Transcript-

Hi, Debra.

Hi, Natasha.

Thank you so much for your time in recording this interview.

Sure, I'm happy to do it.

Well, I was hoping we could start with just you telling us a little bit about yourself and your professional background, and also a bit about your current role as an editor.

Currently, I am the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs for the California School of Professional Psychology. I also am a distinguished professor in the clinical PsyD program. So my current role is mostly administrative, where I oversee the various academic programs that are under the umbrella of CSPP, and that includes over 20 programs, including our clinical psychology, clinical counseling, marriage and family therapy, organizational psychology, psychopharmacology, and a couple of international programs.

So that's really what I'm doing with most of my professional career. I do also have a very, very, very small private practice, which I think is nice because it keeps my clinical skills up, but it's also a different aspect of the skills that I actually am able to use. So I'm trying to think if there's anything else.

In terms of other things that I'm involved in, I'm involved in APA governance, and currently, I'm on the council representatives representing Division 35, which is the division for the psychology of women. And as my role as editor of Women in Therapy, I actually began this role in 2018. Prior to that, I was the associate editor of it for a few years. So that's currently what I'm doing.

Could you talk a little bit about the difference between associate editor and editor?

Sure. So as associate editor, I basically was in charge of any of the manuscripts that came in and getting them through the peer review process and kind of processing them, making sure following up with our different reviewers, and then having the editor make some decisions about whether to publish the article, revise and resubmit, or reject. And so kind of being-- helping with that process for the editor because it's a lengthy process, especially if you're doing-- if you have a manuscript, you're very interested in having it published, but it's not at the standard that you feel like the journal can publish that manuscript.

So as an editor-- and also, feel free to speak to this as your experience as an associate editor-- but what do you look for in a manuscript submission?

So I think, first and foremost, I want-- I will initially review the manuscript to see does it fit within the scope of the journal. And I would say, for anyone considering submitting an article, you really want to look at that journal to see, is this an appropriate venue for what my-- the core of the article is about. And I, generally, will give the advice to look at the past year to see what kind of articles is that journal actually publishing, because more than likely, the editorial board that they currently have has been involved in the process of getting that article published.

And so that kind of gives you a sense of, what is that editorial board seeing as important or critical? What kind of articles are they willing to publish? And does your article fit within what they are publishing? Otherwise, you're actually submitting, and you're going to just get a rejection.

And so it's-- to me, that's where the authors, them doing their homework about let's figure out a journal that we have a high percentage that they're going to accept. Then the publication is going to get accepted by that journal. So that's what I would say in terms of, when you're-- if you're considering submitting, that's one way of figuring out a journal to submit to.

OK. So if a submission fits with the scope and checks all those boxes, what are the characteristics of submissions that are particularly strong?

One, I would say, look at the specifics of that journal in terms of what they tell you, the parameters of your articles. Some could be really good, but they're way too long. Others-- they're really interesting, but again, doesn't quite fit within what you're wanting.

And then so really, what I would say is probably that there is a sophistication of the conceptualization in thinking within the article, so the critical analysis, and that it's succinct, but dense in terms of the content. I know, since you're teaching graduate students, you have lots to read. So do you want people to get to their point?

And the thing is, is that in terms of publication, you're only-- I'm only given so much space to be able to publish a volume or an issue. And so every-- if it's lengthy, and you're just being verbose, that's not a good use of my space. And so you're wanting someone that writes succinctly, but that what they're having to say is very valuable and important.

To what extent, as an editor, do you consider current political issues and social issues as relevant touch points for special issues, or just generally deciding what's most relevant in the field?

So I guess I'm very fortunate because Women in Therapy-- actually, a lot of their issues are special issues. So I can, as editor, tailor the topics in which we are going to do special issues on. So one of the topics that actually were in process-- they just did a call for proposal-- is about the Me Too and sexual violence and sexual assault.

Now, I've been wanting to do a special issue on that for a long time, and then we had all of the explosion of the Me Too movement, the Kavanaugh hearings, and so we're actually going to do a special issue about how the context, the political context, the social context, is affecting women, and then what they're bringing into therapy. And so both from our client's perspective, but also as therapists, and how then do we navigate that given the context in which we're living in currently. So for Women in Therapy, actually, that the political, social, historical context becomes very important within the scope of the work that we're doing.

Yeah, that makes sense. That's a good fit. I mean, in general, more broadly, in your role as an editor, but also, a professor and a psychologist. I mean, do you think that the academic literature in psychology, for academic psychologists-- do you think it's important for us to connect our work to what's going on locally and nationally and globally?

I-- I feel like that's our ethical responsibility, that-- and of course, I know it's a value that I hold in terms of social justice, advocacy, as a feminist. The personal is political, and that I feel like I have a responsibility, if I'm working with clients, that it is not only our individual interaction in therapy, but I need to make the context so that they can optimally function and be able to then pursue whatever they want without barriers or obstacles. And I know that, within our social structures, those barriers and obstacles are still evident and still real.

