Proposing Special Issues for the Adolescent Research Review

Roger J. R. Levesque¹

Received: 14 October 2016 / Accepted: 15 October 2016 / Published online: 20 October 2016
© Springer International Publishing 2016

Introduction

Special issues already are being developed for the *Adolescent Research Review*, and we hope to support more. To that end, this editorial highlights the Editor's expectations about special issues. The general conclusion that potential editors hopefully will reach from this brief editorial is that the Editor is committed to assisting potential editors and authors. That desire includes flexibility in the special issue topics, editors' responsibilities, and the timing of production. That flexibility, however, is couched in important limitations, all of which center on the need for all articles to make original, substantive, and important contributions to the developmental understanding of adolescence. This editorial details the important parameters that Special Issue Editors can expect as they think through whether and how to develop special issues.

Special Issue Editors' Responsibilities

The Editor necessarily retains key roles. First, Special Issue Editors cannot make the ultimate editorial decision on any manuscript, as that decision lies with the Editor. Special Issue Editors also are not involved in managing the flow of manuscripts, such as sending invitations to reviewers. Instead, Special Issue Editors identify reviewers who are

willing to review (rather than simply provide names of potential reviewers). The Editor typically invites those reviewers, although he retains the right to invite others. Special Issue Editors also review each submitted manuscript. It is important for them to review each manuscript for the simple reason that they need to render informed opinions when they make recommendations about whether specific manuscripts will be accepted for their special issues. Special Issue Editors, then, have the task of assisting in seeking manuscripts, identifying willing (and competent) reviewers, and reading each manuscript to both provide a thoughtful review and determine whether, if all goes well with the review and revision process, to accept them for their special issue. The Editor reviews each manuscript, assigns all reviewers, and calls the ultimate editorial decision. In addition, the Editor will send decision letters, work with revisions, and copy-edit all manuscripts so that they comport with the *Review's* manuscript style and with common grammatical conventions.

Some Special Issue Editors may wish to publish special issue introductions. Introductions are permissible as long as they also make substantive contributions above and beyond the special issue articles themselves. The *Review* assumes that readers can read the articles and identify their strengths and limitations, and it further assumes that all articles will note their own contributions to the study of adolescence. This means that special issue introductions will not work if they only repeat the content of the manuscripts. Introductions are justified only if they situate the articles into the relevant area of research and if they do so in a substantive, original manner. The standard is undoubtedly high but not impossible to reach, as it is the same one used for regular submissions: articles must make independent, substantive and original contributions.

✉ Roger J. R. Levesque
rlevesqu@indiana.edu

¹ Indiana University, 302 Sycamore Hall, Bloomington, IN, USA

Proposals and Typical Concerns

Effective proposals tend to do the points articulated below. Potential Special Issue Editors should feel free to contact the Editor to discuss any of them, as they are provided as guidelines and highlight topics that Special Issue Editors may wish to consider. Still, the Editor likely will be interested in knowing whether the points have been taken into account.

Describe the Nature of the Topic

Please give the Editor a sense of the topic. Please know that there is no need for an extended analysis, as the Editor easily can surmise the importance and potential fruitfulness of the topic.

List Potential Authors

If available, the list should include an explanation of the authors' openness or readiness to submit. If calls for proposals are warranted, the Editor will work with the Special Issue Editors to craft effective calls. Still, the Editor expects Special Issue Editors to distribute calls and use their own professional connections to drum up appropriate submissions.

Plan for External Reviewers

Given the potential narrowness of special issue topics, it is important to articulate how reviewers will be identified and commit to reviewing. Since the *Review* is multidisciplinary, there should be a balance between experts on the topic of the manuscript and generalists who can give the manuscript a reading in light of the need to reach a broad audience. Potential authors can serve as reviewers, as they will not be competing for space due to the *Review's* not having space limitations.

Articulate Special Requests

This component is important to avoid future misunderstandings. Special requests tend to be easily accommodated, as the typical ones relate to timing or space limitations. The *Review* is flexible in terms of which volume issues can feature special issues; they typically are published in the issue that comes after each manuscript has been accepted and posted online. The *Review* has no space limitations, which allows for publishing all appropriate manuscripts that fall within the *Review's* mission. This means that we generally can move as quickly and slowly as the editors wish, and the editors generally also can aim for as large an issue as they wish (also see below).

