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A Slice of Advice

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## A Slice of Advice

This column is the fourth in a series presenting the advice of veteran educational researchers aimed at their junior colleagues. Each invited contributor will be asked to offer one or more career-relevant guidelines for beginning educational researchers, developers, and/or evaluators. The column's function is to serve as a repository for the experience-based insights of our field's senior members—insights that, if not shared, must be rediscovered.

### Guideline 1

Work hard toward publishing your articles in professional journals where they will get attention from the ablest persons in their field.

This means being willing to suffer rejections of manuscripts and having to do much revising and resubmitting. Initial acceptance rates vary greatly, from essentially 100% for certain "vanity" journals (most of which have substantial page charges) to perhaps less than 10% for the most rigorously refereed, most frequently cited. All but a few brilliant, inspired researchers, exquisitely attuned to the *Zeitgeist*, must work hard to publish in the latter. The extra effort will usually pay off in contribution to knowledge and in personal satisfaction.

A corollary is that you should probably decide early in your career the extent to which your writing is to be mainly expository rather than research oriented. Such a decision goes along with choices about committee work and administration, both of which almost inevitably cut into research time. No matter how hard you work, there will be just 24 hours in each day. Chairing a long-term committee or a department or being a major officer in a professional organization takes its toll of time, but for some persons may be worth the hours or days lost from research.

In other words, try to plan your professional life rather than drifting through it. Sit down with yourself fre-

quently and think in prolonged fashion about what you want to accomplish in the long run, say 20 or 30 years down the road. Cultivate wise friends who can help you plan. Although you cannot anticipate every eventuality, having clear goals early in the game and updating them frequently can prove a bulwark against your being railroaded into professional cul-de-sacs. Having the plan in mind will make it easier for you to say "no" or "yes," as appropriate, at critical junctures.

A personal anecdote may illustrate this point. In 1966, 17 years after completing my doctorate, I was offered the editorship of a major professional journal. This gave me a flush of euphoria. What an honor, I thought! Fortunately, at that time I happened to be a Fellow of the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences at Stanford University and could readily talk with its director, the renowned Ralph W. Tyler. Ralph congratulated me approximately as follows: "That's a great honor. If you work hard during the 3-year term as editor, you can probably improve that journal 10%—perhaps even 15 or 20%." I was stunned by his remark, because in my vanity I had envisioned easily making the journal several times as excellent as it already was. Then Ralph said, "What question do you have?" I replied, "You've already answered it. I have too many other plans in mind to spend most of my time effecting that little improvement in the journal."

Early in my career I "threw away" several what seem to me, even yet, fine research papers by publishing them in reputable journals off the main line because it was convenient to do so: quick acceptance and fast appearance in print. Conversely, an article of mine that appeared in *Psychometrika* in 1961 is still being cited several times a year. Hard-nosed referees are sometimes difficult to take, but they are essential to guarantee the quality of articles appearing in the

most read, studied, and cited journals.

Knowing when to collaborate on articles and with whom can also affect your career. Campbell and Fiske as well as Cronbach and Meehl come to mind as collaborations that have had wide influence.

A possible trap as you become better known is being offered the opportunity to prepare a chapter, often an expository one, for an edited volume or handbook. Usually, publication is virtually guaranteed, with not much editorial harassment. That can be quite attractive to the researcher tired of wrestling with journal referees, but it may be a misuse of time you could be spending on your ongoing research. It is my impression that many articles in edited volumes get little attention compared with those in the "best" journals. This seems to be a mixed bag, however. Most of mine have disappointed me in not providing much feedback, but my collaboration with Donald T. Campbell on the chapter on "Experimental and quasi-experimental designs for research in teaching" for N. L. Gage (1963) led to a small book used by perhaps half a million students and professionals.

Textbooks pose a similar dilemma: Is your time well spent in preparing them? If the book is successful, you may get appreciable royalties (seldom huge ones) but be called upon by the publisher to revise it every 5 or 10 years. If it is unsuccessful, you have forfeited time that might have been better spent.

### Guideline 2

Interact with persons in your field of special research interest. Seek them out via their publications and presentations at professional meetings.

I stumbled across this my last year in graduate school by becoming interested in Frederick B. Davis's item-analysis monograph and doing some research in that area myself. This led to my first postdoctoral position and a lifelong,

## Awards

**Division K, Teaching and Teacher Education**, invites nominations for the **Research in Teaching and Teacher Education Award** for exemplary research (book length or article). The Awards Committee of Division K invites nominations of recently completed doctoral dissertations on teaching or teacher education for the **Outstanding Doctoral Dissertation Award**. For submission details, contact Tom Russell, Faculty of Education, Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario, Canada K7L 3N6.

Nominations are sought for the **Seymour B. Sarason Award for Community Research and Action**. The winner will receive \$1,000 and present address at the 1993 APA Convention. Send name of nominee and paragraph of support by December 1 to Dr. Kenneth Maton, Department of Psychology, UMBC, Baltimore, MD-21228.

**American Mensa and the Mensa Education & Research Foundation** announce the 1992-1993 Awards for Excellence for outstanding research or interpretive scholarship relating to intelligence or intellectual giftedness. For information, write Dr. Joan E. Bauman, 4636 Candleglow Drive, St. Louis, MO 63129-1706.

## Call for Papers

The Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Department of Health and Human Services, in collaboration with the Society for Research in Child Development and the National Council of Jewish Women Center for the Child, invite proposals for presentations of research at the **Second National Head Start Research Conference**, Translating Research Into Practice: Implications for Serving Families with Young Children, to be held November 4-7, 1993, in Washington, DC. Abstracts must be postmarked by January 29, 1993. For details, contact Dr. Faith Parker, Project Director, NCJW Center for the Child, 53 West 23rd St., New York, NY, 10010; 212-645-4048.

mutually facilitative friendship with Fred. He had not been my teacher or a faculty member of the graduate school I attended. Shortly thereafter, while I was teaching in the South, I sent critiques of some of their work to Professors Everett Lindquist at the University of Iowa, Robert Ebel at Michigan State University, and Palmer Johnson at the University of Minnesota. They all replied spiritedly and we became fast friends, by mail and from time to time at professional meetings. Having had a rather diffident doctoral adviser, I needed these contacts with "greats" in my field. Serious researchers usually welcome *constructive* criticism. It is invaluable. No one mind, however brilliant, can be all-knowing.

Thus, I suggest leading a planned, reasoned life, but with enough flexibility to accommodate vicissitudes of the future. Try to get by largely on your intellectual merits rather than taking essentially political paths. Strive for im-

portant publications rather than extremely numerous ones. Spare yourself time for recreation and family.

Of course, I've learned much of the above by committing many errors, so my advice is of the "don't do as I do, but do as I say do" variety. You might muddle through life and still be reasonably successful and satisfied, as I have been, but intelligent planning along the way is eventually likely to increase your sense of accomplishment.

## Reference

Gage, N. L. (Ed.). (1963). *Handbook of Research on Teaching*. Chicago: Rand McNally.

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## Call for Nominations

The AERA Committee on the Role and Status of Women, the SIG on Research on Women and Education, and Women Educators solicit nominations for the AERA Willystine Goodsell Award given annually to an individual who has served AERA through scholarship, activism, and community building on

behalf of women and education. Deadline is February 1, 1993. Send three copies of letters of nomination, including resumes of nominees, to Karen Arnold, Boston College School of Education, Department of Curriculum, Administration, and Special Education, Chestnut Hill, MA 02167.

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