

# Working with Psychology Journal Editors: Tips for Students and Early-career Authors and Reviewers

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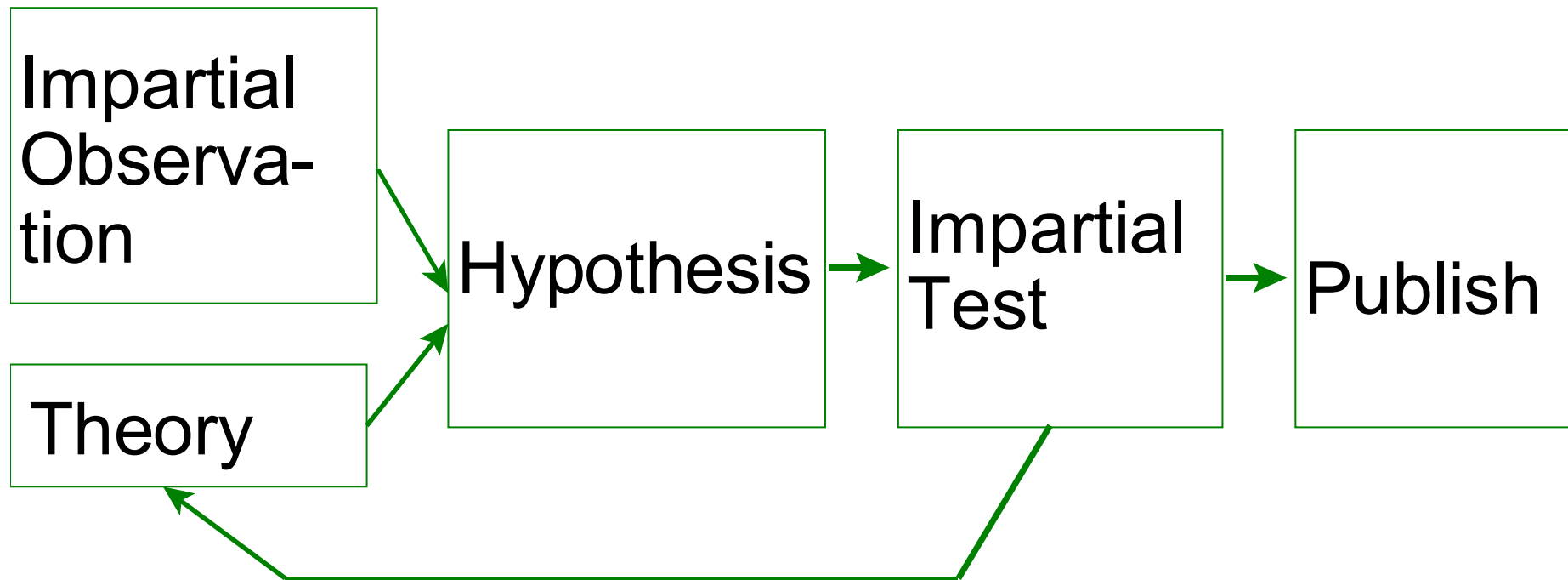


