

# How to Get Published

James W. Chesebro

Factors affecting publishing outcomes are examined. This essay is designed for those new to publishing or those who need to renew their commitment to the publishing process. Prescriptions are suggested for overcoming factors inhibiting the successful completion of the publishing process. Specific attention is devoted to motivational, analytic, and content variables likely to affect publishing outcomes positively.

**KEY CONCEPTS** Publishing, writing, scholarship, academic journals, journal articles, faculty productivity.

**JAMES W. CHESEBRO** (Ph.D., University of Minnesota, 1972) is Chair and Professor in the Department of Communication, Indiana State University, Terre Haute, IN 47809. This essay evolved over a protracted period of time. It is based upon a presentation originally given in June 1985 as a visiting faculty lecturer at Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA. In different forms, with different emphases, it has been delivered several times since then, generally as an invited visiting faculty presentation, and most recently as a special presentation at the annual meeting of the Speech Communication Association of Puerto Rico convention, San Juan, PR, December 1992. The author acknowledges and appreciates the useful contributions of James C. McCroskey and Virginia Richmond at the December 1992 presentation; their contributions have shaped emphases in the written version of this analysis.

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**P**ublishing continues to constitute a critical element of the academic world. In 1990, The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching maintained that, but when it comes to making judgments about professional performance, the three rarely are assigned equal merit," for "research and publication" usually determine "academic rank" (1990, p. 15). If a trend can be discerned, the importance of publishing appears to be increasing in academic institutions. In 1969, 21 percent of faculty reported that "it is difficult for a person to achieve tenure if he or she does not publish." Twenty years later, in 1989, the number of faculty believing publishing was essential to tenure had almost doubled to 42 percent (Carnegie, 1990, p. 12). Publishing potential and productivity affect decisions regarding faculty hiring, tenure, and promotion.

This essay<sup>1</sup> re-examines the publishing process, isolates factors inhibiting the successful completion of the process, and recommends prescriptions for publishing articles within the discipline of communication. Directly shaped by those factors which affect the writing process, this essay considers the motivational, analytical, and content issues most likely to affect a successful outcome to the publishing process.

### Motivation

Many faculty members believe that the publishing process does not encourage members of the discipline to take the steps necessary to publish. Indeed, faculty are de-motivated by the publishing process. Among faculty, 62 percent believe that "the primary criterion" for "promotion of faculty" should be "teaching effectiveness" (Carnegie,

1990, p. 32). Additionally, 38 percent of faculty members believe that "at my institution, publications used for tenure and promotion are just counted, not qualitatively measured" (Carnegie, 1990, p. 33). Similarly, reporting that "quantity matters more than quality," the American Council of Learned Societies has concluded that the attention given to publications has created a "flood of largely unreadable (and unread) monographs" (in Smith, 1990, p. 183). Accordingly, it should come as no surprise to discover, then, that 68 percent of faculty believe that "better ways, besides publications," are needed "to evaluate the scholarly performance of the faculty" (Carnegie, 1990, p. 34).

The value of publications as a measure of scholarly performance will probably continue to be debated for some time to come. In the meantime, it would appear that publications will continue to serve as the primary criterion for hiring, tenuring, and promoting faculty members. Accordingly, faculty members may find publication standards inappropriate, but given current conditions, "survival" in the academic environment requires that faculty members adopt an attitude, frame of mind, or motivational set which encourages them to initiate and to complete the publishing process.

An interim conclusion reached in this analysis is that the primary reason why faculty members do not publish is because they are not motivated to write. Alternative explanations simply do not adequately account for why faculty fail to publish.

In terms of invention, faculty members have generally established a rich reservoir of creative conceptions and formulations from which essays and research reports might be crafted. Both master's and Ph.D. research and theses constitute one base for written essays and research reports. Additionally, formulating lectures for classes and seminars provides yet another ready source of potential materials for possible publication. Finally, the wealth of books and journal articles within every specialization, convention papers and programs, informal discussions with colleagues, and the various colloquia which faculty attend, all provide more than enough stimulation for journal publications.

