Your Research Portfolio & Publishing in Peer Reviewed Journals

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Photo by Irving Penn, 1951
Why should you publish?

Really? I thought it was Publish or Paris.
Why publish? The bottom line…

• Publishing, usually in peer-reviewed journals, is required for all academic & research positions
• Job market is very competitive!
• Publications are best way to “signal” potential of future success
• Many universities & research centers only hire candidates who have published
• Publishing will make you a much more competitive job candidate
Think like an entrepreneur & develop your research portfolio, I

- Make each class paper count
- Design class papers to be publishable
- Invite faculty to be a coauthor on class papers
- Seek faculty with similar research interests; volunteer to assist with research

“Don’t worry—he surrounds himself with good people.”
Think like an entrepreneur & develop your research portfolio, II

- Use independent study to write paper for journal
- Submit abstracts to top conferences in your field
- Design your dissertation to support 2 to 3 articles

“Don’t worry—he surrounds himself with good people.”
Make each paper count

• Identify what you are passionate about
• Critical literature reviews
• Descriptive empirical studies
• Preliminary or pilot studies that can contribute to a larger study
• Invite your instructor to be a coauthor
Make most of your dissertation research

- Identify dissertation topic sooner rather than later
- Approach faculty expert in the field
- Conduct pilot study as an independent study
- Select article based dissertation format: 2 to 3 articles
- Complete & submit dissertation articles within 12 months of defending
Tips for publishing in peer reviewed journals

• Key for success is to have clear & compelling story
• Become familiar with journals in your field
• Become knowledgeable about journal quality, e.g., impact factors, reputation
• Select a story that would be of interest to at least 6 journals, in various quality tiers
Write your papers using standard journal format

- Title page
- Abstract
- Introduction
- Methods
- Results
- Discussion
- References
- Tables and figures
Get started

• You do not need to write linearly
• Write easier sections first
• Key is to get your ideas on paper – don't worry about polish – just write
• Use simple words
• Use short declarative sentences
• Use meaningful subheadings to organize
Paper sections & general content guide

• Title page
  – Clear concise descriptive titles are best
  – Include all author & affiliation information
  – Indicate corresponding author

• Abstract
  – Length 150-250 words
  – Length and specific format guidelines vary by journal
  – Provide readers with key points of your story
Paper sections & general content guide

Introduction and background

• Motivate your topic: why it is important
• Clearly state your research objectives & contributions to literature - use research questions or hypotheses
• Concisely review research relevant for your topic; focus on findings that are most relevant for your study
• Length of these sections varies by journal
• Some journals have separate introductory & background sections
Methods

- Study design
- Sample, recruitment, measures
- Describe variables & coding
- Analytical approach
  - Literature review: describe search process (e.g., keywords, databases) & selection criteria (inclusion & exclusion)
  - Empirical papers: qualitative (e.g., interviews, focus groups); quantitative (statistical methods); software used
- Include IRB review & approval statement
Results

• Order is usually descriptive, unadjusted (bivariate); adjusted
• Refer to tables & describe top 3 to 4 take away items for each table
• Only describe findings that are statistically significant
Paper sections & general content guide

Discussion

• Revisit your research questions and/or hypotheses
• Focus on major & unique findings
• For each major finding, indicate how your finding relates to previous studies & implications
• If findings are not consistent, speculate why
• Limitations
• Implications for policy, practice, & research
References

- Select peer reviewed journal articles whenever possible
- Style, e.g., APA, AMA, varies by journal
- Tables & Figures
- Follow journal format
Submitting your paper – Selecting a journal

- Review journal aims carefully
- Peruse articles in each journal going back ~5 years
- Select journal that is a great fit for your paper
- Aim as high as you reasonably can in journal quality
- Scan table of contents, past 5-10 years
- Identify articles with focus similar to your study
- Include 2-3 references to articles published in journal
- Identify well done article & use it as your role model
Submitting your paper
Polish, polish, polish I

• Review instructions to authors carefully
• Address all submission requirements, e.g., headers, word limits
• Ensure your paper & references are formatted exactly as requested
• Proofread your paper & references so they are error free
• Ask friend, colleague, or family member to help proofread
• Many editors & reviewers review references first & use these as a proxy for quality of your research
  – References need to be appropriate, correctly formatted, & error free
• Write submission letter to editor
  – State your paper is not under review elsewhere; describe major contributions & why it is appropriate for readers of the journal
Keep track of submitted manuscripts