@dstephenlindsay

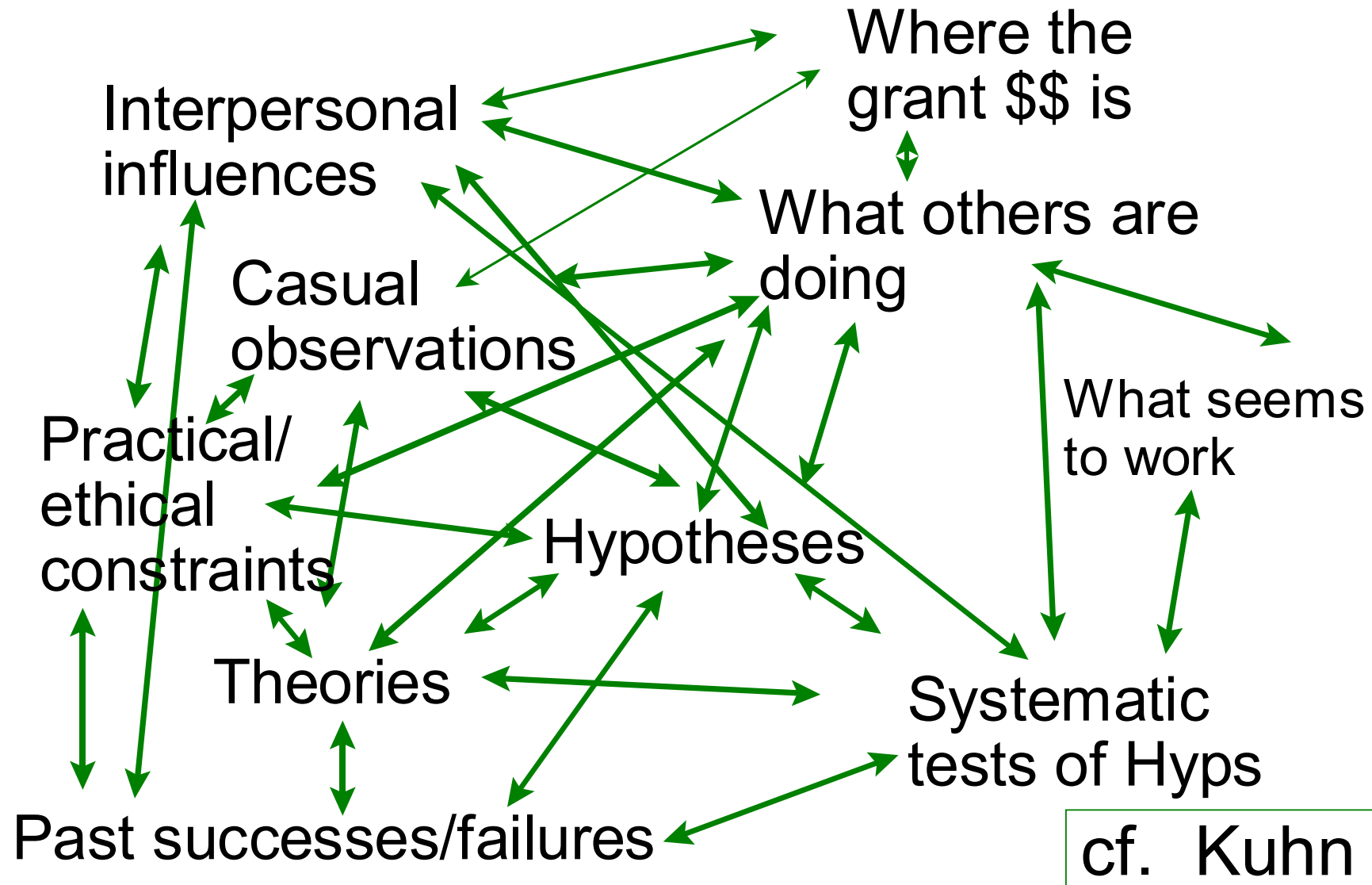
Statements herein reflect my opinions. Might be wrong.

Please ask questions or offer comments at any time. Or post comments/suggestions to Google doc at OSF site. Slides at <https://osf.io/652rg/>

# Mythology of Science



# Scientific practice rarely follows a linear path



# The Lay Impression of Scientific Publishing

The researcher...

...has a flash of insight;

conducts an experiment;

writes a paper;

and publishes it in *Science*, pocketing a tidy sum.

Communicating is integral to science.

Primary research reports in peer-reviewed journals: Still the major channel of communication for science (despite growing interest in “preprints,” e.g., [PsyArXiv](#)).

If you want a research-oriented academic job then you must publish in journals while in grad school.

Quantity/quality trade-off: Seek balance. Little point in publishing rubbish.

# Authorship Order

- APA ethics: Order reflects relative contributions of coauthors from most to least (but in some areas senior author customarily last on empirical articles).
- Intellectual/conceptual/creative contributions more highly valued than mechanical ones.
- By tradition, in North America student usually 1st author on ms based on Masters thesis; almost always on PhD dissertation research; usually not on BA thesis.
- Authorship should be discussed freely; may shift over time.
- Don't list anyone as an author w/o their consent.

# Writing Process

An extended, multistage effort.

Write w/ target audience (reviewers/readers; NOT your supervisor) in mind.

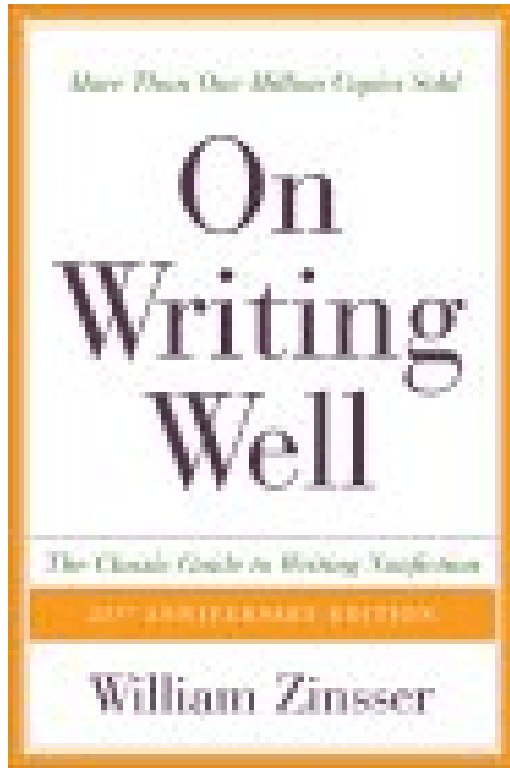
Write w/ outlet in mind; style, length, jargon, etc.

