

Twelve Ways to Improve Your Research Productivity

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Have you ever wondered what's up with the professional journal that has just rejected (another of) your high-quality manuscripts? Does your well-crafted and highly relevant masterpiece get the thumbs-down while obviously inferior and specious works appear in every issue?

I am prepared to offer you readers advice based on years of serious study. I have devoted hours to flipping through journals when my patients no-show. I have also made observations at the annual conferences I make time to attend (well, at least the ones in popular cities known for good restaurants and shopping). Here are my surefire strategies to GET YOU PUBLISHED!

The 12 Ways

1. Make sure your introduction extensively cites the works of the editorial board members of the journal you are submitting to. Or, better yet, go for the specific editorial consultant who will actually review your paper (this is a little riskier, as you may have to commit a felonious act to identify a peer reviewer). Please note, it is not necessary that these particular citations have anything to do with the main area of your scholarly quest for truth.
2. Design your study wisely. Your best bet is to conduct a study that has been replicated many times (a sure sign of popular appeal), and make sure that your results are statistically significant (this can be a real stumbling block, but may be overcome with creative analysis now available for Windows). You may also enhance your replication by adding a little "tweak." For example, in your study on the efficacy of time-out procedures, use a new population, like the families of Buddhist monks. Please note that the important thing is to use your imagination. It is not necessary that the new dimension contribute any-

thing of particular worth to the practicing clinician.

3. Remember that even scholarly circles have their fads. It is crucial that your study include only an "in" population. Avoid "out" populations like the plague (you can use the Fox network as a rough guide). For example, everything's gone rural in the professional literature this year. Why not do a study looking at the effects of "Nitro-Night Wrestling" on improving mother-daughter social interactions in rural populations? It's sure to be hailed an important and ground-breaking study (despite its wholly irrelevant contribution to the study of human behavior).
4. It is also critical that you identify your population as "underserved" or "understudied." After all, who wants to read about an overstudied and overserved population (unless they happen to be Hollywood denizens)? Here is an example of how invoking the "understudied" principle can really make your experiment look vitally important: "Undergraduate females in introductory psychology courses have long been an underexamined population (except by undergraduate males). Recent research suggests that a significant subgroup of this understudied and underserved population is likely to develop health problems over time (especially as they reach age 70 and upwards). Indeed, there is a strong relationship between age and increased mortality among this underserved population. Disease and natural causes appear to be significant contributors to mortality rates among this understudied group, though further research with this population is needed in order to draw any firm conclusions."
5. A recent trend reflects the influence of the new "Positive Psychology." What I mean is, get away from the bleak news about our own human condition. Instead, design a study to show that research psychologists working in university settings and serving on editorial boards are "significantly more likely to

be happy, prosperous, knowledgeable about world and community affairs, and play with their kids on Sunday instead of golfing" than some comparison group. Of course, the trouble will be finding a comparison group that will give you a statistically significant effect (in the hypothesized direction).

6. Related to the point made in number 1, make sure that you employ experimental methods and measures developed by the reviewer. The devices don't necessarily have to be related to what you are actually studying in your experiment. You can just stick them in for good measure. For example, if you are studying childhood anxiety and the reviewer has done work in neuropsychology, you can have the children's parents complete a measure of visual-perceptual integration. This will demonstrate your great skill and understanding of psychological issues (at least to the aforesaid reviewer who is reading your paper). Make sure to include glowing statements about the "exceedingly sound psychometric characteristics, as well as rich clinical data" provided by the measure.
7. Always employ the Latin Square confounded factorial design. Editorial boards love publishing these kinds of designs. It doesn't matter if you are not sure that you meet the assumptions of the LSCF, or even know what exactly it is. Nobody else really understands the Latin Square either, except for a few scattered statisticians who rarely emerge from their I/O unit at the university. The chances that you'll get called on your bluff are quite low, as everyone else is just as averse to admit



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* Expected date of completion: 2008.

their ignorance of the LSCF as you are and the aforesaid I/O psychologists probably wouldn't touch a clinical paper with a 10-foot pole anyway.

8. Get suggestions for improvements before you send your manuscript off to the journal. Preferably, these suggestions should come from past graduate students of editorial board members, or, better yet, board members' spouses, children, whatever first-degree relative is available. It is important to note that you don't have to actually use their suggestions. However, make sure that you make a big point in your paper of thanking them by name for their "keen insight" and "helpful suggestions" with the manuscript. You might also "accidentally" use a bold font for the note of appreciation (see example at end of paper).
9. Make sure that your cover sheet on the manuscript you send in to the journal is printed on letterhead. It's better if it's Ivy League letterhead. Of course, most of us don't have jobs with Ivy League letterhead in the supply cabinet, but remember that not only faculty members have access. One can easily moonlight on the janitorial staff, or even volunteer for summer camp counselor at the school. Or, if geography or scruples prohibit actually procurement of the Ivy League letterhead, you can always get the school's newsletter and use their affiliation (see my own affiliation for a sample).
10. Impress the board with your Ph.D., J.D. tag at the end of your name. You don't actually have to return to school for another onerous 5 years of post-graduate study. They have mail-order law schools now, and all you have to do is enroll or at least send for more information (see my own use of the technique on this paper). An added bonus is that nobody, not even editorial board members (perhaps especially members), wants to antagonize a lawyer.
11. If you've got some time for planning (for example, you aren't up for a promotion and tenure decision for another year or two), you ought to marry into the family of the most likely reviewer for the journal. Please note that this strategy may carry some risk, what with regular changes in editorial review staff or if you are already married.
12. Have your name legally changed to "B. F. Skinner" (see below).

Good luck, aspiring researchers!

Dr. B. F. Skinner



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