

## **“Eighth Submission with Dr. Kristina S. Brown” on *Revise and Resubmit***

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*Edited for readability.*

**RR:** Welcome back to *Revise and Resubmit*, a 10-ish minute or so podcast where I chat with academic writers about their approach to writing. I’m your host, Dr. Cameron Brown, assistant professor in the Couple and Family Therapy program at Texas Tech University.

**RR:** Dr. Brown is a Professor and Department Chair of Couple and Family therapy at Adler University. She will also be *Journal of Feminist Family Therapy*’s next editor. She has published in a variety of academic outlets which cover a number of topics such as integrated care, COVID-19, experiences as a professional in higher education, and sexual health just to name a few. Dr. Brown and I were also just talking that she was previously involved in flat-track roller derby [laughs]. First off, thank you very much for being here on the show with us. We’re really excited to have you.

**Dr. Brown:** Thank you for having me!

**RR:** Okay so what was your derby name?

**Dr. Brown:** My derby name was “presenting problem” [laughs]

**RR:** [laughs] And the implications of that, yes, and then I’m curious, what parallels are there between roller derby and the peer review process? I mean are there parallels? I feel like there’s got to be.

**Dr. Brown:** Yeah absolutely! I mean that’s a great question I haven’t really thought about that. Immediately comes to thought is you get smacked down, you get back up again. You definitely come back at it, you resubmit, but I think also some of the parallels are about being assertive and I almost want to say aggressive in the sense of, you have something to say, do the work, and get it out there.

**RR:** Alright, okay. Beyond roller derby, you have written about lots of different topics.

**Dr. Brown:** Yep.

**RR:** And topics where you openly discuss having a personal stake in them. There is endometriosis, there is women’s salaries, rank, and advancement within the field, I think you even mentioned that you have a current study going on about tattoos, et cetera, et cetera. I’m curious, how has you having a personal stake in, say, a specific piece, how has that added to or enhanced your writing?

**Dr. Brown:** Well, I think it definitely adds and enhances in the sense that my commitment to the project and my desire to learn more about it is definitely strong and it’s there. There’s definitely risks along with it as well, because not only am I sharing personal information at a larger platform, but I also might learn things that I don’t necessarily want to - sometimes in some of the different arenas that we look at ignorance can be bliss if you don’t know that about something. That’s definitely part of the risk, but I find that when I’m choosing something that’s personal to me or something that I’m passionate about, that helps with the drive because it’s really tough to balance in writing and scholarship amongst

professional and personal time. When it's something that I'm intimately connected to or personally motivated about that definitely helps.

**RR:** What advice would you have for somebody that was doing a similar approach as you, where they're writing about a topic area, whatever it may be. Maybe it's the community they're a part of, maybe it's a concern that is affecting them personally, or a family member, as someone who has shown to do that actively, and to do it well, what advice would you have for them if they are having their own personal stake in it?

**Dr. Brown:** Thank you, yeah, this year was the first year I published a first piece by myself without a co-author and it was a really, insecure process because I didn't have that natural feedback you get from your collaborators and your coauthors. And I think that's something that, I was really nervous, I had written about experiences of sexual harassment in psychology programs, social work programs and the lack of the research on sexual harassment in MFT programs. I was really insecure not only on the writing because I was by myself, I didn't have that editor and that feedback, but also then insecure like "oh my gosh I'm putting this out there, I'm challenging my own field." Though that was difficult and I'm actually proud of myself, I think my advice would be that you find a support system, or a mentor, or a collaborator, coauthor and part of that is because that connects back to that sort of "ignorance is bliss." Sometimes when you're writing about something that's so personal to yourself, you don't see issues or problems or errors in fact. When you have the ability to sort of have that balance with someone else, that can be really good. What I've tried to do with topics moving forward that I'm taking a solo approach on, I try to seek out a person who will be my checks and balance, who I can reach out to. And that's actually advice that I give to my students, my PhD students who are writing dissertations, is that you're writing your dissertation about a topic that has importance to you, make sure that your dissertation chair knows enough to be able to hold you, or challenge you, or pause you at different places because that personal connection can be so tough. It can be a place where the words flow, and it can be a place where you're looking at blank pages for weeks and months.

