

“Hey Jane – How do I get published in *Gender & Society*?”

Welcome to Column 27 of Hey Jane! This is a project of the SWS Career Development Committee. Questions and answers are generated by the committee and SWS members. Answers are compiled from several sources. All columns are archived on our committee’s page on the SWS website.

This column includes contributions by Heather Hurwitz and *Gender & Society* editor Joya Misra, and is edited by Tina Fetner.

Hey Jane! How do I get published in *Gender & Society*?

Gender & Society is always in need of good new research. Strong feminist scholarship should be published in *Gender & Society*. It is a highly cited and prestigious journal that can be a great addition to your CV (Jacobs 2009); indeed, it currently is among the top five journals in the discipline in terms of its impact factor (which looks at citations). *Gender & Society* has an 8% acceptance rate, but if you receive a “Revise and Resubmit” decision, there is a better than 50% chance that your resubmission will be published. Here are some things to keep in mind when writing your article:

Fit to journal – Make sure that your article fits into the existing content of *Gender & Society*. Read several issues of *Gender & Society*, and look to see whether your article, and how you’ve framed it, fits the journal. Editors are keen on any content that appeals to journal readers, that shows engagement with existing feminist social science research, and that brings rich data to important questions about gender. Look to see if there are any recent articles in *Gender & Society* on your topic or even near to your topic, to get a sense of how the issues are being framed by *Gender & Society* authors. Since reviewers are usually people who have published in the journal, or who read the journal regularly, it is important to convince the reviewers that you also know the audience for the journal and can successfully engage with it. There are no buzzword topics or content that is especially desired or disapproved, though the journal webpage does list the topics that have been most frequently addressed over the last five years.

Framework for writing your article – There is no required format but there are some general guidelines for your article that most publications follow. Look very carefully at the “Guide to New Submissions.” This guide tells you everything you need to know for framing empirical articles and makes suggestions regarding the framing of theoretical articles as well. Model your article on those that have been published in *Gender & Society*, both in terms of the organization of the article and how your piece fits into the ongoing feminist debates on the topic of your paper. It is important to listen to the existing dialogue and join that conversation.

Your introduction, theory, and literature review should be tightly framed. Be sure to cite articles that have appeared in the journal and are relevant to your work. At the same time, only cite the things that are most relevant to your work. Funnel down to your main question by succinctly and thoroughly reviewing the existing literature. Think about the major theoretical contribution you are trying to make, and then provide the background necessary to make that contribution.

Focus on your findings and rely on your data as evidence. What is new? Develop the story that you want to tell. For quantitative articles, robustness checks on the data are important. For qualitative articles, explain all quotes and analyze them explicitly, explaining what you think they mean, rather than asking your reader to do that work for you. Think through why all of the quotes that you include matter.

The Hook – Within the first 1.5 pages, you should have specified the argument that your paper will make, and how its contribution is original. The hook, or the interesting theoretical claim that you make, is a very important part of your article. Focus on the “hook,” the stand-out contribution, the key piece of research that is essential and provocative to readers of *Gender & Society*. It is good to be very specific. Think of demonstrating/showing “here’s what my data does, and here’s how you’ll think differently because of my paper.”

Before you submit - Rely on your personal network of friends and scholars to read and critique your work before you send it to G&S. Often scholars revise their work several times before the article is polished enough to submit it. You only have one chance to submit the article to *Gender & Society*; if it is rejected you cannot resubmit it. Increase your chances of your article not being initially rejected for sloppy writing, underdeveloped theorizing, incomplete citations, and so on, by asking friends or mentors to read your work. Another way to signal the seriousness of your contributions is to have your work professionally copy edited, or to simply very carefully edit your paper with an eye to grammar, spelling, and referencing style.

The submission process and requirements – Follow Chicago style citations and other submission formatting requirements as specified on the *Gender & Society* website. Do not suggest reviewers, although be aware that if you have cited scholars in your paper, they may be asked to review the paper.

Submission timeline – Submit your article electronically through the G&S website <http://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/gendsoc>. You will be informed relatively quickly if your piece has been rejected outright. The reviewers will alert the editor as to their recommendation for publication within about two to three months, sometimes sooner. You will receive reviewers’ feedback as well as the editor’s decision letter. This is a great feature of *Gender & Society* – the editor and reviewers are committed to developing good scholarship, so even if the paper is rejected from the journal, you should spent time considering the comments in revising your paper.

Responses from the editor - There are a few different designations that your paper might receive from the editor: Reject, Revise and Resubmit, Conditional Accept, and Accept.

