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Publish Without Perishing, Part 1:
Suggestions for Students and New Faculty

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One of the strengths of a scientist-practitioner organization such as the Association for Behavioral and Cognitive Therapies (née AABT) is that many of its members, including student members, are actively involved in research and in publishing their findings in scholarly journals. Publishing your scholarly work can be one of the most fulfilling experiences in academia. It can also be one of the most frustrating. Indeed, diatribes have been written by embittered academics about the difficulties in getting their work published. These pessimistic (and generally unhelpful) perspectives are counterbalanced by optimistic and practical advice from successful academics (Darley & Zanna, 2004; Kazdin, 1998; Sternberg, 2000). In the present article and in the second article in this series, we will build on the optimistic advice of others to offer our views on how to be successful at the game of publishing. The choice of the term "game" is deliberate; we believe that publishing should be stimulating, if not fun. It should be viewed as a game or challenge, rather than a threat. Knowing the written and unwritten rules of the game is important for successful publishing. The perspectives and suggestions we offer are based on our experiences as authors, editors, reviewers, and mentors. Collectively, we have published several hundred journal articles and book chapters, and over a dozen books. There is no single recipe for success in academic publishing. We offer some ideas for consideration. We hope this stimulates discussion from other readers of *the Behavior Therapist*.

To set the scene for the discussion to follow in this article and the next, consider the following questions. The way you approach these issues will influence your academic career in terms of hiring and promotion.

Your time, like all of your resources, is limited. You only have X hours per week for research and writing. To which activity should you devote most of your time; writing grants, writing empirical papers from an existing dataset, writing review articles, or polishing your teaching skills?

Which are more important to write—a number of small empirical articles or one big review paper?

Would your academic career be helped or hindered by collaborating with big names in the field?

Should you be a "hedgehog" or a "fox" in your research strategy? Should you methodically follow a single line of investigation, such as doing research and publishing only on, say, the topic of alexithymia (a hedgehog strategy)? Or should you pursue diverse lines of investigation, depending on what piques your interest (the way of the fox)?

What is the optimal balance of quantity versus quality? For example, should you try to publish lots of papers in second- or third-tier journals, or should you focus on publishing fewer articles in leading journals?

Is it really that important that your papers be well-written? After all, you're a behavioral scientist, not a novelist.

How do you decide on which journal to send your work?

How important is it to your career to publish book chapters or books?

The Busy Business of Academia: How Should You Allocate Your Time?

Understanding Local Conditions

Academia involves many things, including teaching, administration, grant writing, conducting research, and publishing. The way these activities are valued varies across departments and institutions, and so you need to understand the local conditions in which you work, or the conditions in which you are planning to work. Local conditions include the relative importance of teaching at a given institution, as well as the preferences or biases of faculty committees responsible for hiring and promotion. In some institutions, such as some smaller colleges, greater emphasis is placed on teaching and administration than on publishing (Murray, 1998). In such places it is possible that a faculty member may not be successful in obtaining tenure and promotion largely because of unsatisfactory teaching performance, such as poor evaluations from students. To understand the local conditions at the institution in which you work, or the institution in which you are applying to, you should talk to colleagues at the institution, and consult their faculty handbook or similar departmental guidelines.

Grant-Getting Versus Publishing

Grant-getting is a particularly important component that defines the local conditions of an academic environment. Research universities emphasize grant-getting and the publishing of empirical research. Grant-getting is a time-consuming process. Grants are simply a means to an end; that is, a means of securing the time and resources to conduct and publish your research. That would seem to suggest that you should only get those grants that you *need* to do your research. If you can still publish good empirical work with a few tiny grants, then shouldn't you focus most of your time and energy on writing papers instead of getting grants? Although that seems to be a logical strategy, the reality is that many department chairs and deans place great importance on their faculty members obtaining numerous, large grants. Some departments, when it comes to promotion or salary bonuses, place greater weight on grant-getting than on publishing. Bringing in grant funding can increase the prestige of a department or university, which is one reason why grants are emphasized. Some departments, particularly those in medical schools, require faculty members to raise their own salaries, either by pro-

