measuring research productivity” (p. 227). Fairweather (1997), who has studied the balance of teaching and research relative to faculty base salaries for many years, wrote that “administrators and faculty in all types of institutions therefore use similar research-oriented criteria in hiring and in rewarding existing faculty” (p. 43). Research across disciplines supports the trend toward consideration of publication by selection committees in the hiring process as well as promotion and tenure (Johnson, 2008; Morris, 1998; Stith, 1990). Therefore, it is obvious that publishing is becoming less optional and more expected of graduate students, particularly for those seeking positions in academe (Day, 2008). Poster (2005) reported that surveyed graduate students are advised to publish one article for each year of graduate school.

Although publishing in graduate school is considered important, the Carpenter (2008) study revealed that many graduate programs are not structured to facilitate student publication and hence do not expect students to publish. Little time is spent on one very essential part of working in higher education – publishing. Gonglewski and Penningroth (1998) questioned the preparation of “graduate students for the academic triad of teaching, publishing, and service” (p. 70). Furthermore, Corbyn (2008) stated that “academics are failing to prepare their doctoral students to participate in a research-driven university environment” (p.7).

Carpenter (2008) noted that despite the emphasis on graduate students to publish, it remains difficult for most students. Besides the failure of graduate programs to educate students about scholarly writing, students also have difficulty managing their coursework and finding time for scholarly writing. Many graduate students have postponed pursuing publishing due to the demands of coursework, family life, and jobs (Stith, 1990). Further, the

author cautioned against this approach as a possible mistake. Similarly, Pasco (2009) asked, “Can one expect students to have the time and the confidence in themselves and their work to develop what they have done in a class paper into a publication for a good journal?” (p. 232-233).

### **Faculty-Student Mentorship**

Given most graduate students have limited knowledge and experience pursuing and navigating the publishing process, faculty mentorship may be key for graduate students achieving the goal of publishing (Lumsden, 1984; Rosser, 2004). Researchers identified mentoring as one of the most rewarding and important relationships a graduate student can ever have while preparing for a career in academia or elsewhere (Johnsrud, 1990; Rosser, 2004; Tenenbaum, Crosby, & Gliner, 2001). For example, Johnsrud (1990) noted that mentoring is the means by which graduate students are often recommended to faculty positions, mentored to succeed in academic scholarship, and taught the various aspects of academic life. Rosser (2004) noted, from her personal account of graduate school, that graduate students need to observe, participate, and interact with professors in order to be socialized in the traditions of the professoriate - teaching, research, and service. Tanenbaum and colleagues found, in their study of graduate students from nine different departments at one university, that mentoring was associated with students' productivity (i.e., number of publications, poster presentations, and conference talks) and satisfaction with their overall graduate school experience.

Unfortunately though, student mentorship is often not valued as scholarship and equally rewarded, thus professors tend to limit the amount and depth of mentoring as it is widely assumed that mentoring is part of faculty responsibility (Zipp, Cahill, & Clark, 2009). The authors noted that proper mentoring is particularly acknowledged to be time intensive thus puts extra demand on professors' already busy lives (Zipp et al., 2009). Therefore, as much as mentoring may be a desirable graduate school experience for all students, faculty wishing to engage in it may hesitate because of the price they have to pay in exchange for their own career advancement - particularly non-tenured professors. Graduate students are therefore caught in the middle of this dilemma.

### **Peer Collaboration**

Due to practical reasons, such as faculty-to-student ratio that may not afford every doctoral student proper mentoring, the alternative to faculty-student mentorship may reside in peer collaboration, that is, graduate students working with each other on projects, presentations, publications,

and even teaching assignments. Kram and Isabella (1985) suggested that in a work setting, peer relationships provide an important alternative to mentoring while offering some of the same benefits. The authors posited that peer relationships may even be easier than mentoring in the development of effective communication, mutual support and collaboration. Also, a collaborative approach as part of the graduate school experience is consistent with social learning theory which posits that people learn from one another within a social context, such as graduate school (Ormrod, 1999). In our case, the collaborative work originated from a graduate seminar course.