**RR:** Right. Just to add to that, it seems like having that additional person to bounce an idea off of or even if this is something you have a personal stake in or that is natural to you, right, or makes sense up here in the brain or when you read it, of course it comes across this way. Somebody who is outside of that or hasn't personally experienced that may think "well, you're talking in this way and I don't know if I am fully connecting the dots." I love the idea of having that outside checkpoint or collaborator or, like a check of what you're offering.

**Dr. Brown:** And that's actually one of the ways that I connected with Dr. Joyce Baptist, who's the current editor of the *Journal of Feminist Family Therapy* I submitted that individual piece to her and she was just so supportive and she ended up sort of serving as that person, giving that feedback and challenging me and encouraging me at the same time that we expanded on the relationship that we already had, and that was that opportunity in terms of networking and professional growth and development for myself that when the time came for her to move on from the position, she reached out to me and said "are you interested?" I think that there's so many benefits to that collaboration and reaching out and asking for help.

**RR:** Yeah. You have also written about communities that have been historically marginalized, right, and so sexual minorities, transgender, survivors of sexual harassment or assault, capital punishments and

inmates of capital punishments, and others. why is this important to speak about these individuals that have been historically marginalized?

**Dr. Brown:** Yeah, and that's such a good question that's sort of shifting for me a little bit. , I am a white woman with privilege. I hold a position of power as an administrator in my department, I'm privileged in the sense of my ability to have been further educated to a PhD, and I feel that there is a call or a draw, that social justice part of me was definitely a big part of my own training and is now a part of the department that I manage - how important it is to give voice and to speak and to use my voice that way to highlight or provide more information so that historically marginalized populations can have more attention, education, and resources allocated to them. But one of the things that's really been shifting me, especially in the last few months in the context of George Floyd being murdered and the Black Lives Matter movement, it's reemerging in different strength, in my opinion, it's very strong now, is that what I want to do differently is instead of only giving voice using my privilege but inviting in collaborators and co-authors who identify in those marginalized populations. Not just having a group of white authors or myself as a white woman writing about it, but instead bringing in their voice using my privilege in a different way. That's something that's really shifted for me when I think about the projects moving forward. That was really some self-learning, that I've done recently around my scholarly identity.

**RR:** Yeah, if you were to give advice to someone that's looking to write about highlights, puts a spotlight on a group or a presenting concern or whatever it may be that has been over the years or more recently pushed to the margins. I hear advice of bringing in people from that community as a part of this project, like give them voice, right, have them collaborate, collaborate with them. What else advice would you give to that young scholar looking to go down that path?

**Dr. Brown:** Yeah, I think it's definitely being informed, so looking at the literature that's already out there and who's writing about it, and who is writing about their own personal experiences because, of course that's a way that I connect to what I write, but who is also the experts on those topics and reaching out to them. I've been on lots of calls where I'm sort of like starstruck like who's on the group call or who's on there, but I also recognize that by taking those risks, making those connections and reaching out, I am learning so much and that is important. My advice would be to reach out. I always encourage my PhD students, they have to have a defense member on their dissertation, and I'm like "well look at who's publishing most of the stuff you're quoting? Reach out to them!". The answer is no if you don't ask, so you might as well ask! And there you're making some networks and connections with experts in the field you're passionate about. I think it goes back to taking that risk in that you're not alone. But I think the call is also towards my fellow white colleagues, are you doing what you can to bring those voices in with you? For example, I'm currently editing the new textbook that AAMFT is going to be published on ethics, and I have asked specifically my authors to make sure that they are utilizing references that are written by people of color, by our black colleagues, that include history and the development of MFT from other people's experiences and not sort of that white version of how our field has developed. And I think that's the place where it falls on our shoulders just to make sure that those voices and those experiences are included.

**RR:** Yeah, and included in that we get it right, right?

**Dr. Brown:** Exactly.

**RR:** Yeah. To my understanding you also come from a, I don't know how to best put this, but a family lineage, a family line of academic writers.

**Dr. Brown:** Yeah.

**RR:** What would you say to the young writer that is searching for their own, kind of, footing or voice in the scholarly community?