Yeah. Yeah.

So unless I'm willing to at least use my power and privilege and kind of, when I'm at the table, to be able to talk about these issues, I actually feel like the journal is also an avenue in order to do that as well. And that becomes very important for me, in the role as editor, to actually use the position to then address issues that-- oppression and--

Yeah. Well, I'm really glad you connected the role of editor to power and privilege because there have been more broader conversations in the last few years about just scientific inquiry and that being on trial, so to speak, in certain pockets of the conversation, of the discourse. And I think that there's also been a few high profile retractions and issues with the peer review process.

The one that's coming to mind in particular is, a few years ago, there was a study published out of UCLA about canvassing and the impact that it had on voter attitudes towards same sex marriage, which ended up being-- the data ended up being fraudulent. So I guess I'm curious, from your perspective on the academic side, how well-- how good of a job are we doing in psychology within the peer review process to make sure that a diversity of populations, but also authors, are being showcased and published?

I think we're making progress. I guess that's the best way that I could say it. I mean, I think, related to my role as editor, I am trying to get more diverse reviewers on-- into the editorial pipeline.

I think one of the things that I know, in terms of the peer review process, unless you have people that are experts in the certain areas, in the certain methodologies, on the editorial board or doing ad hoc reviews, that oftentimes, when they're doing the review, which then influences the decision to publish, that's going to have inherent bias in it if you don't have the diversity there.

And so then it becomes important, and it's kind of that underbelly that maybe is not so clearly seen, but impacts the process. And so that's where it becomes important. We need to get diverse perspectives within the editorial process, because that definitely then influences what gets published in our so-called science and evidence-based.

And if it's not published, then as-- the question about, does it have credibility, is it real? And we know that, for populations that maybe haven't been part of the Academy, that their voices are less heard. And so that-- this becomes, then, an important part of making progress in terms of the Academy.

Yeah, yeah, yeah. I've been hearing you talking. I'm just like-- it's just a reminder of how much work there is to be done, but also helpful to have your perspective that there is progress being made, which is heartening.

And I would also say that, for professionals as well as students to actually participate in the process-- I mean, I think the only-- it's kind of like voting. It's only if you participate that your impact is going to have-- even though it seems very small, the accumulation of everyone participating and contributing will then, hopefully, move the system into a structure that we all want, and having the diversity and different voices and different perspectives represented.

Right. Well, so you gave me a perfect transition to my final question, which is around, what advice do you have for graduate students who might be new to the publishing process or new to the academic-- the Academy, but want to get their writing out there? What would be your-- what would your advice be?

So I actually really thought about this question, and I would say there's probably three things that I think are really probably the most important, or what I would say, if you're really serious about writing, one, read. Read so that you really get a sense of what is this-- if it's for academic journals, there's a certain type of scientific writing that they're looking for.

Just like if you're going to write a self-help book, that kind of writing is different than for an academic journal. So whatever writing you're going to want to write, even your dissertation, go and read what you're wanting to write like because that's going to give you a lot in terms of structure, in terms of how do they compose things, what is the organization of things.

The second, I would say, is write. Write, write, write, write, write. I can't stress how-- you know what? It gets easier. I know it feels tough right now, but as you do it more, it'll get easier.

And the thing is that, as a professor, as a scholar, the thing that you don't know when you're really early on is, after you write and write and write, and you become an expert in that area, you don't have to do as much literature search and literature review because it's all in your head. I mean, most of it is in your head, so you can pull stuff. So it gets faster and faster. But it's-- and this is that cliche of 10,000 hours of becoming an expert. Well, I think that's the same thing for writing, so you have to write, write, write if you want to get expert at writing.

The third thing that I would suggest is to actually review. And why would I say that? One of the things that I have found is, when you have to critically review someone else's writing, it actually gives you a sense of what works. What is this writer doing that makes me engaged, makes me understand what they're trying to say?

It also tells you, OK, this is not what you wanted to do. I don't understand what they're trying to say, or how they've organized this. It just gives you a sense of what works and what doesn't.

And with reviewing, I would say-- and writing, is that you can start by asking professors or mentors, can you do it together, so that they can kind of guide you and supervise you and support you. And that in a lot of ways, what ends up happening is they take on a lot of the heavy lifting in it, and then over time, as you grow, as you kind of get better at it and build more skills, you'll slowly be able to do it by-- more and more on your own. So that's what I would say-- read, write, and review would be a good way of actually getting to your goal of being able to write journal articles.

Great. That's very simple and direct. I think that's very helpful. Thank you-- thank you so much for that, and for your time, again. Knowing how many different responsibilities you have, really appreciate your time in sharing of your expertise.

Well, you're very welcome.