Note the Appropriateness of the Special Issue Editors

Proposals that are not initiated by the Editor should have a section that briefly details how the Special Issue Editors are up to the task of successfully shepherding an exceptionally strong special issue. This is particularly the case for emerging scholars (see below) or researchers who have not worked with the Editor, either as authors or reviewers. If multiple editors propose to work together, proposals should clarify each reviewer's envisioned and respective roles (e.g., how different tasks will be divided).

Recognize the Review's Mission

Not all topics and manuscripts that happen to relate to the adolescent period fall within the *Review's* mission (for a sense of that mission, please see the Editor's inaugural introduction, Levesque 2016a). For example, reviews may take a variety of approaches (see Levesque 2016b) but they still need to take developmental approaches and engage adolescent research. In addition, the *Review* style will be followed regardless of who submits a manuscript.

The Review Process

Proposals are accepted if they address important areas of adolescent development and if they will attract authors who will make original and significant contributions to the study of adolescence. Thus, it helps if the Special Issue Editors have identified potential authors and if they can make the case that there will be enough manuscripts to fill a journal special issue (typically 6 manuscripts; but there is considerable flexibility on this point, including the possibility of creating a special section of an issue or moving to a double issue). The ultimate goal is to give the Editor a sense that there will be interest among potential authors, a reasonable standard to the extent that a lack of interest among authors likely will translate into little interest among readers.

The review process for individual manuscripts also is straightforward. The minimum standard is that the Editor needs to have at least two "blind," doctoral level reviewers who provide careful reviews and who do not counsel rejection. As noted earlier, all manuscripts must be reviewed, and all manuscripts are subject to the Editor's final approval. In addition, since the Special Issue Editors have considerable expertise in the relevant area, the Editor grants them somewhat wide latitude in developing the issue that they proposed. If they submit their own manuscripts and if the manuscripts fall within the review's mission, the Editor takes the responsibility to assign reviewers. But, as with all manuscripts, the *Review* has adopted the policy

that the Editor welcomes suggestions for reviewers. The ultimate goal is to have thoughtful reviews useful for not only making an editorial decision but also crafting stronger manuscripts.

Scheduling

Like authors, Special Issue Editors often are interested in the special issue's schedule of production. The Editor will work with any schedule. Having said that, the Editor expects quick reviews of manuscripts (within 3 weeks of the initial invitation) and especially quick responses to review requests. In addition, the special issue cannot go to press until all manuscripts have been accepted for publication. This means that the formal release (hard copy print) of the special issue itself could be difficult to judge, as it depends on the cooperation of editors, reviewers and authors. Still, the publisher's staff appropriately enjoys the reputation for being quite quick in processing manuscripts and can move them remarkably quickly to proof stage and to publication. It is worth emphasizing that much remains within the control of the Special Issue Editors as they seek to make the strongest possible special issue that will maximize the impact that the authors' work rightly deserves.

Emerging Scholars Welcomed

Emerging scholars, including advanced graduate students, may serve as Special Issue Editors. This possibility results from the nature of the review process noted above; all

issues rely on "blind," doctoral level peer reviewers. Although a possibility, it must be noted that taking the lead on a special issue is not an easy task, as it demands an important time commitment and requires connections to the field to have both authors submit and reviewers review. Still, nothing precludes emerging scholars from taking the lead if they can convince the Editor that they will be able to fill their role judiciously. The chances of making a convincing case certainly increases if emerging scholars pair with established leaders in the field who can assist in ensuring that the development of the special issue will comport with the *Review's* mission, which includes being responsive, supportive and kind in the execution of responsibilities to reviewers, authors, readers, and the field of developmental science relating to adolescents.

Acknowledgments This editorial draws from one published in the *Journal of Youth and Adolescence* (Levesque 2012).

Compliance with Ethical Standards

Conflict of interest The author is the Editor of the *Review* that is the subject of this editorial.

References

- Levesque, R. J. (2012). On proposing special issues for the journal of youth and adolescence. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 41, 1688–1690.
- Levesque, R. J. (2016a). The editor's inaugural introduction. *Adolescent Research Review*, 1(1), 1–2.
- Levesque, R. J. (2016b). Reviews in research on adolescence: Genres, trends, and challenges. *Adolescent Research Review*, 1(1), 3–13.