

# What Our Doctoral Students Should Know About the Publishing Game

William H. Motes

*Doctoral candidates who aspire toward academic careers in marketing often discover that research performance is generally recognized as a component of exceptional importance relative to the attainment of professional goals. Nothing is more demanding, yet continuously expected, of full-time, tenure-track professors. Outlined and discussed here are numerous points that may better prepare our students to meet these future demands.*

As a complement to our teaching efforts, meaningful research programs provide the foundation for greater insight relative to general topics of classroom discussion and allow us to incorporate information into our lectures that we otherwise would not. Simply stated, teaching and research are not mutually exclusive activities; research of a substantive nature can make us better teachers.

With this in mind, we as educators carry numerous responsibilities, yet none is so great as that which relates to scholarly inquiry. For many institutions of higher learning, research is an integral component of academic workstyles and a generally recognized requirement for career advancement (Lusch and Laczniak 1976; Twedt 1980; Coe and Weinstock 1983; Cunningham and Witt 1983; Sheth 1983). It is a game of serious dimensions—a game at which you either win or lose. In fact, research performance is more important today for “appointment or promotion to every rank” than it has been in the past (Coe and Weinstock 1983, p. 83).

Our doctoral students in marketing must be apprised of the importance of research, and must also be made aware of the pitfalls that may lie ahead. This is particularly true for those who aspire toward academic careers. To allow our students to enter the academic arena with a

superficial and somewhat limited view of the importance of scholarly inquiry and the obstacles they may very well encounter is a disservice. We must not give the impression that success is a function only of course-based fundamentals and sound curricula structure; other interrelated facets of research and publishing bear strongly on one's research efforts and also to a large degree are determinant factors relative to one's research goals. Such is the focus of this article and the following advice.

## ADVICE TO DOCTORAL STUDENTS

### Be Aware of Your Strengths and Weaknesses

Career advancement is made easier by subscribing to an academic system which best fits our own self interests. Keep this in mind as you seek your initial employment. Be aware of your own strengths and weaknesses. It makes little sense to accept a position and subsequently realize that the research standards and expectations cannot be met.

### Become Familiar with Promotion/Tenure Criteria

As Cunningham and Witt (1983) point out, the balance between teaching, research, and service responsibilities is often skewed, at least initially, toward the former two. Teaching and service expectations may be more easily understood than expectations regarding research (Motes 1988), where there may be a vast

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difference between stated standards of performance for promotion and tenure and what is actually acceptable to peers.

Promotion and tenure performance criteria as they relate to research are not always clearly communicated even when they are presented in written form; often, substantial room exists for individual interpretation. For example, the stated standard may specify that you must publish in refereed journals, when what is actually meant is to publish in Level A journals only. An awareness of the true standard can be especially important in some institutions, where research may be the primary component that is used for evaluation with teaching and service playing a much less important role in the promotion and tenure process. Being a great teacher and an active service participant will not get you promoted under such a system, much less tenured; adequate performance in the latter two areas accompanied by outstanding publication performance will.

Because of these differences, you should ask for specific clarifications. Your future success depends on the extent to which you truly understand what is expected of you.

#### Establish a Workable Research and Publication Strategy

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Your strategy must be consistent with university and departmental expectations as well as with your personal goals. Recognize up front that research expectations at different academic institutions may vary quite significantly (e.g., top AACSB schools versus other AACSB and non-AACSB schools) and as a result will require career advancement strategies that are appropriate for that particular institution. On one extreme, for example, are schools which count as worthy of promotion and tenure consideration only articles published in refereed journals (see Figure 1), while at the other extreme are those that recognize almost all publications. You are more likely to encounter the former.

There is usually a clear signal that you must go beyond not only professional conference publications but also the so-called second- and third-tier journals. Such a system suggests strongly the use of a "trickle down" approach to research and publishing.