**Dr. Brown:** There's all kinds of stuff messed up in that question [laughs].

**RR:** [laughs]

**Dr. Brown:** That's something I probably didn't connect with until you know, in my forties and being in the field for a while. I think I got into thinking about writing not necessarily for the right reasons. From the start it was this, maybe, an expectation or living up to reputation. My dad is a cardiologist, and widely published, has edited journals, so that's something I've always admired, but also there was sort of that living up to, and that was in my own mind. I think, understanding that I had to figure out what it was for me. Like I always loved to write. I was that young girl who wrote in diaries and journals and stories and that kind of thing, so writing has always been a mode of communication for me. I think it was figuring out "what do I have something to say about?" and that then connects back to that earlier thing we talked about, what is personal to me, what I'm passionate about, what am I curious about. I have this long list and people always ask me, "do you have a scholarly agenda?" and I'm like "yeah but it was 95 branches going in different directions" because I'm interested in different things. I grab on to the opportunity when I connected with someone and they're like "do you want to write about this?" and I'm like "oh my gosh, yes, I'm interested in that." I had to figure out who I was as a scholar, that took a long time. That took a long time because I had spent a lot of time being an administrator in our program. I was a program director for five years, I'm about to enter my sixth year as a department chair, and that pulls on you in a different way. That administration eats up the energy, time, and I was also a mom with kids at home. My kids are both college graduates and launched in a different way, so my personal time allows me to engage in some of those scholarly passions in a way I hadn't been able to fit into my life previously.

**RR:** Yeah, to find who you are. Not, maybe what your advisor in your doctoral program or your supervisor in your master's program, the research team lead or the PI that you have, not what they want you to be or their expectations but find who you are. I really like that. Easier said than done, yeah.

**Dr. Brown:** It's hard because you get pressures from a lot of people, and I'm glad you brought up advisors and faculty because they definitely put pressures and expectations. And I'm sure I do that to my students, and so that's ways I try to be really conscious about but, yeah, figuring out who you are and what you want to say.

**RR:** Yeah, okay, so we have just a couple of minutes left. Somebody is looking to get published in Feminist Family Therapy. What is something you wish they knew prior to submitting to the journal for review? Beyond making sure that the format is correct, right [laughs].

**Dr. Brown:** I've got sort of the snarky answers and of course the advising answers. One of the reputations I have as a professor is there are two musts with Dr. Brown - make sure your APA is correct, and don't be late for class. Those are sort of the snarky answers, but, one of the things I was really

excited about coming into the *Journal of Feminist Family Therapy* is that it's a smaller journal. We publish quarterly, we have a smaller number of articles, I really am looking forward to having the ability to develop relationships with the authors. The first thing I would say is if you're unsure about the fit of your topic, email me. Send me a query, ask the question. Part of what I want to do is mentor, I especially want to mentor students. I want the students to publish more, I think different programs have different agendas around that. My program is much more clinically focused, but I have students who want to go into academia and to be competitive, they need to be publishing. I would say the first thing is to ask questions, to reach out, make a query. And to make sure whatever topic, you read the names and scope of the audience of who the journal is, because I often think about "okay, I'm writing this thing, who do I want to read it?" and I have to find that connection there. I think we tend to go towards where is the best journal in my field, and sometimes that's the right way to go, at least for the first shot, that's that get up again and if you get rejection you submit it somewhere else. I recently had a rejection and I was like "oh my gosh this is the best feedback I could have ever gotten" and know that the article is going to be better when I resubmit it. But, it was a rejection, so that kind of sucked. But it's a process. It doesn't happen right away, you don't get these magically accept with no edits, it doesn't happen. Again, I think we have to remember that that's that back and forth, that you get up again and you try again. But definitely reaching out, queries. Now I have queries with two other editors that I have journal submissions going into because I want to make sure I get it right before I send it in and see what their expectations are.

**RR:** Yeah, and I think that's really telling of who you are in regards to wanting to form that relationship with the authors, you kind of want it to be like a two-way street

**Dr. Brown:** And I do have that advantage again because the journal is small. I look at other journals in our field and they put as many articles in one issue as we do in an entire volume. That's not fault of the editor, it's an opportunity I have that I want to embrace.

**RR:** Yeah, well, presenting problem, Dr. Brown [laughs]

**Dr. Brown:** [laughs]

**RR:** Thank you for taking the time to be with us here today. I thought you offered some really wise words and some empowerment to our listeners here.

**Dr. Brown:** Thank you for having me, it was an honor and a pleasure!