

Writing Resiliency: Best practices for drafting and submitting manuscripts during COVID-19 and beyond

Andy De Los Reyes, PhD
Jack C. Lennon, PsyD Candidate
Raechel Soicher, PhD Candidate
Garth A. Fowler, PhD

Education Directorate | American Psychological Association

7/1/2020 | Staying on Track During a Pandemic Series





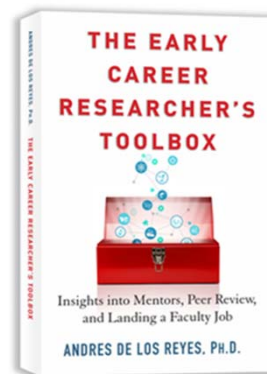
Please ask questions using the “Questions” box in the Go To Meeting dashboard.

Today’s slides and articles are in the Handouts section.

The slides and recording will be sent to all registrants along with a survey about this webinar. Please take a few moments to fill it out.

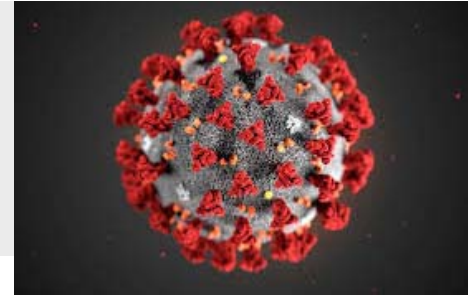
Two Goals in 15 Minutes

- What about peer review has changed during the pandemic?
- 3 tried and true strategies for effectively engaging with the peer review process
- The other 12 strategies are in here:



<http://bit.ly/ECRToolboxHome>

Our Pandemic



- Disrupted many systems
 - Health care, Social environments, Economic
- Peer review is not immune to these disruptions
- In all likelihood, expect the process to move slower
- **Just a guess:** Add 50% more time to the journal's usual turnaround time
- Why the added time?

Editors & Reviewers are People Too

- Work from home has changed everything
- Editors are handling way more papers than usual
 - For many researchers, data collection has stopped
 - Many aren't even bothering to submit grants, because who knows when we will be allowed to collect data for the studies we propose in grant applications?
 - What's left to do? That's right, write papers!
- For the reviewers, if they have family obligations, that is going to supersede time they might otherwise use to review your manuscript
- I will review three strategies that might be particularly useful to you during these challenging times



Strategy #1: Pick Your Reviewers

- Huh? Pick my reviewers?
- Yes you can!! And should!
- Marsh et al. (2008; <https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.63.3.160>):
Submissions viewed more favorably when applicant selects reviewers
- Helps put your submission on a level playing field with senior researchers
- But how do you select reviewers?



Strategy #1: Pick Your Reviewers

- In the cover letter, identify 2-4 reviewers
- How do you identify reviewers?
 - **Goal:** Identify those who you think will provide a fair evaluation of your work
 - Talk with co-authors/mentors about who the “fair reviewers” are
 - Perform a thorough search of the Editorial Board
 - Identify reviewers who are knowledgeable of your area of research
 - You can request reviewers who are not on the Editorial Board, but also make sure to identify at least 1-2 reviewers who are on the Editorial Board
 - Text below is from my own lab’s cover letter template:

In our experience it has been quite difficult to identify reviewers knowledgeable in the specific area on which this manuscript is based, that being **DESCRIPTION OF CONTENT AREA**. Thus, we are happy to provide names of reviewers who are knowledgeable in the manuscript’s primary area of focus: **NAME OF REVIEWER** ([REVIEWER EMAIL](#)), **NAME OF REVIEWER** ([REVIEWER EMAIL](#)), and **NAME OF REVIEWER** ([REVIEWER EMAIL](#)).

Strategy #2: Accept Your Emotions

- **Scenario:** You just got the decision letter on your manuscript
- How do you feel?
- Can you possibly make rational decisions now?
- **Answer:** No!!
- You just waited 2-3 (or 6!) months to get a decision!



Strategy #2: Accept Your Emotions

Dear Dr. Andres De Los Reyes:

Thank you for submitting your manuscript entitled "Mother-Child Rating Discrepancies of Parental Monitoring: Consistent Through a Two-Year Follow-Up and Predict Child Delinquent Behaviors Two Years Later". The reviewers have made recommendations for revisions that must be addressed before your article will be considered further for publication in the Journal of Youth and Adolescence. The reviewers and I are quite impressed by your work, but would like some clarifications before determining whether to pursue it for publication in our Journal.

Given the importance of your work to the study of adolescence, I certainly hope that you intend to revise. I would welcome the opportunity to work with you and look forward to the receiving your revised manuscript soon. Thank you again for considering the Journal of Youth and Adolescence.