Simply stated, this paradigm emphasizes the submission of research results to what are generally considered to be the leading journals in the discipline. Rejection results in manuscripts being directed toward journals within the same category and then to those of so-called less stature and, perhaps, eventually to national or regional conferences. This model is often viewed as a self-promoter of quality in that your best research efforts must be brought to bear in order to enhance the probability of acceptance at stage one. On the down side, however, are the time and effort often required for such manuscripts, which may very well act as a barrier to high levels of productivity and may result in little or nothing to show during your first three to six years in the profession.

From a personal standpoint, you may have thoughts of striving to build a substantial research record, of gaining national and regional recognition, of integrating yourself into the academic community, and of promotion and tenure. These are commonly expressed goals, and to a great extent they dictate the types of publication to which scholars submit their manuscripts (see Figure 2). For example, papers are often submitted to regional conferences for the purpose of developing and maintaining regional recognition; they are submitted to refereed journals for quite a different reason.

However, your publication goals must not transform the process of scholarly inquiry into a daily grind. Promotion and tenure should be a pleasurable end result of your efforts; otherwise, you get dragged into the depths of publishing for the sake of publishing rather than for the sake of enlightenment and self-satisfaction.

#### Pursue Both Quality and Quantity

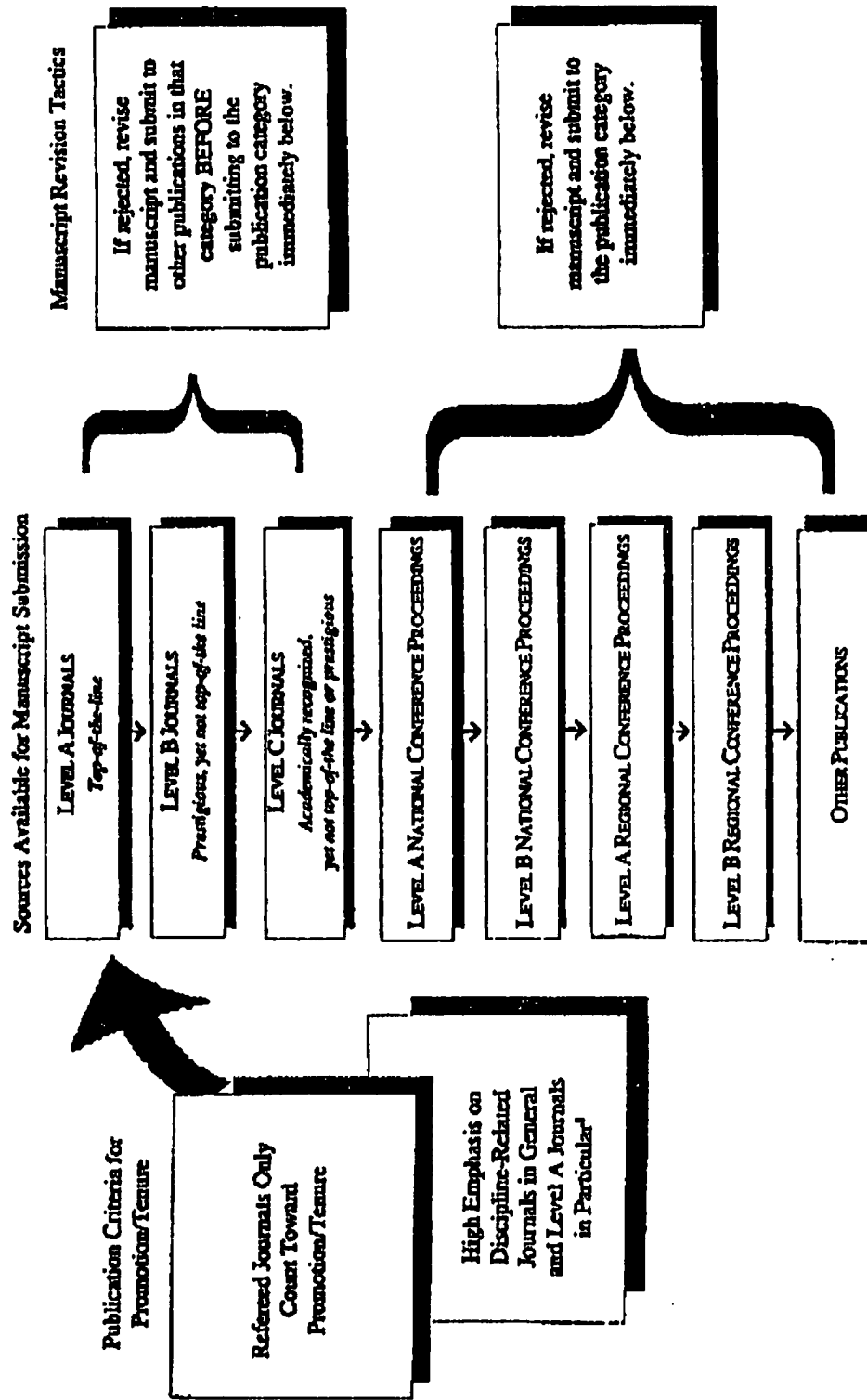
Undertake projects that will probably result in a substantive contribution to the discipline. While not allowing yourself to sacrifice quality for quantity, be aware of the importance of high productivity. Generally, you will be expected to produce in terms of both.