Friend and Cook (1992) who have worked collaboratively and written extensively on the topic of collaboration provided a definition of collaboration that captures, in many ways, our own collaborative experience. The authors stated, “interpersonal collaboration is a style for direct interaction between at least two coequal parties voluntarily engaged in shared decision making as they work toward a common goal” (p. 5). Kram and Isabella (1985) noted that in contrast with often a one-way relationship in mentoring, “peer relationships offer a degree of mutuality that enables both individuals to experience being the giver [of information and support] as well as the receiver of these functions” (p. 118). They purport that peers affirm each other through shared perceptions, values and viewpoints. Based on our own experiences, we can attest to the benefits and importance of peer collaboration in facilitating the development of scholarly writing skills and publishable work, and therefore it is our goal in this paper to share those experiences.

### Sources

Glesne (2006) explained that whereas quantitative methods provide an observable outcome used to make generalizations about social phenomena, qualitative research methods are used to understand the *how and why* of the social phenomena that produced the outcome. The authors of this current article chose qualitative methods to share the *how and why* of graduate students’ publishing while still in school. Based on the assumption that learning occurs within a social context (Ormrod, 1999), this article provides a voice from the perspective of two graduate students based on life histories documented in several ways. Specifically, this piece addresses the process of publishing the article entitled “The effects of peer tutoring on academic performance of secondary students with disabilities: A synthesis of the literature” in *Remedial and Special Education* (RASE) while in graduate school. The content for this current article was extracted from several

sources which include personal reflection, authors' communication, authors' records, and journal article database search.

### **Personal Reflection**

The authors were asked by two professors to share their perspectives on their publishing experiences with classes of graduate students. In preparation, each author developed talking points which became the basis for their own narrative, reflecting on the experience and process of collaborating to publish. The authors met and reviewed each other's narrative, blending them into a single document.

### **Literature Search**

Each author conducted a computer search in EBSCO, ERIC, PsycINFO, Business Source Complete, JSTOR, and Web of Science. Criteria included: (a) articles addressing the issue of publishing in graduate school, (b) published in scholarly (peer reviewed) journals, (c) published in English, and (d) the articles must have been published in the last 20 years in order to reflect current practice. The keywords included "publishing" and "graduate school." These database searches yielded 92 hits. A review of the titles and abstracts yielded 20 articles on publishing in graduate school. Articles that did not meet the criteria were rejected. A subsequent database search was conducted on the requirement of publications by screening committees hiring for professor positions using the keywords of "scholarly writing," "screening committee," and "publications." Three additional articles were added, totaling 23 reviewed articles. Both of the authors read all of the 23 articles and noted relevant points.

### **Our Stories**

We are both graduate students in a top-tier research university with aspirations to teach in higher education and work with nonprofit organizations serving disenfranchised populations. However, our backgrounds are quite different. Liz Shelby is a White American woman in her sixties who, after retirement from a state-level job in human services, returned to college to work on her doctorate. Nathern Okilwa is a Kenyan man in his thirties who came to the doctoral program from four years of teaching after receiving his master's degree in another state. Both of us are married to working professionals and have one child each, one (Liz's), a college student, the other (Nathern's), a preschooler. Both of us view ourselves as dedicated, hard-working students. We are both mature and self-confident in our role as students. We both respect each other's priorities for

time with family and school work. We also are very tenacious and goal-oriented. At the same time we are both patient and genuinely enjoy working collaboratively with each other. Therefore, our successful collaborative work for the publication was built on shared values. Friend and Cook (1992) noted that parity, shared goals, and shared responsibility are crucial core values, which underlie collaborative relationships. In our interaction, we both identify with these values. However, it is important to note that we both were also supported greatly by understanding spouses, and we were encouraged by two professors to pursue publication.

