

## Increasing the Impact of Asian Scholars in International Environmental Sociology

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## Rich Traditions of Env Soc in Asia

- We all know that environmental sociology has a long tradition in Japan, with Nobuko Iijima (the “mother” of our field) being one of the world’s very first environmental sociologists, and she has been joined and followed by many others. South Korea, Taiwan and China are all also developing strong efforts in our field, and a great deal of important knowledge is being developed by Asian environmental sociologists.

- Yet, it is fair to say that with only a few exceptions (most notably Koichi Hasegawa, current President of ISA's RC 24), Asian scholars are not yet as visible as they *should be* in the international arena.
- This leads to an unfortunate situation in which so much of environmental sociology "knowledge" is based on studies from a limited and unrepresentative number of nations in North America and Europe.

### **WEIRD people!**

- Recently psychologists have pointed out that most of what we think we know about "human nature" is based on studies of WEIRD people--subjects from "**W**estern, **E**ducated, **I**ndustrialized, **R**ich **D**emocracies." Yet there are major differences between such people and others on key characteristics such as reasoning style, cooperation versus individualism, and much more.
- Thus, psychological "knowledge" is biased.
- J. Henrich, et al, *Nature*, Vol. 466 (July, 2010).

## Environmental Sociology

- I worry that this problem also applies to Environmental Sociology to some degree.
- We need to have more studies from Asia in particular to compare to those from North America and Europe.
- Sadly, language barriers prevent Americans and Europeans from learning about Asian environmental research.
- It is not fair that English has become the “international” language, but it is a fact of life.

- I realize that many Asian scholars, especially Japanese, wish and need to publish in national journals in their own language.
- But I want to encourage more effort to publish in “international” journals as well, in order to help environmental sociology overcome the “WEIRD people” problem and broaden our knowledge so that it is relevant to the entire world.

So I will assume many of you can master English, and want to provide practical advice for publishing in international journals where you can reach a wide audience for your scholarship.

Much of what I know about Japanese work comes from articles in English published in the *International Journal of Japanese Sociology*.

But to really reach an international audience, you also need to publish in the journals that are widely read by scholars in our field.

## Learning international scholarship

- Before publishing in international journals one must have some familiarity with relevant work, which often comes from North America and Europe.
- I encourage you to try to visit these regions, perhaps during graduate school or as a visiting scholar.
- Many Chinese academics do this, and Hasegawa, Terada and Horikawa have all spent time in the United States.

## Attending non-Asian conferences

- I also encourage you to attend ISA conferences, where RC 24 is very active, and consider attending American Sociological Association or European Sociological Association conferences.
- It is not difficult to get a paper accepted for a Roundtable session organized by the Section on Environment & Technology (ETS) of ASA.
- If you come to ASA let me know and I will try to make sure you meet many environmental sociologists, and you will find the ETS to be friendly and welcoming.

## Follow international literature

- If you are going to participate at the international level, it is important to follow international literature in environmental sociology
- If your library does not provide access to a good selection of international journals, there are several things you can do to compensate.

## Google Scholar

- First, use Google Scholar to search for key literature relevant to your research.
- You can search for publications by subject, such as “environmental sociology” or “environmental justice” or “environmental movements.”
- Or, you can search for publications by leading scholars who publish on the topic you are interested in.
- You can then request pdfs from the authors if your library doesn’t have the journals.

## ResearchGate

- ResearchGate is growing in importance, and many scholars post pdfs of their publications there which you can download.
- I encourage you to set up your own ResearchGate page, and then you can post your publications and follow leading scholars and others who share your interests.
- ResearchGate seems widely available, and I see for example many Chinese scholars downloading my publications.

## Connecting to International Work

- I have been talking about how you can readily follow international scholarship relevant to your research and interests.
- Now let's focus briefly on connecting your research to major themes and topics of international research in environmental sociology to increase your chances of publishing in international journals.

## Compare and contrast

- I see great opportunities to compare Japanese and American environmental sociology in particular. A major example is comparing and contrasting the strong Japanese tradition of "victimology" and emphasis on "suffering" with US studies of "environmental justice" (EJ) and especially "*injustice*."

## Sources of injustice

- “In most instances the victims of pollution problems and occupational disasters are people at the bottom of the social ladder.” Iijima, 1992.
- Similar patterns are found in the USA, but often in terms of racial/ethnic status as well as social class.
- With less racial/ethnic cleavages in Japan, there seems more emphasis on “powerlessness” as leading to environmental injustice, and nice comparisons can be made with US work.

## Benefit and disadvantaged zones

- In a related fashion, Japanese emphasis on “benefit” versus “disadvantaged” sectors is very similar to US work on local resource communities that are economically dependent on mining, forestry and other extractive industries—often owned by distant corporations that take the profits to urban areas. These areas often experience severe ecological and societal damage due to reliance on these industries.



## Corrosive communities

- Iijima, Funabashi and others note that in communities like Minamata, the pollution not only does terrible harm to victims but leads to social conflict. Similarly, Freudenburg and other Americans note that technological disasters (e.g., toxic wastes) produce conflictual or “corrosive” communities, while natural disasters (floods, earthquakes, hurricanes, etc. ) produce “therapeutic” communities where everyone tries to help the victims.