Moreover, most faculty members already possess the basic skills necessary to complete journal publications on a regular basis. Certainly, seminar papers and theses are not in a form which is acceptable for publication in a journal. Yet, seminar papers and theses require the same kind of basic skills required to publish an article in a journal. Or, if the adaptation from seminar paper and theses seems too strained, most faculty members possess the ability to identify, describe, and interpret the format and conventions governing the content, research, style, organization, and format requirements of a journal. If all else fails, descriptions of the formats and conventions of journals are readily available. For example, those wishing to publish a research report in *Communication Quarterly* should find the first two chapters of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychology Association* (1983) instructive in dealing with all of the fundamental requirements necessary to author an essay. For those wishing to publish critical analyses in this journal, similar descriptions of essential publishing requirements are also available (see, e.g., Bormann, 1965, pp. 213-221 & 242-249).

These preliminary considerations provide a base for the first set of prescriptions recommended if one is to be published:

**1. Write.** To get published, an author must write words, sentences, paragraphs, and pages. The primary reason authors are not published is because they fail to do the obvious—they must engage in the physical behaviors required to generate words. The most minimum but essential standard must constantly guide an author: If you are not writing words, you cannot have an essay or research report published.

**2. A rigorous writing schedule may have to be established.** Ideally, writing for

publication is at least an established feature of a work routine. If a time period is not set aside on a daily basis, a portion of a specific day each week should be reserved solely for writing or publication. For those writing for publication for the first time or returning to writing after a delay, a rigorous schedule may have to be established.

**3. At the outset of a new project, keep the words flowing in written form.** All of the preliminary stages of a new project should be encoded and recorded in written form. The ideas which constitute the content of a published article become "real" only when they exist as sentences in written form. The final end or product of a publishing project can be measured only by what exists in written form. The closer a research report or essay is to the form "record" all ideas in written form, the closer a research report or essay is to the form necessary for a published article to appear. Indeed, even in the early stages of brainstorming, jotting ideas down as they emerge constitutes one of the less threatening ways to write. As ideas are grouped and ordered to create the first working outline, written formulations are equally important. Certainly, the various formulations of the first tentative or working thesis should be recorded and retained, for these written records may prove invaluable when the first draft of the essay is written, and especially when revisions of the first draft are undertaken. Macdonald (1987, pp. 54-98) has provided an equally useful description of how writers "get started," generate the "messy first draft," and "sharpen" the "thinking and logic" in an essay.

**4. Be willing to be criticized.** Some 95 percent—if not all—of submissions are revised before they are published (see, e.g., Standing Committee on Research, p. 18). These revisions are a response to formal criticism. In this sense, when submitting a research report or essay for publication, an author invites criticism. To publish a research report or essay, an author normally must revise in a way which deals adequately with criticism. To publish an article, then, an author must be willing to be criticized. Given these "realities," an author must necessarily adopt an attitude which encourages a positive response to criticism. Indeed, understood in certain ways, criticism can be viewed as useful, if not essential, to the successful completion of the writing process.

Writing invites a response, but an author seeks to generate feedback which draws attention to, enhances and extends the ideas expressed in a research report or essay. Such feedback is necessarily beyond the capability of the author. If the author could anticipate feedback which enhanced and extended the ideas within his or her essay, these ideas would be incorporated into the research report or essay before it was published. A receiver's feedback constitutes a different kind of understanding than the author or source of the message produces. To seek feedback from others is to seek a different understanding of the message than the author intended. If the feedback draws attention to, enhances, and extends the ideas expressed within the research report or essay, an author can appropriately perceive the feedback as positive.

Colleagues can be an excellent initial source of feedback and informal criticism. Before formal submission to a journal, direct criticism of preliminary drafts of a manuscript by colleagues can be extremely useful. The feedback of colleagues can prepare an author for the more formal assessments which journal editors provide. And, the feedback provided by colleagues can enhance the quality of an essay, for colleagues can frequently identify problems in a manuscript as well as suggest corrective strategies which will reduce the issues which a manuscript can encounter during a formal review.