In addition, each author kept an electronic record of communication, particularly email communication (i.e., between the authors, consultation with professors, and journal editor), over the entire period of writing and publishing which provided information for the narrative shared herein. Maintaining the record-keeping system provided us with three essential ingredients to the process: preservation of evidence, easy access to the information, and consistency between us. Having a comprehensive record helped us connect easily with our previous thinking after time lapses and enhanced our abilities to write in an efficient and fluid manner. In addition, each author kept a binder filled with materials pertinent to the writing, which included manuscript drafts, journal articles, as well as editorial suggestions from professors and journal editor. Examining these documents provided an accurate account of events and facilitated the development of a coherent story. Also, one-on-one dialogue and phone conversations provided critical content for development of the story.

From our experience, we agree with Day's (2008) underscoring of the importance of the ability to concentrate intensely, which we prefer to call "focus," while writing for publication. To help facilitate "focus," we scheduled time and met in environments that were free of distractions and interruptions. We also agreed to redirect each other when either of us was going on a tangent. Each session had specific goals that became milestones in accomplishing the task and served as the basis for self-monitoring. Finally, since we have very busy lives and multiple responsibilities, we both made a commitment to each other that the scheduled time was critically important and should foster the maximum amount of productivity possible.

### **Nathern's Perspective**

In the spring of 2007, Liz and I took a seminar class from a well-published professor, unbeknown at the beginning of the class to most of us. The professor began the class talking tough in terms of high expectations for everyone in the class. I remember getting a little anxious about my success in the class. As the class proceeded, I realized what a great instructor Dr.

Vaughn was – concepts were explained succinctly and checking for understanding was constant. The final paper for the class was an individualized synthesis of the literature. The professor assigned the class to choose a topic of interest and develop individual papers in incremental stages. Class members shared and submitted parts of their papers for comment (i.e., research questions, selection criteria, list of references, code sheet, table(s), draft paper, final paper). My paper’s title was, “The effects of peer tutoring on academic performance of secondary students with disabilities: A synthesis of the literature”. When I wrote the summary of the seven studies, in table format, to my pleasant surprise the professor thought that the main components of the studies had been well presented. In part the feedback read, “This is outstanding work!” (S. Vaughn, personal communication, March 19, 2007). Honestly, Dr. Vaughn’s positive comments caught me by surprise. I knew that I had exerted my best effort; however, I never thought, given her very high standards, that she would consider my paper at the level of “outstanding work.” For the second stage of the assignment, Dr. Vaughn asked the class to submit the first draft of the entire paper. As the professor returned our papers with her feedback, I was again pleasantly encouraged by the very positive feedback. The comment read, “You have an outstanding start on a paper that I think could warrant publication if you continue to develop and write. Congratulations on very fine work!” (S. Vaughn, personal communication, April 15, 2007). One time during class break, the professor talked to me and commended me on the job I had done on the paper. She reiterated her view that the paper could be developed into a publishable piece if I chose to put in the time. Having not published before, I did not really understand what it would take to develop a class assignment into publishable work. I decided to follow up on Dr. Vaughn’s suggestion at the end of the regular semester. I made an appointment to meet with Dr. Vaughn to find out exactly what I needed to do to improve the class paper. One major suggestion was to expand the synthesis in terms of the time period – instead of 2000 – 2006, I needed to expand the search for articles to include 1996 – 2006. I was also interested to know what journal was more viable for the piece I was writing. Dr. Vaughn suggested a couple of journals. I also wanted to know how much help (mentorship) I would get from her while working on this paper. Due to Dr. Vaughn’s many commitments, she declined co-authoring the paper with me, but advised that I would be better served by partnering with another person – possibly a student from our class. However, Dr. Vaughn said she was willing to advise and critique the work as it progressed, which she did and her comments were invaluable.