Draft, polish, feedback, polish, feedback...

“Brevity is the soul of wit.” (Shakespeare, *Hamlet*)

Don't lie. Be transparent.

## Two superb books to enhance your writing skills



William Zinsser



Strunk and White

Dr. Joydeep Bhattacharya (Goldsmiths) recommended Robert Kail's *Scientific Writing for Psychology* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed. 2018) and Joshua Schime's *Writing Science - How to Write Papers That Get Cited and Proposals That Get Funded*.





David Mellor



Simine Vazire

Moi

[Transparent science: A more credible, reproducible, and publishable way to do science](#)

Preprint version of a 2018 chapter on writing scientific reports in ways that promote transparency and replicability.

There are hundreds of psychology journals and a number of general journals that regularly publish psychology.

Science journals range from widely read, highly cited, peer-reviewed w/ high rejection rate (e.g., *Science*).

*[Very wide range in between]*

To obscure, special-interest, pay-per-page.

Good work sometimes appears in low-status journals, and high-status journals sometimes publish trash. Still, it is strategic to place your work in the highest-status journal for which it is appropriate.

# Choosing a Journal

- Aim for best journal in which your work has a reasonable shot.
- Consider journals that published works cited in your manuscript.
- Compare your manuscript against what's typically published in various journals, looking for a match in terms of topic, style of research, and quality of contribution.
- Consider who the Editor/Assoc Eds are; may have stance at odds w/ your ms. \*

\*If an editor at the journal to which you plan to submit is an expert in the topic of your ms, consider citing that person's work. Maybe that seems unsavory but it can also be construed as a courtesy.

# Criteria for Acceptance

- Topical/current (new, but not alien).
- Novel (direct replications hard to publish, although that is changing).
- Non-null (null effects hard to publish, although that too is changing; use Bayes or equivalence tests to assess strength of support for null and explain why this is informative).
- Scientifically rigorous; compelling; robust (standards vary w/ sub-area and w/ journal).
- Well written (clear and succinct).
- Fit with journal.

Be mindful of editors' goals.

Generally, editors want to publish works that will enhance their journal's reputation (i.e., advance the field, attract readers and citations, increase impact).

May also have specific, idiosyncratic goals (e.g., to promote research on a particular topic or using certain methods). Worth checking to see if they published an editorial on such.

# Preparing to Submit a MS

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- Review and follow journal's submission guidelines.
- Some journals require authors to mask their identities on submissions, and some offer masked review as an option. Masking may benefit members of underrepresented groups.
- Most journals require or invite a cover letter that explains why the author believes the ms is appropriate. Some journals use only an on-line form. In either case:
  - Declare any conflicts of interest.
  - Recommend 2 or 3 well-qualified, arm's-length reviewers; be chary RE requests to avoid reviewers.
- If ethically and practically feasible, make de-identified data and materials available to reviewers. Share analysis scripts.
- Video of procedure may help reviewers.

# If your ms includes preregistered research, include with your submission the Transparency Checklist



**Balazs Aczel**

[Aczel et al. \(2019\).](#)

Transparency Checklist for Social and Behavioural Researchers  
*Nature Human Behaviour*

[Link to shiny app version of checklist!](#)

# Process I

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- Editor previews for fit with journal.
- Editor asks experts to review the ms; usually 2 to 4 reviews are solicited



# Process II

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- Each reviewer evaluates ms., makes recommendation RE pub and suggestions for improvement, sends review to Editor.
  - Reviews may be signed or blind
  - Reviewers are not paid; most do a good job but some are tardy and/or flawed.
- Editor reads (ms &) reviews and makes decision:
  - Accept as is or pending minor revisions;
  - Reject but invite resubmission w/ substantive changes (often re-reviewed);
  - Reject w/o invitation to resubmit.