To increase the possibility that an article receives positive feedback, most academic journals have adopted formal conventions to provide preliminary and representative reactions to a research report or essay before it is published. These reactions are generally

## Audience Analysis

A manuscript is directed towards an audience. As an author writes, any number of audiences can be imagined. However, the decision to publish in an academic journal narrows the range of potential audiences. Yet, even within an academic context, an author might anticipate that a manuscript is designed for "the entire discipline." Or, an author might believe that a manuscript is intended to influence a specific or identifiable group of specialists or experts within the discipline. Or, an author may view a manuscript as directed toward an "ideal" audience of informed scholars. Any one or more of these potential "audiences" can shape the choices an author makes in a manuscript.

Functionally, however, the three to four members of a journal review board will actually determine whether or not a manuscript is to be published. In this sense, to get published, an author might aptly conclude that the associate editors of a journal are the most important and immediate audience for an author. In several respects, the writing process becomes more manageable if this audience of associate editors is recognized at the outset. There are few guidelines available to authors if they attempt to anticipate the reactions of relatively amorphous groups such as "the entire discipline," "a group of specialists or experts within the discipline," or "an 'ideal' audience of informed scholars." Authors will find it far easier to identify the most appropriate "target" journal for their manuscripts, and then examine the list of associate editors most likely to read their manuscripts. Indeed, once the list of associate editors is at hand, based upon the prior publications of the associate editors, authors may even be able to anticipate which of the associate editors are most likely to be reviewing their submitted manuscripts, for an editor is likely to ask associate editors who have published in the authors' areas of expertise to review submitted manuscripts. Accordingly, authors may even be able to anticipate some of the substantial issues, and perhaps even organizational and stylistic concerns, which are likely to appear on the reviews received from an editor.

But, even if an author decides not to attempt to anticipate the reactions of specific associate editors, the criteria and standards employed by associate editors are known and can be reasonably anticipated. For example, Ryan<sup>2</sup> (1982) has identified 25 criteria employed by journal editors and their associate editors to evaluate scholarly manuscripts. Four of these criteria are worthy of note because over 50 percent of journal editors and associate editors use these criteria to evaluate manuscripts. These criteria include:

1. **Results should be clearly presented.** A clearly specified thesis, presented in the few first pages of a manuscript, allows editors to anticipate and understand the results reported. Likewise, a precisely stated preview sentence, which indicates how a manuscript is to be developed, should shape and clarify the results described later in a manuscript. Similarly, the use of subheads throughout a manuscript, which parallel the major areas identified in the preview sentence, can function as a convenient method of clarifying an author's intentions and objectives. Moreover, a comprehensive but concise review of the published literature of the discipline functions as yet another clarifying definition of the results an author provides. Perhaps more important, an author should devise methods for highlighting the major results being reported. For example, if the abstract—which is generally the first paragraph read by editors—provides a concise summary of the results reached, it can constitute an obvious but critically important way of clarifying results. Similarly, an author might re-examine a completed manuscript to be sure that the first sentence of each paragraph is, indeed, a topic sentence. In other cases, the most obvious approach might be employed, and the major results might be articulated in single declarative statements and perhaps even enumerated. In still other cases, transitional

provided by a board of associate editors appointed by the editor of the journal. The associate editors generally engage in "blind" reviews (i.e., no knowledge of the author's name and institutional affiliations) in order to focus solely upon the content and form of the research report or essay rather than its source. These associate editors ideally possess expertise in the content area and method employed in the research report or essay. Typically a journal editor asks two to three associate editors to read and respond to the quality of a submission before it is published. The associate editors' responses are also likely to include an evaluation of the submission (i.e., to publish, revise significant, make minor revision, reject, or submit to another journal).

This kind of review generates criticism. The criticism offered by the associate editors offers a kind of "definitive" assessment about the "ultimate" value of the essay in terms of suitability for publication. But, such critical evaluations are generally structured by editors to include feedback useful to an author who would undertake a revision of the essay.

5. **Plan on resubmitting.** The first draft of a manuscript submitted to a journal editor is likely to be rejected. For example, the journals published by the Speech Communication Association have a rejection rate of 90 to 95 percent. In other words, some nine out of every 10 manuscripts submitted to these journals are rejected. Likewise, some 80 percent of manuscripts submitted to "regional" journals, such as *Communication Quarterly*, are rejected.