#### Develop a Balance Between Co-Authored and Single-Authored Publications

Newly appointed assistant professors are often encouraged to work with others, at least initially. Such an approach generally results in

FIGURE 1

**SUGGESTED RESEARCH PLACEMENT AND REVISION TACTICS UNDER PROMOTION/TENURE CONDITIONS THAT EMPHASIZE REFERRED JOURNALS ONLY**



\*Solid Line Represents Suggested Route for Initial Submission of Majority of Manuscripts.

FIGURE 2

**SUGGESTED SOURCES OF RESEARCH PLACEMENT ACROSS SIX COMMONLY EXPRESSED GOALS**

FIGURE 2

SUGGESTED SOURCES OF RESEARCH PLACEMENT ACROSS SIX COMMONLY EXPRESSED GOALS

Suggested Source of Research Placement	PROGRESS TOWARD				DESIRED GOAL		
	Promotion to Associate Professor	Promotion to Full Professor	Tenure	To Establish and Maintain National Recognition	To Establish and Maintain Regional Recognition	Cited Research	
Level A Journals	██████████	██████████	██████████	██████████	██████████	██████████	
Level B Journals	██████████	██████████	██████████	██████████	██████████	██████████	
Level C Journals	██████████	██████████	██████████	██████████	██████████	██████████	
Level A National Proceedings				██████████	██████████	██████████	
Level B National Proceedings				██████████	██████████	██████████	
Level A Regional Proceedings					██████████	██████████	
Level B Regional Proceedings					██████████	██████████	
Other Publications				██████████	██████████	██████████	

higher research productivity and makes the transition from doctoral student to full-time faculty an easier one.

Nevertheless, disadvantages exist. There is always some confusion as to how workloads were allocated. Did each co-author contribute equally to the writing of the manuscript? What role did each play in the process of developing a defensible methodology? These are only a few of the questions that can be asked.

Few disadvantages can be cited for single-authored manuscripts. They leave little doubt as to your total contribution and as a result allow limited room for critical assessments on this particular basis. Quite simply, your research efforts should not be in the direction of multiple authorships only; a reasonable balance must be maintained.

### Try to Become Known for Something

This is easier said than done. Name recognition and a reputation for quality work and substantive contributions are goals we would all like to attain, yet to do so generally requires a substantive research focus. This does not mean that your research efforts cannot be somewhat eclectic in nature. Yet, somewhere within your program of research, there should appear an area subset (e.g., pricing, behavioral influence strategies, etc.) with which you are easily associated and identified throughout the discipline (Niffenegger 1983).

