

## ***Demystifying the Edited Collection***

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The following handout is meant to serve as “things to think about.” Everyone’s experience with edited books is different and we all have different reasons for working with edited collections. What follows is a list of suggestions and things to think about when deciding whether to edit, co-edit, or contribute to an anthology.

### ***Some basics about book editing***

**From collaborators Nancy Naples, Professor, Sociology & Women’s Studies, University of Connecticut, and Ilene Kalish, Executive Editor, Sociology, Criminology, Politics and Women's Studies, New York University Press.**

#### **From Ilene:**

- Think about picking a co-editor. Carefully divide up duties. Don't waste time doing the same tasks. If one is better at editing and the other at deadlines then divide that way.
- Set deadlines. Send reminders. Bug people. You will never get it otherwise.
- Consistency is key. Give everyone a guideline--wordcount, whether there will be images, whether there will be headers, don't (or do) include an abstract.
- Get a mix of scholars. Some established and some new. Publishing a book full of grad students can be hard to do.
- Make sure that the pieces are original. More and more publishers are looking for original material and reprints are a no-go.
- Make sure all the pieces make sense with one another! This should not be a motley crew. Do you need to put the essays into Parts? Organize the Table of Contents in a way that makes sense.
- Not all publishers still publish edited collections. Take a look at current books to get an idea of where to send them.

#### **Nancy’s addition:**

- The more contributors you have identified and confirmed the better before pitching your project to a press. The project will take a lot longer if you only have an idea for the project and haven’t yet brought together the main contributors. One way to maximize your effort is to link it with a conference or session you have organized, drawing potential contributors together prior to pitching or soliciting for an edited book project.
- An edited book is a lot of work for modest gains so you also need to assess the intellectual advantages to doing an edited book (e.g. advancing knowledge in a new field, responding to important debates in the field, or highlighting new approaches to a field).

**From Julie Shayne, editor-in-progress of *Taking Risks: Feminist Stories of Social Justice Research in the Americas*. Under contract with SUNY, under consideration for Praxis: Theory in Action Series**

- Decide whether to do a CFP for proposals or for final papers. My current book started at a conference and then I expanded out and the CFP only asked for detailed proposals. This meant that some of the first drafts of chapters I received from proposals I had accepted needed a tremendous amount of work. (Many, many iterations.) If I had seen these first drafts as proposed papers I may have turned them down but our work together ultimately made for strong chapters. It also meant I had an entire (more or less) book to pitch to presses even though I did not have full chapters yet.
- Do not underestimate how long it takes to edit chapters.
- Find out from your contributors if their chapters are new to your volume. And if they are based on earlier work, find out exactly how much has already been published and in what format.
- Be honest with the contributors about your own schedule and deadlines; if you have a quick turn-around time with their work to you, convey that you expect they do the same for you.
- Convey to the contributors that their delays affect not only you the editor but every author in the collection, including those going up for tenure.
- Decide in advance if you will remove contributors from the project if they pass the deadline(s) in a significant way.
- Consider adding at least one or two more chapters than you envision the book needing in case a contributor withdraws.
- Get your contributors cell phone numbers so you can stay on top of them that way. Emails may get “lost” but text messages are hard to avoid. Additionally, create an email list where you can contact all of the contributors easily.

***On publishing in a series***

**From Nancy Naples, editor of “New Approaches in Sociology: Studies in Social Inequality, Social Change, and Social Justice,” Routledge Book Series and “Praxis: Theory in Action Series,” SUNY Press**

- The advantage of publishing in a series is that it calls potential readers’ attention to a field of inquiry that they may be interested in (and who may be unfamiliar with your work) since the press will ideally advertise the books together.
- If you are interested in publishing in a series, it is wise to contact the academic editor in advance to discuss your book project since they are usually in the best position to give you insight on whether your project fits with the theme and what the press will be looking for in the way of a prospectus.
- The clearer you are about your project when you pitch it the better. Don’t try to shape your project to fit what you think the press or the press’ representative wants. Rather, pitch the book you want to write, or better still the book you have already drafted.

## ***Suggestions for assistant professors thinking about contributing to an edited volume***

**From Roberta Villalón, Associate Professor, Sociology and Anthropology Department, St. John's University**

- Be/become aware of the official and unofficial requirements and expectations for your tenure process
- Be honest, smart, and humble about your own research and publications dossier:
  - Book chapters should complement your publications (book and peer-reviewed journals are the main pieces)
  - Do not commit to write a book chapter within a set deadline if at the same time you are having to meet book manuscript and/or journal articles' deadlines (the latter will come first, hurting the editor and other collaborators of the former)
- Evaluate the quality of the edited volume you want to contribute to (in terms of the press, contract, the editor/s, and the other contributors)
- Take advantage of the process of writing book chapters for edited volumes given that
  - The review process will tend to be very constructive
  - You will be able to either expand on work that you published before (thus giving you a chance to add on issues that occurred after publication or to go into theoretical terrain that you weren't ready for before), or write about something timely (and sometimes about something that you didn't think you would write about but that fits perfectly with your theoretical/ideological position)
- Prepare yourself to share a rationale of why your contributions to edited volumes should have a significant weight in your dossier (because of the originality and quality of your work, the quality of the volume, press, and editor, the review process that your chapter went through, and the way in which your chapter is in dialogue with other research, for example).

## ***Demystifying the Edited Collection: From the Perspective of Tenure Reviewers***

**From Judy Howard, Divisional Dean of Social Sciences, College of Arts & Sciences, University of Washington, Seattle**

- Promotion reviewers tend to see book chapters and edited collections as “less valuable” than peer-reviewed journal articles. To make the case about their value:
  - Address the rigor of the process by which chapters are selected; was there peer review of any sort?
  - Indicators of quality/stature: the press, the editor(s), the other contributors; is it reviewed and where?
- Provide context for role of chapters as opposed to articles in relevant subdisciplines
- If a Handbook or Encyclopedia, may be special cases to be made for significance