## Becoming Co-authors

I decided to not pursue publication as a single author due to my desire to incorporate more than one perspective to my work – someone to collaborate with, someone to share ideas with, and someone who could provide a different perspective and skills. Therefore, I invited Liz with whom I had previously taken two classes and worked on a couple class presentations. Our previous collaborative class assignments were very successful so I had no doubt that Liz and I would work productively on this paper as well.

## Liz's Perspective

It was the summer of 2007 when Nathern emailed me to ask whether I would work with him on publishing his paper, I was flattered, and I remembered the first day I met Nathern in the fall semester of 2006. We sat side-by-side, quite by accident, in one of our required courses for first year as doctoral students. During the introductions, we discovered that we were the only two in our cohort of doctoral students in Special Education Administration. We vowed that day to support each other to finish the program. Although Nathern later moved on to a different specialization, Education Policy, I did not hesitate to accept his request. After all, he had already written the paper. Having spent a career of almost forty years writing grants, I felt very confident in my ability as an author and typist. Little did I know this was a two-year commitment! We had a meeting to talk about what it would entail to collaboratively advance the paper to publication status, based on Dr. Vaughn's advice, and outlined what both of us needed to do over the summer.

## Collaboration

Liz was not quite acquainted with the content of the paper yet, except for what Nathern presented in the seminar class during his final project presentation; therefore, she had to read the paper, read all the articles, and to code them. It was imperative for both of us to read and code all of the articles independently for fidelity purposes. Meanwhile, Nathern searched for more articles that would be included within the expanded 1996-2006 timeframe.

During the summer of 2007, Nathern had to leave Austin to join his family in Arizona. This meant the writing collaboration had to be facilitated long distance – mostly via email with some phone calls to clarify email communication. Thank goodness for technology! What we did would not have been possible within our timeframe without computers and telephones. Email communication may sound obvious and easy but the initial stage of the collaboration was tedious and cumbersome. With Liz not having been

part of the original paper, it initially required numerous email communications to clarify and make sure we both were on the same page with the original intent of the paper. That particular summer was just the beginning of the many email exchanges that ensued over the two-year period of writing and revising the article before final acceptance for publication by the journal.

### **Communication – Essential to Collaboration**

A primary concern for us was the need to establish clear communication between two people who speak very different dialects of English – Kenyan British English and East Texas drawl. When we discussed ideas, we would jot down the idea first to ensure we did not lose it. Next, we would try to phrase the idea – bouncing phrases off of each other until we agreed. If either of us did not understand a phrase or word, we both felt comfortable asking for clarification or re-phrasing to make sure we both agreed on the understanding. We met face-to-face around twenty times with each meeting taking four to six hours during school breaks from the summer of 2007 to December, 2008. The elements of active listening played a large role in our communication. Robertson (2005) noted that active listening includes not only attentive body language and minimal interruptions, but also includes reflecting skills of paraphrasing, summarizing, and feedback. Distance provided us with the time and opportunity to engage in reflection on each other's writings.

### **Timeline**

After we read the original seven articles, we discovered differences in coding which we discussed on the telephone and resolved. Based on the conversation, Liz revised the entire text and tables to reflect our decisions and sent them to Nathern who read and revised and sent the document back to Liz. This back-and-forth editing lasted all summer.

#### **First Submission – September, 2007**

During the preceding summer, additional search yielded three more studies on the topic which we each read and coded. The narrative describing the studies and the three tables from the original paper were revised to incorporate the data from the additional studies. We asked Dr. Vaughn, for whose class the original paper was written, to read the final paper prior to submission, and we received her continued encouragement. After the feedback from Dr. Vaughn and one other professor, we felt the paper was ready for submission to a journal that was suggested to us by Dr. Vaughn.

## First Reviewers' Feedback – April, 2008

We received feedback from the editor and three reviewers. One reviewer's feedback noted the need for "major revisions," and the other two recommended "reject [revise] and resubmit." When we received the 13 pages of recommended changes during our semester finals, it was somewhat deflating and certainly not something either of us wanted to deal with at that time especially in the midst of end-of-semester finals.