viding direct clinical service or by obtaining grant funding. Thus, although publications are more important than grants in the progress of science, it can be more important, at least in many academic settings, to secure grants than to publish research articles. Publishing is still necessary to survive in many academic settings, but it may be insufficient for academic success. The Catch-22 here is that publishing (or demonstrating your record in research success) is also a necessary component of success in grant competitions. Space limitations preclude a discussion of grant-getting in the present article. For a detailed discussion of the art and science of grant-getting, see Sternberg (2004). Similarly, detailed discussions of effective strategies for conducting research are discussed elsewhere (e.g., Kazdin, 1998).

Publish and *Perish*

Local conditions also define ways that one can publish and perish. Some departments emphasize empirical research and minimize the importance of "nonempirical" papers, such as review articles or commentaries. Thus, even if you devote most of your time to writing erudite, theoretically important review papers, it is possible that you may be passed over for salary bonuses, and you may have difficulty obtaining tenure and promotion. The bias against review articles is ironic because review papers tend to have a greater impact on the field and longer citation half-life than empirical papers (Amin & Mabe, 2000; Garfield, 1994). So, your efforts at writing highly cited articles (i.e., reviews) could actually undermine your academic success if you are in a department where hiring or promotion committees place greater emphasis on empirical papers.

Another way of publishing and perishing is to publish many articles in low-ranking journals; a better strategy is to publish at least some articles in leading journals, even though many of your articles might be in lesser journals. (Statistical indices of journal ranking are discussed in the second article in this series.) A similar approach might be taken when you consider whether to publish with established leaders in your field. There are pros and cons to publishing with big names. The pros include (a) you are likely to learn important things about research and publishing when you work with leading researchers, and (b) your articles may be more likely to be read and cited by others if they are co-authored by a well-known investigator. The cons include (a) the risk that people might assume (perhaps incorrectly) that all the good ideas in your paper came from your big-name co-author rather than you, and (b) the risk that members of hiring or promotion committees might be concerned about your ability to work as an independent investigator, especially if most of

your articles are co-authored with big names in the field. The solution to these problems is to ensure that you publish articles in which it is clear that you are the lead investigator and the originator of the important research ideas. This can be achieved by publishing single-author papers. That might not always be feasible, especially when conducting complex research that involves the input of many others. In such cases you might choose to do some of your work with your own research group (e.g., other colleagues) rather than with big names in the field. Or you might include a footnote in your research papers, acknowledging receipt of your grant support and, if appropriate, mentioning that you were the principal investigator. Some journals, primarily medical journals, require articles to contain a footnote describing the contribution made by each of the authors. This can help you demonstrate the contributions you made to the paper, even if you are publishing with an established leader in the field.

Taking a "fox" rather than "hedgehog" approach to research and publishing can also sometimes harm your chances of academic success, especially in the early stages of your career. According to the ancient Greek poet Archilochus, the fox knows many things, but the hedgehog knows one big thing (Berlin, 1953). Fox and hedgehog strategies are both commonly seen in academia. One might adopt a largely foxlike approach, whereby you do research in many different areas, and publish on a diverse range of topics. In comparison, one might adopt a hedgehog approach, in which you study one topic in great depth, and publish only on that topic. To illustrate the latter, one of our colleagues has focused his research on the concept of perfectionism, and publishes almost exclusively on this topic. Other researchers adopt a blend of fox and hedgehog approaches. Neither of the fox or hedgehog approaches is inherently wrong; both can lead to important advances in science. The hedgehog approach facilitates a deep understanding of one particular research area, whereas a foxlike approach may lead one into many different novel or underinvestigated areas, some of which may be of great interest to readers, reviewers, and editors.

For someone starting out in academia, we believe it is better to adopt a more hedgehoglike approach in order to demonstrate to hiring or promotion committees that you are systematically pursuing a solid line of research. In other words, it is important to demonstrate (e.g., via your publication record) that you have a program of research that is capable of attracting grant funding, instead of seemingly haphazard or fad-driven research. A highly diverse string of publications might be interpreted as evidence that you don't know where you are heading in terms of your

research. As you become more established in your academic career you might choose to diversify and become more foxlike, such as by pursuing multiple lines of research and publication.