Sincerely yours,

Roger J.R. Levesque, J.D., Ph.D.
Editor-in-Chief
Journal of Youth and Adolescence

Strategy #2: Accept Your Emotions

Reviewer #2: Thank you for the opportunity to review this interesting manuscript. The paper has important strengths, not the least of which are its use of strong measures and longitudinal data. Regrettably, the manuscript has important limitations that considerably dampen my enthusiasm.

First, although the study does address important issues and addresses relevant literature, the study fails to engage literature relating to the adolescent period. In this regard, the manuscript absolutely misses the boat. A look at its references reveals no focus at all on Effects. Given these, it is really difficult to be convinced that the proposed manuscript is making an important, original contribution since the authors themselves have not bothered to examine relevant literature.

Strategy #2: Accept Your Emotions

Second, although the literature review is interesting, it is quite lacking not just in the substantive content relating to the research areas (see above) but also in terms of what a literature review is supposed to do. It is supposed to give readers a sense of the field, address key variables that will be studied, and then lead to testable hypotheses. The current paper does not do that. In addition to the content issues reported above, there would need to be research presented relating to the group that is studied (high risk neighborhoods). In short, the literature review should be closely tied to the hypotheses, data/methods. The current paper simply does not do that.

Strategy #2: Accept Your Emotions

Given the above issues, I have not read the rest. But, I could not help to take a peek at the discussion. The discussion fails to engage relevant literature.

I would encourage the authors to revise. The manuscript would need to start the review process from scratch given the severe limitations of the current version. One of the clear contributions that this manuscript can do, I hope, is bring other literature/theories/approaches to the study of adolescence. The current version is just not developed enough.

Strategy #2a: Peek and Let it Sit

- Skim the decision letter
- Did you get an invite to Revise and Resubmit?
- Great, let it sit for 2-3 days
- Was it rejected?
- Do the same thing, let it sit
- The further out from the decision, the easier it will be to get the “planning” parts of your brain to kick into action!



Strategy #3: Itemize Your Cover Letter

- Right from the outset, first thing to do is create your “to-do list”!
- Go to the reviews and start numbering your comments (even if the reviewers did not do that for you)
- Your to-do list should be the template of the cover letter you send back to the Editor



VectorStock

VectorStock.com/28812967

Strategy #3: Itemize Your Cover Letter

Dear Dr. XXXX:

Thank you for the positive feedback regarding our manuscript, "TITLE". We are very pleased that you have invited this manuscript for revision and resubmission to the *JOURNAL* for review. We are also very grateful for your helpful suggestions and those of the reviewers. Indeed, the comments allowed us to carefully rethink SOME STUFF, OTHER STUFF, and STILL OTHER STUFF. **Specifically, we have.... Further, we have....** We have highlighted in yellow all of the text revisions. Permit us to describe our revisions and their scope:

Editorial Commentary

1. COMMENT:

a. RESPONSE:

Reviewer 1

1. COMMENT:

a. RESPONSE:

Reviewer 2

1. COMMENT:

a. RESPONSE:

Strategy #3a: “I have a plan: Attack!”¹

- Your cover letter becomes the plan for how you will execute your revisions!
- Make a promise to yourself: Address one comment per day
- It's OK to start with the easy ones!
- If you do this, most R&R's will take you a month or less



¹Iron Man (2012), *The Avengers*

Strategy #3a: “I have a plan: Attack!”¹

Dear Dr. Levesque:

Thank you for the positive feedback regarding our manuscript, now entitled *The Longitudinal Consistency of Mother-Child Reporting Discrepancies of Parental Monitoring and their Ability to Predict Child Delinquent Behaviors Two Years Later*. We are very pleased that you have invited this manuscript for revision and resubmission in the *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*. We are also very grateful for your helpful suggestions and those of the reviewers. Indeed, the comments allowed us to carefully rethink the discussion and interpretation of relevant literature in the Introduction, our analyses and evaluating alternative interpretations of the findings, and the relevance of the findings for adolescent development. Specifically, we have revised the Introduction and Discussion to better integrate prior work on informant discrepancies and their relevance to the adolescent development literature and parental monitoring. Moreover, we reported additional findings testing the relation between reporting discrepancies and child age both continuously and dichotomously (older versus younger youth), as well as variants of our main tests using either a continuous versus dichotomous age variable. Finally, in the Discussion we aimed to better integrate discussions of relevant literature in the Introduction and expanded upon the implications of our findings for future research. We have highlighted in yellow all of the text revisions. Permit us to describe our revisions and their scope:

Strategy #3a: “I have a plan: Attack!”¹

Reviewer 2

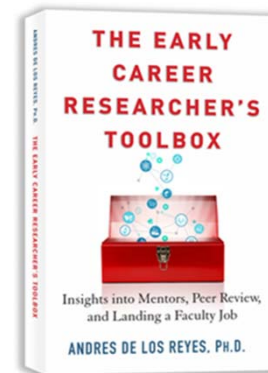
1. We thank Reviewer 2 for noting that our manuscript “has important strengths, not the least of which are its use of strong measures and longitudinal data”.