# Process III

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- Editor sends author an “action letter” with a decision and the reviews.
- Author then do one of the following:
  - ▶ Celebrates; does minor revisions and sends to Ed.;
  - ▶ Works toward major revisions and, if success seems likely, resubmits. (May require several cycles.)
  - ▶ If can't revise to satisfaction of Ed., decides whether to revise for submission elsewhere.

# Doing Revisions

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- Expect rejection; hope to get invitation to revise & resubmit.
- Study action letter and reviews, work hard, take time, and be savvy in making revisions.
- Have others proof read revised manuscript.
- Write cover letter that...
  - Thanks editor and reviewers for input.
  - Details the revisions vis a vis the action letter.

# What if the Action Letter Sucks?

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- Sometimes editors are flat wrong and if so then it is appropriate to email the editor.
  - Do not do this immediately. Take at least a few days.
  - Be polite, clear, calm, balanced.
  - If editor rejects your plea it is generally best to thank them and move on.

Lag between initial submission and journal publication rarely less than a year, often two or more.

Unethical to submit to more than one journal at a time;

If *Journal X* rejects the manuscript, can submit it (or a revised version of it) to *Journal Y*.

Usually unwise to submit to diff journal w/o any revisions-- may well get the same reviewer(s) at new journal

For most journals, when manuscript accepted authors required to sign over copyright to publisher or to pay publication fee.

Most journals allow authors who transfer copyright to post final accepted version of an article on their own websites and their institution's website (e.g., [APS policy here](#)).

# An Alternative Approach to Publishing Peer-Reviewed Research

Registered Reports: Peer Review prior to (as well as after) data collection.



Chris Chambers  
Cardiff Uni  
Champion of RRs



# Getting Into Publishing

- Actively seek opportunities to collaborate.
- Work on writing, speaking, and science skills.
- Read current journals.
- Talk to supervisor/colleagues about collaboration and publication possibilities and authorship issues.
- Participate in your department's social and intellectual community. If there isn't one, make one.
- Seek out conferences, non-refereed as well as refereed; attend and talk to folks.
- Check out the Society for the Improvement of Psychological Science ([SIPS](#)).

# Reviewing

- Reviewing is a valued way of contributing to science.
- Being a good reviewer can advance your career.
  - Establish good rep with editors
  - Learn cutting-edge research
  - List reviewing on your cv – it's taken as an indicator of having a good rep and of being a team player



## How to get invited to do reviews

- Tell present/past mentors you would like to be involved in reviews. Many journals let primary reviewer involve mentee as co-reviewer; almost all ask folks who decline invitation to review to recommend potential reviewers.
- Submitting good manuscripts to *Journal X* may put you on that editor's radar.
- Publishing on topic *X* increases  $p$  of being invited to review submissions on topic *X*
- Make yourself known (engage, ask questions, give talks).

## Rock-bottom Basics of Reviewing

1. Know your stuff before accepting invitations to review.
2. Be timely.
3. Know the journal's standards and the sorts of works it publishes; read instructions to reviewers.
4. Read and reflect on the ms with care.
5. Strive to make your review
  - a. Concise (clear, well-organized, brief)
  - b. Constructive
  - c. Fair and accurate

Here are [22 editors' comments on reviewing](#).

Roediger (2007) [12 Tips for Reviewers](#).

## **Reviewing to Promote Transparency and Replicability**

Science should be transparent; a primary research report should accurately explain how the data, analyses, findings, and claims came about.

Not all authors understand that.

Not all editors understand it.



## Peer Reviewers' Openness Initiative

To date, 561 researchers have signed a pledge not to do a comprehensive review unless they have access to data, analysis scripts, and materials needed to do thorough job.

I don't recommend for or against taking that pledge, but I do encourage reviewers to ask editors for access to information they believe important for doing a good review.

# Peer Review Guidelines Promoting Replicability and Transparency in Psychological Science

This 17-page article in *Advances in Methods & Practices in Psychological Science* (2018) grew out of a hackathon that Roger Giner-Sorolla and I co-organized at SIPS 2017.



Topics include

- Preparing to review
- Statistical reporting elements to look for or request
- Dealing with data, materials, and preregistrations
- Evaluating statistical outcomes
- Assessing constraints on generality
- Promoting transparency
- Reviewing direct replications
- Reviewing Registered Reports

## Some topics for discussion

Should you sign your reviews?

Should you post your reviews?

To what uses can you put information in manuscripts received for review?

Can authors post the action letter (including your review) without your permission?

Reviewing Registered Reports?

Open reviewing.

Are you responsible for assessing quality of preregistration and fidelity to it?  
Reproducibility of analyses?