- Most journals use online submission process (e.g., manuscript central)
- You can – and should – keep track of status of your manuscript online
- Log in periodically to check on the status, e.g., reviewers assigned
- Review timeframe varies a lot by journal, 2-3 weeks to 4-5 months; some journals state this information; many do not
- If you can, find out review timeframe before you submit
Keep track of submitted manuscripts II

- It is acceptable & useful to contact the journal to inquire about status
- Contact editorial assistant with brief note of inquiry after usual time period has elapsed, e.g., if 3 month review timeframe & you have not heard anything after 4 months, follow up
- Lengthy review delays can occur
- Be patient & work with editor; pulling manuscript from review is last possible option & you want to avoid
If your paper gets a revise & resubmit:

- Read letter from editor & study reviewers comments carefully
- Reply to editor if requested & confirm you plan to revise & resubmit
- Respond as fully as possible to each reviewer suggestion
- If you do not address a suggestion, persuasively state your rationale
- Draft detailed response to reviewers: include each reviewer comment verbatim; after each comment describe how you have addressed & location of revision in paper
If your paper gets a revise & resubmit II

• Keep tone positive, thank reviewers for their suggestions
• Do not ever be defensive even if reviewers are not correct
• Reviewers & editors volunteer a lot of time to peer review
• Draft separate letter to editor & thank editor for suggestions; state you have been as responsive as possible & paper is much improved
• Responding to reviewers is key part of publishing art & science
• Publishing in peer-reviewed journals almost always requires 1 to 2 revise & resubmits
If your paper is rejected I

• If you have received reviews, study reviews & make revisions that make sense & are doable; correct anything that is wrong

• If your study has weakness that you cannot correct (e.g., sample, research design), thoughtfully acknowledge limitations & indicate a rationale if possible

• Select another journal ASAP; possibly lower tier; reformat as needed
Paper Rejection II

- Editors & reviewers are often idiosyncratic
- You often get very different comments from different editors & reviewers
- Many top tier journals reject most manuscripts (75% +) before sending them for review
- Be persistent; good papers will get published
More publishing tips I

- Journals you publish in will signal your research areas of emphasis & reputation
- More prestigious journals will carry more weight in job search & in your career
- Select leading journals in your field & widely indexed
- It is a small world & you are establishing relationships with editors who often have long tenures (30+ years)
More publishing tips II

• Be realistic in journal selection
• Much better to be published in mid tier journal than not published!
• Impact factors
  – Vary by field
  – Vary over time
  – Journals without impact factors can get good impact factors
• Once your paper is published, it is out there "forever"
Setting goals for your scholarship portfolio

- Scholarly products are required for academic & research positions
- Products & order of what counts most: peer reviewed journal articles; books; book chapters; conference proceedings; conference abstracts & presentations
- Order of what counts varies by field
- Set goals for your portfolio now
Setting goals for your scholarship portfolio

• Conference presentations provide feedback & visibility
  – UNC Charlotte Research Day
  – Submit abstracts to regional & national conferences
  – Aim to have at least 1 conference presentation per year

• Aim to have 1-2 papers published or under review before you defend

• Design dissertation to support at least 2 journal articles

• Making publishing dissertation papers your first priority

• Publishing takes lots of practice, time & persistence

“Somehow, in all the confusion, I aged.”
Sources and Resources

• Primary Health Care: Research & Information Service: includes many resources about publishing and brief articles, e.g., Publishing in peer reviewed journal articles: criteria for success.

• Powerpoint presentation: Publishing in peer review journals by Robert Joseph Taylor and Brian Perron, University of Michigan (adapted from a presentation by Harold Koenig, Duke University
  http://mcuuaar.wayne.edu/mmcdoc/robpubjou.pdf

• Hong Kong Polytechnic University: has links to useful internet resources on publishing and books on publishing in various field in the social and health sciences.
  http://www.lib.polyu.edu.hk/researchers/pb/prp

• Book chapter by Susan Savva (2007): How to write a scientific paper for a peer reviewed journal; clear review of the writing process and organization of an article

• Abby Day, How to write publishable papers; usual introductory material
  http://cashflow88.com/decisiones/howtowriteclean.pdf
Thank You