92% of those people who submit an article to *Gender & Society* are rejected. Try not to take it personally. Whether you are rejected outright or rejected upon review, use the feedback from *Gender & Society* to revise your article and try to submit it to another publication. Many of the articles that *Gender & Society* rejects are simply not a good fit for the journal. One clear way to tell where your paper fits is simply to look at the articles you are referencing – this is a great indicator of where the conversation you are engaging in is taking place.

If your paper is rejected without review, the editor may note that the paper simply is not a good fit for the journal, and comments from reviewers will not necessarily help you make the paper a better one, since they'll be taking you to task for not fitting into the journal. It is better to place your paper in the right journal than to try to reframe it for one that is the wrong fit. While this is a difficult response to receive, the editor is trying to help you find the right place for your paper, rather than having you go through a long review process, to be rejected for not being a good fit. If you think you can reframe the paper for the journal, you can always make a new submission, after carrying out those revisions.

Occasionally a paper is rejected without review because the editor thinks it needs further development before it would receive the right sort of feedback from reviewers. If the editor notes that she really likes your paper, but thinks you need to reframe or develop it before making a new submission to the journal, take her at her word. If the changes she suggests would indeed make the paper a better paper, and if you think *Gender & Society* is the right fit for your piece, do carry out the revisions and make a new submission. You might also decide that *Gender & Society* is not the right fit; you might take the editor's suggestions for other potential outlets. While it can feel devastating to be rejected without review, the editor is really trying to help you improve your piece so that you have a better chance of being published in the journal.

Many other papers that are submitted are rejected after the review. The editor works hard to identify top scholars in your field to provide you with comments. *Gender & Society* reviewers take their work seriously, and write thoughtful, careful reviews. While it may be tempting to just put the paper in a drawer after being rejected, you should instead think: "How can I use the comments made by the reviewers to ensure that next time around, it doesn't get rejected?" Take the comments made by the editor and reviewer, and make a list for yourself – using neutral language – about the main revisions that they recommend. Then, take that list, and work on revising your paper, crossing out each major recommendation as you tackle it. Give yourself a timeline to complete the revision, get your trusted friends and mentors to read it once again, and send it out to another great journal. Consider the recommendations that the editor made for other potential outlets for your paper, and be sure that your revision does a good job of showing how your paper fits for the journal to which you plan to send it, making sure you're aware of recent papers on the topic, etc. Don't give up. This can be a long process, but with hard work, your paper will get better, and you will learn a great deal that will be helpful to you with other papers you are working on.

Papers that show a great deal of promise, as well as a strong fit for the journal, but are not fully developed will receive a "Revise and Resubmit" (R&R). This means that the reviewers were interested in your paper, but you may need to collect new data, rework the theoretical framework, or further developed your analyses. In other words, it is important that you read the letter from the editor and the reviewer comments carefully, and undertake extensive and serious revisions. Reviewer comments are there to help you. Carefully read over all of the feedback that you receive from *Gender & Society*. If you receive some information in the reviews that are contradictory, it is ok to ask the editor the best way to approach the reviews; she will also signal in her letter which points are the most important. As you prepare to resubmit your article, you will need to craft a response memo that explains how you have addressed the comments made by the editor and reviewers, as well as any other revisions you have

made. Explain why if you didn't make suggested changes, showing that you considered the suggestion, but why you think that revision would not strengthen the paper. These memos are often several pages long; very short ones may suggest that you did not take the comments seriously enough. You should aim to return your revised paper within about three months. About half of those who receive a Revise & Resubmit will go on to see their papers accepted for publication. Read the "Guide to Resubmissions" carefully, so that you increase your chances of being in that lucky group.

Conditional Acceptances are rare on the first time around, and mean that the reviewers and editor believe that your paper will make an excellent contribution to the journal and will very likely be published (assuming you make the changes requested). Authors usually receive Conditional Acceptances only after their paper has been resubmitted once or twice. When you receive one, you will have to address all of the reviewers' comments, suggestions for changes and editing and turn around another draft of the paper within two weeks.

The final stage is Accept, which happens after you have addressed the final minor issues. At this point, you will transfer copyright and will receive a final, copy-edited version of the paper. You will likely send it back to the journal within a week or so.

From submission to publication, your article in *Gender & Society* might take as little as a year, though most take longer. Don't give up. The peer review process is there to make your paper stronger, not to keep you from publishing. Persistence is the key.

REFERENCES

Jacobs, J. A. 2009. "Where Credit Is Due: Assessing the Visibility of Articles Published in *Gender & Society* with Google Scholar." *Gender & Society* 23:817.