Publishing Your Work Is the Business of Communication

Good writing is dismissed as mere window dressing by some researchers. Some researchers submit their poorly written work to journals in the hope that the reviewers will tell them how to fix their papers. Expecting reviewers to clean up your work is irritating to reviews and editors, and a recipe for rejection. It is also a misuse of the review process (Kendall, 1990). Some researchers believe that their work sounds more "scientific" or profound if it is written in dense, jargon-filled, and convoluted prose. Again, this is a recipe for rejection. Some authors have been drawn to writing gimmicks in the hope of making their papers seem scientific, such as Dillon's (1981) work showing that the presence of a colon in the title of a manuscript is positively correlated with chances that the paper will be published. Gimmicks like adding a colon is no substitute for a well-written manuscript. (Even so, we added a colon to the title of the present article, just to be on the safe side.) We also offered a charbroiled chicken and three dolmades to Πίθηκος δακτυλογράφησης, the god of acceptance letters. Perhaps the most unusual attempt to get around the problem of good writing and good methodology was made recently by a Brown University researcher. When his paper was rejected from an occupational medicine journal, he simply bought two pages of ad space and printed the entire article in the same journal (McCook, 2005).

In graduate school we're encouraged to pour over monographs like Campbell and Stanley (1970) to learn how to design reliable and valid experiments. We're encouraged to study volumes like Tabachnick and Fidell (2000) to learn how to best analyze our data. We're told to examine the *Publication Manual* of the American Psychological Association (2001) to learn how to organize our findings into the desired publication format. But students and new faculty typically receive very little instruction on how to actually write their articles. Clarity and good writing are highly important in getting your work published. These points were highlighted recently in editorials from the leading journals *Nature* (Gee, 2004) and *Psychological Bulletin* (Bem, 1995).

When space in journals is at a premium, and when success is measured in terms of publication, it is in the interest of researchers to write clearly and plainly … [Well written papers emerge] like bright buttons from a larger pile of lexical sludge written in the customarily dreadful manner. … In the last

analysis, when authors need to maximize every opportunity to get their message heard, literacy will be seen, increasingly, as something that could make or break a paper, and with it, the careers of authors. (Gee, 2004)

From my own experience as an editor of an APA journal, I believe that the difference between the article accepted and the top 15-20% of those rejected is frequently the difference between good and less good writing. Moral: Don't expect journal reviewers to discern your brilliance through the smog of polluted writing. (Bem, 1995, p. 176)

Thus, it is important to remember that publishing your work is, to a large degree, the business of effective communication. To be sure, good writing can't salvage a methodologically weak study, but it is still important that you learn to communicate your ideas clearly.

Clear prose is also important when you are asked to revise and resubmit a journal article. If the reviewers can't follow your arguments, or if they raise other concerns (even if their concerns appear to be wrongheaded), then you need to clarify the text of your manuscript, in a nondefensive way. Your cover letter to the editor, in which you describe how you addressed the reviewers' concerns, should also be clear, concise, and noncombative. (Some of the best examples of the sort of writing to avoid can be found in the combative, but nonetheless entertaining, squabbles found in the Letters section of the *New York Review of Books*.) No one likes criticism (well, almost no one), and it's easy to get discouraged by scathing reviews. If you've been asked to revise and resubmit a journal article, then your paper is potentially salvageable. Responding to the reviewers' comments is just another one of the games of publishing. This one is more like a video game; if you want to get to the next level, then you need to solve the puzzles or challenges set by the reviewers. Rejected articles are also often salvageable and find a home in another journal. Don't be afraid of rejection and don't let it stop your efforts to publish your work. You need not take it personally—remember, it's just a game. Lives are not at stake. Also remember the two secrets of publishing: (a) everyone gets rejected, and (b) just about everyone eventually gets published (Asmundson, Norton, & Stein, 2002). Persevere and you will succeed.