These rejection rates could discourage authors, but they should not. The rejection rates conceal as much as they reveal. The rates do aptly reveal that authors should be capable of being experiencing rejection. At the same time, if authors revise and resubmit their manuscripts, they generally have a fifty-fifty chance of having their manuscripts published. Moreover, the number of recognized outlets for publication have increased dramatically during the last 20 years. In 1971, the Speech Communication Association indexed seven journals in its index to journals in communication studies (Matton & Matton, 1971). By 1992, the number of journals indexed had increased to 19 (Matton & Ortiz, 1992). Moreover, the actual number of new journals has increased significantly since 1971. Seven or over one-third of the 19 journals indexed in 1992 did not exist in 1971. In all, resubmissions increase the probability that a manuscript will be published, and the number of outlets for manuscripts in recognized communication journals has also expanded dramatically.

All of these factors suggest that if an author is to be published, the most critical issue is the author's motivation. To publish, first and foremost, an author must decide to write. Discipline may be required, perhaps in the form of a rigorous daily or weekly writing schedule. Additionally, an author may have to reinforce the commitment to write by using the written medium during all major steps of the creative, organizing, and revision process. And, as an author approaches completion of a manuscript, some of the most critical motivational issues emerge, for the author must decide that he or she is willing to be criticized and willing to revise and resubmit a manuscript. For the writers who have already been trained as researchers and writers in advanced programs of study at the graduate level, all of these factors are predominantly motivational issues. All of this suggests, as noted at the outset of this analysis, that the primary reason why faculty members do not publish is because they are not motivated to write. While any generalization should be qualified, given the training most faculty members receive in graduate school, how the journal review process functions, and the growing number of outlets for publication, one can reasonably conclude that one of the primary reasons why faculty members have not published is simply because they have decided not to make publishing a priority in their academic career.

sentences, summarizing a result just reached and previewing the next, can be a useful method of clarifying. Finally, while it might highlight new directions for future research or call for action, the conclusion of a manuscript should also contain a concise summary of major results reached by an author. Thus, given the significance which editors attribute to clarity, the final revision of a manuscript might appropriately be devoted solely to a final effort to clarify each sentence of a manuscript.

**2. A study should make a contribution to knowledge.** An author should not assume that the significance of a research report or essay will be evident to journal editors. If the significance of an analysis is universally and manifestly obvious to all, one would anticipate the analysis has already been published. If the author is providing a truly unique contribution to the discipline, it becomes the responsibility of the author to identify the ways in which the analysis constitutes a unique contribution to knowledge. A paragraph, introduced within the first few pages of the manuscript, provides a convenient and appropriate way of specifying directly and explicitly the three or four ways in which an analysis uniquely contributes to the existing body of knowledge. The unique contribution of each analysis will certainly vary from area of specialization to area of specialization, but universally most journal editors anticipate that each research report or essay will identify a body of previously published research in the discipline and specifically indicate how the author's analysis provides a substantial extension of this literature. Moreover, strategically, an author might aptly elect to identify explicitly the unique contributions of an analysis if only to direct the readers' attention toward certain conclusions rather than others. In any event, it is ultimately the author's responsibility—as a writer—to identify the significance and uniqueness of a contribution to the discipline. If an author has provided a unique analysis, readers cannot be expected to know what the author uniquely understands. In all, if an author expects to contribute to a body of knowledge, it is the author's responsibility—not the readers—to specify directly and precisely what this new contribution is.

