

# NEWSLETTER



## The value of peer-review

By Wu Fei

I am Wu Fei, a former graduate student in CUHK sociology (2010-2015) and a current fellow in Fudan University in Shanghai. I published two papers coauthored with my mentor (Prof. Tony Tam) during my graduate years, one in *Chinese Sociological Review*, another in *Social Indicators Research*. I would say the peer-review process is an exceptional tool helping me to “drill” my paper: to make the research question sharper, to target the literature more efficiently, to design the models more sounded, and to recognize my limitation more profoundly. My mentor provided valuable training to equip me with basic know-how on responding to reviewers, such as summarize reviewers’ general comments and emphasize what you’ve done in a nutshell, list each comment in detail titled with short phrases, and give specific responses, never try to

hide your problems, admit them, and try to solve them. Following his suggestions, I found each time when I complete a reply file that my research has been “upgraded” to a new level, maybe that is the spirit of peer review. Beyond the experience of being reviewed, I also serve several journals as a reviewer, some in Chinese (like 社会), some in English (like *Journal of Happiness Studies*). To me, the core of being a good reviewer is to be conscientious and constructive. Conscientiousness implies to complete the review on time, and to be constructive means to think hard for the authors to make the paper better, give solutions instead of only critiques. Hope all of you experience a prosperous life in your publications.

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## STUDENTS’ OUTREACH

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Lam, Kelvin. 2020. “‘Learning’ to be self-reliant: What does the COVID-19 pandemic mean to the refugee community in Hong Kong?.” *Routed: Migration & (Im)mobility Magazine*, June 20. ([read the article](#))

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## PUBLICATIONS

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Katila, Julia, **Yumei Gan**, and Marjorie Harness Goodwin. 2020. “Interactional rituals and social distancing: New haptic trajectories and touching from a distance in the time of COVID-19.” *Discourse Studies*. 1-23. ([read the article](#))

## What I have learned about publishing (so far)



Illustration by iStock

I haven't had any first-authored publications, so here is what I learnt from my undergraduate mentor who I co-authored with. It may only apply to qualitative articles/journals in English.

1. Write for the journal. The manuscript should cater specifically to the journal you plan on submitting to. This means familiarizing yourself with the topics and methods frequently published in the journal, as well as their "hard" requirements like word count. It also means citing (some of) the articles previously published in the journal in your manuscript.

2. Be prepared for rejection(s) and be strategic with time. The co-authored article I was part of took two years from our first submission to its online publication, and it got two desk rejections before a revision and resubmission from the third journal we submitted it to. If you have time, submit to the more prestigious journals at first. Even if they desk-reject you, they sometimes offer helpful advice on how to revise the manuscript. If you are pinched on time, pay attention to the turn-around time of journals as some can take about a year to inform you of their decision (This [link](#) might be helpful)

This [article](#) might be helpful as well, but I think it's quite generic.

**Guolin Gu**

Here are three tips regarding raising the research question, writing and working style. I hope they are helpful in your way of getting a paper published.

We may need to go through a tough and long process before getting a paper published. Starting with a research question that interests you a lot is one of the ways to relieve the "pain" and keep you passionate. Drawing ideas from your own life experiences is likely to help you find an interesting question. For example, my supervisor told me that she was once inspired by her daily interactions with her daughter. Her daughter's narrative of comparing the parental style she receives, with that of her classmates was later transited to be a crucial independent variable in her study.

Writing is a particular barrier to publication for non-native English speakers. A poorly written manuscript often causes difficulties for editors and reviewers to understand the content, and therefore makes rejection more likely. Linking paragraphs and sentences to one another logically and clearly is never an easy task. A valuable skill I learned to present the flow of writing to friends using mother language. It is fine if they are laymen of your research field. Their confused look, if any, tell you where the weak connections are in your writing.

Lastly, for the working style, you can either conduct research on your own or work with other scholars. Cooperation will certainly increase your publication speed. In the meanwhile, you may also obtain a valuable chance to learn from established collaborators, in terms of research ethics, creative ideas, advanced methods and so on. Nevertheless, it is always good to start your own project as soon as possible. Publishing your work as a single author is a major step toward being a mature scholar.

**Yiqing Gan**

### ANNOUNCEMENTS

#### ✓ Publication opportunity:

- Special issue of Organizational Studies (Q1): Organizing Sustainably: Actors, Institutions, and Practices. **Deadline: November 30, 2020.** ([see the ad](#))

#### ✓ Job ads:

- Postdoctoral position in Sociology at Nanjing University, China. **Deadline: August 31, 2020.** ([see the ad](#))