## Comparative studies needed

- These few examples suggest similarities between Japanese and American studies of environmental injustice, but also the need for careful comparisons to highlight different dynamics stemming from national differences.
- Articles that provide detailed comparisons, drawing upon both Japanese and American literature, would be extremely valuable and are likely to draw attention.

## Other comparisons

- Environmental movements – There is much work on environmental movements in Asia, often involving comparisons with US and European environmentalism, and this work receives international attention.
- Ecological modernization – European and US scholars tend to disagree strongly about prospects for ecological modernization, and there is great need for studies in Japan and other Asian nations to help clarify eco-mod's applicability outside of Western Europe.

## Expanding our knowledge

- In sum, there are many opportunities for detailed analyses that compare and contrast societal-environmental dynamics between Western and Asian nations.
- Such analyses will help environmental sociology overcome the limitations of focusing on WEIRD people and nations and broaden our knowledge base.
- So I hope to see more work like this.

## Comparative contexts for results

- Of course, articles do not need to be devoted to detailed comparisons of Asian and US and/or European findings, as often you will want to present the results of your personal study.
- But when presenting results from your own study of environmental injustice, movements, attitudes, etc., if you “frame” them in the context established findings from “Western” studies it will make your paper more attractive to journals and readers in the West.

## Getting published

Having briefly noted the importance of engaging with international literature, let me turn to specific suggestions for how to get your studies published in international journals where it will become available to environmental sociologists worldwide.

## Preparing the manuscript

- Take the time to write a very good paper that is well-organized, reads easily and makes a good impression. Have others read your paper to help you polish it, and carefully edit the English. Reviewers do not like poorly written papers, even when the substance is very strong.

- It is difficult to provide detailed guidelines for writing a good paper because of the differences between theoretical and empirical papers, and between empirical papers reporting qualitative and quantitative results. But I think there are some common threads.

## Background preparation

- You should read many articles like the one you hope to publish—theoretical, qualitative, quantitative or comparative.
- Then, before writing your own paper, you should RE-read some of the *best* ones paying attention to their format and style. Learn from good examples and then try to follow them in your own paper.

## Journal guidelines

- Follow the journal's guidelines on issues like maximum length, format, table construction and reference style—even though it is frustrating to change the paper for differing journals.

## Good introduction

- Begin with a strong Introduction, typically a paragraph that introduces the topic and why it is important (perhaps practically as well as theoretically).
- Next, a second paragraph or more that clarifies the goal of the paper (“basic purpose,” or “research question” for empirical pieces).
- Then one that outlines the rest of the paper—telling readers what sections will follow. This prepares readers for the rest of the paper.

## Rest of the paper

- The rest of the paper should follow your outline. Papers reporting empirical results typically have sections on each of the following:
- Literature review/theoretical perspective.
- If relevant, statement of hypothesis or specific research question.
- Methods - data collection techniques used, sampling if relevant, measures employed.
- Results – Clear presentation of results.
- Summary and conclusion – A good short summary is important, as is a strong conclusion.

## Choosing journals

- There is a huge number of international journals, and it is important to make wise decisions about where to submit.
- Decide on the audience you wish to reach—the general sociological community, environmental sociologists, or perhaps a more interdisciplinary audience of environmental social scientists.
- Then investigate the best journals for that purpose.

## General Sociology Journals

- Elite journals like *ASR*, *AJS*, *Social Forces* and *Social Problems* are publishing more environmental work, but their acceptance rate is about 10%.
- Many other general journals publish work by environmental sociologists. Four with strong records are *Rural Sociology*, *Social Science Quarterly*, *Sociological Inquiry* and *Sociological Spectrum*—not elite journals but respectable.
- Also, consider the two ISA journals, *Current Sociology* and *International Sociology*.

- The *International Journal of Comparative Sociology* seems an especially good possibility, as it is now edited by Sandra Marquart-Pyatt—an environmental sociologist at Michigan State University.

## Environmental Journals

- There are many environmental sociology/ social science journals.
- ISA's new RC 24 journal *Environmental Sociology* is an ideal choice. But there are many others.
- I suggest using the Web of Science journal reports to view “environmental studies” journals and their “impact” scores.



## High to Fairly High Impact Journals

- *Global Environmental Change*
- *Environment & Behavior*
- *Population & Environment* (Lori Hunter, Editor)
- *Environment*
- *Environmental Politics* (Chris Rootes, Ed.)

## Lower But Respectable Impacts

- *Society & Natural Resources* (David Sonnenfeld, Co-Ed.)
- *Journal of Environmental Education*
- *Human Ecology Review*
- *Nature and Culture* (Matthias Gross, Co-Ed.)
- *Environmental Values*

## Deciding where to submit

- First look at the articles you are citing in your paper to see where they are published, and if you find several from the same journal that is a good clue to submit to it.
- It is good, but not necessary, if the journal has published similar work in the past that you can cite to “legitimate” the relevance of your paper for that journal.
- It’s even better if you are replicating, extending or critiquing an article published in the journal.