**3. Research should be well executed.** The scholarly orientation is defined, in part, by its procedures, rules for inference, data base, and the degree to which claims can be said to be more true than false (e.g., verification and reliability). Accordingly, clear statements of method are an essential feature of the academic journal. Social scientists have created conventions and precise guidelines which the authors of research reports can use when describing the procedures which generate results and conclusions (see, e.g., American Psychological Association, 1983, pp. 17–29). Critical essays are now goaded by similarly explicit statements of method. Traditionally, critics have been believed, by some, to be exempt from the need to provide explicit descriptions of their governing methods. But, given the growing complexity of criticism, statements of methods are now an increasingly recognized component of a published essay. Brock, Scott, and Chesebro (1990, p. 510) have reported:

... the past decade has witnessed a consolidation and clarification in the perspectives and methods governing rhetorical criticism. Individual critics have been more likely to specify their governing perspective and method overtly in their own criticisms, seeking to specify and clarify the relationship of their works to those of other critics. Particular methods have been more precisely defined and distinguished from other methods, and critics employing these methods have more clearly identified their relationship to the methods established by others. We see little that would alter this trend toward the use of an explicitly stated method in rhetorical criticism within the next decade. Such methodological statements provide a shorthand way of defining the choices of a critic amid the ever-growing

volume of rhetorical scholarship while also conveniently specifying the intellectual heritage a critical essay seeks to extend.

Thus, in virtually all cases, scholarship is now defined by its method, and it has become a responsibility of authors—who wish to publish—to specify the procedures by which they characterize situations, interpret phenomena and experiences, draw conclusions, and generate understandings.

**4. Results should justify the conclusions reached.** Research reports generally employ standardized tests of significance to justify the degree to which results warrant conclusions. The relationships between these tests and the conclusions drawn are of direct attention to both authors and readers of research reports (see, e.g., Jackson, 1992). In critical studies, a single case, the study of a single movement or collective action, and an examination of a particular cultural era, all have traditionally been viewed as an acceptable foundation for societal conclusions. Yet, even for critics, many of these traditional assumptions may be changing. Brock, Scott, and Chesebro (1990) have noted, "Traditionally, the qualitative analysis has functioned as the dominant metaphor for rhetorical criticism" (p. 511), but they have also reported that, "quantitative data and assessments have increasingly made their way into rhetorical analyses" (p. 511). They have concluded by predicting that, "As rhetorical criticism evolves in the 1990s and beyond, we fully anticipate that rhetorical critics will increasingly find it useful to identify their philosophical and ideological posture and, within these qualitative contexts, specify the degree to which quantitative claims regarding their position can be provided" (p. 512). Accordingly, virtually all contemporary authors can expect that both their research reports and essays should specifically identify the relationship which exists between the results described and the conclusions implied or overtly articulated.

## Content Analysis

The content of a research report or essay is aptly constrained by the issues it addresses as well as its methods, data base, and applications. During the editorial review process, however, persistent concerns emerge which are worthy of an author's attention.

**1. Content should extend previously published research in the discipline.** Surveys of previously published research is now a convention in journal articles, but the convention should also be substantial and designed to extended the collective understanding of the discipline.

Yet, a summary of previously published research must also be perceived—especially by an author—as strategic in several senses. Given the massive quantities of research regarding any specific topic, the summary is necessarily selective and therefore strategic, for it highlights certain understandings rather than others. Additionally, a summary of previously published research establishes a context for the author's analysis, which necessarily emphasizes the orientation of the author and the direction which the author wishes to see the discipline pursue. Moreover, rather than questioning or denying its value, "gracious" authors frequently believe it is necessary to employ indirect descriptions or understatement when characterizing the usefulness of previously published research.

Despite its strategic nature and the limitations which necessarily occur whenever strategies are employed, a summary of previously published research should ultimately extend the knowledge base of the discipline. A summary fulfills this function by integrating or "making connections" across independent investigations and thereby placing "specialties in a larger context" which brings "new insight to bear on the original research," "fitting one's own research—or the research of others—into larger intellectual patterns," and

identifying questions and areas where extended lines of development would prove useful in terms of the body of knowledge defining the discipline (Boyer, 1990, pp. 18–20). In a larger sense, a summary of previously published research creates coherence within a discipline, provides a framework for integrating prior and new understandings, and ultimately functions as a central method for re-defining a discipline.