### Working with Feedback

We would have quit with the 13 pages of recommended changes, but Dr. Vaughn encouraged us by telling us the fact that we were not rejected was good and by urging us to address the concerns and resubmit. So we began reviewing the document, and it became evident to us that the reviewers had spent significant time giving us suggestions to improve the document. Their comments were somewhat humbling but definitely focused our efforts on the areas that needed to be addressed in order to raise our level of writing commensurate to scholarly journals. We decided to work over the summer, 2008, and to divide the labor of addressing the 13 pages of comments by section (i.e. introduction, methodology, results, discussion, implications for practice, future research, summary, tables, and references). The revisions ranged from minor typos to major rewrites which included issues with the introduction (i.e., adding results from previous reviews or syntheses, including seminal works from a major researcher in the field, clarification of terminology, and description of intervention models addressed in the manuscript), methodology (i.e., additional search terms, conducting a hand search, and clarification of range of dates for articles), and scholarly publishing guidelines regarding personal identity on the document and adherence to the *American Psychological Association Manual*, (5<sup>th</sup> ed.). We decided to not agree with one recommendation regarding the social benefits of the intervention on academic outcomes since we did not feel it fell within the intent of the paper. Furthermore, we decided to postpone addressing the social benefits until we wrote another article. After we completed our revisions, we sought feedback from a second professor who was not familiar with the topic. This professor's feedback was vital because it provided an "outsider" perspective, so to speak, which greatly enriched our work. Meanwhile, we completed a proposal for a major conference on the same topic as our paper.

Table 1

*Response to Reviewers' Comments.*

Comments	Response
<p><b>Editor-in-Chief:</b>  <i>I concur with the first reviewer that your Introduction section needs to be restructured. First person plural pronouns rarely work in scholarly articles, and that is true here. I'm not sure who the "we" is in your first sentence, but some of the journal readers will have witnessed criticism and others have not.</i></p> <p><i>Further, while it's appropriate to start broadly in the introduction and narrow down to your thesis or the problem you are addressing, starting with a putative spiral of criticism is overly broad, fails to set the stage for the arguments leading to your primary thesis or problem...</i></p>	<p>The authors agree with the comment. Introduction was restructured. The plural pronoun was deleted.</p> <p>The authors agree with the comment. A new introduction was written deleting much of the original paragraph...</p>
<p><b>Reviewer 1:</b>  <i>Page 3. In the opening sentence the authors state there is an ever-increasing amount of criticism toward special education. Recommend authors elaborate further (e.g., lack of evidence based instruction incorporated in special education classrooms), and provide supporting citations...</i></p>	<p>In response to reviewer's comments, a new introduction was written...</p>
<p><b>Reviewer 2:</b>  <i>...One concern about the paper relates to the use of terms utilized to search the literature. Terms other than peer tutoring are sometimes used to describe peers teaching each other a skill (e.g., peer support, peer buddy). To adequately search the literature, it would be important to use each of these terms but it isn't completely clear if the authors were aware of this and searched the literature using all of these terms to uncover studies, or if they made a specific decision not to use these additional terms...</i></p>	<p>Authors conducted a new search to include descriptors suggested by the reviewer. Also, conducted was a thorough search of reference lists of articles included and hand-search of seven major journals. These new search criteria yielded two additional studies...</p>
<p><b>Reviewer 3:</b>  <i>Secondary education...includes... middle and high school students with and without disabilities (grades 6-12).</i></p>	<p>The target population was revised to be "Grades 6 though 12."</p>

### Second Submission – September, 2008

We took another three months and completely rewrote the article addressing all of the comments in a side-by-side document (one column of reviewer's comments and one column of our response, see Table 1), an approach that was suggested by Dr. Vaughn. Due to the lengthy timeframe, we conducted another search to include 2008 which yielded two new articles that resulted in revisions to both the text and the tables. Also in September, we received approval for a poster session at the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) conference – the largest national conference for special education to be held in April, 2009.