Feel free to complain to your colleagues or rail at your poodle because the stupid reviewers failed to read your manuscript correctly. But then turn to the task of revising your manuscript with a dispassionate, problem-solving approach. First, pay special attention to criticisms or suggestions made by more than one reviewer or highlighted by the editor in the cover letter. These *must* be addressed in your revision—even if not in exactly the way the editor or reviewers sug-

gest. ... Next, look carefully at each of the reviewers' misreadings. … Whenever readers of a manuscript find something unclear, they are right; by definition, the writing is unclear. The problem is that readers themselves do not always recognize or identify the unclarities explicitly. Instead, they misunderstand what you have written and then make a criticism or offer a suggestion that makes no sense. In other words, you should also interpret reviewers' misreadings as signals that your writing is unclear. (Bem, 1995, pp. 176-177, emphasis in original)

You don't need to be a Pulitzer Prize-winning author to be successful in publishing in academia, as you can see from the un-Hemingwayesque prose of the present article, but you do need to learn how to express your ideas clearly. There are several useful resources that can help you learn how to write clear scholarly articles. Among the most useful includes Strunk and White's (2000) *Elements of Style*. Other useful guides include the University of Chicago Press (2003) manual of style, and the resources on the style home page of the American Psychological Association (www.apastyle. org/). Taking courses in writing and requesting feedback from mentors or colleagues can also be helpful.

Although these resources are useful, the mere mention of doing "quality writing" can cause some students and faculty to lapse into writer's catatonia. Several useful programs have been developed to help academics overcome writing procrastination (e.g., Boice, 1989). One simple but useful strategy is to aim low when you write your first draft of a paper; construct a rough outline, then write out the paper in full, as a deliberately rough draft, without worrying about grammar, style, or concision. To get to the full draft stage, try the 3-minute rule: sit down each day and write for at least 3 minutes. Once you've written for that period of time, decide whether you want to write some more. People often find that once they've written for a few minutes, then it's easy for them to continue writing. Next thing you know, you've written something massive, like *War and Peace* or the *Starr Report*.

Once the first draft is written, it's easier to start polishing the text. You should pay careful attention to the length of the manuscript. Try to keep your paper as short as possible, without sacrificing important details. If you are writing up a single-case study, for example, the manuscript should be more like 20 pages than 50 pages. (Unfortunately, we have seen several instances of the latter, which are often rejected outright.) In your literature review, focus only on the articles and issues that are germane to the aims of the study. One of the best ways to improve your writing is to continue to write, even if you're only writing a few pages each day. With increased

proficiency, writing can become fun, rather than a chore.

Conclusion

Academia is a land of paradoxes. Once you land a job as an assistant professor, you're expected to carry a teaching load, even though you probably had little or no experience or training in how to teach. You are expected to obtain grants and establish a research program, even though you may have had little or no experience in grant-getting and may have only a limited understanding of the issues and pitfalls in establishing a research program. On the one hand, academics are expected to have taken the required courses and attained the requisite credentials from a suitably accredited program; self-education in such things would be woefully insufficient for even being considered for an academic job. On the other hand, academics are required to autodidact or "pull ourselves up by our bootstraps" when it comes to important endeavors like teaching proficiency, grant-getting, establishing a research program, demonstrating that one is an independent investigator, and publishing scholarly works. Along the way we fill these knowledge gaps by seeking out mentors and role models, by soliciting peer feedback, by consulting the literature on the topic, and by muddling our way along with the help of common sense.

This article has raised issues and suggestions about particular aspects of the academic enterprise; the writing and publishing of scholarly works. Your approach to publishing should take into consideration the local conditions of the academic institution in which you work, or the institutions in which you wish to apply to. Although the maxim "Publish more of everything that is worth publishing" certainly can lead to academic success, some publications are more important than others. As we have seen, empirical papers are particularly important, even when they may objectively have less impact on the field than review articles. We also suggest that, at least in the early stages of your academic career, that you avoid publishing a high quantity of low-quality articles, and avoid publishing a low quantity of high-quality articles. Aim for something in between. We also recommend that you follow the path of the hedgehog, at least in the early stage of your career. Good writing is very important, although it is no substitute for methodologically sound research.

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