Thus, authors should perceive previously published research as a base for their strategic responses to the discipline but also a method for extending the meaning of the discipline. In these senses, the summary of previously published research is not an "exercise in conventions," but can potentially function as a significant method for redefining the scope and understandings of the discipline. Accordingly, when journal editors bemoan the absence of a carefully constructed "survey of the literature," the observation may reflect a larger commitment to a systematic development of the discipline itself.

**2. Content should reflect everyday understandings and experiences.** The discipline of communication emerged from the "world of the practical" and in an effort to enhance or improve the techniques used in everyday encounters beyond the academic environment (see, e.g., Wallace, 1954). The persistent interest in the effectiveness of communication is one of the derived consequences of the tradition of the discipline. In a larger sense, these origins are manifested in the contemporary demand that journal research reports and essays be able to withstand the test the "meaningfulness."

At least two "reality" tests are relevant.

The majority of readers of academic journals in the discipline of communication are teachers. Accordingly, an article is likely to have more significance and meaning for its readers if it responds, in part, to the concerns of teachers. An author might ask: "Are the thesis and major arguments within the manuscript articulated in a fashion useful to teachers?" An affirmative response to this question appears warranted if the manuscript's discussion, conclusions, or recommendations for future research at least include a discussion of the pedagogical implications of the research report or essay.

Given its tradition, virtually all conceptions of communication also need to respond to the pragmatic nature of human communication. Boyer (1990, p. 23) has argued that, "New intellectual understandings can arise out of the very act of application—whether in medical diagnosis, serving clients in psychotherapy, shaping public policy, creating an architectural design, or working with the public schools. In activities such as these, theory and practice tally interact, and one renews the other." To test the usefulness of an article, an author might ask: "Can the thesis and major arguments within a manuscript be articulated in a fashion that creates insight for those outside of the discipline?" An affirmative response to this question appears warranted if the manuscript's discussion, conclusions, or recommendations for future research at least include a discussion of the applied implications of the research report or essay. Thus, just as authors need to recognize the link between teaching and research, they also need to identify explicitly, within their analyses, how research and application can be understood as interrelated processes.

**3. Content should extend the discipline of communication.** Academic journals are popularly conceived as vehicles which conserve and inhibit the development of the discipline. In the American Council of Learned Societies' (1986) survey of 5,385 members of its organizational affiliates, 50 percent of respondents said that academic journals were "regularly biased" in favor of "established scholars" and those who use "currently fashionable approaches." These survey results suggest that academic journals function to identify and trivialize a discipline, preventing "radical" departures from existing academic norms, and ultimately discouraging those who would offer profoundly serious modifications to the knowledge base of a discipline. In sharp contrast, Kuhn (1970) has argued that

disciplines have undergone revolutionary transformations, and he has described the process by which such changes occur (also, see: Gross, 1990; Nelson, Megill, & McCloskey, 1987; and Simons, 1989).

At the same time, authors new to a discipline can easily feel overwhelmed by the complexities of a discipline characterized and influenced by a rich historical development. It certainly must appear that significant change is difficult to initiate and sustain by publishing in academic journals. It is. The more significant the change proposed, the greater the burden of proof an author adopts, and the greater the difficulty in institutionalizing change. As noted immediately above in this article, new developments must necessarily be placed in terms of the context established by previously published research. Additionally, the consequences of a new concept of human communication must also be accounted for in terms of existing pedagogical and applied contexts. Within an academic discipline, revolutionary change often proceeds gradually. Certainly, such changes are seldom achieved with a single journal article.

This is not to say that a discipline cannot and should not change. Rather it suggests that the author who wishes to make a fundamental change should establish a program of research and analysis designed to "prove" his or her case. And, it should be noted that a program of research can often constitute a lifetime of work. As noted at the outset of this article, motivation, dedication, and determination are essential if an author is to have the first of a series of interrelated articles published.