### Second Reviewers' Feedback – December, 2008

Two reviewers' comments noted the need for "minor revision" and recommended changes in slightly over three pages. One reviewer commented that the introduction was too lengthy; therefore, we shortened the introduction by creating a brief table for some of the descriptive information. In addition, we corrected typos the reviewers had noted.

### Third Submission – December, 2008

Since it was another break from the long semester, we were able to revise and resubmit within a ten-day timeframe. As a result of our professor's encouragement, we included an acknowledgment with the faculty member's approval.

### Third Reviewers' Feedback – January 11, 2009

We received the following notification: "It is a pleasure to accept your revised manuscript in its current form for publication" (M. Wehmeyer, personal communication December 7, 2008).

### **Juggling Multiple Priorities**

Neither of us had any idea how long the process would take. Even when we were both in town working the few days before or after a semester, we grossly underestimated how long editing together would take (e.g., two hours quickly became six). However, we were not willing to sacrifice our studies so working on school breaks somewhat extended the timeline.

We found that the writing process was significantly impacted by other life responsibilities and vice versa. We had to learn to juggle these responsibilities (e.g., family, work, student, etc.) in order to manage them all. This, in part, explains why the whole process took us longer than it could have.

Additionally, there was no way we could effectively attend to the demands of our classes and at the same time write a quality article worthy of publication. Most of our editing was done during breaks from the regular semester, that is, summer and winter break – meeting at the university library, local city library, and Liz’s husband’s unoccupied office on the weekend. In order to make the most efficient use of our time, we scheduled face-to-face meetings in advance.

The task was made more challenging because we chose not to neglect our responsibilities to our families. Our decision to prioritize family is supported by Stith (1990), who encouraged graduate students to pursue publishing but noted the necessity to schedule leisure and family time to prevent burnout. Nathern traveled back and forth to Arizona to spend time with his wife and toddler. In addition, Nathern was teaching in a middle school full-time. Although Liz was retired, she was a full-time student, worked part-time as a board member and grant writer for a small non-profit, provided training for another non-profit, was active in her church, was committed to her husband, and was long-distance support to her son who was in college out of state. Every day was a juggling act! We mention all these aspects of our lives because graduate student life does not operate independently of other obligations of life.

## **Lessons Learned**

### **Publishing Takes Time**

First and foremost, we learned publishing is a very lengthy process so students need to start the process in their first year of graduate school. For us, upgrading a class paper to a publishable article, corresponding with the journal, and responding to reviewers’ comments were all time consuming tasks. Although we learned more from the 13 pages of reviewers’ comments about writing style and format than we had learned in any class, the reviewers’ comments were not always specific and required much time and contemplation to decipher what needed revision. Furthermore, our multiple responsibilities and roles (e.g., student, parent, spouse, professional jobs, etc.) contributed to a lengthy publication process for us.

Also, we established that identifying a journal and fully getting acquainted with their expectations is crucial to this process. We certainly concur with Brewer, Marmon, and McMahan-Landers (2004) who stressed the importance of reading the submission criteria from the journal (usually online) before starting, referring to them continually throughout the process, and familiarizing oneself with the style and editorial guidelines. In addition,

we cannot underscore enough the need to constantly refer to the *American Psychological Association Manual*, (5<sup>th</sup> ed.) – it is a great resource.

### **Involve Faculty**

Having a professor to consult for advice throughout the writing process and correspondence with a journal is critical. In our case, Dr. Vaughn's feedback on our manuscript, suggestion on journals to submit our manuscript, and overall encouragement was invaluable. Again, in many cases the ideal situation is for students to initially co-author with a professor or mentor; however, circumstances do not always allow for faculty-student collaboration. In our case, not authoring with a professor or mentor became an advantage for us in that we had to wade through the entire process ourselves, thus learning from our experiences. However, over the extended period of time, we better understood the process of publishing and became aware of the skills necessary to truly collaborate.