Strategy #3a: “I have a plan: Attack!”¹

Pages 2-3. We thank Reviewer 2 for pointing us toward articles in the adolescent development literature that speak to issues of informant discrepancies. Indeed, much of the informant discrepancies work conducted in the last 20 years has been done specifically within examinations of parent-adolescent discrepancies in reports of each other's behaviors, as empirical papers cited in past reviews of the literature attest (Achenbach et al., 1987, *Psychological Bulletin*; De Los Reyes & Kazdin, 2005, *Psychological Bulletin*). In light of these comments, rather than cite reviews on the broad topic of informant discrepancies research in child and adolescent assessments, we sought to focus more specifically on citing primary developmental and clinical research studies on informant discrepancies as observed in assessments of adolescents and their families. In so doing, we highlight that the phenomena of informant discrepancies is readily present in the assessment literatures dedicated to the measurement of adolescent behavior, in much the same way as informant discrepancies are observed across the psychological sciences. As Thomas Achenbach (2006) noted in a recent review, the observation of informant discrepancies represents one of the most robust observations in assessments of children, adolescents, and adults.

For More about Peer Review + Mentors + Job Talks

- New book out last April, see endorsements and more here:
- <http://bit.ly/ECRToolboxHome>
- Recently reviewed in the Psychology Today:
- <https://bit.ly/ECRToolboxPsychologyToday>
- Covered by the Hello Ph.D. podcast:
- <https://bit.ly/ECRToolboxHelloPhDPodcast>



Approach

- Practical considerations during time of high competition
- Life circumstance will vary
- Stress is high for various reasons
- Uncertainty is palpable for many – control only what you can

Take Advantage of Good Timing

- When motivation is high, review literature or write
- When mood is elevated, add your perspective/touch
- Assume that motivation will be lower tomorrow
- Don't allow good timing to pass

Play to Your Strengths

- Work on what works best for the moment
- Numbers may be better with lower motivation for some
- Writing may be similarly impacted, or vice versa
- Even if multi-tasking is a strength, use caution in taking on too much at this time

Use External Motivators

- Tell others what you are doing
- Determine whether or not self-created deadlines help or hurt
 - If deadlines are determined externally, schedule as if it is set one week earlier
- Create feasible to-do lists and allow yourself to alter prn

Turn Negatives Into Motivators

- If relevant to your work, take life circumstances and incorporate them into the work
- Allow yourself to be more creative with manuscript topics (reviews, short communications, etc.)
 - Choose the right journal for your topic (peer-review may take longer)
- Research writing can be cathartic if it is made personally meaningful rather than a chore

When In Doubt

- If relevant to your work, consider on-off days
 - Unlike piecemeal work with novels
 - Remember that the brain needs rest from strong emotions and cognitive load
- Consider seeking collaborators on manuscripts
 - Take chances with asking – this is not a time to struggle alone
- Ask colleagues to provide feedback

Motivation Tips & Tricks

- Dedicated workspace
- Daily writing goal
- Weekly intentions
- Free-writing
- Backward design
- Pomodoro sessions
- Accountability Groups

Resources

- Books

- *How to Write A Lot*, Paul J. Silvia
- *How to Write a Journal Article in 12 Weeks*, Wendy Belcher
- *Demystifying the Dissertation*, Peg Boyle Single

- Blog

- Dr. Raul Pacheco: <http://www.raulpacheco.org/resources/academic-writing-acwri/> (Twitter: @raulpacheco)

- Accountability

- Grad Write Slack (FREE!) - gradwritingslack.wixsite.com/gradwriteslack
- ThrivePhD (\$) - <https://www.thrive-phd.com/>
- National Center for Faculty Development & Diversity (\$\$ but free to subscribed institutions) - <https://www.facultydiversity.org/>
- The Art of the Article (\$\$) - <https://reachthenextlevel.net/purchase-aoa/>

APA2020

VIRTUAL

AUGUST 6-8

REGISTER NOW
CONVENTION.APA.ORG



APA COVID-19 Information and Resources

Continually updated by APA for psychologists, health-care workers and the public



STRESS, ANXIETY AND GRIEF



SCIENCE AND RESEARCH

ALL TOPICS

[Behavioral and Public Health](#)

[Education, Training and Distance Learning](#)

[General](#)

[Parenting and Caregiving](#)

[Physical Distancing and Isolation](#)

[PTSD and Trauma](#)

apa.org/topics/covid-19

Staying on Track During a Pandemic

A Webinar Series for Students and ECPs

Join APA for a weekly webinar series on practical strategies and expert advice for students, early career psychologists, and their allies. In these hour-long webinars, we'll discuss topics ranging from completing your dissertation from afar to managing your finances.

pages.apa.org/staying-on-track