## Conclusion

This article has identified factors affecting the publishing process, and it has argued that an author's motivation, analysis of the reading audience, and decisions about content affect publishing outcomes. Prescriptions have been suggested for overcoming factors inhibiting the successful completion of the publishing process. In this context, a central tenet of this analysis warrants repeating: One of the primary reasons why faculty members have not published is simply because they have decided not to make publishing a priority in their academic career. If they did, the changes in the discipline would probably be breath-taking, generate a new kind and level of excitement, and ultimately transform the communication classroom and frequency and ways in which communication principles are employed in everyday life.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>This essay is not designed to function as a research report or state of the art review but rather as "supported opinion." Whenever possible, verification of the claims made in this analysis are provided. However, the claims governing this essay are predominantly the opinions of the author and the mode of support is predominantly personal experience. In this regard, the author of this essay has served as the Editor of *Communication Quarterly* from 1985–1987, and many of the claims presented here and the foundations for these claims are drawn from experiences while holding this office. Additionally, the opinions and support for the opinions expressed in this essay have been influenced by the author's experiences while serving on the Board of Associate Editors on all of the journals published by the Speech Communication Association as well as on the board of associate editors or as a manuscript reviewer of all of the regional communication journals. Finally, it should be noted that the author's opinions and support for these opinions have been shaped by the author's experiences as a published author in the journals of the discipline. In this regard, the author has been identified as the tenth ranked of "25 Most Prolific Active Administrators as Researchers in Speech Communication, 1915–1990" (Hickson, Stacks, & Amsbury, 1992, pp. 69, 70, 71).

<sup>2</sup>For a related approach to publishing, which employs a question-and-answer format, but which also deals with the submission, reviewing, and resubmission-revising-feedback processes related to publishing, see: Knapp & Daly (1993).

<sup>3</sup>Ryan's conclusions were drawn from the study of reviews provided by journalism editors and associate editors. In my experience, these conclusions are equally true of editors in all areas of the discipline of communication.

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# Reach Out and Touch Someone: Analysis of Nonverbal Comforting Responses

Danielle J Dolin and Melanie Booth-Butterfield

Nonverbal comforting responses to an hypothetical scenario were collected and categorized by an analytic inductive technique in an effort to extend the boundaries of comforting research. This resulted in twelve identifiable categories of nonverbal responses to a situation calling for comforting communication. Participants also completed the Affective Orientation Measure (AO) to assess the relationship of use of emotions to comforting. Results indicated that males reported fewer comforting strategies and less diverse comforting responses than did females. Comforting strategy use was positively correlated with affective orientation.

**KEY CONCEPTS** Comforting responses, Touch, Nonverbal communication, Affect

**DANIELLE J DOLIN** (MA, West Virginia University, 1992) is a doctoral student in the Dept. of Communication Studies at West Virginia University and **MELANIE BOOTH-BUTTERFIELD** (Ph.D. University of Missouri-Columbia, 1985) is an Associate Professor in Communication Studies at WVU, Morgantown, WV 26506.

Crises in today's world of all magnitudes are causing emotional distress of varying degrees. These feelings of stress and suffering lead us to turn to our closest friends and family members for support. One way to help assuage these feelings is through comforting. Comforting may be verbal, such as "I'm really sorry about your fiancée. I'm sure it must be a very difficult thing to deal with." Individuals may also comfort distressed others nonverbally by patting them on the back, paying extra attention to eye contact, wiping away tears or giving hugs to alleviate emotional upheaval.

Previous research has used a constructivist perspective and primarily focused on verbal comforting strategies related to age, social cognitive development, personality variables such as emotional empathy, and perceived importance in friendships. This study, however, examines nonverbal comforting responses in interpersonal situations and the role of affective orientation as a moderator of this process.

Nonverbal messages are often used to alleviate others' feelings of distress. People may attempt to comfort, or at least respond in some way, to a distressed conversational partner, but not have the words to say; therefore, they give the friend a hug or show them nonverbally that they are concerned and want to help. Even without words these actions no doubt have the purpose of helping the individuals to feel better about themselves or the situation. Thus, we are missing major portions of the meaning when we study only verbal comforting.

Indeed, adults generally rely more on nonverbal cues to determine social meaning. More specifically, nonverbal cues are more important than verbal cues for relational and affective messages (e.g., Biringoon, 1985; Hickson & Stacks, 1989; Knapp & Hall, 1992; Mehrabian, 1972; Richmond, McCroskey & Payne, 1991).