### **Work With A Peer**

Noting that the majority of articles we reviewed in the education journals are written by collaboration of authors, we suggest that graduate students find someone with whom they work well and collaborate on a paper. Brewer et al. (2004) recommended collaboration with someone who has been successful in publishing; but in our case, not knowing the process and circumstances not allowing to co-author with a professor forced us to learn the process as we progressed. Graduate school should be an excellent and nurturing environment in which to learn how to collaborate for publication. Morris (1998) noted that "writing for and publishing journals is also a way to learn in a contained environment the basics of professional academic life – the social procedures, the protocols, the routine psychological and political conflicts as well as the ethical issues" (p. 500).

In addition, we believe that graduate students need not to be afraid to try publishing. Day (2008) conducted a study of graduate students and found the greatest barrier to publication was fear. Day wrote that "bravery is having the fear but doing it anyway" (p. 26). We found that most professors will help in some way. Poster (2005) conducted an informal survey of her fellow graduate students which indicated that "graduate students are frustrated, puzzled, and scared, but, overall we remain ambitious and committed to success in the academy" (p. 92). However, graduate students must be tenacious enough to prevail over the challenges of publishing, and it is important to remember that even if the submission is rejected, it is a learning experience. Due to the high competition, and hence high rejection rates in the print journals, Poster (2005) reported that "most graduate

students celebrate the expansion and innovation of the online publishing” (p. 90). Online publishing has expanded the breadth of publishing opportunities and has made dissemination of scholarly work efficient.

### **Remain Goal-Oriented**

We found that co-authoring offered multiple perspectives that enriched our work. Brewer et al. (2004) noted the publication process “can frustrate and dishearten many novice writers” (p.16). Hence, it is important for coauthors to remain focused and in harmony with the purpose of the article. We found it was helpful to remind each other of the goal when we would get off track. For this to be accomplished, coauthors must get along.

### **Communicate Effectively**

We did not experience any major conflicts since we chose to use active listening to understand each other’s perspectives and respected each other’s opinions. For example, when we did not understand a word, phrase, or thought, we asked each other for clarification and re-phrased to ensure common understanding. We also learned it is important to communicate upcoming commitments and to respect each others’ obligations outside of the writing process.

### **Keep Accurate Records**

We discovered it is important that the co-authors keep records of every element of the process (e.g., all emails, edited versions, scheduled meetings and reference materials). Accurate records helped facilitate a smooth transition between previous, current, and future work sessions or completed and pending sections of the manuscript.

### **Schedule Work Sessions**

Additionally, scheduling specific times for work sessions and setting a goal for every work session (i.e., the task to be completed) made every session productive. Furthermore, Levy and Schlomowitsch (n.d.) advised that in collaboration, division of labor is important so everyone knows their roles and responsibilities in the process. We agree the division of labor is an efficient way to handle the demands of the process within limited time constraints.

### **Be Determined**

Lastly, we found that persistence and long-term perseverance is essential because the process was always longer than we thought it would be.

### **Implications for Professors**

After our experience and due to the importance placed on publication in the post-graduate school world, we feel that graduate students need to learn while in graduate school how to write and publish scholarly papers, and faculty are key in facilitating the process. Aitchison and Lee (2006), both education faculty, recommend use of writing groups that share the following four pedagogical principles: identification with people of shared interests, use of peer review, development of community for discourse as well as learning, and incorporation into the program as the expected practice. Pasco (2009) suggested that graduate students find a faculty mentor to not only ensure the manuscript is well-written, but also to provide encouragement for the publication of worthy papers. In addition, professors could help graduate students learn to write for publication by structuring the classes with deadlines for various sections of the paper such as the introduction, tables, results, and discussion as well as time for critique at each stage. In their study of graduate students in German studies, Gonglewski and Penningroth (1998) found that 68% of the students considered publishing articles to be important compared to a dismal 24% who engaged in writing for publication. This raises the need for graduate students, with the mentorship of their professors, to become professionally active early in their graduate school career (Gonglewski & Penningroth, 1998).