## Some strategic insights

- Realize that the Editor is very likely to choose individuals you cite as reviewers—especially if they are on the Editorial Board, but even if they are not.
- Similarly, Editors are likely to choose scholars you mention early in the text as reviewers.
- If you are favorable toward someone’s work, cite them 2-3 times or more *if* appropriate.
- If you are very critical of someone’s work, it is legitimate to tell the editor and ask that s/he take this into consideration in the review process.

- You must cite the most relevant literature and you should be careful and choose wisely. Good summaries of topics like *Annual Review of Sociology* articles can be helpful, and there are several on environmental sociology.
- Don't adopt a scattergun approach that just picks almost random studies for each point you want to make—choose the best ones.
- You can often save space by “see Smith 2013 and the references therein” if it's a recent article that does in fact provide a good summary of relevant literature.

## Things to consider when submitting

- Be prepared to be rejected, and have your first *three* journal choices set so that if your paper is rejected by the first choice you are psychologically ready to go to next one.
- Do *not* assume your paper is worthless even if it gets harsh reviews and a clear rejection.
- Do *not* act in haste. Try to improve the paper based on the reviews before sending it to the next journal. Get advice from a trusted source regarding which of the reviewers' critiques and suggestions are most helpful in order to improve the paper.

## Revise and resubmits

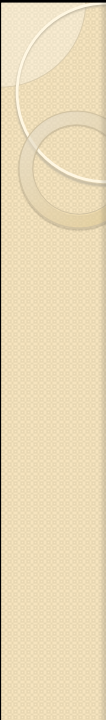
- Learning to deal with revise and resubmits or “R&Rs” (a very common experience even for strong papers) is an art form—one that I was slow in learning.
- Do **not** be intimidated by requests for major revisions.
- If you can deal effectively with at least half, but especially two thirds to three fourths, of the suggestions there is a very good possibility of acceptance.
- You need to choose which suggestions are most important, although good editors will tell you which they see as top priorities.

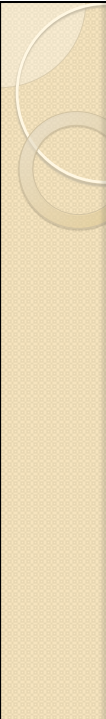
- Often you can (and must) “play off” reviewers against one another, as when one asks you to expand your theoretical framework or the implications of your findings and another suggests that the paper should be shortened to a “research note.” Ask yourself which is easiest and best to do.
- You can point out the competing advice, and then indicate which reviewer you followed--*but* indicate why you made that choice.

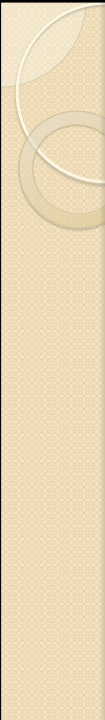
## Cover letter for resubmission

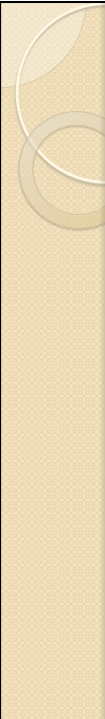
- Writing a detailed and very clear cover letter explaining carefully what you did *or* choose not to do for *each* suggestion made by the reviewers *and why* you made these decisions is absolutely crucial.
- You don't have to follow all of the advice, as long as you give good rationales for what you do—length concerns, competing suggestions, reviewer failed to understand or misread your point, etc.
- Often you can deal with some suggestions quickly in footnotes, such as those asking for more information on your sample or measures for example.

- Make the cover letter comprehensive *but* easily comprehensible.
- While it is tempting to just list what you did for each reviewer in order, it is better to begin with the major criticisms and especially similar ones made by two or three reviewers—and particularly those made by the editor--and then discuss the minor ones.
- In other words, make the letter easy to follow for the reviewers and editor.

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- While it is legitimate to take issue with some suggestions and “argue” a bit with a reviewer, be very polite.
  - Begin and especially end the letter by noting that you found many of the criticisms and suggestions very helpful, and by taking them into account you believe you have made the revision is stronger.

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- Express appreciation for the insights offered and end by saying that you hope the editor and reviewers will now find the revision suitable for publication.
  - Keep in mind that the reviewers (including the likely new one) will receive your cover letter along with the revised paper.

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- Finally, be prepared for another “R&R” or even a rejection.
  - It is common to have to go through two sets of reviews (especially when you get one or even two new reviewers on the revision) so be patient.

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- If your paper gets rejected 2-3 times, especially if you have revised it each time in response to reviews, do *not* give up without first getting advice from more experienced scholars.
  - You can have very bad luck sometimes, getting the wrong reviewers (they just don’t like your kind of work, they are having “bad days,” etc.).
  - Submitting a paper is a little like gambling, and the results may not be a reflection of your work.
  - Streaks of bad (and good) luck do occur.

- Learn from your experiences, and you will find that it becomes easier and easier to publish after some failures from which you profit by learning, and then some successes.
- Do not give up, and please help overcome the WEIRD people problem!
- Good luck.

Thank you.