### Recognize that You Can Publish Yet Still Perish

No longer is the climate one of "publish or perish" but quite clearly, as strange as it might sound, one also of "publish and perish" (Hexter 1968). You might publish 40 manuscripts including a substantial number of refereed journal articles and still be denied promotion and tenure. This is true particularly if your publications are primarily in journals which are perceived to be of low quality or if the majority of those articles deal with a topic outside your primary discipline. The simple truth is that barriers are often created by the position for which you have been hired and, as a result, research interests of a broad, eclectic nature may have to be altered dramatically.

### Be Aware of Other Collegial Sensitivities and Views

The promotion and tenure system is characterized generally with some built-in biases and expectations that will bear strongly on your research performance. Some schools, for example, may mandate a substantial number of placements in specific journals, without realizing that for some of those journals "frequent publication by the same author is historically an exceptional feat" (Marquardt and Murdock 1983, p. 56).

Furthermore, "not all journals in a given discipline are regarded equally" (Clark and Geisler 1986, p. 3). In marketing, for example, the *Journal of Marketing* and *Journal of Marketing Research* are considered by many as our premiere journals; other refereed journals take on less stature (Beltramini, Schlacter, and Kelley 1985). A similar view prevails with respect to professional conferences, where annual AMA (American Marketing Association) educator and ACR (Association for Consumer Research) conference publications might be viewed as worthier of scholarly recognition than other national and particularly regional conference placements.

Right or wrong, a clear, recognizable tendency often exists to rate the importance or impact of a particular manuscript according to where it is published and not necessarily what is reported (Coe and Weinstock 1983; Sheth 1983). This is true not only among those whose academic backgrounds are dissimilar from yours but also among many of those who possess similar disciplinary training.

Such a view does two things. First, it suggests strongly that manuscripts in certain journals make a significant contribution to the discipline and most others do not. You will often see this mind set spill over into promotion and tenure deliberations. Secondly, it creates an impression that one should avoid many refereed and nonrefereed publications of a perceived lower stature. As a result, you may decide to focus only on what counts toward promotion and tenure. Restrictive perceptions of this nature help new appointees maintain a research path that is consistent with departmental expectations, yet often lost is the pleasure of writing and simply communicating ideas that you might like to express via other avenues.

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Such is a compromise that you will be expected to accept.

An institution's projected image is in part a function of its faculty's research productivity (Clark 1985). It therefore stands to reason that what you do off campus in a professional capacity is not necessarily your business only, particularly if such activities are perceived to interfere with one of the stated purposes for which you were hired. Outside consulting, for example, can be a source of significant criticism (sometimes justified, sometimes not), not only by administrators but by colleagues as well. Although such activities (with the client's permission) might very well serve as a valuable research data bank and a source for numerous publications, there will always be those who criticize and denigrate the contributory nature of such proprietary research efforts. Be aware of this, not as a criticism of the system, but simply as a point of fact. Diversity of faculty composition promotes diversity of opinion.

### Expect Periods of Transition

Whatever the system's initial characterization, systems rarely if ever remain static in nature (Motes 1988). Standards by which you have operated for years may change suddenly. Research records that may have been considered outstanding under previous rules of engagement are now adorned with fewer superlatives. Don't expect to be grandfathered out; these new standards may very well apply to everyone.

### CONCLUSION

A major part of our job as marketing educators is not only communicating the overall value of research to doctoral students but also preparing them for what they will undoubtedly

encounter as they enter a strongly competitive research environment. Today's emphasis on high quality, productive research mandates that we be forthright, yet not be overly dramatic—that we stress the importance of research and its role in the attainment of professional goals, and that we relate both good and bad points from a variety of perspectives. Above all, however, we must offer encouragement and support. The future success of our doctoral students as researchers depends to a large extent on how well we carry out these responsibilities and mandates.

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