Evidence suggests that publishing is critical in the current competitive job market place and successful career in the academy (Carpenter, 2008; Gonglewski & Penningroth, 1998; Stith, 1990). Therefore, graduate programs and professors need to structure programs that equip graduate students with skills necessary for publishing scholarly work. One way could be for departments to offer a seminar class in *Academic publishing* that purposefully teaches skills for scholarly publishing (Leydens & Olds, 2007). Leydens and Olds suggested that such a class should emphasize helping students with discourse conventions relevant to their specific research interests, building confidence in students' ability to engage in technical writing for general or specific audiences, and developing competence in applying rhetoric tools in their specific work. Morris (1998) suggested that these skills can be intentionally taught and learned; otherwise, "we help to foster an *invisible* elitism, charisma based, favouring those who 'just know' what the right thing to do might be – or who have family, friends, and experienced or influential advisers to help them" (p. 499).

Pittam, Elander, Lusher, Fox, and Payne (2009) conducted a study of graduate psychology students and found confusion regarding their identities as authors. None of the students identified with being an academic author.

Pittam et al. noted that “understanding of authorship may be relatively underdeveloped among students at all levels...and approaches to writing may reflect more enduring styles or dispositions that would not be expected to change spontaneously over time” (p. 165). Therefore, professors need to clarify not only the process, but also the writing style (i.e., academic argument) and concrete suggestions to avoid plagiarism. Most colleges and universities have stated policies regarding academic honesty; however, to avoid student writing consisting of only “he said, she said,” students need specific instruction on when and how to properly cite resources. Unfortunately, we learned by trial-and-error. Poster (2005) reports that many graduate students report not receiving any “advice about the importance or originality of their work” (p. 91). For scholarly work, there is no room for plagiarism; all quotes and ideas gained from other sources must be properly referenced. Finally, graduate students could benefit from professors using more class time for the students to critique existing works as well as each others’ papers.

### **Conclusion**

We decided to write this article upon the suggestion of a professor to share our story of the process after we had success transforming a class assignment into a publishable article and made presentations in two graduate classes reflecting on our experience. This account is based on recollection of the process and some documentation from our records. Future research is needed to address different ways in which graduate students can become comfortable in submitting articles for publication. Research regarding graduate student perspectives on their professional development, such as the Gonglewski and Penningroth (1998) study, may provide the field of higher education with answers to possible gaps in their doctoral programs regarding student publishing.

Although the outcome was successful for us, the reader should note that some submissions are rejected. Henson (2001) noted that almost two-thirds of the journal editors surveyed reported rejection rates of over 65 percent. Possible implications of the high rejection rates may be the rapid increase in the number of student journals and online publications. Pasco (2009) suggested that strength of character cannot be taught in the classroom, but is learned through “persistence in the face of rejection” (p.232) and the humility to accept suggestions. Pasco underscored “the essential need for self-confidence, mixed with humility and persistence” (p.232) in order to achieve success in publishing. Graduate students have taken advantage of the

growth of online publishing (Poster, 2005). Pasco (2009) also noted the option of student journals, albeit having limited readership.

Publication during graduate school has become essential in the competitive job market. Poster (2005) reported one student's comment that highlights the dilemma of graduate school publishing: "My drive to publish is about jobs, although ideally it would be about intellectual conversation. My drive to write is about scholarship" (p. 92). Publishing does not have to be learned by trial-and-error after students exit graduate school. Professors can encourage students by structuring classes that not only expose students to current trends and issues in academia, but also emphasize collaboration and building the essential elements of a scholarly paper. Learning these skills in a supportive, educational environment can lead to more confident and successful authors of publications after graduation.

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